

Revelation 2-3 – The Seven Churches

Introduction:

Chapters 2 and 3 of Revelation cover the second section of the Book as outlined by Revelation 1:19. This is the Present aspect:

I. Interpretation

a. The Prophetic Interpretation

Many hold that there is a prophetic interpretation of these 2 chapters, stating that the 7 churches represent 7 stages in church history, or the past 2000 years.

The Prophetic Interpretation goes as follows:

- i. Ephesus – The Apostolic Church, to A.D. 100
- ii. Smyrna – The Persecuted Church, A.D. 100-316
- iii. Pergamos – The Settled Church, under imperial favor.
- iv. Thyatira – The Idolatrous Church, during the middle ages.
- v. Sardis – The Dead Church, reforming remnant
- vi. Philadelphia – The Revived Church, post-reformation
- vii. Laodicea – The Apostate Church of the last days

b. An analysis of this Prophetic Interpretation

This interpretation has some appeal, in that Revelation 2 and 3 cover the period “The Things Which Are”, i.e. the present. However, the interpretation fails when placed alongside the actual events of history. In it, the Roman Catholic system is represented by the Thyatiran Church. Scripturally, the Roman Catholic system is NOT a church in any sense, and such an outline presented above would only resemble a history of Christendom.

This interpretation also denies the imminent return of Christ (Revelation 22:7, 12, 20). John as well as all the apostles looked for Christ in their day (Peter – II Peter 3:9-10; Paul – I Thessalonians 4:16-17; John – Revelation 22:20). This would have excluded the rest of the six church ages.

The facts of history are that there have always existed New Testament churches in every age. We have been known by many names over the centuries: Montanists – Novatians – Donatists – Paulicians – Waldenses – Albigenses – Anabaptists – Baptists.

Such references as Matthew 16:18; 28:20; I Corinthians 11:26; Ephesians 3:21; show or imply that real churches would be in existence from the days of Christ until His blessed return.

c. The Literal Interpretation

The literal interpretation of Revelation 2-3 is that these are 7 literal churches that existed in John’s day and to whom Christ addressed these 7 letters.

There is a pattern, an apparent downward slide from the Ephesian to the Laodecean letters. This pattern is generally evident in all stages of history. Amongst Baptists today you could find every one of the 7 kinds of churches.

II. History

a. Asia – Revelation 1:11

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This refers to the region of 'Asia Minor', which comprised the Western section of modern Turkey.

b. Ephesus – Revelation 2:1

The 'metropolis of Asia', and, the 'gateway to Asia', Ephesus was a major sea-port. It was a large city, rich, and bustling with activity. Ephesus was the seat of Diana (Artemis) worship, and the temple dedicated to her was one of the 7 wonders of the world. The worship of Diana was a 'perpetual festival of vice'. The account of the founding of the church at Ephesus is found in Acts 19 and 20.

c. Smyrna – Revelation 2:8

The 'crown of Ionia', Smyrna was another sea-port, second only to Ephesus in wealth and activity. The name "Smyrna" comes from 'myrrh', an embalming perfume. William Ramsey called Smyrna the 'city of life' because it had survived destruction and was rebuilt twice. It was a beautiful city with fine avenues. It was a faithful ally of Rome, and had erected a temple dedicated to Emperor worship.

d. Pergamos – Revelation 2:12

An ancient city-state reaching back beyond 500 B.C., Pergamos was the political capital of Asia Minor. It was a cultural center (possessing a library of 200,000 volumes, the place of the invention of a parchment type paper), a religious center (with magnificent temples to Zeus, Dionysus, Athena, Asclepius, along with Emperor worship) and a medical center. Hislop believes Pergamos was the "pagan-connection" between Babylon and Rome. Even after Smyrna replaced Pergamos as the provincial capital, Pergamos continued as a center of religion.

e. Thyatira – Revelation 2:18

A small but wealthy city given over to the manufacture of clothe. It is best known for the manufacture of purple dye (Acts 16:14-15). Pagan worship in the town was directed to the Sun-god (Tyrinnos) and Sambethe.

f. Sardis – Revelation 3:1

The oldest of the cities, having once been the capital of the Lydian empire (550 B.C.). It was a very idolatrous city, given over to Artemis and later Cybele (the "mother goddess"). The pagan worship in this city was particularly vile and immoral.

g. Philadelphia – Revelation 3:7

A city located in a rich agricultural area subject to volcanic activity. It was known for grapes (and the consequent worship of Dionysius).

h. Laodicea – Revelation 3:14

This city was founded about 250 B.C. by Antiochus II and named in honor of his wife, Laodice. It came to prominence under Roman rule, and became extremely wealthy through the production of wool clothe. The other mention of this place in the Word of God is Colossians 2:1; 4:15-16.

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Introduction:

While reading each of the seven letters to these individual churches, there are many recurring phrases. These give us an outline with which to study the messages to the churches.

I. Christ – “These things saith He...”

Ephesus – Revelation 2:1

Divine Protector

The ‘stars’ (angels, messengers) are in His right hand. John 10:28; Psalm 73:23; 118:16.

Divine Authority

The right hand speaks of authority – Hebrews 1:13; Colossians 3:1; Revelation 5:1

Divine Association

Christ is in the midst of His churches. Through the Holy Spirit, He is the Head of every New Testament Church.

Smyrna – Revelation 2:8

Cf. Revelation 1:17-18 This verse tells us two things about the Lord Jesus Christ:

His Timelessness – “...I am the First and the Last...”

His Triumph – “...was dead, and is alive...”

This reverence to Christ had special significance to the church of Smyrna which was undergoing severe persecution. Secular literature notes the extreme wickedness of the city and its opposition to the Gospel in the 1st century.

Pergamos – Revelation 2:12

Cf. Revelation 16

The Word of God is Discerning. – Hebrews 4:12 (Ephesians 6:17)

The Word of God is Judging. – Revelation 2:16; 19:15

Thyatira – Revelation 2:18

Cf. Revelation 1:14-15 The Lord Jesus Christ is presented here as the:

Discerning Judge

Eyes – omniscience. The Lord knows all about us and his churches.

Fire – judgment. The Lord penetrates all in His judgment.

Destroying Judge

“Fine brass” speaks of refining judgment. Many times the Lord has to judge His churches to purify them. I Peter 4:17; I Corinthians 5:7

Sardis – Revelation 3:1

Cf. Revelation 1:16 The Lord Jesus Christ is presented as:

Administrator of Life

Christ has the “seven Spirits of God”, meaning the seven times perfect Holy Spirit. Isaiah 11:1-2 indicates the Spirit rests upon Christ. It is the

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Spirit Who inhabits the churches today, giving them life and power.
John 14:6-18, 23-26; 16:7; Acts 1:8; 2:1-4; I Corinthians 3:16; Ephesians 2:22

By presenting this to the church at Sardis (the “dead church”), the Lord was indicating the need for Holy Spirit revival.

Administrator of Leadership

Christ also has the ‘seven stars’, which represent the angels (messengers) of the churches. We know the Bible teaches that pastors are “undershepherds”, I Peter 5:1, 4, thus they are to be under the leadership of the Lord. The Lord holds the leadership in His churches primarily responsible for their spiritual wellbeing, Hebrews 13:17, and that revival must begin with His servants.

Philadelphia – Revelation 3:7

The Lord presents Himself to this church both in His:
Divine Attributes

Holy – Right in Character

Isaiah 40:25; Hebrews 7:26; I Peter 2:22; II Corinthians 5:21

Truth – Right in Conduct

John 14:6; 17:3; I John 5:20; Titus 1:2

Divine Activity

Hath the Key of David

This has reference to Isaiah 22:15-22, where the Lord replaces Shebna with Eliakim. The ‘key of David’ (vs. 22) seems to be the key of the treasury (vs. 15).

This activity of the Lord may be seen as the bestowing of treasures (blessings) upon the church, as well as His millennial rule from the throne of David. Isaiah 9:7.

Openeth and Shutteth

The “Keys of the kingdom”, i.e. the Gospel have been committed to the Lord’s churches. That which is opened NO MAN CAN SHUT, and vice-verses. Matthew 16:19; John 20:38.

Tho’ we as a church use the Gospel key to unlock the door of salvation, it is the Lord Who actually does the work. Bearing this in mind, note 3 great truths:

- What Christ open, no man can shut. – Eternal security.
- The opening and closing is the work of the Lord – which fact gives the lie to the Roman Catholic priesthood which claims that power.
- The door of salvation cannot be pried open by any man who rejects Christ.

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II. Commendation – “I know thy works...”

Ephesus – Revelation 2:2, 3, 6

They were Active

Busy with “works” – the ministries of the church

Busy with “labour” – the performing of these ministries

Displayed “patience” – the steadfast continuance of performance

A church that is active in serving the Lord needs each of these qualities.

– I Thessalonians 1:3

They were Doctrinally Sound

They were separated – “...thou canst not bear...evil...”

They were Scriptural – “...thou has tried them...” – I John 4:1; Isaiah 8:20

They took a Stand – “...thou hatest...which I also hate...”

Note: The word ‘Nicolaitans’ is derived from 2 Greek words, “nikao”, meaning to conquer, and “laos”, meaning the people. It was a doctrine teaching the division of God’s people into a clergy class and a laity class.
III John 9-10, Acts 20:29-30

Smyrna – Revelation 2:9

They were noted for their performance – “...I know thy works...”

They were noted for their pressures – the literal meaning of tribulation

They were noted for their poverty – note God’s estimation of true riches –
Matthew 6:19-21; James 2:5; II Corinthians 6:10

They were noted for their persecution – this was primarily stirred up by godless Jews

Pergamos – Revelation 2:12-17

A daring testimony in the Seat of Satanic Cultism.

“...thou holdest fast my Name...”

Pergamos was a religious center. The ‘god of medicine’, Asclepius, was presented as a serpent.

Here we see that Satan’s seat is not in hell. (Ephesians 2:2; II Corinthians 4:4; I John 4:3-4; 5:19; John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11.

It would have been easy for members of this church to have kept silent about Jesus Christ – they were a minority.

A doctrinal tenacity in the face of Satanic persecution.

“...and hast not denied My faith...”

See: Jude 3; II Timothy 3:1-5; Colossians 2:8

Antipas (‘against all’) was evidently the first of probably many martyrs in that city.

Thyatira – Revelation 2:19

The Lord commends His church at Thyatira for 5 quality, but more-so because these qualities were increasing – “...and the last to be more than the first...”

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Growing Works

Twice, the works of this church are mentioned – indicating this was a very active church. In this regard, the church at Thyatira contrasts to the church at Ephesus which was decreasing in its works. Many Christians begin serving the Lord with cheerfulness and enthusiasm, but gradually slow down to a standstill. How commendable is it to abound and grow exceedingly in our usefulness to the Lord! II Thessalonians 1:3

Growing Charity

Charity is 'God's Love outworked' – Romans 5:5; I Corinthians 13:13; I Thessalonians 4:9; Romans 13:10
The church at Ephesus was waning in love and works – the church at Thyatira was gaining in these things.

Growing Service (Ministry)

This church was adding to its ministries, and these labors were motivated by love. See: I Thessalonians 1:3

Growing Faith

This is the kind of faith that suggests loyalty to the Lord. They experienced the desire of the disciples, Luke 17:5 ("...Lord, increase our faith"), and remained faithful to the Lord, Galatians 6:7.

Growing Patience

Patience is born out of trial and perfects the Christian character. It is acceptable to God. James 1:3-4; I Peter 2:20; Hebrews 12:1

Sardis – Revelation 3:4

With this church there was little to commend, and this comes after their condemnation. In fact, the Lord does not commend the church, but a small remnant of a separated few. See: Jude 23; I Kings 19:18.

Philadelphia – Revelation 3:8, 10

Their perception – "...I have set before thee an open door..."

Their purity – doctrinal ("...kept My word..."), testimonial ("...not denied My Name...")

Their patience – The 'keeping the word of My patience' (vs 10) has to do with patiently serving the Lord while waiting for His return. I Thessalonians 1:3, 9-10; James 5:7.

Laodicea

This is the only church which is not commended by the Lord. Even in the dead church at Sardis the Lord could find a few faithful members – but here, nothing good may be said.

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III. Condemnation – “Nevertheless, I have somewhat against thee...” Ephesus – Revelation 2:4

They were backslidden. They had departed from their:

- First love – Jesus Christ. Hebrews 12:2; Colossians 1:18
- First works – Matthew 28:19-20

This second departure naturally follows the first – John 14:15

What a lesson to be learned! A church can be active and orthodox, yet backslidden. Yet this is the way of backsliding, both in a church and a person. It is a gradual, almost imperceptible process. We begin to love the work of the Lord ahead of the Lord of the work. Backsliding is often thought of as missing church, quitting areas of service, etc – but these are the results. A Christ can be backslidden and yet attend every church service and be actively involved in a host of worthwhile ministries. The danger of replacing our love for the Lord with a love for things is stated in I Timothy 6:10; I John 2:15; 5:21; Matthew 10:37. We need not be side-tacked from our primary mission of soul-winning for the Kingdom of God.

Smyrna – Revelation 2:9

There is no condemnation of this church. Instead the Lord offers Comfort in this description:

“first and last” – Always there – with you always – Hebrews 13:8

“dead and alive” – I’ve tasted death for every man

Pergamos – Revelation 2:14-15

The church was troubled by Compromise in 2 areas:

- Toleration of the Doctrine of Balaam

Numbers 22:1-6 – Balak, king of Moab, asks the prophet to curse Israel.

Numbers 22:7-14 – Balaam refuses to curse those whom God has blessed.

Numbers 22:15-19 – Balaam succumbs to the offer of wealth and honor to try to curse Israel. This is the “way of Balaam.” II Peter 2:15

Numbers 22:21-24:10 – Three times God prevented Balaam from cursing Israel.

Numbers 25:1-5 – Balaam caused Israel to sin by suggesting they intermarry with the heathen. See: Numbers 31:15-16. This is the “doctrine of Balaam”. See also Jude 11

Within the church of Pergamos were members who advocated the wedding of Christianity to heathenism. “We’ve got to be relevant,” no doubt was their cry.

This is a breakdown in the ecclesiastical and person separation. II Corinthians 6:14-7:1.

- Toleration of the Doctrine of the Nicolaitans

What was ‘deeds’ in Ephesus (2:6) was ‘doctrine’ in Pergamos.

Thyatira – Revelation 2:20

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They tolerated evil. It is evident from verses 23-24 that within the membership of this church were true believers and false professors.

Nowhere is it stated that Jezebel received sympathy or encouragement from the people of God – but that they let her alone. She was not dealt with.

A church that will not exercise discipline is in error. – I Corinthians 5:1-13 (esp. vs. 2, 6, 13)

A church that abides wrong associations is in error. – That is why Baptist churches cannot (or should not) engage in church fellowship or co-operation with unscriptural organizations or ‘churches’.

The Old Testament Jezebel – I Kings 16:29-33; 18:13; 19:1-3; 21:1-16; II Kings 9:30-37; 23:4-7.

She was the daughter of Ethbaal the Sidonian king, married Ahab. In this marriage, two things are evident:

She manipulated Ahab – the real power behind the throne.

She introduced Baal worship into Israel.

The New Testament Jezebel – Evidently she was a real woman in the church who taught and seduced the leadership of the church, perverting Christianity.

The Bible teaches that women are not to be in position of leadership – I Timothy 2:12; I Corinthians 14:34-35.

The Greatest Jezebelite Movement

Without doubt, the work of the seducing spirit of Jezebel (I Timothy 4:1) is seen in history following the ‘Edict of Toleration’ by the Roman Emperor Constantine the Great (288-337 A.D.) and the development of Roman Catholicism. By making unsaved pagans come into the ‘churches’ bringing their beliefs and practices with them. Over time, ‘Christian’ terminology was adopted as paganism was practiced. Today, it is a perverted ‘paganized Christianity.’

Sardis – Revelation 3:1-2

This church was dead in the eyes of the Lord

It had a deceptive Reputation – vs. 1

“A name that thou livest”

In the eyes of others, especially other churches, this church was considered ‘alive’. No doubt it had every conceivable activity and ministry thought of, large crowds, best buildings, etc.

“And art dead”

The fire had gone out. It is not the size of the church or the number of activities in a church that measures its life.

It had defective Results – vs. 2

“...I have not found thy works perfect before God...”

This word ‘perfect’ means ‘fulfillment.’ The church had stopped short of fulfilling God’s will. – “ministry without a mission” – seeking only entertainment, preaching that tickles itching ears, missions to reach the body but not the soul. – I Timothy 5:6; Isaiah 10:13

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Philadelphia – Revelation 3:9-10

With this church, there is no condemnation, only a Commitment from the Lord Himself:

A Commitment to Victory – vs. 9

One day the enemies of the gospel will be vanquished. Faithfulness has its reward.

A Commitment to Vindication – vs. 9

“...to know that I have loved thee...”

One day every body will know just how much the Lord has loved His churches. Ephesians 5:25

A Commitment to Vanishment – vs. 10

One of the most certain statements of a pre-tribulation rapture. The return of the Lord for His saints is, and always has been, imminent. Should the Lord have returned during the life-time of the church in Philadelphia, He assures then that they would be raptured and would not pass through the Great Tribulation period. – I Thessalonians 5:9

Laodicea – Revelation 3:15-17

They were Complacent – vs. 15-16

The church at Laodicea is described as being “lukewarm”, and making the Lord sick. No enthusiasm, no compassion, no urgency, no vision.

They were Conceited – vs. 17

“...because thou sayest...”

This church was trusting in its own possessions, and position in society to do God’s work.

They were Comfortable – vs 17

As noted previously, Laodicea was a wealthy city, and it seems the church there had been in a similar position. Here we learn the value of living by faith - looking to the Lord to supply our needs. It is not a sin to be rich - but it can be a snare. See: II Corinthians 8:1-5; Philippians 4:19; I Timothy 6:6-10; Matthew 6:33.

There are some notable differences between this church and the previous 6:

Its Title

Addressed as “the church of the Laodiceans”, not “the church in’, or the church at’. This suggests that Christ didn’t really own the church – the people did.

Its Relationship to Christ – vs. 20

Seemed to have everything – except Christ.

Its Total Corruption

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There is no faithful remnant within this church.

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IV. Counsel

Ephesus – Revelation 2:5

Remember – The Lord takes every backslider back to the place where he left off.

Repent – A change of mind with respect to sin. – I John 1:9; Psalm 51:10-13

Re-do – A right love for the Lord will motivate a church and individual believers to the right service. Cf. Genesis 29:20

Smyrna – Revelation 2:10

The Lord rarely removes the thorns from our way – Instead He gives us grace to live for His glory whatever the circumstances.

Fear Not – I Peter 1:7; 4:16-19; Hebrews 13:5

Further Trial – II Timothy 3:12

History tells us that the faithful Polycarp, who was the pastor of the church at Smyrna was cruelly martyred in 155 A.D. The Jews stirred upon the romans authorities to carry out this deed.

Faithful Be

At the Judgment Seat of Christ, believers will share in the rewards of service, which are mentioned in the New Testament:

- The Crown of Life – faithfulness. – Revelation 2:10; James 1:12
- The Crown of Glory – Pastors – I Peter 5:4
- The Crown of Rejoicing – soulwinners – I Thess 2:19-20
- The Incarnate Crown – victors – I Corinthians 9:25
- The Crown of Righteousness – looker for Christ, lover of Christ, and livers for Christ – II Timothy 4:8

Pergamos – Revelation 2:16

Repent

This is a sudden sharp warning. There is nothing else to do but turn from the way they were going. – II Chronicles 7:14

Thyatira – Revelation 2:24

The all-knowing, all-searching Lord identifies:

The Real Church

In addition to the initial membership requirements of salvation then baptism (Acts 2:41), there is a continuing membership requirement of continuance in doctrine. The holding of false doctrine is grounds for church discipline. – Titus 3:10; II Timothy 2:16-19

The Real Authority

The real authority in faith and practice is the Word of God – not the babblings of some Jezebel. The Lord says “...I will put upon you none other burden...”, which reminds us of the attempts of the Judaisers in Acts 15 who wanted to ADD to the Word of God. – Acts 15:28

Sardis – Revelation 3:2-3

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Within this dead church, there is a flicker of light comes from a faithful few. His counsel is 5-fold:

Regard – “...be watchful...” – vs. 2

We need to be alert to the subtleties of Satan. Unlike the churches that sustained direct Satanic confrontation, this church was seemingly free from outward opposition – the rot was on the inside!

Re-enforce – “...strengthen the things which remain...”

God’s people need sound doctrine to resist the rot. – Titus 1:9

Remember – vs. 3

The Lord takes these faithful few back to the days when the church had life – back to the things it had received and heard. Cf. II Peter 1:12; 3:1-3

Retain – “...hold fast...” – vs. 3

In these days of dead churches, how much more is it imperative for God’s people to hold fast to the faith. – Jude 3

Repent – vs. 3

The only course of action when a church or a believer departs from the Word of God.

Philadelphia – Revelation 3:11

They are reminded of the possibility of:

Falling – “...holding fast to that which thou hast...” – Hebrews 2:1

Failing – “...that no man take thy crown...” – II John 8

Laodicea – Revelation 3:18

Get spiritual riches

Oh how we need to have the riches of Christ! Note that this kind of wealth is:

From the Lord – “...buy of me...” – Isaiah 55:1

From testing – “tried in the fire”

What a paradox! This church was living at ease in Laodicea. No hassles, no battles, no hardships – nothing! Here we learn the real value of trials for a church and for individuals. – I Peter 1:6-7.

Get spiritual raiment

Laodicea was noted for its manufacture of black wool. To these merchants, the Lord points them to their need of righteousness. – Isaiah 61:10

Note: Nakedness is shameful.

Get spiritual reality

Laodicea was also noted for the manufacture of two kinds of medicine – an ointment for sore ears and an eye powder for sore eyes.

The Lord uses this fact as an illustration to the church of its need for spiritual perception. The Lord Jesus opened the eyes of many men during His earthly ministry – He still opens the spiritual eyes of men today.

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V. Challenge – “He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith...”

Ephesus – Revelation 2:7

A spiritual inspection of our church and our lives is STRONGLY SUGGESTED by these words.

Who or what is my/our first love?

How do I/we labor for Christ?

Do I/we hate that which God hates?

Am I/we patient (faithful) in my service?

Smyrna – Revelation 2:11

How do we as a church (and as individuals) handle pressure?

Often we equate tribulation with martyrdom, but actually death can prove easier than the relentless pressures that can be brought to bear by Satan.

So many of God’s saints are falling by the wayside. Faithfulness to God, consistent testimony, and trusting the Lord in all circumstances of life are qualities to be desired.

Pergamos – Revelation 2:17

Do we boldly proclaim the name of Christ? – vs. 13

Do we hold dear the fundamental doctrines of the Word of God?

Do we harbor compromise?

Am I willing to lower the standards to ‘fit in’ with this world? What do I do with my children – encourage them in worldly things, or teach them to stand for the right?

Does my living match my belief?

Thyatira – Revelation 2:25,29

There is but one challenge issued to this church – “hold fast.” II Timothy 1:13; Titus 1:9; I Corinthians 15:58

Sardis – Revelation 3:6

How are we seen by others? More importantly, how are we seen by the Lord? Are we alive? Or are we a “spiritual zombie”? – a waking corpse?

Evidences of spiritual life:

Birth – are we reproducing?

Growth – are we growing in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ?

Activity – are we busy serving the Lord in the way He sets forth?

Maturing – are we maturing as we are grounded in the doctrines of the Word of God?

Compassion – are we working in harmony with the other members of this body of Christ?

Philadelphia – Revelation 3:13

See the real strength and wealth of the church:

Are we a church seeking opportunities to serve?

Are we holy and true in all we seek to do?

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Do we plan to 'work till Jesus comes'?

Laodicea – Revelation 3:20, 22

The hope for an apostate, lukewarm church is to invite and allow Christ in.

The Plea – "...If any man hear My voice..."

The Proposal – "...and open the door..."

The Promise – "...I will come into him..."

The Purpose – "...and sup with him, and he with Me..."

VI. Covenant – "To him that overcometh..."

Ephesus – Revelation 2:7

That which sin prevented (Genesis 2:9; 3:22), salvation includes. (Revelation 22:2)

Smyrna – Revelation 2:11

A wonderful facet of a wonderful salvation. "If you're born once, you die twice – but, if you're born twice, you can die but once." These severely persecuted believers could only be harmed physically. Revelation 20:14; Matthew 10:28

Pergamos – Revelation 2:17

Provision – "Hidden Manna"

Every child of God is sustained by the grace of God through the Word of God. John 6:47-51, 63

Here the promise is given in the light of compromise. We do not need the world and its religion to exist – Christ is all, and in all. Colossians 3:11; II Corinthians 3:5

Manna may also be seen as a picture of The Word of God our spiritual food. It sustained (Exodus 16:35), it had to be taken daily (Exodus 16:21).

Pardon – "White Stone"

It signified "acquittal" in a criminal trial.

It was given as a token of freedom for an emancipated slave.

It sometimes was carried as a token of citizenship.

It was awarded to the victors in athletic contests.

Every believer has been given the white stone of acquittal and freedom through Jesus Christ.

Thyatira – Revelation 2:26-28

We note here a difference to the usual formula, "...he that overcometh...", in the additional words, "...and keepeth my works unto the end..."

The Overcomer is the believer. (I John 5:5)

In this promise, the Lord speaks to believers who remain faithful to Him in the face of apostasy. These words apply to the Millennial reign of Christ.

A position of responsibility – vs. 26; Revelation 5:10

A position of authority – vs. 27; Matthew 25:21, 23

The "morning Star" refers to Christ, Revelation 22:16; II Peter 1:19, and fixes the time of the faithful believer's co-ruling with judgment of the nations. See: Daniel

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2:34-35, 43-45; 7:22; Psalm 2:9; Luke 19:12-21; Matthew 19:28; Isaiah 40:10; Zechariah 3:7

Sardis – Revelation 3:4-5

Privilege of Raiment – Revelation 7:13-15; 19:14

Privilege of Record

By faith in Christ, our names are recorded in the Lamb's Book of Life – Revelation 20:12.

We can never have our name erased.

Privilege of Recognition – Matthew 10:32

Philadelphia – Revelation 3:12

A Permanent Position in Heaven

The "pillar in the temple" suggests permanence. "He shall no more go out" confirms the idea (Philippians 3:20).

On earth, each true New Testament church is a "pillar of the truth." – I Timothy 3:15. It seems in glory, these pillars will make up the great temple of God.

Note: A "temple" means the place where God dwells – not necessarily a physical building. In this age, the Lord's churches are likened to Temples in which the Lord dwells through His Spirit. I Corinthians 3:16; Ephesians 2:22; I Peter 2:5

A Personal Passport to Heaven

It is purchased with the blood of Christ, and contains 3 important pieces of information:

Our Sovereign – the Name of our God

Our City – the New Jerusalem

Our Signature – my new Name. – Revelation 2:17

Laodicea – Revelation 3:21

In response to our inviting Jesus Christ into our lives, and the joyful feasting and fellowship which follows, the Lord promises all His children:

Everlasting Fellowship – "...sit with Me..."

Everlasting Future – "...in my throne..."

This throne suggests the kind of service we will be involved in – Matthew 19:28; Revelation 1:6; 5:10; I Corinthians 6:2-3