

## Revelation - Chapter 2 & 3 - Summary

### Christ's Message to the Seven Churches



John's heavenly vision continues and to his amazement, Jesus dictates a letter to each of the seven churches which were represented as the seven golden lamp stands. The message in the letters is clear: Jesus is giving a performance evaluation to these seven churches and He is pleased with many things they are doing but He has great concern and even rebukes them for areas they are falling short in their faith and service to Him.

#### Deeds

Jesus commends all the churches except for Sardis and Laodicea. Commendations include their good deeds, love, faith, service, hard work, perseverance, standing against false apostles and teachings, suffering, difficulty living where extreme pagan rituals and sacrifices were occurring while keeping His word, persecution and even death due to their Christian faith.

Jesus said the believers in Pergamum lived, "where Satan has His throne, probably referring to the altar of Zeus which was 120 by 112 feet contained within a colonnaded court that included a podium almost 18 feet high. In Smyrna most believers were destitute, had few possessions and many were slaves because of their faith.

In a way that only our Sovereign Lord can do, Jesus offers the believers at Smyrna hope and encouragement by reminding them that He transcends this world and empowers them to do the same, that even though they are living in material poverty they are spiritually rich, and the relentless attacks that are occurring will be limited in scope and temporary in duration.

#### Promises

Jesus promises to the true believers in each of the seven churches, that they will have their names written in the Book of Life, will receive the crown of life, will have a white stone with a new name and will be clothed in white garments, will be kept from the Tribulation Period prior to Jesus' second coming to the earth to set up His Millennial Kingdom, will rule with Christ and have authority over the nations in the Millennial

Kingdom, will eat of the tree of life in the New Jerusalem, and spend eternity with Him and God in the new heavens and new earth.

## **Rebukes**

Jesus appears as Divine Judge, & Executioner, sovereign Lord of the church, The Amen (truth), True Witness, and Ruler of God's Creation, as He issues his rebukes to the churches:

- One church has lost their love of Christ - The Church at Ephesus had endured through severe persecution, rejected false teachings, and had an incredible rich spiritual heritage including teaching from Paul and Timothy. Thirty-five years earlier, Paul had commended them for their love of Christ. The Church at Ephesus retained their purity of doctrine and life and maintained a high level of service, but their love for Christ was missing (Eph 1:15-16). Their failure was a matter of the heart (1 Cor 13:13; Eph 6:24).
- Three churches allowed false teaching
  - Compromising Church - The church at Pergamum believed they could participate in pagan feasts and sexual practices and still join the Church. As a result they were in danger of becoming intertwined with the world.
  - Tolerant, Permissive Church - The church at Thyatira was allowing false teaching and leading believers to take part in the sexual immorality that accompanied pagan religion and to eat food sacrificed to idols.
  - Dead Church - The church at Sardis made peace with the grossest form of pagan idolatry rather than standing out against it. As a result they became defiled, marked by inward decay and were now populated by unbelieving people playing church.

The heart of Christ's message to these churches is that Biblical truth and morality can't exist in a culture of worldly compromise. To lead other Christians into false doctrine or immoral living is a very serious sin, meriting the most severe punishment (Matthew 18:6-10).

- One church became lukewarm or useless - The church at Laodicea became so intertwined with the city of Laodicea, one could not tell it apart from its surroundings. All their wealth had made them self-sufficient, they were content with their wealth and they had no need for the Lord. They were unable to see their spiritual deficient. Christ told them they were: wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked (Rev 3:17). He was speaking of their spiritual state. In spite of all their riches, they lacked what matters most in life: a saving faith and relationship with Jesus Christ.

Christ was outside this apostate church and wanted to come in—something that could happen only if the people repented. The picture of Christ outside the Laodicean church seeking entrance strongly implies that there were few believers there or no believers at all.

Does it seem that the many or all of these conditions exist today for the church? Christ's message represent the Churches then and the Churches throughout all of the Church Age including now.

### **Chronological View**

Although it is a deduction from text rather than explicitly stated it appears that the conditions represented in these seven churches also represent the chronological history of Churches throughout the Church Age. This also matches Scriptures in the New Testament describing the last days for the Church before Jesus returns.

The church at Philadelphia is characteristic of the true Church in the last days. This church has devoted its energy and efforts to spreading the Gospel and leading others to faith in Jesus Christ. Jesus had only commendation for their works and exhortation for them to continue despite their little strength and wealth. He had opened a door for them to proclaim the Gospel that would not be shut. The letter to the faithful Philadelphia church reveals that the holy, omnipotent God pours out His blessings on churches that remain loyal to Him.

The church at Laodicea was the last, most tragic, and also the most threatening of the seven letters written to the Churches. It has the grim distinction of being the only church that Christ offers nothing positive. Representing the church at the end of the age we can see many similarities to our churches today.

### **Christ's Solutions**

Jesus did not just leave the churches with praise, exhortation, and rebuke. He gave solutions for the issues they faced. These issues are as relevant today as they were when John wrote the book of Revelation.

<b>Christ's Warnings</b>	<b>Christ's Solution to Keep Your Spiritual Fires Burning</b>
Losing love for Christ	Fresh devotion to Christ
Fear of suffering	Do not fear
Doctrinal compromise	Hold fast Biblical truths
Moral compromise	Hold fast Biblical moral standards
Spiritual deadness	Accept Jesus as Lord & Savior
Holding fast	Keep My Word
Being lukewarm or useless	Open the door, He will come in, Receive Him as Lord & Savior