

# The Revelation of Jesus Christ

## Revelation 2

Revelation 2: Work of the Church to Do

Dr. Mark Alan Langner



Welcome.

Rhyme idea credited to Mark Correll.

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“Hence ‘in the Spirit on the Lord’s Day’ (Rev. 1:10) the exiled disciple of the Lord, John the author of the Apocalypse, celebrates the worship of heaven with its congregations in the loneliness of the Island of Patmos.

He sees the seven lampstands that are the congregations, the seven stars that are the angels of the congregations, and in the midst and above it all, the Son of Man, Jesus Christ, in his great glory as the risen one. He strengthens and comforts John by his word.

That is the heavenly community in which the exile participates on the day of His Lord’s resurrection.”



Dietrich Bonhoeffer  
Image: WordPress.com: Sam Shaw



Overview of Revelation 1: Jesus’s chosen vessel to spread His Gospel is the Church.

We [the Church] are “founded and held together by none other than Jesus Christ, the incarnate one himself...It was the Word made flesh who ha[s] called [us], who ha[s] created the visible, bodily community.”

## Three Interpretive Views Regarding the Revelation Churches:

- (1) Seven successive church dispensations or ages; (2) Church history in advance; (3) Direct messages to the seven churches in Asia and to the church of the future, all represented throughout church history.



“These seven churches were probably chosen because they are explicit examples of the various conditions in the Church.”  
-Stanley Horton



Particularly note the Horton quote.

**2** “Write to the angel of the church in Ephesus: Thus says the one who holds the seven stars in his right hand and who walks among the seven golden lampstands: **2** I know your works, your labor, and your endurance, and that you cannot tolerate evil people. You have tested those who call themselves apostles and are not, and you have found them to be liars. **3** I know that you have persevered and endured hardships for the sake of my name, and you have not grown weary. **4** But I have this against you: You have abandoned the love you had at first. **5** Remember then how far you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first. Otherwise, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent. **6** Yet you do have this: You hate the practices of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.

**7** “Let anyone who has ears to hear listen to what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.”



By starting with Ephesus, it seems that Jesus intentionally spoke to a church that others would consider “having it all together.” Jesus cut immediately to the heart of the matter: “You have abandoned the love you had at first.”

Some commentators believe this loss of love is referring to Jesus Himself; others claim it is referring to other believers. In either case, we can remember Jesus’s command: “...Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength, and will all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself.”

## Backstory of Ephesus

Ephesus was the “political capital of Asia; a seaport; and a wicked city of false priest and priestesses dedicated to its false god. Paul, Aquila, and Priscilla founded the Christian church in Ephesus.



“Ephesus was the Roman provincial capital of Asia Minor with a population of over 250,000.” Emperor worship was extreme, and Ephesus had a temple dedicated to either Domitian or Titus. There was a large Jewish contingent as well. The Christians of Ephesus apparently experienced extreme pressure to bend to either emperor worship, Judaism, or both.

## Key Terms

# Nicolaitans

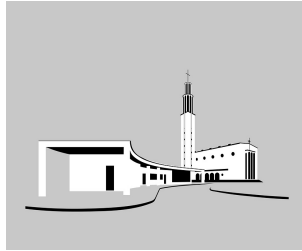
The Nicolaitans were mentioned on twice in the New Testament, both times by Jesus in His Revelation to the Christian churches.

Some early church fathers, including Irenaeus, Clement, and Tertullian mentioned the Nicolaitans in their writing. Irenaeus concluded that one of the original deacons, Nicolaus, left the true faith and led a Gnostic sect which practiced adultery, idolatry, self-indulgence, and ate food sacrificed to idols.

Other scholars believe “Nicolaus” is simply the Greek form of “Balaam.”



Dogmatism regarding the identity of the Nicolaitans seems unwise: the important thing to remember are to avoid their practices.



### Applying the Message of Jesus to Ephesus

We should: (1) love God and others; (2) test doctrine; (3) offer correction with “love and grace;” and (4) stand as a beacon of hope and truth in a lost society and in a lost world.

Loving Acclamation	Rebuke	Expectation	Reward
<p>Works; Labor; Endurance; Intolerance of Evil People and False Apostles</p>	<p>Have Abandoned First Love</p>	<p>Repent; Do First Works</p>	<p>Right to Eat from the Tree of Life</p>



To “overcome” ( to “conquer”) is “to follow the Lamb with one’s life until the very end of one’s life.”

Christians (overcomers in Christ) will be able to eat from the Tree of Life initially created for Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden.

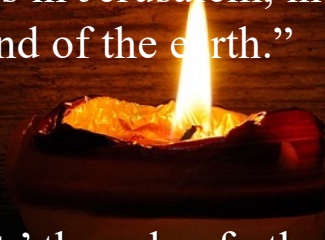
“Let anyone who has ears to hear listen to what the Spirit says to the churches.”

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come on you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

- Jesus

“If John’s role is to ‘write in the Spirit,’ the role of others in this prophetic community is to ‘hear in the Spirit.’”

- John Christopher Thomas



Revelation may be difficult to understand at times, and we will gain understanding only by listening in the Spirit.



**8** “Write to the angel of the church in Smyrna: Thus says the First and the Last, the one who was dead and came to life: **9** I know your affliction and poverty, but you are rich. I know the slander of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. **10** Don’t be afraid of what you are about to suffer. Look, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison to test you, and you will experience affliction for ten days. Be faithful to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life.

**11** “Let anyone who has ears to hear listen to what the Spirit says to the churches. The one who conquers will never be harmed by the second death.



Jesus’s authority is grounded in who He is: “...the First and the Last, the one who was dead and came to life.” All Christianity is based on this fact of the Resurrected and Eternal Christ.

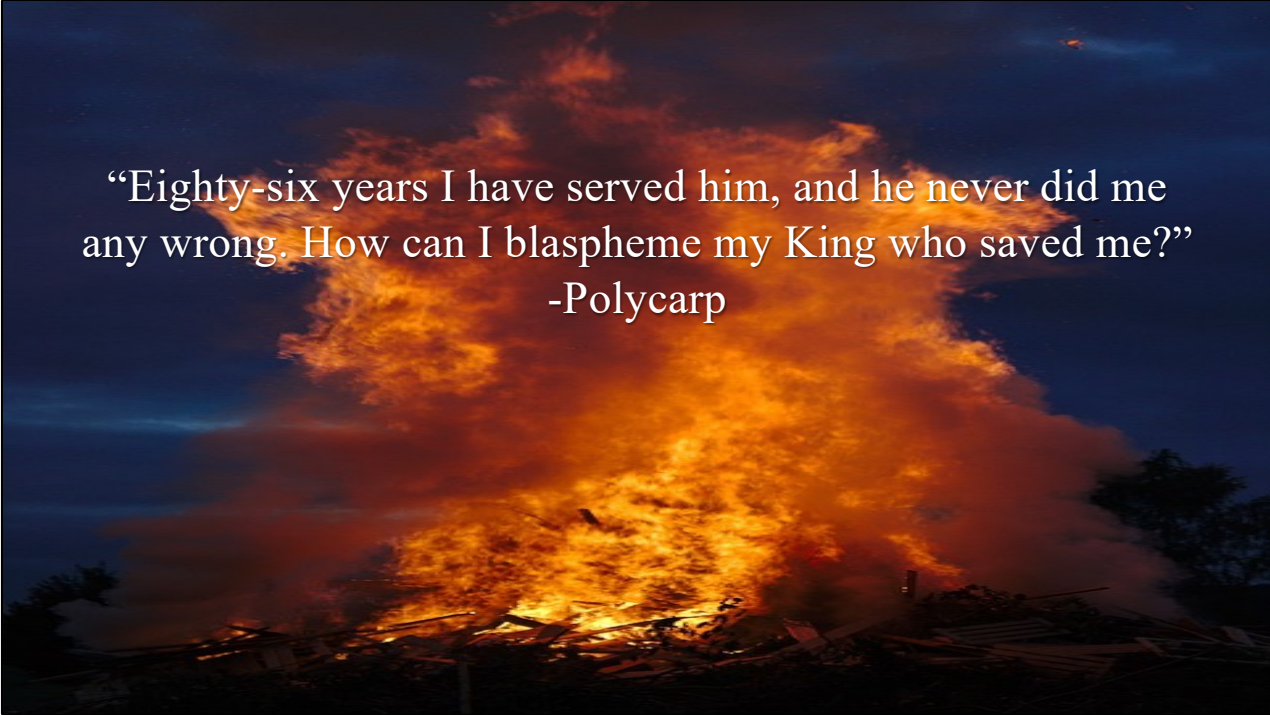
## Backstory of Smyrna

Smyrna was a place of intense suffering for Christians. Cicero called Smyrna “the city of our most faithful and most ancient allies.” There was also a large Jewish population which was hostile to Christians.



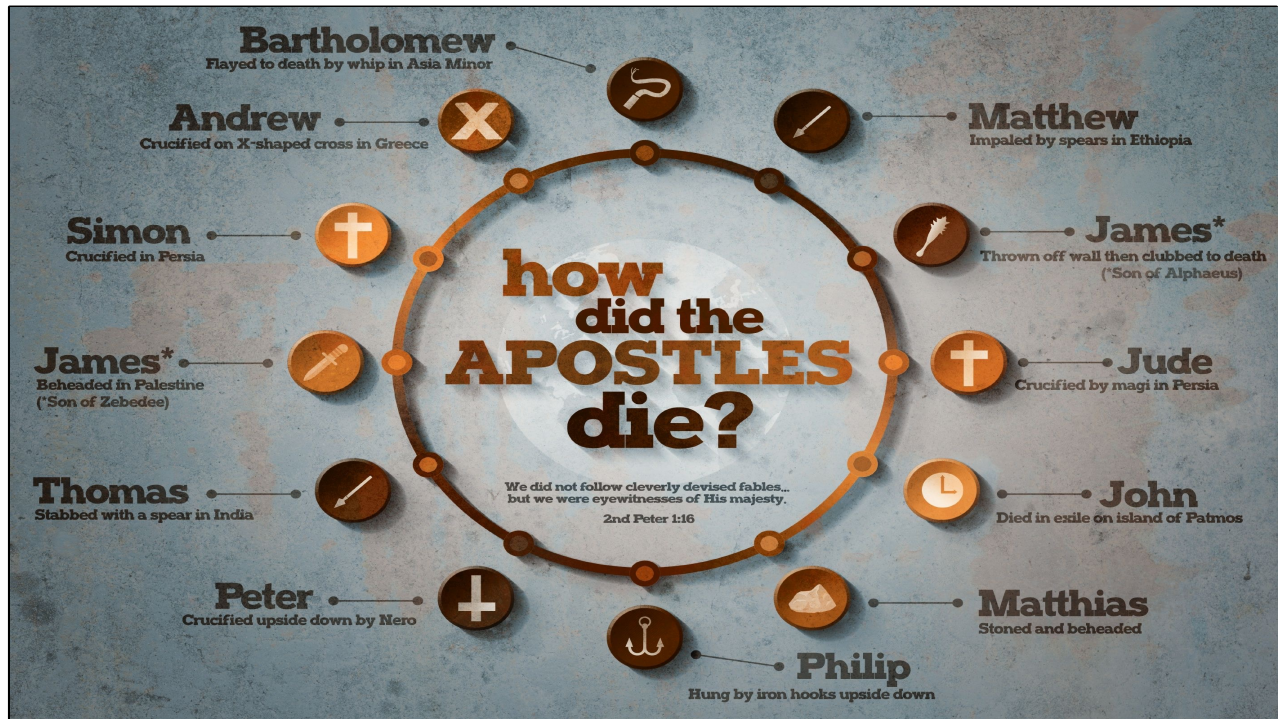
Smyrna is now modern-day Izmir. It was known for its Emperor worship and embrace of numerous gods.

Smyrna was one of the most important cities of the time and was also known for emperor worship. The large Jewish population apparently cooperated with the Romans at times by betraying Christians, including Polycarp, years after Jesus’s Revelation to John.

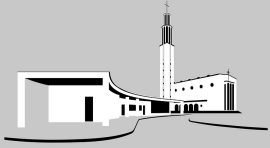



“Eighty-six years I have served him, and he never did me any wrong. How can I blaspheme my King who saved me?”  
-Polycarp

Polycarp was the Bishop of Smyrna and a disciple of John. After the death of another Christian, Germanicus, Polycarp was brought to the proconsul, who in turn urged Polycarp to pledge allegiance to the Emperor, and to renounce Christ. Polycarp’s brave reply when told he would burn was to note that that fire would last “only a moment,” but that the eternal fire would “never go out.”



Historical tradition notes that John is the only one of the Twelve to survive martyrdom. Matthias replaced Judas, as chosen by lot by the other Apostles.

	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Applying the Message of Jesus to Smyrna</b></p> <p>We should: (1) expect suffering, slander, and shame; (2) understand that we are to participate in the suffering of our Lord Jesus Christ; and (3) we should realize that we are being refined by the Spirit.</p>		
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Loving Acclamation</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Loving Rebuke</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Loving Expectation</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Loving Reward</b></p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Affliction; Poverty; Endurance from Those who Slandered Them</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Jesus Gave No Rebuke to Smyrna</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Do Not Fear; Expected to Be Tested; Be Faithful to the Point of Death</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Crown of Life; No Harm Because of the Second Death</p>
			

Has there ever been a greater cancel-culture environment than that found in today's world? There *will* be times when we will suffer for Jesus Christ.

Those who overcome will receive the Crown of Life, a statement of victory in our Lord Jesus Christ. Eternal death will never be the reward of those truly saved by Jesus. Notes Duvall, "The great Christian hope is not removal from trouble but resurrection from the dead."

<sup>2</sup> “Write to the angel of the church in Pergamum: Thus says the one who has the sharp, double-edged sword: <sup>13</sup> I know where you live—where Satan’s throne is. Yet you are holding on to my name and did not deny your faith in me, even in the days of Antipas, my faithful witness who was put to death among you, where Satan lives. <sup>14</sup> But I have a few things against you. You have some there who hold to the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to place a stumbling block in front of the Israelites: to eat meat sacrificed to idols and to commit sexual immorality. <sup>15</sup> In the same way, you also have those who hold to the teaching of the Nicolaitans. <sup>16</sup> So repent! Otherwise, I will come to you quickly and fight against them with the sword of my mouth.

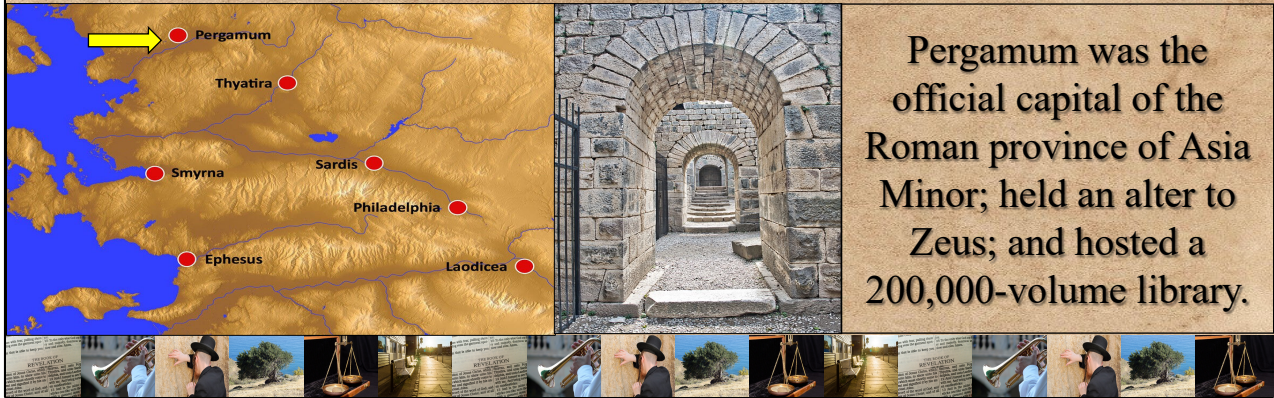
<sup>17</sup> “Let anyone who has ears to hear listen to what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers, I will give some of the hidden manna. I will also give him a white stone, and on the stone a new name is inscribed that no one knows except the one who receives it.



Jesus knows where we are, every second, every day.

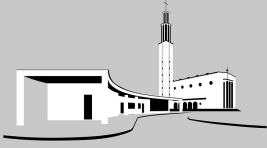

## Backstory of Pergamum

Pergamum was the home of “Satan’s throne.” Antipas was put to death in this city known for emperor worship and false gods; other Christians were apparently persecuted. Some Christians were heavily influenced by the society and compromised their beliefs; actions; and loyalty to God.



Pergamum was a large city with 120,000-200,000 residents. Pergamum, “an intellectual and religious hub,” received “special favor” from the Roman government because of their military loyalty to Rome.

The persecuted church here had already experienced the loss of faithful Antipas, a disciple of Jesus Christ. Many other Christians held onto Jesus’s name and their faith in Him. However, false teaching was also prevalent in Pergamum’s Christian church, and the Lord called their attention to this issue.

	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Applying the Message of Jesus to Pergamum</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">We should embrace Truth and we should not: (1) compromise regarding the Word of God; (2) the Gospel Message; and (3) sound doctrine.</p>		
<p style="text-align: center;">Loving Acclamation</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Rebuke</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Expectation</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Reward</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Holding on to Jesus in the Midst of Evil; Faithful Even to the Death</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Some Following the Teaching of Balaam and the Nicolaitans; Sexual Immorality; Some Eating Meat Sacrificed to Idols</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Repent</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Hidden Manna; White Stone with a New Name Inscribed</p>
			

Any church, denomination, or Christian which bases its thoughts and behavior on anything other than the Truth of Jesus Christ and His Word must repent. Our preferences *cannot* be based on anything but the Word of God and obedience to the Holy Spirit.

The “hidden manna” may refer to eternal sustenance of God for his people, and seemingly contrasts directly with the food sacrificed to idols.

The “white stone” is more difficult to interpret, but it perhaps stands in contrast to the paganistic black stone of the time; or, to the practice of jurors of the time indicating their thoughts of the accused’s innocence by producing a white stone.

Our *own* acquittal is entirely due to the blood and sacrifice of Jesus Christ our Lord, who alone atoned for our sins!



<sup>18</sup> “Write to the angel of the church in Thyatira: Thus says the Son of God, the one whose eyes are like a fiery flame and whose feet are like fine bronze: <sup>19</sup> I know your works—your love, faithfulness, service, and endurance. I know that your last works are greater than the first. <sup>20</sup> But I have this against you: You tolerate the woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess and teaches and deceives my servants to commit sexual immorality and to eat meat sacrificed to idols. <sup>21</sup> I gave her time to repent, but she does not want to repent of her sexual immorality. <sup>22</sup> Look, I will throw her into a sickbed and those who commit adultery with her into great affliction. Unless they repent of her works, <sup>23</sup> I will strike her children dead. Then all the churches will know that I am the one who examines minds and hearts, and I will give to each of you according to your works. <sup>24</sup> I say to the rest of you in Thyatira, who do not hold this teaching, who haven’t known “the so-called secrets<sup>[n]</sup> of Satan” —as they say—I am not putting any other burden on you. <sup>25</sup> Only hold on to what you have until I come. <sup>26</sup> The one who conquers and who keeps my works to the end: I will give him authority over the nations—

<sup>27</sup> **and he will rule them with an iron scepter;**

**he will shatter them like pottery —**

<sup>28</sup> just as I have received this from my Father. I will also give him the morning star.

<sup>29</sup> “Let anyone who has ears to hear listen to what the Spirit says to the churches.



The message from Jesus to Thyatira is His longest of His messages to the Seven Churches.

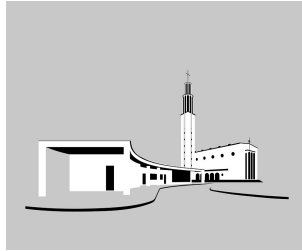
## Backstory of Thyatira

Thyatira was an unremarkable town. Some Christians in Thyatira had compromised their doctrinal and theological understanding. Lydia was from Thyatira and may have helped found the church there. Perhaps the smallest church, it received the longest letter from Jesus.



Trades in general were prevalent because of Thyatira's location.

Jezebel, King Ahab's notorious wife and devout Baal worshiper, was apparently symbolic here of the prophetess in Thyatira who was similarly idolatrous and immoral. She refused to repent, and Jesus was quite firm with His Church for not removing her from authority. This is absolutely a message to the Church today! Tolerance and social acceptance for anything that does not line up with His Word is forbidden, and we are to not allow it in the Church.



### Applying the Message of Jesus to Thyatira

We should: (1) continue steadfastly and increasingly in good works; (2) hold onto the Truth of God’s Word; (3) beware and “guard against” false teaching and following personalities; (4) hold strong moral standards; and (5) accept the discipline of Christ.

Loving Acclamation	Rebuke	Expectation	Reward
<p>Works; Love; Faithfulness; Service; Endurance; Increase in Works</p>	<p>Tolerant of Jezebel and Her Teaching; Sexual Immorality; Food Sacrificed to Idols</p>	<p>Hold on Until the Return of Jesus; Keep on Working Until the LORD’s Return</p>	<p>Authority Over the Nations and the Morning Star</p>



It is not “love” to accept an “anything goes” attitude: Christians should base every decision, every action, and every thought on the Word of God and *His* will. This does not mean the Church is only for perfect people, who do not exist outside of the Person of Jesus Christ, but instead, that false teaching will not be allowed in the Church. It is my strong belief that Christians should be counter-cultural, yet loving, in our response to the society around us.

Overcomers are promised “authority over the nations,” a promise I believe to indicate both the Millennial Reign and all eternity.

Additionally, the “Morning Star” is promised, Jesus Christ the Messiah. We are His!

# The Revelation of Jesus Christ

## Revelation 3

Revelation 3: Where Should Our Church Be?

Dr. Mark Alan Langner



Revelation 3 address the last three of the Seven churches: one is a dead church; one is a loving church; and one is a lukewarm church.

**3** “Write to the angel of the church in Sardis: Thus says the one who has the seven spirits of God and the seven stars: I know your works; you have a reputation for being alive, but you are dead. **2** Be alert and strengthen what remains, which is about to die, for I have not found your works complete before my God. **3** Remember, then, what you have received and heard; keep it, and repent. If you are not alert, I will come like a thief, and you have no idea at what hour I will come upon you. **4** But you have a few people in Sardis who have not defiled their clothes, and they will walk with me in white, because they are worthy.

**5** “In the same way, the one who conquers will be dressed in white clothes, and I will never erase his name from the book of life but will acknowledge his name before my Father and before his angels.

**6** “Let anyone who has ears to hear listen to what the Spirit says to the churches.



Keener notes, “Jesus’ oracle to Ephesus challenges a loveless church; his oracle to Smyrna encourages a persecuted church; his oracle to Pergamum addresses both persecution and compromise; his oracle to Thyatira challenges compromise. But Jesus’ word to Sardis summons a sleeping church to wake up.”

## Backstory of Sardis

Sardis was apparently a place of tolerance for both Jews and Christians. The Jewish synagogue was approximately the length of a football field. Sardis was devastated by an earthquake prior to the Revelation; therefore, it had been a city of consequence but was now great only in memory.



Sardis is known for the large Jewish population and for the lack of persecution.



It seems vital to note that Jesus was rather blunt with Sardis – “Wake up!” is a serious reprimand. It is also not unusual – there are many dead churches today.

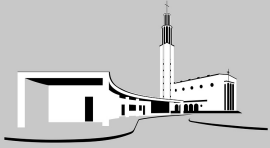

## Ten Symptoms of a Dying or Dead Church

1. Jesus is an afterthought.
2. Love for God and others is not evident.
3. The Holy Spirit's gifts and calling are marginalized.
4. "In the past" is a common refrain.
5. Worship is defined by a musical style.
6. Scripture is used as an agent of preference instead of the Word of Truth.
7. Prayer is uneventful, overly strategized, powerless, and unmoving.
8. Servant-leadership, i.e., followership, is uncommon.
9. Tithing is only about money.
10. Gossip, divisive rhetoric, discord, and dissension are the norm.



It is not size which determines whether a church is alive or dead, although there are many small churches which were once large, vibrant communities for Christ.

Any tradition that is based on *preference* rather than *Scripture* can become a hindrance to church growth. Church methods constantly change, which is fine. What should *never* change is the *Message: the Gospel of Jesus Christ our Lord!*

	<h3>Applying the Message of Jesus to Sardis</h3> <p>We should: (1) be wary of comfort – comfortableness is rarely positive in Christianity; (2) wake up, strengthen, remember, obey, repent!; (3) be watchful and ready for the return of Jesus Christ!</p>		
	Loving Acclamation	Rebuke	Expectation
<p>Works: Undefined Clothing</p>	<p>Spiritually Dead</p>	<p>Wake up! Strengthen What Remains. Repent.</p>	<p>Dressed in White; Name Will Not Be Erased from the Book of Life; Name Acknowledged to The Father and His Angels</p>
			

This is where many US churches now find themselves.

Overcomers are promised to be dressed in white, likely indicating purity through which we are to address God (found only if we are in Christ).

Overcomers' names will be found in the Book of Life.

Overcomers in Christ will be acknowledged by Jesus before God and His angels.



<sup>7</sup>“Write to the angel of the church in Philadelphia: Thus says the Holy One, the true one, the one who has the key of David, who opens and no one will close, and who closes and no one opens: <sup>8</sup>I know your works. Look, I have placed before you an open door that no one can close because you have but little power; yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name. <sup>9</sup>Note this: I will make those from the synagogue of Satan, who claim to be Jews and are not, but are lying—I will make them come and bow down at your feet, and they will know that I have loved you. <sup>10</sup>Because you have kept my command to endure, I will also keep you from the hour of testing that is going to come on the whole world to test those who live on the earth. <sup>11</sup>I am coming soon. Hold on to what you have, so that no one takes your crown.

<sup>12</sup>“The one who conquers I will make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he will never go out again. 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.

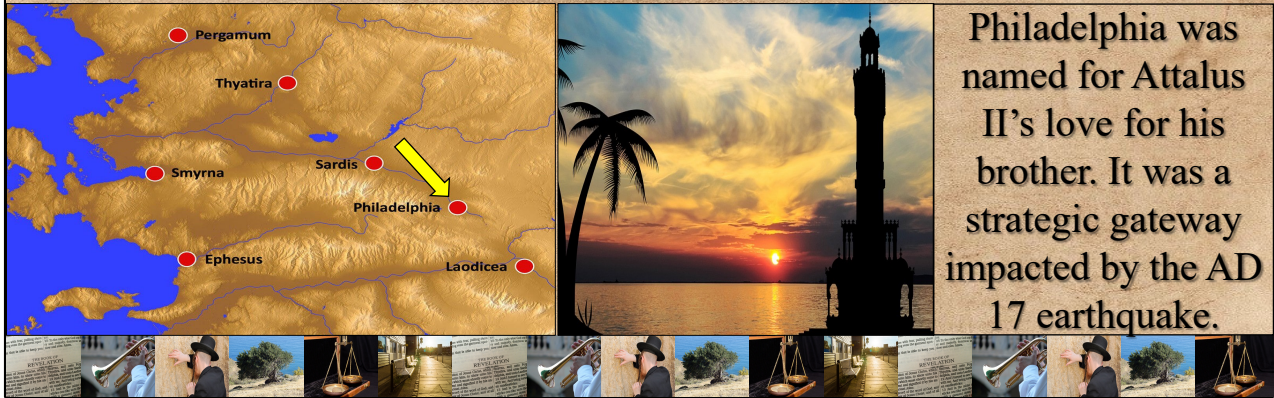
<sup>13</sup>“Let anyone who has ears to hear listen to what the Spirit says to the churches.



The Church of Philadelphia receives no rebuke from Jesus.

## Backstory of Philadelphia

Philadelphia loved Jesus and they loved His Word. Though they were located in a city loyal to Rome, the Philadelphia church was loyal and devoted to the LORD Jesus Christ. At least some of the local Jews were hostile to this beloved church.



The City of Philadelphia was named after two brothers who were influential in founding the city, Eumenes II and Attalus II. The Church of Philadelphia faced Jewish persecution, including apparent expulsion from the Jewish synagogue.

“I will place the key of the house of David on his shoulder, what he opens, no one can close; what he closes, no one can open.”

-Isaiah 22:22

“I am the gate. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will come in and go out and find pasture.”

-John 10:9

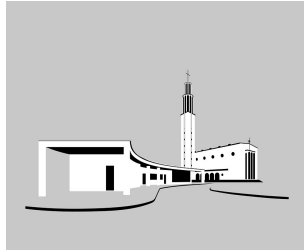
“Jesus told him, ‘I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you know me, you will also know my Father. From now on you do know him and have seen him.’”

-John 14:7



“For there is one God and one mediator between God and humanity, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all, a testimony at the proper time.”  
-1 Timothy 2:5-6

Jesus is the Only Way to the Father. There is no other way to be saved, except that of the Son Jesus Christ.



### Applying the Message of Jesus to Philadelphia

We should: (1) persevere, even during the most difficult times; (2) trust the One who has saved us; (3) stand firm. Jesus judges us not on what we start with, but on what we do with what He gives us!

Loving Acclamation	Loving Rebuke	Loving Expectation	Loving Reward
<p>Works; Keeping to God's Word; Refused to Deny Jesus's Name.</p>	<p>Jesus Gave No Rebuke to Philadelphia</p>	<p>Keeping Holding On to What You Have</p>	<p>Kept from Hour of Temptation; Made a Pillar in God's Temple; Receive the Name of God and New Jerusalem; Receive Jesus's New Name</p>



Overcomers are helped by Jesus during times of testing and temptation.

The overcomers' new name would be from Jesus Himself.



## Backstory of Laodicea

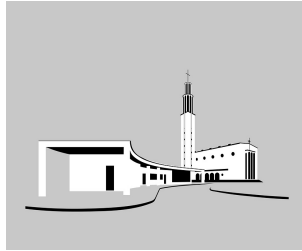
Laodicea was only ten miles from Colosse. Its water supply was stagnant and disagreeable to the inhabitants with no direct access to either the cold water of the mountains or the hot water of nearby springs. The town – and sadly – its church, were arrogant, self-satisfied, wealthy, and generally gross. It was a both a banking and a medical town known for its famous eye salve.



Laodicea was enamored with Zeus and numerous other false gods. Jews seemed to have blended into their surrounding community.



Note the contrast of the supposedly self-sufficient Laodicean Church to the Originator of God's Creation – Jesus.



### Applying the Message of Jesus to Laodicea

We should (1) remember, regardless of our social status, to thankfully trust Christ – alone - for all things; (2) consecrate our lives to Him; (3) remember the poor, marginalized, hurting, and fellow suffering Christians – open our eyes to what is around us.

Loving Acclamation	Rebuke	Expectation	Reward
<p>Jesus Did Not Offer Any Acclamation to Laodicea</p>	<p>Lukewarm: Wretched; Pitiful; Poor; Blind; Naked</p>	<p>Buy Gold Refined in Fire and White Clothing; Add Eye Ointment; Be Zealous; Repent</p>	<p>Invitation to sit on Christ's Throne with Him</p>



Note verses 19- 20: the keys are inviting Jesus into our lives, repenting of our evil sin, and fellowshiping with our Lord and Savior. Jesus offers an open invitation to “anyone.”

Obedient overcomers get to share in the reward of the apostles, witnessing with Christ the Throne Room of Heaven.

“There are many expressions of Christianity: the different denominations, the different systems of theology, the different modes of worship, the different types of church polity, the different schools of evangelism and the different architectural expressions of the church buildings...

The question remains,  
‘What is the biblical church?’”

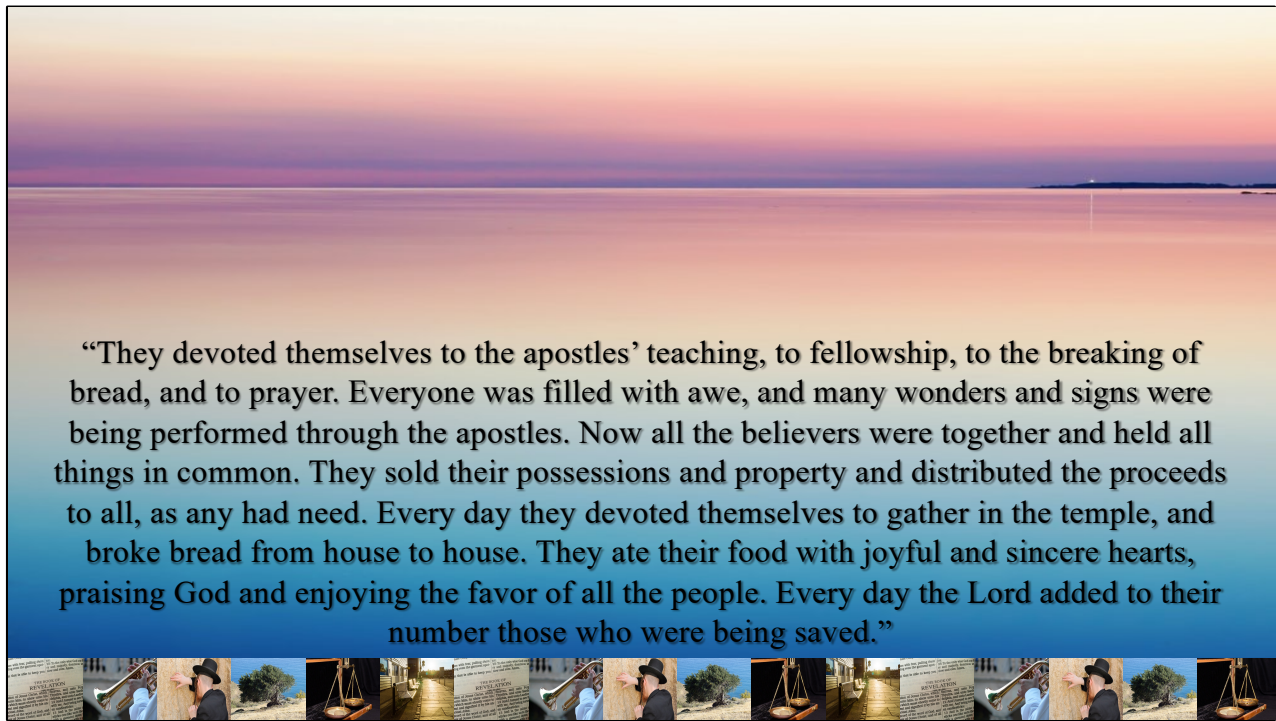
“...The only true model for the church is found on the pages of the New Testament...”  
and the “...purpose is to carry out the Great Commission.”

-Elmer Towns



Summarizing Revelation 2-3 must start with Jesus in consideration of *His* Church.





“They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching, to fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and signs were being performed through the apostles. Now all the believers were together and held all things in common. They sold their possessions and property and distributed the proceeds to all, as any had need. Every day they devoted themselves to gather in the temple, and broke bread from house to house. They ate their food with joyful and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. Every day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.”

*This is the Model for the Christian Church.*

“The believer need not feel any shame when yearning for the physical presence of other Christians, as if one were still living too much in the flesh. A human being is created as a body; the Son of God appeared on earth in the body for our sake and was raised in the body. In the sacrament the believer receives the Lord Christ in the body, and the resurrection of the dead will bring about the perfected community of God’s spiritual-physical creatures. Therefore, the believer praises the Creator, the Reconciler and the Redeemer, God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, for the bodily presence of the other Christian.”

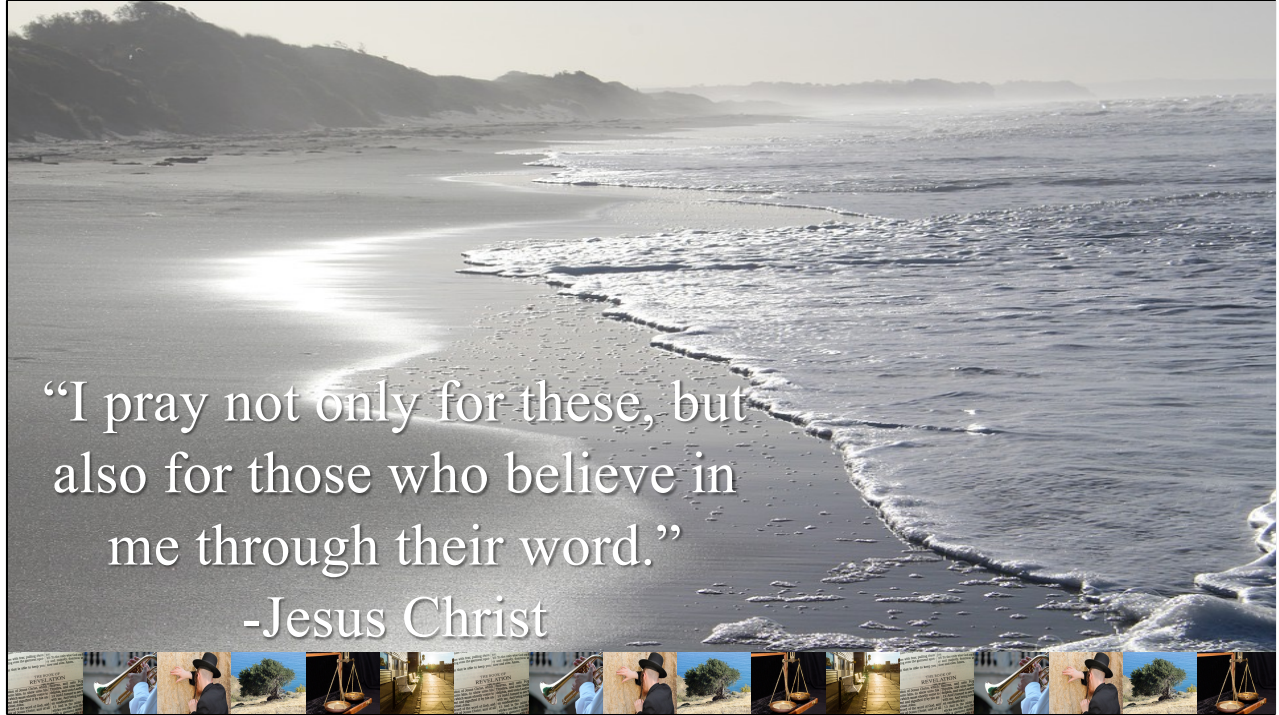
-Dietrich Bonhoeffer



We must be with each other; worshiping the Christ, our Lord, and working together for His Kingdom! We must be the “Visible Church-Community,” witnessing for Christ, loving each other, and loving others outside the walls of the Church.

Psalm 133:1 states: “How good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in harmony!” (CSB).

Like the earliest Apostles, we must be willing to suffer and endure for Christ; yet, we are encouraged by the Great Comforter Himself. Jesus is worth any price we pay, because *He paid* the greatest price of all, “for where sin multiplied, grace multiplied even more” (Romans 5;20b)!



Jesus knew we would need His help and His prayer. He knows Christians will be tempted and will be persecuted for Him and for His Word.