

Letters to the churches at Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea
(see introductory notes on chapter 2)

5th Letter: THE LETTER TO SARDIS (Revelation 3:1-6)

¹ “And to the angel of the church in Sardis write, ‘These things says He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars: “I know your works, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead.” ² Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die, for I have not found your works perfect before God. ³ Remember therefore how you have received and heard; hold fast and repent. Therefore if you will not watch, I will come upon you as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you. ⁴ You have a few names even in Sardis who have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with Me in white, for they are worthy. ⁵ He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels. ⁶ “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.””

Introductory material about Sardis

Sardis was a very well established city, considered one of the oldest in the world. It was 60 miles inland from Ephesus. It knew its "heyday" back in the 6th century BC when it was the capital of the kingdom of Lydia. Sardis was a glorious city in those days, and is mentioned in many Greek writings. It was built on a mountain, and was extremely well fortified on a hill 1000 feet above the valley. It seemed to defy any kind of military assault, and appeared impregnable. There was a false sense of security in this city, and the people believed they were safe when they were not.

There are stories of how King Cyrus of Persia eventually took Sardis, stories that were well known in this city. It seems that the commander of Cyrus' army told his soldiers there was a great reward for anyone who could figure out how to successfully attack this great mountain stronghold. It appeared impossible. However, one soldier was watching the Sardis guards on top of the mountain one day, and saw the guard accidentally drop a helmet over the side, and then he watched as the soldier picked his way down the mountain and back up again to retrieve the helmet. Continual erosion of the precipitous cliffs had left large cracks which could be maneuvered. The Persian soldier told his commander, and that night the Persian army climbed the so-called "unassaultable" mountain the same way the soldier had seen the guard do it. When they got to the top, there was no one there! No guards. The guards had assumed that no one could climb their way to the top. so they didn't think they needed to guard it at night.



*Remains of the Acropolis at Sardis,
from below.*

Hence, the city of Sardis was taken, not just this first time, but several times later. The city of Sardis fell on several occasions with surprise attacks the same way. Seems the people there didn't learn from their own history. The word "WATCH!" got to be a key word for Sardis and the world knew of her mistakes in this regard. When this letter was written to Sardis, everyone was aware of this, and understood the letter's command about being watchful.

Eventually Sardis became part of the Roman empire. It was a great trading center, and like Thyatira was a center for woolen goods and the dyeing industry. Sardis had a river that ran through it very rich in gold deposits. Modern money, minted gold and silver coins, was born in Sardis. It was a Roman "assize" town, where justice was dispensed, and had plenty of Roman pomp and circumstance. They would have liked to have been a center for Caesar worship, but lost a bid to Smyrna in that regard. They did, however, become very involved in the worship of Cybele (whose son was the fabled Midas, the one who had the "gold" touch) with frenzied and hysterical worship rites involving sexual immorality and mutilation. Because there was no Caesar worship, Sardis was not a particularly dangerous place for Christians, at least not physically dangerous. There was a far greater problem here.

In 17 AD a huge earthquake hit this area and pretty much devastated Sardis. The Romans poured lots of manpower and money into rebuilding this ancient city, but its former glory was gone. Now Sardis became known as a center for moral decadence. Even the rest of the pagan world considered Sardis notorious for loose living, pleasure seeking, and luxury loving (*hmmm..., sound familiar?*) Life was far too easy here. There was incredible wealth here, and no persecution. A spiritually deadly condition took hold - COMPLACENCY. One commentator made this observation: "The Church at Sardis was at peace, but it was the peace of the dead."

- **Sardis** can literally mean "that which remains" or "remnant." After an earthquake devastated this region, the city of Sardis remained, but it was merely a remnant of its former self. This is also true for the church here. Sardis is known as the unwatchful, "sleeping" church in which only a remnant of true believers remained.
- **Description of Jesus used for this letter:** "*He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars...*" The seven Spirits of God is an idiom for the Holy Spirit. The Speaker indicates He is in their midst, and knows everything about them.
- **The Commendation:** "*I know your works,...*" (but none are listed!) NONE! This church is in serious trouble. It is one of two letters with no commendation.
- **The Criticism:** "*...that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead.*" The Greek word "onoma" for *name* is used several times in this letter. It means having a certain reputation, being called something that describes you. The church at Sardis, and the entire city, had a reputation for immorality and loose living. This group of people were wearing a label called "Christian" and were called by that name, but apparently were not living their faith. Some commentators also believe this use of the word "name" may imply the breaking up of the united church into denominations. We tend to call ourselves by these names (Lutheran, Methodist, Presbyterian, Catholic, etc.) rather than by the Name of Jesus, the Name above all other names. Denominations have been one very successful way the watching enemy takes advantage of our lack of watchfulness. The church's fragmentation into named groups ultimately replaced the original apostolic teachings and practices. The church at Sardis had a name which implied they were alive, but here Jesus very dramatically tells them that they are dead. That should be the question for each of us: "*Am I alive, or do I just have a reputation (a name) for being alive?*"

- **The Exhortation** (encouragement):

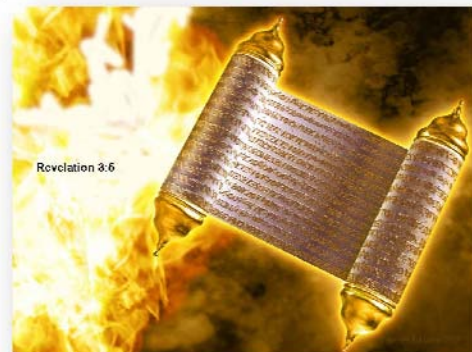
(1) ***"Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die, for I have not found your works perfect before God."*** The command to be watchful is like a slap in the face for complacent Christians in Sardis. They were being lulled to "sleep." They were Christians in name only. And just like the Persian soldier who was watching and waiting for a way to attack, the enemy was watching and waiting to attack this group as well. He already had. They had almost lost their faith. Jesus tells them their "works" are inadequate. This does not mean they didn't do enough good works. It means their lives were not living testaments of their faith (see the book of James), and if they didn't wake up, work on what still remained (the grace of God, their flickering faith, some attempts to live to please God), it would die forever. (*"the things which remain"* is a deliberate pun on the meaning of the city's name.)

(2) ***"Remember therefore how you have received and heard; hold fast and repent..."*** Just like the letter to the church at Ephesus these people are reminded to remember their first love, to think back to when they first believed and hold fast to that. Holding fast here is a continuous action. Don't let go for minute, keep holding. AND, they are to repent of their spiritual stupor, and become watchful and alive again. Unlike the church at Ephesus, however, this church had no redeeming qualities. They had really sunk into the worldly ways of this city.

(3) ***"Therefore if you will not watch, I will come upon you as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you."*** Using the city's reputation of being unwatchful, Jesus warns them that if they don't wake up and watch for His coming, they just might miss it. What a tragedy that would be!

"You have a few names even in Sardis who have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with Me in white, for they are worthy." Apparently there were a few in Sardis who had not "defiled" their Christian walk and faith. Their robes of righteousness weren't soiled. There is a beautiful promise for these people...they will walk with Jesus! Don't mistake the phrase "they are worthy." None of us is worthy in our own strength. The only way these people could become "worthy" is by continuing their daily walk with Jesus, and relying on the power of the Holy Spirit. They had maintained their relationship with Him. The others had not.

- **The Promise:** ***"He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels."*** Here we have mention again of white garments, a symbol of righteousness, given us by Jesus. Living lives that are just like the rest of world will defile and soil our robes of righteousness. Here the overcomer is promised a white garment, one not soiled. We (and they) will receive the incorruption of Jesus. This comment is also a reference to the Greek worship of the day. It was considered a sacrilege to approach "the gods" in stained or soiled clothing. These lazy Sardis Christians were in danger of approaching the One True God in soiled robes. For a rich lesson in this, read Zechariah 3. The white garments are also a symbol of the redeemed in this book. A roll call of the truly alive and white-robed believers will be given by Jesus Himself before the Father.



- **The Book of Life:** All cities in that day kept registers of its citizens. When they died, their names were "blotted out." The Book of Life is God's registry of heaven. God writes every name here, but some will be blotted out (the second death, separation from God). Our genealogy is either one of the family of Adam, which is to death, or one of the family of Jesus (the Lamb's Book of Life) which is one of eternal life. The only way to keep from being blotted out is to live in Jesus our Messiah.
- The Church at Sardis is thought to **prophetically represent the Reformation and the start of the protestant denominational church, 1517-1750 AD** in an historical timeline of the Christian Church. The church at the beginning of this era woke up out its spiritual sleep and reminded Christians of the original great truths (justification by faith alone, the inerrancy of the Word of God, depravity of man, etc.) of the Word of God. However, with denominationalism, those truths were once again in danger of being lost. Sadly, the church at Sardis is very much like the liberal church of today. There are a few true believers, a remnant, but the church as a whole is sleeping.

6th Letter: THE LETTER TO PHILADELPHIA (Revelation 3:7-13)

⁷ *“And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write, ‘These things says He who is holy, He who is true, ‘He who has the key of David, He who opens and no one shuts, and shuts and no one opens’”:* ⁸ *“I know your works. See, I have set before you an open door, and no one can shut it; for you have a little strength, have kept My word, and have not denied My name.”* ⁹ *Indeed I will make those of the synagogue of Satan, who say they are Jews and are not, but lie—indeed I will make them come and worship before your feet, and to know that I have loved you.* ¹⁰ *Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.* ¹¹ *Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown.* ¹² *He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more. I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God. And I will write on him My new name.* ¹³ *“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”*

Introductory material about Philadelphia

This is the youngest of the seven cities, and its name means "brotherly love." It was founded by Attalus II around 140 BC and the city's name commemorates the loyalty and devotion that Attalus, the king of Pergamos, had for his brother Eumenes II. Philadelphia was considered an outpost of Greek culture, as it sat on the frontier of western Asia. It was a border town, standing where three countries met (Mysia, Lydia, and Phrygia). It was the gateway to the east, and from one continent (Asia) to the next (Europe). It also commanded a great highway between several key cities in Asia.



Philadelphia's purpose was initially as a "missionary city" to spread Greek culture to the land beyond. Jesus uses this unique history to indicate a greater missionary goal. This city had neither a predominantly Greek or Roman life style. They practiced an "open door" policy, allowing people to adopt and practice their own culture of choice.

There is another feature of this city used by Jesus in this letter. Philadelphia was located on a prominent earthquake fault. It was known as the "burned land" because of the active volcanic region. After the quake of 17 AD which destroyed Sardis and 10 other cities, Philadelphia received financial aid from Rome to rebuild. They were so grateful they even renamed the city "NeoCaesarea" (new town of Caesar), but the name didn't stick. The people in this area were subject to many earthquakes, and were always "running to the hills," quite literally, to escape the falling debris from such quakes and aftershocks.

Because of the volcanic activity here it was also one of the most fertile areas in the world. Grape growing and the wine industry flourished and were known world wide. It was also rich in hot springs of medicinal value, and people came from all over the world to bathe and be healed. Philadelphia was a famous center of heathen worship, whose principal god was Dionysus, the god of wine. There were so many gods, and so many temples, that it was known as "Little Athens." (Athens was the center of worship of the Olympian gods.) There was a custom in Philadelphia that is also alluded to in this letter. When a person served the city well, after he died a memorial was established in his honor. This memorial was a pillar in one of the temples with the good servant's name inscribed. Although this town was famous for its gods and temples, the threat of persecution here was not terribly great, at least not directly from the Roman government. There was a large, active group of Jews here, however, who took great delight in fighting and persecuting the Christians in town. However, years later, the bishop of Antioch, Ignatius, writes to the church at Philadelphia indicating that these Jews had been converted, and were repentant of the problems they had caused the early Christians here.

This city is now called Ala-shehir, and it is still a Christian town, with one-fourth its population Greek, and a Greek bishop still makes his home there. Today you can see the ruins of the ancient city, and near the city walls an indication of the foundation of the early church here.

- **Philadephia** - literally "brotherly love" in Greek. An appropriate name for the church who is seeking to take the gospel and make brothers in Christ of all men (*and sisters of all women!*).
- **Description of Jesus used for this letter:** *"... He who is holy, He who is true, 'He who has the key of David, He who opens and no one shuts, and shuts and no one opens'"* This greeting is not from the original description of Jesus in the first chapter. *"He who is holy..."* He is the one who knew no sin, was completely separate from the world, yet still human. *"He who is true..."* the word for true is *alethinos*, which means real and genuine, as opposed to something false. *"He who has the key of David..."* keys are a symbol of supreme authority. David is the king of Israel from which the Messiah would be descended. Jesus is asserting his authority as King of Kings. This may also reference Janus, the god of doors and hinges (yes, there was a god for everything!) The Greek word *cardo* means hinge, and was later used by the Pope and cardinals. Instead of the god of hinges, we have the God, the Almighty, the Supreme Authority of everything who holds the keys (symbols of authority) of the kingdom. The door to the kingdom of God is opened by Him and Him alone. If He opens it, no one can shut it. If He shuts it, no one can open it. This is a good reminder to a missionary church that the kingdom is opened by God, not by the human missionaries. He is the One who commissions the work of the Kingdom.

- **The Commendation:** *"I know your works. See, I have set before you an open door, and no one can shut it; for you have a little strength, have kept My word, and have not denied My name."* Jesus knows they have been working for Him, and that He has opened a door of evangelism for them. No one can shut this door. In John 10 Jesus refers to Himself as "the Door." He is the entrance to the Kingdom of God, and He not only IS the door, but He opens the door. The phrase *"for you have a little strength"* is interpreted as meaning they have some "strength" to do His work here, even though they are persecuted by the Jews. This does not mean they were weak, but indeed had access to His power, and He was opening the door for their work. Their commendation was that they had kept His commands (were true to His Word), and had not denied His name. Although hounded by the Jews, they steadfastly upheld the Name above all other names.

"... Indeed I will make those of the synagogue of Satan, who say they are Jews and are not, but lie—indeed I will make them come and worship before your feet, and to know that I have loved you." The "synagogue of Satan" is a reference to those Jews who called themselves Jews, but were in name only. Their hearts were hardened and they held themselves out as righteous and the only ones deserving of God's grace. Now they persecuted the true believers, after having rejected the Messiah. Jesus has no tolerance for this behavior and rightly calls them a group dedicated to their Father, Satan (see John 8). They were hypocrites, a *"brood of vipers"* as Jesus said in Matthew, children of the serpent. Jesus knew the believers in Philadelphia were under persecution by these Jews, but He promised something that took place a short time later. They (these Jews) would come and *"worship before your feet, and...know that I have loved you."* According to Ignatius, this indeed happened. Many of these hypocritical Jews came to know Jesus, and were repentant toward the believers for their previous persecution. This statement by Jesus is prophecy which literally was fulfilled at that time, and will be again, as *"they look upon Him whom they pierced."* (Zechariah 12)

A special blessing: *"Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth."* The "hour of trial (tribulation)" is thought by many to be the actual seven year Tribulation period, which is coming *"upon the whole world to test those who dwell on the earth."* This can then be interpreted as a special "pass" from having to endure the Tribulation, and meaning that the faithful Church will be removed prior to this time. Others disagree, and say this means that Jesus will not keep them FROM, but THROUGH the hour of trial. In other words, they will endure it, but God will be with them. *This is the main difference between a pre-Tribulation philosophy, a mid-Trib and post-Trib belief. "To test those..."* indicates the whole world at that time will be tested to determine if they will acknowledge the Truth of God, or not. We know that the soul harvest in this time will probably be greater than at any other time in history as millions pass the test and come to Him.

"Those who dwell on the earth..." This is the first reference to a phrase used frequently in Revelation - *"the inhabitants of the earth."* The Greek words here imply that these people are identified with the earth, they are associated with it. These dwellers have a "permanent" arrangement with the earth, instead of others just passing through. The "inhabitants of the earth" are those who have made earth their permanent home. Believers are just passing through here on their way home to God. Throughout scripture, this is a term that implies unbelievers, those whose home is the earth, not heaven.

- **The Criticism (Concern):** **None!** (*Smyrna and Philadelphia are the only churches with no criticism*)

- **The Exhortation** (encouragement): *"Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown.."* Jesus gives this church a little "inside" information - He is coming quickly (in Greek, meaning *suddenly*). This church was awake, unlike the church at Sardis. They are told to "hold fast" so they don't lose what they have. It is a good reminder to us that unless we diligently follow Jesus, we can succumb to the enemy and worldly temptation to fall away. Like Sardis, we could be caught sleeping at His return. Scriptures are filled with examples of those who "lost" things (Esau, Reuben, Moses, Saul, etc...) because their faith and obedience flagged.
- **The Promise:** *"He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more. I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God. And I will write on him My new name."* The pillar mentioned here is a direct reference to the practice of honoring people by putting names on pillars in the temples. Jesus promises that the overcomer will have his or her name written on a pillar in the Temple of God! And, we won't have to "run for the hills" anymore (as they did, to flee the falling debris from earthquakes in that city). We won't have to flee from God's presence anymore because of our sin. We will have God's name written on us, indicating His ownership. We will own all the promises of heaven, and God will own us. New names are common in scripture. God assigns a new name to correspond to new character, a new creature in Christ.
- The Church at Philadelphia, a believing, living and telling active church persecuted but empowered by Jesus, is thought to **prophetically represent the Missionary Church era from 1750 - 1900 AD** in an historical timeline of the Christian Church. Today, when the inspiration of scriptures is denied, when the supreme authority of Jesus is denounced from seminaries and pulpits, the people representing the church in Philadelphia, during the missionary age, and today *"keep my Word...and have not denied my name."*



7th Letter: THE LETTER TO LAODICEA (Revelation 3:14-22)

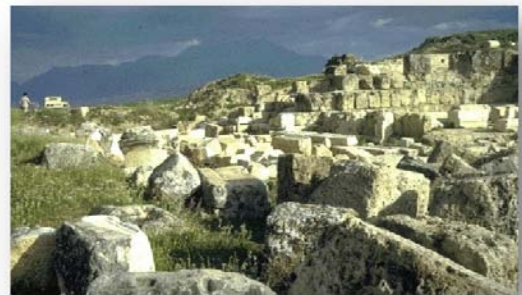
¹⁴ “And to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write, ‘These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God: ¹⁵ “I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. ¹⁶ So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth. ¹⁷ Because you say, ‘I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing’—and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked—¹⁸ I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see. ¹⁹ As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent. ²⁰ Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me. ²¹ To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also 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.””

Introductory material about Laodicea

Laodicea was the last city in the loop of this circulating letter to the churches of Asia minor. We have heard it referenced often, probably more than any other letter in Revelation, because of its "lukewarm" attitude. Laodicea was large and prosperous. It was a twin city to Hieropolis about 6 miles away, known for its hot springs (in fact the Turkish government is now attempting to harness these springs today as a source of geothermal energy). Laodicea was midway between the hot springs and the cold waters of Colossae. The water to the city was fed by an aqueduct from Hieropolis, and when it arrived, it was lukewarm.

Laodicea was founded and named by Antiochus II in 250 BC, and named after his wife, Laodike. It stood on a plateau high above the Lycus River, and controlled the trade that came down the river valley to the coast. There were also three very major roads in and out of Laodicea. This city grew to wealth and prominence during the Roman Empire. It was a military outpost and a trade center, a Roman assize town, with plenty of pomp and circumstance.

Laodicea was also known for its black wool, spun from black sheep raised specially in this area. A busy textile industry manufactured many distinctive pieces of clothing which were shipped all over the world. There was also a medical school here, and Laodicea was well known for its ear salve made from nard, and its eye powder which was mixed as a salve for bad eyes. The other distinctive feature of this city was its fame as a financial center. It specialized in money-changing, and hand minted its own coins several centuries before the Christian era. References to all these features are seen in the letter to this church.



The city magistrates usually offered Jews free citizenship and generally the freedom of worship. After all, they always brought money and trade to any city. The Jews here had great wealth and independence. They were so influential that they were known to even bring pressure on Roman governors. Laodicea was known as the wealthiest city in Phrygia in Roman times, and one of the richest commercial centers of the ancient world. It was so wealthy that after a devastating earthquake in 60 AD, they refused all financial aid from Rome, insisting on

rebuilding their city themselves, from their own resources and private citizens. They were too rich and proud to accept anything from anyone.

Laodicea was not known as a religious center, though they had their share of gods, principally "Men" the god of healing, later identified with "Asklepios." Religious persecution was not too much of a threat here. They were too busy making money, including (apparently) the Christians (there was a large group of believers here). The Laodicean people put their trust in money, material worth, luxury and physical health. They trusted in the things of this world. One commentator said: "*Laodicea stands as a warning to those who remember intensely that man has a body and forget completely that man has a soul.*"

About 30 years before this letter was written, Paul warned Archippus (considered the bishop of Laodicea) to be more diligent in his ministry to these people. So apparently they have been warned previously. (Colossians 2:1, 4:16-17)

- **Laodicea** - This word literally means "rule (or justice) of the people." How appropriate for this church, and for this age. The people were in charge here, not God.
- **Description of Jesus used for this letter:** "*These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God...*" This is in contrast to the church that was unfaithful, untrue to The Master. The "Amen" is literally the "so be it." So it is, so it will be, so is the church. This letter is the last in the circuit, and references the last church of the Christian age before Jesus' coming. We know later in this book that the church of the end of times is an apostate church, a false church. It is well on its way.
- The phrase "*the Beginning of the creation of God*" is often misunderstood, if you don't know the original words. It does NOT mean Jesus was created. He is not a created being, He has already equated Himself with the Almighty, the One who has no beginning and no end. These words mean the origin or source of the creation. Jesus created all things (Colossians 1:16). The Greek word "arche" also indicates the highest order, top rank. Jesus is King of Kings, Lord of Lords. He is the pre-eminent One, the master of the creation.
- **The Commendation: None!** (*not even some who had not soiled their clothes, like at the church in Sardis, the only other church with no praise*) That alone should wake up the church in this age.
- **The Criticism (Concern):**
"I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth." While Jesus might have been disappointed in the other churches, and informed them to get things right, with this church He literally shows disgust. The people of Laodicea well understood what was being said here, as their lukewarm water was disgusting, and even today this is a way to induce vomiting. He wished instead they were either cold or hot, because either extreme shows a passion. This church disgusted Jesus so much that He provides a very descriptive picture of his rejection of them. Remember that Laodicea represents the church in the latter days, from about 1900 onward. Why do you suppose the church of today would disgust Jesus?



- **The Exhortation** (encouragement): *“Because you say, ‘I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing’—and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked— I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see.”* Jesus now uses the renown of this city to chastise it. They believed they were wealthy, but he says they are wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked! What a slap in the face. Wake up church, He says. The wealthy Christians there needed His gold (refined - always indicates purification by trial) to be rich, they needed His WHITE garments (robes of the redeemed, righteousness) instead of those they were known for (black, sinful) to cover their spiritual nakedness, and they needed His medical salve (from the Great Physician) to heal their spiritual blindness.

“As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent.” While Jesus is disgusted with this church, He also indicates that He loves them, and will rebuke and chasten them, just as a parent would a wayward child. He tells them be zealous (as opposed to lukewarm), restore their passion, and repent of this lazy and lukewarm attitude about Him. Remember our God is a jealous God, demanding our complete love and loyalty. That should be voluntary, our greatest desire. This church forgot this, and even forgot Him. The relationship had grown lukewarm.

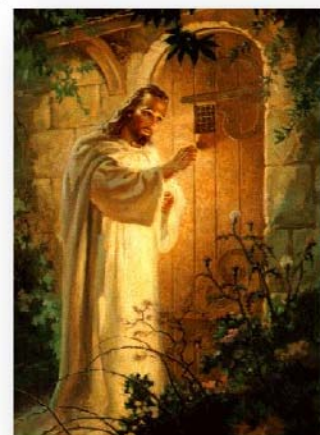
- *“Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.”* Now Jesus appeals to "anyone" not the corporate church. This is an open invitation to the individual who will answer the knock at the door of his or heart. Conditions at the end of the age will force true Christians to leave the apostate church of the end times.

- In the mid 1800s William Holman Hunt painted picture titled the "Light of the World." It depicted Jesus standing outside a door that had been overgrown with weeds, obviously not used in quite a while. Someone noted there was no handle on the door. Hunt replied, "This door is a picture of the human heart, the only handle is on the inside." Jesus won't kick the door down. It's up to us to open it ourselves. To "dine" with the Jesus is to share the main fellowship meal of the day. It is God's desire throughout scripture, hence the need for our redemption, to have fellowship with us. Eating is a symbol of fellowship.

- **The Promise:** *“To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.”* The overcomer is granted the right to sit with Jesus on His throne. That is amazing! Jesus is looking forward to the Millennial Kingdom, when we will rule with Him. That is an awesome thought, and just a bit intimidating! Thankfully we will do so in our redeemed state, not subject to the political corruption of rulers today. Jesus has already taken His throne with His Father, and we will follow Him there.



William Holman Hunt's
"The Light of the World"



Most of us are familiar
with Sallman's painting
of "Jesus at the Door"

- The Church at Laodicea is thought to **prophetically represent the last days of the church, from about 1900 AD to present** in an historical timeline of the Christian Church.

LAODICEA, THE CHURCH TODAY?

A quick look at the church today will tell us immediately that the mainstream "church" has truly fallen away from the truth of scripture, and is more concerned with programs, entertainment, social gospel, and appeasing rather than teaching, or staying true to the Word of God. The so-called **"emergent" church** is a primary example of this. Here are some warning signs:

- Scripture is no longer the ultimate authority for the Christian faith. Emergent leaders teach that we cannot know the "truth" of the Word of God, so they rely on the thoughts of man.
- The gospel of Jesus Christ is replaced by humanistic methods promoting church growth and a social gospel (make the world a better place, feed the hungry, environmental concerns, etc).
- There is almost no teaching about the need for atonement, the shed blood of Jesus, or forgiveness of sins in order to enter heaven.
- More and more emphasis is on building the kingdom of God now (Dominion theology) and less on the warnings of Scripture about the imminent return of Jesus Christ and a coming judgment in the future. The teaching that Jesus will rule and reign in a literal millennial period is considered unbiblical and heretical. The emergent church's "eschatology" claims that we are being drawn into a golden age when God will recreate everything and us, and we will help Him do this by making the world a better place. Jesus will not judge when He comes again. The teachings on "signs of the times" and the Bible's prophecies regarding those times is considered false.
- Teaching that the book of Revelation does not refer to the future, but instead has been already fulfilled in the past (1st century) or is just allegorical.
- Teaching that the church has taken the place of Israel and Israel has no prophetic significance is embraced. (replacement theology)
- An "experiential" mystical form of Christianity promoted as way to reach the postmodern generation.
- Idea that Christianity needs to be reinvented in order to provide meaning for this generation.
- Implementing an idea called "ancient-future" or "vintage Christianity" claiming that in order to take the church forward, we need to go back in church history and find out what experiences were effective to get people to embrace Christianity (such as icons and mystical rituals).
- While the authority of the Word of God is undermined, images and sensual experiences are promoted as the key to experiencing and knowing God. These experiences include icons,

A GOOD REMINDER: There is an inscription engraved in stone on a cathedral in Lübeck, Germany that is a good reminder to the Church today:

**Ye call me Master and obey me not,
 Ye call me Light and seek me not,
 Ye call me Way and walk me not,
 Ye call me Life and desire me not,
 Ye call me wise and follow me not,
 Ye call me fair and love me not,
 Ye call me eternal and seek me not,
 Ye call me gracious and trust me not,
 Ye call me noble and serve me not,
 Ye call me mighty and honour me not,
 Ye call me just and fear me not,
 If I condemn ye, blame me not.**

candles, incense, liturgy, labyrinths, prayer stations, contemplative prayer, experiencing the sacraments (for Protestants), particularly the sacrament of the Eucharist.

- A strong emphasis on ecumenism indicating that a bridge is being established that leads in the direction of unity with the Roman Catholic Church. May ultimately lead to one world religion.
- Some suggest there are many ways to God. Some even suggest that "God is in everything" - a New Age teaching. The New Age "all paths lead to god, the divine within" is prevalent in the emergent church, or will be in those who are still claiming to be "Christian."
- Members of churches who question or resist the new changes that the pastor is implementing are reprimanded and usually asked to leave. If you are over age 50, your opinion will not even matter.

How about your church? Here are a few questions to ask:

- Does your church teach that you are a sinner in need of atonement?
- That atonement can only come by the shed blood of Jesus?
- Does your church believe you are lost without Jesus?
- Do they believe and teach that salvation is through Jesus alone?
- Are the horrors of the consequences of sin made clear in your church?
- Have you been taught the certainty of heaven, and the certainty of hell?
- Does your church teach the pure Word of God, or does it preach a social gospel?
- Is Jesus exalted and praised, or is He a second thought?

Will your church please, or disgust, Jesus? Something to think about!

Chapter 3 Summary Chart follows.

REVELATION CHAPTER 3			
CHURCH	Sardis 3:1-6	Philadelphia 3:7-13	Laodicea 3:14-22
Symbolic Church Age	Reformation Era 1518 AD-1750	Missionary Church 1750-1900	Apostate Church of the Last Days 1900-present +
Speaker	“He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars.”	“He who is holy, He who is true. He who has the Key of David, He who opens and no one shuts, and shuts and no one opens.”	“the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God.”
Praise	NONE! (did find a few who had not “soiled their clothes” and they would walk with Him in white)	Works, have a little strength (influence, ability), kept His word, not denied His Name. Kept command to persevere* (Missionary church)	NONE!
Problems	Works indicated they had a reputation for being alive, but they were dead. He did not find their “works” complete or perfect before God.	NONE!	Neither hot nor cold (wished they were cold or hot); lukewarm. Say they are rich, have need of nothing, but He says they are wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked
Counsel or Warning	Be watchful, strengthen what remains (is about to die!) Remember what you heard, hold fast to it, repent OR ELSE I will come as a thief (suddenly) to take away what remains	<i>(This letter informs more than warns)</i> He will make those of the synagogue of Satan come and worship before their feet and know that He has loved them. “I am coming quickly!” Hold fast what you have so no one can take your crown.	I will vomit you out of my mouth! Buy from Me gold refined in the fire (that you may be rich) white garments (that you may be clothed), anoint your eyes with eye salve (that you may see) As many as I love I rebuke and chasten. Be zealous and repent. Open door to Him!
Reward to Overcomer	Clothed in white garments, will not blot name from Book of Life, will confess name before Father and His angels. <i>(covered with righteousness of Christ, remain in Book of Life, right to be with God)</i>	<i>*will keep them from the hour of trial which is coming upon the whole world to test those “who dwell on the earth”</i> Make him a pillar in temple of God, will go out no more, will write on him name of God, name of city of God, New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from God..I will write on him My new name. <i>(eternally have access to God’s place, identified with His city, identified with Jesus)</i>	Will sit with Me on My throne. <i>(will share in ruling over Millennial kingdom)</i>
Problem in a nutshell	Complacency , spiritually dead, more interested in material riches	NONE	Lukewarm, pride , more concerned about material wealth than spiritual wealth

