

A Future Journey with Christ

The Letter to the Seven Churches (Part 2)

Revelation 2:18-3:22

INTRODUCTION:

All Stand and Read Scripture

Revelation 1:10-11 (NASB)

¹⁰I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like *the sound* of a trumpet, ¹¹saying, "Write in a book what you see, and send *it* to the seven churches: to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamum and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea."

Prayer

John was commanded to write "**a book**" to **seven** churches in Asia Minor. John wrote one book that would be passed from church to church. We know that there were other churches in that area who would read it as well, but the symbolic number was more important to John than the literal number. The number seven symbolically means that when John addresses the seven churches in Asia who first read the book, he is also addressing the complete church, or all the true churches that will exist throughout history from the time of John's writing until Christ comes again.

You will notice a pattern in each of the individual letters.

- A unique description of Christ.
- An intimate knowledge of what the church is doing.
- Things they are doing right.
- Things they are doing wrong.
- An exhortation.
- "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."
- A promise to him that overcomes.

BODY:

I. MESSAGE TO THYATIRA

Revelation 2:18-29 (NASB)

¹⁸"And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write:

A unique description of Christ.

The Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet are like burnished bronze, says this:

This is a reference back to Christ's appearance in chapter 1.

An intimate knowledge of what they are doing and Things they are doing right.

¹⁹ I know your deeds, and your love and faith and service and perseverance, and that your deeds of late are greater than at first.

They have been faithful and have actually matured in their service for God.

Things they are doing wrong.

²⁰ But I have *this* against you, that you tolerate the woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, and she teaches and leads My bond-servants astray so that they commit *acts of immorality* and eat things sacrificed to idols.

Originally she was a queen of Israel who promoted the immoral cult of Baal (I Kings 16:31). This may be the name of a real person or her name may be being used here to categorize a false teacher, a so-called prophetess who misled the believers in Thyatira.

Paul tells us that eating food offered to idols is not a moral sin in I Cor. 8:4-8. But he also warned that, depending on the spiritual maturity of the believer, it could lead to sin in verses 7-12. In this case, the teaching to eat meat offered to idols was part of a religious practice that was not righteous.

An exhortation.

²¹ I gave her time to repent, and she does not want to repent of her immorality. ²² Behold, I will throw her on a bed of sickness, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of her deeds. ²³ And I will kill her children with pestilence, and **all the churches** will know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts; and I will give to each one of you according to your deeds. ²⁴ But I say to you, the rest who are in Thyatira, who do not hold this teaching, who have not known the deep things of Satan, as they call them—I place no other burden on you. ²⁵ Nevertheless what you have, hold fast until I come.

"Jezebel's children" is a metaphor indicating those who followed her false teachings.

Cults of the time, including the one here in Thyatira, often claimed secret knowledge or wisdom that would be revealed only to those initiated into the cult. These words mock the claims that these "secrets" revealed truth.

A promise to him that overcomes.

²⁶ He who overcomes, and he who keeps My deeds until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations; ²⁷ and he shall rule them with a rod of iron, as the vessels of the potter are broken to pieces, as I also have received *authority* from My Father; ²⁸ and I will give him the morning star.

The "morning star" is a name given for Christ in Rev. 22:16.

²⁹ He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'

II. MESSAGE TO SARDIS

Revelation 3:1-6 (NASB)

3 "To the angel of the church in Sardis write:

A unique description of Christ.

He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars, says this:

The "seven spirits" is a reference to the Holy Spirit. The number seven denotes fullness or perfection. Thus the perfect, complete spirit, the Holy Spirit. The seven stars, once again, refer to all of the true churches in the time period between the first and second comings of Christ.

An intimate knowledge of what they are doing.

Things they are doing right. (None)

Things they are doing wrong.

¹ I know your deeds, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead. ² Wake up, and strengthen the things that remain, which were about to die; for I have not found your deeds completed in the sight of My God.

An exhortation.

³ So remember what you have received and heard; and keep *it*, and repent. Therefore if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come to you. ⁴ But you have a few people in Sardis who have not soiled their garments; and they will walk with Me in white, for they are worthy.

A promise to him that overcomes.

⁵ He who overcomes will thus be clothed in white garments; and I will not erase his name from the book of life, and I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels.

The "book of life" is a metaphor derived from the ancient practice of keeping a list of citizens. It represents God's records of those who are part of his kingdom. The book of life contains a record of all those who accept Jesus Christ as Savior and who will receive eternal life.

Revelation 20:12,15 (NASB)

¹² And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is *the book* of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds.

...¹⁵ And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

⁶ He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'

III. MESSAGE TO PHILADELPHIA

Revelation 3:7-13 (NASB)

⁷ "And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write:

A unique description of Christ.

He who is holy, who is true, who has the key of David, who opens and no one will shut, and who shuts and no one opens, says this:

The Jews cast out of their synagogues all Jews who accepted Christ. Jesus says that it He and He alone that grants entrance into the His church.

An intimate knowledge of what they are doing and Things they are doing right.

⁸ I know your deeds. Behold, I have put before you an open door which no one can shut, because you have a little power, and have kept My word, and have not denied My name.

⁹ Behold, I will cause *those* of the synagogue of Satan, who say that they are Jews and are not, but lie—I will make them come and bow down at your feet, and *make them* know that I have loved you.

The ones "*who say that they are Jews and art not*" are actually Jews by birth, but this is figurative language to say that those who reject Christ forfeit their chance to be God's chosen people.

1 Corinthians 12:12-13, 27 (NASB)

¹² For even as the body is one and *yet* has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ. ¹³ For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

...²⁷ Now you are Christ's body, and individually members of it.

Everyone who accepts Christ as their Lord and Savior and are born again are now God's chosen people.

¹⁰ Because you have kept the word of My perseverance, I also will keep you from the hour of testing, that *hour* which is about to come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.

This trial will occur for unbelievers at the time of Christ's return.

Things they are doing wrong. (None)

An exhortation.

¹¹ I am coming quickly; hold fast what you have, so that no one will take your crown.

The Greeks in the first century awarded champion athletes with a "crown" made of flowers of leaves. This is figurative language for "the crown" that will be awarded if they hold fast to the faith and are victorious.

A promise to him that overcomes.

¹² He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he will not go out from it anymore; and 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 My new name.

The pillar in the temple of God is figurative language to represent all who overcome Satan in this life on earth. Our body is referred to as the temple of God where God (the Holy Spirit) dwells. Thus each of us help make up the complete "temple of God".

The "new name" represents a unique relationship that we have with God. It identifies us as His people. This is probably the same reference that we see later in Revelation where John is describing heaven.

Revelation 22:3-4 (NASB)

³ There will no longer be any curse; and the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and His bond-servants will serve Him; ⁴ they will see His face, and His name *will be* on their foreheads.

¹³ He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'

IV. MESSAGE TO LAODICEA

Revelation 3:14-22 (NASB)

¹⁴ "To the angel of the church in Laodicea write:

A unique description of Christ.

The Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God, says this:

The Hebrew "Amen" is translated as the "the God of truth". When we say "amen" it means "so be it" or "truly it is".

ILLUSTRATION:

Amen is frequently used when someone affirms that a statement is true or at the end of a prayer. If a pastor says "The Bible is the inspired Word of God" those who agree might say "*amen*" or "truly it is."

Now that title is being given to Christ. "The Amen" is personified showing that Christ's character itself guarantees the truth of His message. He is the true and faithful witness.

"The Beginning of the creation of God" means that Christ was God's source for everything that was created. God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit are one and are eternal.

An intimate knowledge of what they are doing.

Things they are doing right. (None)

Things they are doing wrong.

¹⁵ I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot; I wish that you were cold or hot.
¹⁶ So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth.

"Neither cold nor hot" is a contrast between the hot medicinal waters of Hierapolis, and the cold pure waters of Colossae. Thus, the church was providing neither refreshment for the spiritual weary, nor healing for the spiritually sick. Strangers entering Laodicea for the first time, when they tried to drink where the hot spring water and the cold came together, would usually "spew it out" of their mouths.

It would be better to be spiritually cold instead of lukewarm because the spiritually cold could not pretend that everything was alright. Those who are lukewarm may have just enough religion to cause them to think they are okay. God desires to be first in your life. Anything less suggests that other things have a higher priority in your life than a relationship with Him. Those who seek to meet the "minimum requirement" of faith and service risk missing Him altogether.

17 Because you say, "I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing," and you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked,

The Laodicians had apparently mistaken "the good life" for the righteous life. They boasted of their riches and professed to not need anything. Yet Christ reminds them that they are the neediest of them all. We live in an affluent country. We must be very careful that we do not allow our material riches to take the place of spiritual wealth.

An exhortation.

18 I advise you to buy from Me gold refined by fire so that you may become rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself, and that the shame of your nakedness will not be revealed; and eye salve to anoint your eyes so that you may see. 19 Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline; therefore be zealous and repent.

The very thing that the Laodiceans felt was their strong point was truly their weakest. The city had a lot of wealth from its garment industry where they had a monopoly on the dyes used on their cloth and from their unique eye salve.

Christ reminds them that their industry was temporal and material. He tells them that they use dyes for their clothing, but He wants them clothed in white. This is a metaphor for white garments of righteousness which are supplied by the Lord to the baptized believer.

The only "eye salve" that will heal spiritual blindness is the Word of God. This is what they truly needed to be clothed in Christ and be able to see.

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 will dine with him, and he with Me.

This verse is often used out of context. Jesus is talking to the church here, not to the unsaved. We are to read God's Word, listen to its message, and open our heart to it. This allows the Holy Spirit to dwell within us and give us spiritual guidance in our lives.

A promise to him that overcomes.

21 He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down 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.'"

CONCLUSION:

Exhortations that were made to each of the churches are also exhortations to us today. As we read the message to the seven churches, we must identify those elements that we are deficient in and act accordingly.

Our goal in life is to overcome. If we are successful we are guaranteed victory over Satan and sin. We will find our name written in the Lamb's Book of Life. Be washed in the blood of the Lamb. Live a life of witness for Christ. Let Christ be first in everything you do and say and be willing to give up your life for Him!

He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'

He is Lord!