

The Last Days

An In-Depth Study of Biblical Eschatology

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

Revelation 2-3 *Brief Introduction Review*

Applications of the Letters from Jesus to the Seven Churches in Asia

Practical Perennial Personal Prophetic

Church Letter	Description	Dates (A.D.)	Key Phrase
Ephesus	Apostolic Church	< 100	“you have fallen”
Smyrna	Persecuted Church	100 – 313	“tribulation ten days”
Pergamum	Imperial Church	313 – 590	“the doctrine of Balaam”
Thyatira	Papal Church	590 – Rapture+	“that woman Jezebel”
Sardis	Reformed Church	1517 – Rapture+	“you are dead”
Philadelphia	Missionary Church	1730 – Rapture	“open door”
Laodicea	Apostate Church	1900 – Rapture+	“you are lukewarm”

The Seven Design Elements in Each of the Seven Letters

- † The church name in the phrase: “*To the angel of the church in _____ write:*”;
- † The following contents are included, if appropriate: a **description of Christ** *, a **commendation**, a **concern**, an **exhortation** and a **comfort** **; and
- † The closing: “*He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.*”
This phrase addresses people who wish to know the truth Matthew 11:15, 13:9,43, Mark 4:23, Luke 14:35, Rev.13:9

“Write what is now” – Revelation 2-3

Revelation 2-3 *Letters from Jesus to the Seven Churches in Asia* (concluded)

The Letter to Thyatira (2:18-29) [the Papal Church]

THYATIRA [*uncertain meaning; Akhisar, Turkey*] Thyatira was a military outpost (Roman garrison) and center of trade, with many trade guilds – each associated with a pagan deity. The city was likely the least important of the seven cities, but received the longest letter. Thyatira was famous for its dyes (primarily purple cloth, like that sold by Lydia Acts 16:13-15).

2:18 *To the angel of the church in Thyatira write: These are the words of the Son of God, whose eyes are like blazing fire and whose feet are like burnished bronze.*

19 *I know your deeds, your love and faith, your service and perseverance, and that you are now doing more than you did at first.* **20** *Nevertheless, I have this against you: You tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess. By her*

teaching she misleads my servants into sexual immorality and the eating of food sacrificed to idols. ²¹ I have given her time to repent of her immorality, but she is unwilling. ²² So I will cast her on a bed of suffering, and I will make those who commit adultery with her suffer intensely, unless they repent of her ways. ²³ I will strike her children dead. Then all the churches will know that I am he who searches hearts and minds, and I will repay each of you according to your deeds. ²⁴ Now I say to the rest of you in Thyatira, to you who do not hold to her teaching and have not learned Satan's so-called deep secrets (I will not impose any other burden on you): ²⁵ Only hold on to what you have until I come. ²⁶ To him who overcomes and does my will to the end, I will give authority over the nations – ²⁷ 'He will rule them with an iron scepter; he will dash them to pieces like pottery' – just as I have received authority from my Father. ²⁸ I will also give him the morning star. ²⁹ He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

description of Christ: This is the only mention in Revelation of the name “Son of God” ^{Matthew 14:33, Luke 1:35}. Fire ^{Nahum 3:15, Revelation 20:9-10}, feet ^{Isaiah 63:1-4} and brass ^{Micah 4:13} represent judgement by Jesus ^{John 5:22,27}.

commendation: Jesus was impressed with their works, love, faith, service, perseverance and improvement.

concern: There was a self-proclaimed prophetess in the church who promoted idolatrous doctrines and practices, similar to those Jezebel (wife of Ahab, a king of Israel) ^{1 Kings 21:25-26} practiced in her worship of pagan gods ^{1 Kings 16:30-33}. Jesus gave her an opportunity to repent ^{Romans 2:4, 2 Peter 3:9} of her physical and spiritual immorality, but she refused ^{Romans 2:5, Revelation 9:20, 16:8-11}, so her judgement included the tool of her sin: her bed. Also, her immoral partners ^{Revelation 17:2, 18:9} will “suffer intensely” (can also be translated “Great Tribulation” – first mention) and children (followers) will die. Humans convince themselves they can do some things in secret, but Jesus knows and will justly judge ^{Jeremiah 17:10} everything (omniscience), including deeds (actions) ^{Matthew 16:27}, thoughts ^{Psalms 139:2,23} and feelings (heart ^{Proverbs 21:2, Luke 16:15}). Ultimately, everyone will be judged, both the believer ^{2 Corinthians 5:10} and the unbeliever ^{Revelation 20:12-14}.

exhortation: Those who did not follow the immoral woman, nor submit to “Satan’s so-called deep secrets” (an early gnostic teaching that claimed a person was free to investigate the sphere of Satan and engage in evil with their body without harming their spirit) (in contrast to the “deep things of God” ^{1 Corinthians 2:10}) were promised no additional burdens ^{Acts 15:28-29}. They were also encouraged to cling to the blessings they had until Jesus comes (first mention of His return – Rapture ^{1 Corinthians 15:51-52} or Glorious Appearing ^{Titus 2:11-14}).

comfort: Whoever “overcomes and does [His] will to the end” will be given authority to reign ^{Revelation 5:10} with Jesus ^{Psalms 2:8-9, Luke 22:28-30, 2 Timothy 2:12} on earth during the Millennium ^{Revelation 20:4}. Faithful believers will also be eternally blessed with being in the presence of Jesus (the “Morning Star” ^{2 Peter 1:19, Revelation 22:16}).

The Letter to Sardis (3:1-6) [the Reformed Church]

SARDIS [*uncertain*; village of Sart] Sardis was an ancient city of great wealth, which led to their minting of the first coins, called gold and silver Lydian Staters (6th century B.C.). Its primary commercial industry was harvesting, dying and making garments from wool. The city was on the slope of Mt. Tmolus, more than 1000 feet above the Hermus Valley, with sheer cliffs on 3 sides and a very narrow isthmus on the 4th side. Sardis was thought to be impregnable; however, overconfidence led to the city being captured twice (by the armies of Persian King Cyrus in c.549 B.C. and Seleucid King Antiochus III in c.214 B.C.).

3:1 *To the angel of the church in Sardis write: These are the words of him who holds the seven spirits of God and the seven stars. I know your deeds; you have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead.* **2** *Wake up! Strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have not found your deeds complete in the sight of my God.* **3** *Remember, therefore, what you have received and heard; obey it, and repent. But if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what time I will come to you.* **4** *Yet you have a few people in Sardis who have not soiled their clothes. They will walk with me, dressed in white, for they are worthy.* **5** *He who overcomes will, like them, be dressed in white. I will never blot out his name from the book of life, but will acknowledge his name before my Father and his angels.* **6** *He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.*

description of Christ: Jesus held the seven spirits of God (Holy Spirit ^{Isaiah 11:1-3, Zechariah 4:1-10}) and the seven stars: the seven angels (probably a pastor or an elder from each) of the seven churches ^{Revelation 1:20}.

concern: They had a reputation (a “name”: an impressive title) which made them seem important, but their “deeds” were not the result of faith ^{Galatians 5:6, James 2:26}, because they were (spiritually) “dead” (without the Holy Spirit) ^{1 Timothy 5:5-6}. Much like the city, they lived on appearance and false confidence ^{Matthew 23:27}.

exhortation: Jesus said to “wake up” (“be watchful”) ^{Romans 13:10-12, Matthew 26:41} from their spiritual slumber (over-confidence), and then they were to “strengthen” (hold on to) what they did have, complete the Godly works they started, and remember/obey the Word of God they had received and repent ^{Revelation 2:5}, or Jesus will come like a thief (Rapture) to those who refuse to “wake up” ^{1 Thessalonians 5:1-3; 2 Peter 3:8-10}.

commendation: In spite of all His criticisms, Jesus applauded the remnant of true believers ^{Isaiah 37:32}. Their “clothes” (character) will not be “soiled” (corrupted ^{Jude 1:23}), and they will wear the “white” clothes of the redeemed ^{Revelation 4:4, 6:11, 7:9,14, 19:14} (dressed in white, like Jesus ^{Matthew 17:2} and His angels ^{Matthew 28:3}).

comfort: The overcomers are also promised the white clothes ^{v.4} (a symbol of righteousness ^{Revelation 19:8}). In a confirmation of ‘once-saved-always-saved’ (i.e., eternal security), Jesus assured the overcomers that He “will never blot out” their name from the Book of Life ^{Daniel 12:1, John 10:27-30}. In addition, Jesus pledged to positively declare their names to God the (His) Father ^{Matthew 10:32, Romans 8:34} and His angels ^{Luke 12:8-9}.

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The Letter to Philadelphia (3:7-13) [the Missionary Church]

PHILADELPHIA [*brotherly love*; Alashehir, Turkey] Philadelphia was a prominent military and commercial city, but was relatively small, because of the threat of severe earthquakes (for example, a large earthquake destroyed much of the city in A.D. 17). The city was positioned near the boundary of three regions (Mysia, Lydia, Phrygia), and was considered to be the gateway to the east for the spread of the Greek language/culture (Hellenism). The city of Philadelphia was founded in c.190 B.C. by Eumenes II (King of Pergamum) in honor of his younger brother, Attalus II Philadelphus (a later King of Pergamum).

3:7 *To the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: These are the words of him who is holy and true, who holds the key of David. What he opens no one can shut, and what he shuts no one can open.* **8** *I know your deeds. See, I have placed before you an open door that no one can shut. I know that you have little strength, yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name.* **9** *I will make those who are of the synagogue of Satan, who claim to be Jews though they are not, but are liars – I will make them come and fall down at your feet and acknowledge that I have loved you.* **10** *Since you have kept my command to endure patiently, I will also keep you from the hour of trial that is going to come upon the whole world to test those who live on the earth.* **11** *I am coming soon. Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take your crown.* **12** *Him who overcomes I will make a pillar in the temple of my God. Never again will he leave it. I will write on him the name of my God and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which is coming down out of heaven from my God; and I will also write on him my new name.* **13** *He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.*

description of Christ: Jesus was ^{Luke 1:35, Acts 2:25-28}, is ^{Hebrews 7:25-26} and will always be ^{Revelation 4:8} the “holy” and “true” (genuine) God ^{1 John 5:20, Revelation 19:11}. Eliakim, royal steward for King Hezekiah who held the keys to Israel’s riches (“house of David”) ^{Isaiah 22:20-22}, was the prophetic pattern for Jesus, who holds the keys to life/death ^{Revelation 1:18}, as well as all spiritual blessings, whether material or opportunity to serve ^{John 13:1-17}.

commendation: There are ‘seven’ of them:

1. Jesus recognized their “deeds” (positive works in service to Him) ^{Ephesians 2:10, Titus 2:11-14}.

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2. They were given the great privilege/responsibility of an “open door”. In the Bible, an open door indicates an opportunity to present the Gospel to others. ^{Acts 14:26-28, 1 Corinthians 16:8-9, 2 Corinthians 2:12, Colossians 4:2-3}
3. The church realized they could only do their work in Jesus’ strength. ^{1 Corinthians 4:10, Corinthians 12:9-10, 13:4}
4. Jesus applauded the fact the church in Philadelphia “kept [His] word”. ^{Psalms 1:2, Proverbs 4:3-5, John 8:51,15:7}
5. Jesus praised them, because they had not “denied [His] name”. ^{Psalms 111:9, Luke 1:49, John 12:13, Revelation 2:13}
6. The false Jews from Satan’s “synagogue” ^{Revelation 2:9} will be made to worship Jesus’ followers ^{Isaiah 49:23}.
7. As a result of their having “kept [His] command to endure patiently” ^{Revelation 1:9,13:10,14:12}, the overcomers will not face (be kept “from”) the “hour of trial” (the Tribulation ^{Revelation 4-19}) ^{Romans 5:9, 1 Thessalonians 1:9b-10}.

concern: none!

exhortation: Jesus again promised His return ^{John 14:2-4}, which will happen “soon” ^{Revelation 1:3} (‘quickly’). He told them to “hold on” ^{Revelation 2:25} and not lose their “crown” (rewards) ^{Mark 10:29-30, 2 John 1:8}.

comfort: Every overcomer will be a “pillar” ^{1 Timothy 3:15} (have a secure place in the presence of God) in the New Jerusalem ^{Revelation 21:1-2,10}, where they are already citizens ^{Philippians 3:20}. The name (the character) of Jesus is powerful ^{Mark 16:16-18, Acts 3:6,16}, and His new “name” (still a mystery ^{Revelation 19:12}) will be imprinted on their foreheads ^{Revelation 14:1, 22:4}, as well as the name of His city (the New Jerusalem) ^{Ezekiel 48:35}.

The Letter to Laodicea (3:14-22) [the Apostate Church]

LAODICEA [*rule of the people; no present day equivalent*] In 250 B.C., the city was rebuilt by Seleucid King Antiochus II, who named it Laodicea, after his wife, Laodice. In early Roman times, Laodicea was the wealthiest commercial city in Phrygia, profiting greatly from banking (gold trading), commerce (black wool clothing) and medicine (eye salve). Laodicea’s water supply was tepid, dirty and inadequate for the needs of their citizens, which was in contrast to the hot springs of Hierapolis and the cold springs of Colossae. Laodicea developed an elaborate aqueduct that piped water from hot springs to the south, but by the time the hot water made its way to Laodicea, it was also dirty and lukewarm.

3:14 *To the angel of the church in Laodicea write: These are the words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God's creation. 15 I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! 16 So, because you are lukewarm – neither hot nor cold – I am about to spit you out of my mouth. 17 You say, 'I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.'*

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But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked.

18 I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see. 19 Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest, and repent. 20 Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me. 21 To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne. 22 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

description of Christ: Jesus is a God of certainty ^{Isaiah 65:16, John 10:30,14:6} (“the Amen” ^{2 Corinthians 1:20}), who is completely trustworthy (“the faithful & true witness”) ^{Psalm 145:13b, John 18:37b, Revelation 1:5}. He is also the Creator of all things (“ruler of God’s creation”). ^{John 1:3, Colossians 1:15-17} (The Gnostics said Jesus was created.)

commendation: none!

concern: The church members at Laodicea were neither cold (openly rejecting/denying Jesus) ^{Matthew 24:12}, nor hot (filled with spiritual zeal) ^{Jeremiah 20:9, Romans 12:11}. Instead, they were lukewarm (prideful hypocrites who professed the name of Jesus, but did not know or belong to Him ^{Matthew 7:21-23, Luke 13:25-27}), which made Jesus sick ^{Matthew 23} (“spit” ⇒ *emeō*: to vomit [lit]). The church had great worldly wealth ^{Psalm 62:10, Hosea 12:8}, but was spiritually poverty-stricken ^{1 Timothy 6:17-19} (the opposite position/perspective of Smyrna ^{Proverbs 13:7}). Jesus primed them for His corrections by describing them as “wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked”!

exhortation: Jesus counseled ^{Isaiah 9:6} the church by using their own language (gold, clothing, medicine) to strongly counsel the Laodiceans to switch their security perspective from earthly to Heavenly ^{1 Peter 1:7}. Jesus advised them to obtain from Him the eternal wealth of God ^{Psalm 19:7-11, Matthew 6:19-21, 1 Corinthians 3:11-15}, clothes of righteousness ^{Revelation 4:4, 16:15, 19:8,14} and spiritual eyes that see His truth ^{Luke 4:18, 2 Peter 1:5-9}. When necessary (as in this case), Jesus’ love includes rebuke and discipline ^{Proverbs 3:11-12, Hebrews 12:7-11}. Jesus attempted to get the Laodiceans’ attention by the sternly warning He was/is waiting outside “the door” to fellowship with ^{Luke 12:35-36} (or to judge ^{James 5:9}) the church, who must decide whether to let Him in or not.

comfort: Jesus gained the victory ^{Revelation 5:5} over the world ^{John 16:33} and death ^{Isaiah 25:7-8, 1 Corinthians 15:54-57}, and now reigns with His Father ^{1 Peter 3:18-22}. In addition, He promised believers the right to reign with Him on earth ^{Revelation 5:10, 20:4}, over Israel ^{Matthew 19:28}, the world ^{1 Corinthians 6:2} and over angels ^{1 Corinthians 6:3}.