

The Book of Revelation
The Orchard Equipping Center
Tuesday Evenings: 7:00 – 8:00 PM
September 10 – November 26, 2024
Instructor – David Courson

▣ **The Purpose:** of the Book of Revelation is to reveal Jesus Christ and give hope to all believers, especially those who have suffered for their faith, by proclaiming Christ's final victory over evil and the reality of eternal life with Him.

- Jesus Christ is coming again.
- Evil will be judged.
- The dead will be raised to eternal life or eternal destruction.

▣ **The Author:** The apostle John.

- John is the only one of Jesus' original 12 disciples who was not killed for the faith. John also wrote the Gospel of John, I John, II John, and III John.
- The Gospel of John was written that we might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God (John 20:31). 1st, 2nd and 3rd John were written that we might know we have eternal life (John 5:13). So, John wrote his Gospel that we might believe, his epistles that we might be sure, and the Book of Revelation that we might be ready.
- In 66, Jewish zealots led an uprising against Roman rule and successfully drove the Roman army out of Jerusalem. The emperor Nero sent Vespasian, and his son Titus to quell the revolt. Vespasian conquered Galilee in 67. In 68 he marched toward Jerusalem but withdrew to Caesarea after learning that Nero committed suicide on June 9. He proclaimed himself emperor in 69 and turned the war over to Titus.
- Titus laid siege against Jerusalem for 143 days before finally breaking through the walls and decimating the city and the Temple. The conquest was complete on September 2, 70, thus fulfilling the prophecy Jesus made to his disciples that before his crucifixion that the Temple in Jerusalem would be so completely destroyed that not one stone would be left on another (Matthew 24:2).
- After the fall of Jerusalem in 70, the remaining Jewish soldiers fled with their wives and children to the rock fortress on the mountain of Masada, near the Dead Sea. 960 people found refuge there. They repelled the Roman army for 3 years. In 73, as the Roman army scaled a ramp that they had built on the side of the mountain, the Jews knew they could no longer fend off the enemy. As their fortress burned around them, the Jews committed mass suicide rather than face enslavement under the Romans.
- Domitian became Caesar after his older brother, Titus, died at the age of 42 in 81. Domitian, age 21, declared himself "lord and god" and demanded to be worshipped. Those refusing to

acknowledge his deity were persecuted, including all classes of Christians (Roman citizens, noncitizens, male, female, slave and free). During this time, John, who had been living in Ephesus, was exiled to the island of Patmos for “preaching the word of God and speaking about Jesus” (Revelation 1:9).

- In the Roman Empire, prisoners were commonly exiled to islands. Patmos was a desolate volcanic island 10 miles long and 6 miles wide, 37 miles off the coast in the Mediterranean Sea. There, in about 95, John received 4 visions described in the book of Revelation:
 1. Revelation 1:9 – 3:22
 2. Revelation 4:1 – 16:21
 3. Revelation 17:1 – 21:8
 4. Revelation 21:9 – 22:17
- Domitian’s behavior became so intolerable to others, including his wife, that he was assassinated on September 18, 96, at the age of 44. Nerva, the next Caesar, recalled all of Domitian’s exiles in 96, and John returned to Ephesus. In the first vision, the Son of God sends letters to 7 churches in Asia Minor (Turkey), revealing the blessings that will come to them if they are faithful, and the judgements that will come if they are unfaithful. The rest of the book (visions 2 – 4) gives details of these blessings and judgments.

▣ **Outline of Revelation:** Revelation is the only Book of the Bible with its own divine outline (*“Write down what you have seen—both the things that are now happening and the things that will happen.”* Revelation 1:19).

- **Chapter 1: “What you have seen” – The reality of the Resurrected Jesus.**
- **Chapters 2 – 3: “The things that are now happening” – Jesus gives 7 messages to 7 churches.** This encompasses the chronology of church history from the beginning of the early church to the present.
- **Chapters 4 – 22: “The things that will happen.”**
 - Chapters 4 – 5: The church is raptured and taken to heaven for a 7 year “honeymoon” with our Lord.
 - Chapters 6 – 19: The Tribulation occurs on earth as God pours out His wrath on a Christ-rejecting world.
 - Chapter 20: The Millennium – a 1,000-year period of peace and prosperity as our Lord rules and reigns from Jerusalem. At the end of the Millennium, Satan is loosed. A final rebellion ensues before Satan is permanently cast into hell.
 - Chapters 21 – 22: A new heaven and new earth are created where we will live forever.

▣ **Key Verse:** *“³ God blesses the one who reads the words of this prophecy to the church, and he blesses all who listen to its message and obey what it says, for the time is near.”* (Revelation 1:3). Note: The Greek word translated “reads” literally means “to read out loud.”

▣ **Definitions:** interpreting the Book of Revelation:

- **Preterist View:** John is writing to encourage Christians in his own day who are experiencing persecution from the Roman Empire.
- **Futurist View:** Except for the first 3 chapters, John is describing things that will occur at the end of history.
- **Historicist View:** The Book of Revelation is a presentation of history from John's day until the second coming of Jesus Christ and beyond.
- **Idealist View:** The Book of Revelation is a symbolic representation of the continual struggle of good and evil. It doesn't refer to any particular historical events.
- **Premillennialism:** The hallmark of premillennial eschatology is the literal interpretation of prophecy. Premillennial theologians teach that there will be a series of key events that occur before the millennial rule of Christ on earth. These events include the rapture of the church, a seven-year time of tribulation and the return of Christ to establish a thousand-year rule on earth.
- **Postmillennialism:** Postmillennial theology teaches that the Church will be triumphant as a result of the Church Christianizing the world. After this, Christ will then return, upon which believers will enter the eternal state. Postmillennialists, therefore, apply a more allegorical approach (idealist view) to their interpretation of the book of Revelation.
- **Amillennialism:** Amillennialism theology can be deciphered by its title. "A" preceding millennium means this view teaches there is no future millennial earthly rule of Christ sitting on David's throne. This stance also employs an allegorical interpretation and non-literal approach to prophecy. The events mentioned in the book of Revelation are being played out presently in the church age. Revelation reveals that the situation in the world will worsen before Christ returns. According to the amillennialists' beliefs, Christ will one day return not to establish a millennial rule on earth but to usher in the eternal state.

▣ **The Rapture:** Jesus' Promise to us (John 14:1-3).

- **Pre-Tribulation View:** Christ comes in fulfillment of His own promise (Revelation 3:10).
- **Mid-Tribulation View:** Christ raptures His church in the middle of the Tribulation (Revelation 11).
- **Post-Tribulation View:** Christ will come at the end of the Tribulation, which means the church will go through the tribulation and be raptured before the Second Coming.
- **How the Pre-Tribulation View conforms to Scripture:**
 1. The anger that should have been poured out on us was absorbed by Jesus Christ on the Cross of Calvary. *"⁹For God chose to save us through our Lord Jesus Christ, not to pour out his anger on us. ¹⁰Christ died for us so that, whether we are dead or alive when he*

- returns, we can live with him forever. ¹¹ So encourage each other and build each other up, just as you are already doing” (I Thessalonians 5:9 – 11).
2. Jesus told us to pray that we would be raptured before the Tribulation. How can we be “strong enough to escape these coming horrors and stand” before our Lord? Only one way. Because of what Jesus did for us on the Cross of Calvary. ³⁶ Keep alert at all times. And pray that you might be strong enough to escape these coming horrors and stand before the Son of Man” (Luke 21:36).
 3. Jesus Christ promised to deliver us. ¹⁰ “Because you have obeyed my command to persevere, I will protect you from the great time of testing that will come upon the whole world to test those who belong to this world. ¹¹ I am coming soon. Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take away your crown” (Revelation 3:10).
 4. The Bible says that God will “not pour out his anger on us.” ⁹ For God chose to save us through our Lord Jesus Christ, not to pour out his anger on us. ¹⁰ Christ died for us so that, whether we are dead or alive when he returns, we can live with him forever. ¹¹ So encourage each other and build each other up, just as you are already doing” (I Thessalonians 5:9).
 5. This doctrine is a comforting one. The belief that the Rapture happens after or in the middle of the Tribulation isn’t comforting, because it means believers must endure unbelievable agony before they’re taken to heaven. ¹³ And now, dear brothers and sisters, we want you to know what will happen to the believers who have died so you will not grieve like people who have no hope. ¹⁴ For since we believe that Jesus died and was raised to life again, we also believe that when Jesus returns, God will bring back with him the believers who have died. ¹⁵ We tell you this directly from the Lord: We who are still living when the Lord returns will not meet him ahead of those who have died. ¹⁶ For the Lord himself will come down from heaven with a commanding shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet call of God. First, the believers who have died will rise from their graves. ¹⁷ Then, together with them, we who are still alive and remain on the earth will be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. Then we will be with the Lord forever. ¹⁸ So encourage each other with these words” (I Thessalonians 4:13 – 18).
 6. Rapture before the Tribulation is illustrated in Genesis 19, where angels delivered Lot and his family before the destruction of Sodom. Peter refers to this in II Peter 2:9. ⁹ So you see, the Lord knows how to rescue godly people from their trials, even while keeping the wicked under punishment until the day of final judgment” (II Peter 2:9).
 7. Rapture before the Tribulation is illustrated in Enoch, who was taken to heaven prior to the flood. ²³ Enoch lived 365 years, ²⁴ walking in close fellowship with God. Then one day he disappeared, because God took him” (Genesis 5:23-24).
 8. The Pre-Tribulation Rapture makes sense historically and scripturally. In keeping with Jewish custom, before a man would marry, he would add a room on to his father’s house for himself and his bride. When the addition was complete, and when the father gave his approval, a trumpet would sound, and the bridegroom would go meet his bride. Following the wedding ceremony, the bride groom would take his bride to his father’s

- house, where they would celebrate their “honeymoon” for 7 days in their newly completed “bridal suite.” At the end of 7 days, they would join the community. That’s exactly what’s going to happen with us. Jesus is preparing a place for us in heaven. At the appointed time, only known by the Father, a trumpet will sound, and Jesus will meet us in the air to take us to the “Bridal Suite” He has prepared for us. We will remain with Him in heaven for 7 years before we are presented to the world, where we’ll rule and reign with Him. *“Don’t let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God, and trust also in me. ²There is more than enough room in my Father’s home. If this were not so, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you? ³When everything is ready, I will come and get you, so that you will always be with me where I am”* (John 14:1 – 3).
9. The Pre-Tribulation Rapture follows the Book of Revelation. If you don’t embrace a Pre-Tribulation view, you have to put chapters 4 – 5 after chapter 11 (if you embrace a Mid-Tribulation view); or after chapter 19 (if you embrace a post-Tribulation view). Only a Pre-Tribulation view of the Rapture allows for a consistent flow of the Book of Revelation.
 10. Jesus warned the church at Thyatira that if they didn’t repent, they would experience “great tribulation” (Revelation 2:22). If the rapture won’t occur until after the Tribulation, what would be the reason for this warning?
 11. The Pre-Tribulation View is the only view that conforms to the many admonitions in Scripture to watch and be ready for Jesus to call us to meet Him in the air at any moment. *“²For you know quite well that the day of the Lord’s return will come unexpectedly, like a thief in the night”* (I Thessalonians 5:2); *“³⁶No one knows the day or hour when these things will happen, not even the angels in heaven or the Son himself. Only the Father knows”* (Matthew 24:36).
 12. The Bible tells us that Jesus will deliver the church “from the terrors of the coming judgment.” *“¹⁰And they speak of how you are looking forward to the coming of God’s Son from heaven—Jesus, whom God raised from the dead. He is the one who has rescued us from the terrors of the coming judgment.”* (I Thessalonians 1:10).
 13. The Tribulation is unnecessary for the church. Referred to as “the time of Jacob’s trouble,” Israel will be awakened and at last see Jesus as Messiah. God will make Himself known to them, and they shall be saved. ³⁰*“In the distant future, when you are suffering all these things, you will finally return to the Lord your God and listen to what he tells you. ³¹For the Lord your God is a merciful God; he will not abandon you or destroy you or forget the solemn covenant he made with your ancestors”* (Deuteronomy 4:30-31).
 14. The Book of Daniel confirms a Pre-Tribulation prophecy. It’s clear from Daniel 9 that the 69 weeks refer to the time between the commandment to rebuild the temple, given in 445 by Artaxerxes, and the coming of the Messiah, fulfilled perfectly on Palm Sunday when Jesus rode into Jerusalem on the back of a donkey. But Daniel was also told *“Seventy weeks are determined for your people ...”* (Daniel 9:24). The 70th week of Daniel refers to the Tribulation. The 70 weeks of Daniel refer to Israel. The church wasn’t

present for the first 69 weeks. And the 70th week doesn't begin until after the church is raptured.

15. The church is never mentioned in the Bible during the events of the Tribulation (Revelation 4-18).

▣ **Events of the Rapture:**

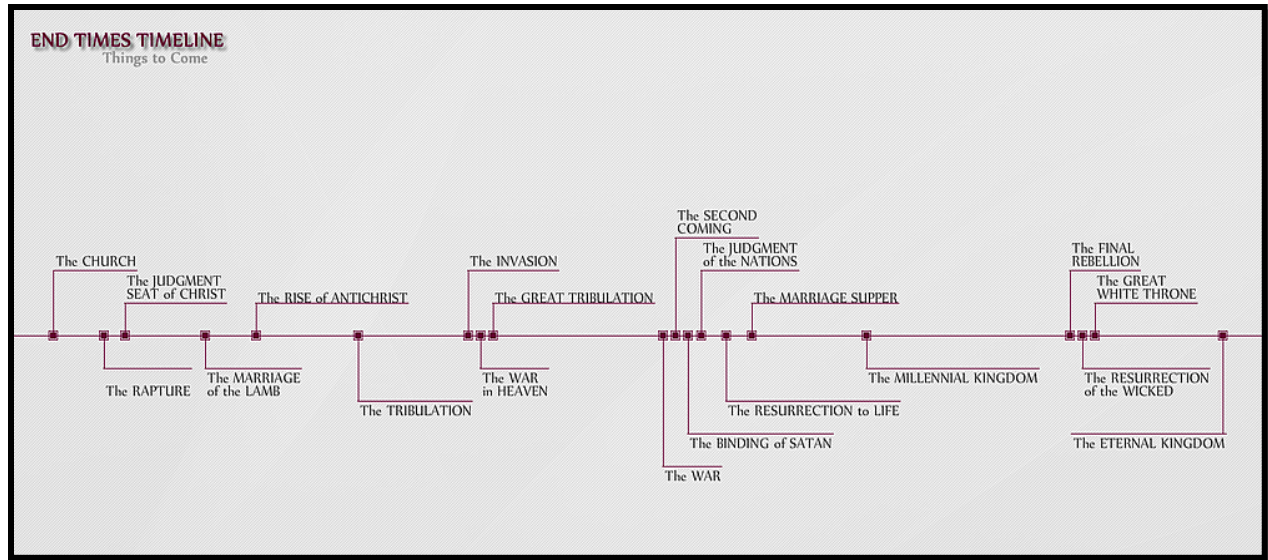
1. Jesus Christ will descend from Heaven – where He is preparing a place for us (John 14:1-3).
2. Our Lord will shout as He descends, “in the twinkling of an eye” (I Corinthians 15:52).
3. He will resurrect Christians who have already died (I Thessalonians 4:16-17).
4. We will hear the voice of the archangel (I Thessalonians 4:16).
5. We will hear the trumpet call of God (I Thessalonians 4:16).
6. We who are alive will be changed by having our bodies made “immortal” (I Corinthians 15:51-53).
7. We will be caught up (raptured) in the clouds, to be reunited with believers who had earlier died in a glorious reunion. We will meet our Lord in the air. (I Thessalonians 4:17).
8. Christ will take us to “the Father’s house” (John 14:3).
9. We will always be with the Lord (I Thessalonians 4:17).

▣ **The Most Significant Truth in Biblical Prophecy:** The Return of Jesus Christ.

- Mentioned 329 times in the Bible.
- The second most frequently mentioned doctrine in all of Scripture (only the subject of salvation is mentioned more frequently).
- The 216 chapters of the New Testament contain 318 references to the second coming of Jesus Christ (one verse out of every 30).
- All but four of the New Testament books contain teachings on the second coming of Jesus Christ.

▣ **The Olivet Discourse:** The Most Important single passage of prophecy in the entire Bible.

- Found in Matthew 24 – 25, Mark 13, and Luke 21.
- When studied in relation to Daniel 2, 7, 8 – 9, and Revelation 2 – 20, the Olivet Discourse gives more information about future events than in the writings of any world religion.



▣ **Overview of Sequence of Coming Events: According to God’s Word.**

1. The Rapture.
2. The Judgment Seat of Christ.
3. The Marriage of the Lamb.
4. The Rise of the Antichrist.
5. The Tribulation.
6. The Great Tribulation.
7. The Battle of Armageddon.
8. The Second Coming of Jesus Christ.
9. The Binding of Satan.
10. The Marriage Supper.
11. The Millennial Kingdom.
12. The Final Rebellion.
13. The Resurrection of the Wicked.
14. The Great White Throne Judgment.
15. The Eternal Kingdom.

▣ **Chapter 1: “What you have seen” – The reality of the Resurrected Jesus.**

- **Revelation 1:1 – 2:** *“This is a revelation from Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants the events that must soon take place. He sent an angel to present this revelation to*

his servant John, ²who faithfully reported everything he saw. This is his report of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ.”

- This book is the revelation of Jesus Christ (not St. John the Divine). The Father gave revelation to the Son. The Son gave revelation to John. And John gave revelation to us. An angel was sent by God.
 - 34 (of 66) books in the Bible refer to angels.
 - Jesus taught referred to angels (Matthew 8:10; 24:31; 26:53; etc.).
 - Angels were created by God (Psalm 148:2 -5; Colossians 1:16; etc.).
 - Angels were created before the world (Job 38:6-7; etc.).
 - Angels were created holy (Ezekiel 28:15; Jude 6).
 - They have intellect (Matthew 28:5; I Peter 1:12).
 - They have emotions (Job 38:7; Luke 2:13; 15:10).
 - They have will (Jude 6).
 - Angels exist as spirits – not with material bodies (Hebrews 1:14).
 - An angel can be in only one place at a time (Daniel 9:21-23; 10:10-14).
 - Although they are spirit beings, they can appear in human form in dreams (Matthew 1:20); in natural sight with human functions (Genesis 18:1-8; 22:19:1); and seen by some and not others (I Kings 6:15-17).
 - Angels cannot reproduce (Mark 12:25).
 - They do not die (Luke 20:36).
 - Angels have more knowledge than humans (Matthew 24:31; Luke 1:13-16) but less than God (Matthew 24:36).
 - They have more power than humans (II Peter 2:11; Acts 5:19) but less than God.
 - Angels are organized and ranked. Michael is named as an “archangel” (Jude 9). There are also “chief princes” (Daniel 10:13), “seraphim” (Isaiah 6:1-3) and “cherubim” (Genesis 3:22-24).
 - Angels are continually involved in praising God (Revelation 4:6-11) through describing His attributes (Isaiah 6:3) and singing His praises (Revelation 5:8-9).
 - Angels announced the birth of Jesus Christ (Luke 1:26-33; 2:13); protected Him (Matthew 2:13); strengthened Him (Matthew 4:11; Luke 22:43); and explained to humans His resurrection (Matthew 28:6) and ascension (Acts 1:10-11).
 - Angels carry out God’s government. They are God’s servants (Psalm 103:20; Hebrews 1:7) and messengers (Luke 1:19; 2:8-14).
 - They can be involved in controlling nature (Revelation 7:1; 16:3-9), nations (II Kings 19:35), Satan and demons (Daniel 10:13, 21; 12:1).
 - Angels will perform future judgement for God (Matthew 13:3; Revelation 15:1; 16:1-21).
 - Angels protect God’s people. They are sent to serve believers (Hebrews 1:14). They protect the godly (Psalm 34:7; Daniel 6:20-23) and oppose our enemies (Psalm 35:4-5).
 - Angels are specifically assigned as guardians of individuals (Matthew 18:10).

- They are God’s agents in answering prayer (Acts 12:27), even bringing physical provisions (Genesis 21:17-20; I Kings 19:5-7).
- They assist believers at death (Luke 16:22; Jude 9).
- **Revelation 1:3:** *“³ God blesses the one who reads the words of this prophecy to the church, and he blesses all who listen to its message and obey what it says, for the time is near.”* (Revelation 1:3).
- Note: The Greek word translated “reads” literally means “to read out loud.”
- **Revelation 1:4 – 6:** *“⁴ This letter is from John to the seven churches in the province of Asia. Grace and peace to you from the one who is, who always was, and who is still to come; from the sevenfold Spirit before his throne; ⁵ and from Jesus Christ. He is the faithful witness to these things, the first to rise from the dead, and the ruler of all the kings of the world. All glory to him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by shedding his blood for us. ⁶ He has made us a Kingdom of priests for God his Father. All glory and power to him forever and ever! Amen.”*
- Asia refers to present-day Turkey.
- “Grace” (charis – Greek) and “Peace” (shalom – Hebrew) combined is a powerful greeting because we can’t have peace until we understand 'love of God through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.
- “The one who is, and always was, and is still to come” (Verse 4) refers to God the Father.
- “The sevenfold Spirit” refers to the seven-fold ministry of the Holy Spirit as seen in Isaiah 11:2 (*“And the Spirit of the Lord will rest on him – the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord”* Isaiah 11:2).
- “Jesus Christ” completes the Holy Trinity found in this passage.
- **Revelation 1:7 – 8:** *“⁷ Look! He comes with the clouds of heaven. And everyone will see him – even those who pierced him. And all the nations of the world will mourn for him. Yes! Amen! ⁸ “I am the Alpha and the Omega—the beginning and the end,” says the Lord God. “I am the one who is, who always was, and who is still to come—the Almighty One.”*
- In the original text, John writes out the word “Alpha” under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Alpha is the first letter of the Greek alphabet. But he only uses the first letter of “Omega.” Perhaps it’s because the Lord is the beginning, and without end. We’ll spend eternity exploring His nature.
- **Revelation 1:9 – 11:** *“⁹ I, John, am your brother and your partner in suffering and in God’s Kingdom and in the patient endurance to which Jesus calls us. I was exiled to the island of Patmos for preaching the word of God and for my testimony about Jesus. ¹⁰ It was the Lord’s Day, and I was worshiping in the Spirit. Suddenly, I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet blast. ¹¹ It said, “Write in a book everything you see, and send it to the seven*

churches in the cities of Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea.”

- John is writing as a pastor of the 7 churches under his care. These people are being tortured, persecuted and slaughtered. He was with them. He was their friend. Although he was alone, he didn't forsake worshiping in the Spirit. How do you worship in the Spirit when you're all alone?
- **Revelation 1:12 – 16:** *“¹² When I turned to see who was speaking to me, I saw seven gold lampstands. ¹³ And standing in the middle of the lampstands was someone like the Son of Man. He was wearing a long robe with a gold sash across his chest. ¹⁴ His head and his hair were white like wool, as white as snow. And his eyes were like flames of fire. ¹⁵ His feet were like polished bronze refined in a furnace, and his voice thundered like mighty ocean waves. ¹⁶ He held seven stars in his right hand, and a sharp two-edged sword came from his mouth. And his face was like the sun in all its brilliance.”*
- The 7 gold lampstands are the 7 churches in Asia (Revelation 1:11; 20), and Jesus stands among them. The 7 gold lampstands refer to the golden lampstand of Exodus 25 (3 lamps on each side of a main stem) speak both of John 15 (Jesus said, “*I am the vine and you are the branches*”) and of John 8 (Jesus said, “*I am the light of the world*”). We're told in Matthew 5 to let our light shine, too. That can only happen as we stay connected to the stem of the candlestick, the true vine – Jesus Christ.
- Verse 12 mentions the candlestick is made of gold, which represents His divinity.
- In Verse 13, we read the term Jesus used most often to speak of Himself – “*the Son of Man.*” Daniel 7:13 describes “*the Son of Man*” coming in the clouds of heaven.
- In this passage, John recognized Jesus because he lived with Him for 3 years and had seen Him as the Son of Man as the Galilean preacher, and as the glorified Son of God at the Transfiguration (Matthew 17:1-8).
- His white hair represents his wisdom and divine nature (Daniel 7:9). His bright eyes represent judgement of all evil. The gold sash across His chest reveals Him as the High Priest, who goes into God's presence to obtain forgiveness of sin. The sword in His mouth represents the power of His message. His word is as sharp as any sword (Isaiah 49:2; Hebrews 4:12).
- **Revelation 1:17 – 20:** *“¹⁷ When I saw him, I fell at his feet as if I were dead. But he laid his right hand on me and said, “Don't be afraid! I am the First and the Last. ¹⁸ I am the living one. I died, but look—I am alive forever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and the grave. ¹⁹ “Write down what you have seen – both the things that are now happening and the things that will happen. ²⁰ This is the meaning of the mystery of the seven stars you saw in my right hand and the seven gold lampstands: The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.”*

- “The keys of death and the grave” (Verse 18) are not to lock people up – but to set people free. Jesus says, “I can save you from hell eternally, if you’ll receive me. My desire is to set you free” (Luke 4:18).
- Who are the “angels of the seven churches”? Why are they likened to stars? According to Daniel 12, those who turn many to righteousness will shine as stars forever.

▣ Chapter 2 – 3: “The things that are now happening” – Jesus gives 7 messages to 7 churches.

The message to the church in Ephesus

- **Revelation 2:1 - 7:** *“Write this letter to the angel of the church in Ephesus. This is the message from the one who holds the seven stars in his right hand, the one who walks among the seven gold lampstands: ²“I know all the things you do. I have seen your hard work and your patient endurance. I know you don’t tolerate evil people. You have examined the claims of those who say they are apostles but are not. You have discovered they are liars. ³You have patiently suffered for me without quitting. ⁴“But I have this complaint against you. You don’t love me or each other as you did at first! ⁵Look how far you have fallen! Turn back to me and do the works you did at first. If you don’t repent, I will come and remove your lampstand from its place among the churches. ⁶But this is in your favor: You hate the evil deeds of the Nicolaitans, just as I do. ⁷“Anyone with ears to hear must listen to the Spirit and understand what he is saying to the churches. To everyone who is victorious I will give fruit from the tree of life in the paradise of God.”*
- Chapters 2 – 3 comprise the second section of the Book of Revelation. These chapters include “the things that are now happening” (Revelation 1:19). Jesus gives 7 messages to 7 churches. This encompasses the chronology of church history from the beginning of the early church to the present.
- These 7 messages have a 4-fold application:
 - **1st** – They are to be applied locally. The cities of the 7 churches are given in the order of the ancient Roman postal circuit.
 - **2nd** – They apply ecclesiastically. These letters address every problem and challenge facing the local church today, as well as when they were written in John’s time.
 - **3rd** – They apply personally. They apply to us individually. How do I know? Because every letter ends with the words, “*anyone with ears to hear must listen to the Spirit and understand what he is saying to the churches.*” So, if you have ears, listen to the Holy Spirit!
 - **4th** – They apply prophetically. When John wrote these letters at the beginning of the church age, these events had not yet taken place.

- The church at Ephesus refers to the period of church history from 33 – 100. Ephesus is 35 miles from Smyrna. It's the closest of Revelation's seven churches to the island of Patmos (where John wrote the Book of Revelation. Ephesus was the chief city of Asia Minor. It had an artificial harbor accessible to the largest ships. The city stood at the entrance of a valley that reached far into the province. It was also connected via highways to other important cities in the region. The ease of traveling to the city, either by land or sea, made it the most accessible populated destination in Asia.
- When John wrote this book, in 97, the church was experiencing multiple problems. The church had been compromised to such a degree that Jesus said, *"⁵ Look how far you have fallen! Turn back to me and do the works you did at first. If you don't repent, I will come and remove your lampstand from its place among the churches"* (Revelation 2:5). Church history should not be our model, because the church has had problems from the beginning. However, the Book of Acts gives God's plan for how the church is to function. So, may the Bible be our guide regarding the local church.
- In Verse 1, *"the one who walks among the seven gold lampstands"* (the 7 churches) is Jesus (Revelation 1:11-13). He *"holds the seven stars in his right hand"* (messengers of the churches), demonstrating His power and authority over the churches and their leaders. Ephesus had become a very large and proud church. Jesus was reminding them that He alone is the head of the church.
- In Verses 2 – 3, Jesus commends the church at Ephesus for their *"hard work and patient endurance."* He commends them for examining *"the claims of those who say they are apostles but are not."* In other words, standing firm for the truth and identifying false teaching. This wasn't easy in a city known for deviant sexual practices associated with the worship of the goddess Artemis. He commends them for not tolerating evil people. He commends them for working hard. We should do the same. But our motive for loving people must be our love for God. Jesus and John taught that our love for others is authentic proof of our love for God (John 13:34; I John 3:18-19).
- Paul once commended the church at Ephesus for their love for God and love for people (Ephesians 1:15), but many of the church founders had died, and many of the believers had lost their passion for God. They were a busy church. They did a lot to help the community. But they'd left their first love (Verse 4). Jesus didn't say they "lost" their first love. But He did say they "left" it. So, He tells the church, *"Turn back to me and do the works you did at first. If you don't repent, I will come and remove your lampstand from its place among the churches"* (Verse 5). "Repent" means "change direction." He exhorts them to go back to what they were doing when they were passionate about the Lord. He encourages them to remember, repent, and return!
- A church may have lots of programs and lots of activities. A church may be doctrinally correct. But the Bible says Jesus will not stay in a church where there's not true love, because without true love, nothing else matters (Verse 5). *"² If I had the gift of prophecy, and*

if I understood all of God's secret plans and possessed all knowledge, and if I had such faith that I could move mountains, but didn't love others, I would be nothing" (I Corinthians 13:2).

- In Verse 6, Jesus commends the church hating the deeds of the Nicolaitans. "Nicos" means "conquest" and "laity" means "people of the church." The Nicolaitans presented themselves as "spiritual leaders" and told the people who to marry, where to live, and what to do. This isn't what the Bible teaches. Paul said we don't *"want to dominate you by telling you how to put your faith into practice. We want to work together with you so you will be full of joy, for it is by your own faith that you stand firm."* (II Corinthians 1:26)
- Do you remember the 2 trees in the Garden of Eden? The tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Genesis 2:9)? Eating from the tree of life brought eternal life with God. Eating from the tree of knowledge brought the realization of good and evil. When Adam and Eve ate from the tree of knowledge, they disobeyed God's command. So, they were driven out of Eden and barred from eating from the tree of life. In the new earth, everyone will eat from the tree of life and live forever. So, what did the Ephesians lack? Love. What would they get if they changed their ways? The fruit of the tree of life.

The message to the church in Smyrna

- **Revelation 2:8 – 11:** ⁸*"Write this letter to the angel of the church in Smyrna. This is the message from the one who is the First and the Last, who was dead but is now alive: ⁹"I know about your suffering and your poverty—but you are rich! I know the blasphemy of those opposing you. They say they are Jews, but they are not, because their synagogue belongs to Satan. ¹⁰Don't be afraid of what you are about to suffer. The devil will throw some of you into prison to test you. You will suffer for ten days. But if you remain faithful even when facing death, I will give you the crown of life. ¹¹"Anyone with ears to hear must listen to the Spirit and understand what he is saying to the churches. Whoever is victorious will not be harmed by the second death."*
- The church at Smyrna represents the period in church history from 100 – 312. Smyrna is 35 miles from Ephesus and 49 miles from Pergamum. It was considered to be the "Port of Asia" because of its excellent harbor on the Aegean Sea. The word "smyrna" comes from myrrh. This is a fragrance released only when crushed. And the believers in Smyrna were being crushed.
- Christians practicing communion were being accused of drinking blood and cannibalism by people who claimed to be Jews (Verse 9). But these people weren't Jews any more than the people who claimed to be Christians during the Crusades who slaughtered hundreds of thousands of Jews. Therefore, persecution of the Christians was rampant, from these "so-called" Jews and the Roman government.
- The pastor of the church at Smyrna was a man named Polycarp. He was the last man personally disciplined by John. When he was 86 years old, he was ordered to burn incense at the altar of Caesar. He refused, so he was sentenced to burn at the stake. But, when the fire

didn't burn him, a frustrated guard stabbed Polycarp, and Polycarp's blood extinguished the fire. Throughout history, we see fires of persecution extinguished by the blood of Christians.

- Between 100 – 312, there were 10 Roman emperors that correspond to the 10 days mentioned in Verse 10. They slaughtered about 7 million Christians during this time. But did you notice that Jesus didn't stop the persecution? He said, *"if you remain faithful even when facing death, I will give you the crown of life"* (Verse 10). The people of Smyrna understood the analogy, because Smyrna was also famous for its athletic games. Winners received a "crown" by the judges, made of leaves.
- The Bible says immediately after the rapture, every Christian will stand before Christ to be judged by Him. This has nothing to do with salvation, for only the saved will be there (I Corinthians 3:11-15). The Bible names five different crowns reserved for those who are obedient to His calling:
 - The **"Crown of Life"** (Martyr's Crown) – Given to those who have suffered much, yet endured with a sweet Christian spirit, even unto death (Revelation 2:10).
 - The **"Incorruptible Crown"** (Victor's Crown) – Given to those who forsake the pleasures of this world in order to serve Jesus Christ (I Corinthians 9:25).
 - The **"Crown of Glory"** (Elders Crown) – Given to those who have given their lives to the teaching of the Bible (I Peter 5:2-4).
 - The **"Crown of Righteousness"** – Given to those who look forward to the return of Jesus and live accordingly (II Timothy 4:8).
 - The **"Crown of Rejoicing"** (Soul Winners Crown) – Given to those who have given themselves to sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ (I Thessalonians 2:19-20).
- What is *"the second death"* (Verse 11)? Believers and unbelievers experience a physical death. But believers will be resurrected to eternal life with God, while unbelievers will be resurrected at the end of the Millennium, to stand before the Lord at the Great White Throne Judgement (Revelation 20). Their failure to believe on the Lord and refusal to accept God's payment for their sins will condemn them to hell. But for those who remain faithful, like the church at Smyrna, the second death will have no effect.

The message to the church in Pergamum

- **Revelation 2:12 – 17:** ¹²*"Write this letter to the angel of the church in Pergamum. This is the message from the one with the sharp two-edged sword: ¹³"I know that you live in the city where Satan has his throne, yet you have remained loyal to me. You refused to deny me even when Antipas, my faithful witness, was martyred among you there in Satan's city. ¹⁴"But I have a few complaints against you. You tolerate some among you whose teaching is like that of Balaam, who showed Balak how to trip up the people of Israel. He taught them to sin by eating food offered to idols and by committing sexual sin. ¹⁵In a similar way, you have some Nicolaitans among you who follow the same teaching. ¹⁶Repent of your sin, or I will come to you suddenly and fight against them with the sword of my mouth. ¹⁷"Anyone with*

ears to hear must listen to the Spirit and understand what he is saying to the churches. To everyone who is victorious I will give some of the manna that has been hidden away in heaven. And I will give to each one a white stone, and on the stone will be engraved a new name that no one understands except the one who receives it.”

- The city of Pergamum was a sophisticated city, built on a hill over 1,000 feet above the surrounding countryside. Pergamum is located 49 miles from Smyrna and 38 miles from Thyatira. It was the center of Greek culture and education, with a 200,000-volume library. Pergamum and its library were so highly regarded that when Marc Antony married Cleopatra, he gave her the entire library as a present. The city’s chief god was Asclepius, whose symbol was a serpent and considered the god of healing. People came from all over the world to be healed. According to Greek mythology, Pergamum was the birthplace of Zeus. “*Where Satan has his throne*” (Verse 13) is a reference to the 150’ high structure dedicated to Zeus in the middle of the city. Antipas (Verse 13) was a Christian physician in Pergamum. Because he didn’t recognize Asclepius (the serpent god of healing) and bow to Zeus, Antipas was fried to death.
- The Greek prefix “per” means “objectionable.” “Gamum” means “marriage.” So, “Pergamum” means “objectionable marriage.” This aptly describes the next phase of church history, from 312 – 600. In 312, Emperor Constantine concluded that if he converted to Christianity, then the Christians would join his army. So, he issued the “Edict of Toleration,” which prohibited the persecution of Christians. Christianity became the official religion of Rome. All Roman babies were legally required to be baptized into the Christian faith. However, Constantine compromised with the pagan priests.
- This “objectionable marriage” between the pagans and Christians was illustrated by the legal coins which had Christian symbols on one side and pagan symbols on the other. From 313 to 600, the church and state worked together as a political power. As a result, the church began a downward spiral. History proves that the message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ is compromised when the church and politics get in bed together. We must keep our focus on the kingdom and our passion for Jesus.
- Do you remember the story of Balaam (Numbers 22)? When Balaam was asked by the Moabite King Balak to curse the people of Israel, God told Balaam not to go. But Balaam went anyway, and after a short discussion with a donkey, he ended up on a mountain overlooking the Israelites that King Balak wanted him to curse. Because Balaam failed to curse them, he came up with an alternate plan. He told King Balak, “If your women seduce the Israelite men, they can introduce idol worship to them which will bring a curse upon all of Israel” (Numbers 22). Just like Pergamum, an “objectionable marriage” with the world.
- Not only had the church in Pergamum embraced the marriage of church and state, but they embraced the Nicolaitans (the religious leaders who told the people who to marry, where to live, and what to do). (Verse 15) So, how do we know who’s who or what’s what in a world susceptible to what Pergamum embraced? Stay focused on the Bible, the Word of God.
“¹²For the word of God is alive and powerful. It is sharper than the sharpest two-edged

sword, cutting between soul and spirit, between joint and marrow. It exposes our innermost thoughts and desires. ¹³ Nothing in all creation is hidden from God. Everything is naked and exposed before his eyes, and he is the one to whom we are accountable” (Hebrews 4:12-13).

- The Lord promised “hidden manna, a white stone and a new name” to those who don’t compromise in an “objectionable marriage” with the world. The “*manna that has been hidden away in heaven*” (Verse 17) refers to the spiritual nourishment that the faithful believers will receive. Just as the Israelites received manna from heaven for their physical nourishment (Exodus 16:13-18), Jesus, the bread of life (John 6:51) provides spiritual nourishment that satisfies our deepest hunger.
- The secret ballot of John’s day was a stone. A black stone meant “no.” A white stone meant “yes.” So, Jesus was saying, “If you don’t compromise in an “objectionable marriage” with the world, I’ll give you a white stone” (Verse 17) which means you’re not guilty, you’re righteous, you’re free.
- Finally, in Verse 17, Jesus said He will give a “new name” to those who don’t compromise in an “objectionable marriage” with the world. In the Bible, a person’s name stood for his character. So, a new name means a new character. The new doesn’t follow the old but takes its place and is different from the old. The Bible says: “... *you will be given a new name by the Lord’s own mouth.*” (Isaiah 62:2). The prophet also adds, “... *the Sovereign Lord will ... call his true servants by another name*” (Isaiah 65:15). So, if we stay true to the Word, God will bless us with the manna of salvation, the white stone of acquittal and approval, and a new name written down in glory.

The message to the church in Thyatira

- **Revelation 2:18 – 29:** ¹⁸ “*Write this letter to the angel of the church in Thyatira. This is the message from the Son of God, whose eyes are like flames of fire, whose feet are like polished bronze:* ¹⁹ “*I know all the things you do. I have seen your love, your faith, your service, and your patient endurance. And I can see your constant improvement in all these things.* ²⁰ “*But I have this complaint against you. You are permitting that woman—that Jezebel who calls herself a prophet—to lead my servants astray. She teaches them to commit sexual sin and to eat food offered to idols.* ²¹ *I gave her time to repent, but she does not want to turn away from her immorality.* ²² “*Therefore, I will throw her on a bed of suffering, and those who commit adultery with her will suffer greatly unless they repent and turn away from her evil deeds.* ²³ *I will strike her children dead. Then all the churches will know that I am the one who searches out the thoughts and intentions of every person. And I will give to each of you whatever you deserve.* ²⁴ “*But I also have a message for the rest of you in Thyatira who have not followed this false teaching (‘deeper truths,’ as they call them—depths of Satan, actually). I will ask nothing more of you* ²⁵ *except that you hold tightly to what you have until I come.* ²⁶ *To all who are victorious, who obey me to the very end, To them I will give authority over all the nations.* ²⁷ *They will rule the nations with an iron*

rod and smash them like clay pots.²⁸ They will have the same authority I received from my Father, and I will also give them the morning star!²⁹ “Anyone with ears to hear must listen to the Spirit and understand what he is saying to the churches.”

- The fourth period of time begins in 60 and continues through 1500. This includes the period of the Reformation (Martin Luther). Thyatira is 38 miles from Pergamos and 32 miles from Sardis. Thyatira was an important trading location on the Roman road from Pergamum to Laodicea. The pagan god Apollo (son of Zeus) was widely worshipped. The city was famous for its dyeing and was a center of the indigo trade. During his second missionary journey (Acts 16:13 - 15) the apostle Paul traveled to Philippi, where he met a woman named Lydia, from Thyatira, who was praying near a river. Lydia was a seller of purple (either of the dye or cloth dyed in this color). As she listened to Paul's preaching, she and her entire household, gave their lives to Christ and were baptized. When she returned to Thyatira, Lydia helped spread the gospel throughout the city.
- Born near Dumbarton, Scotland, Patrick (390 – 461) was captured by Irish pirates and sold into slavery in Ireland. Escaping to Gaul (modern day France), he became a monk. He later returned home to his family, but sensed God calling him to return to Ireland as a missionary. So, he led a mission team to Ireland in 432. For the next 30 years, Patrick shared the Gospel, and several thousand people gave their lives to Jesus Christ. The churches he founded were independent of Rome. Irish monasteries became centers of learning. The Bible was the primary subject, and Latin was the language of education. The Irish monasteries sent missionaries throughout the world. Although the Roman Catholic hierarchy didn't approve of their work, this ministry remained a powerful influence in Western Europe until 950.
- Since “fire and polished bronze” refer to judgement, Verse 18 is the only place in the entire Book of Revelation where Jesus identifies Himself as the Son of God rather than the Son of Man. A woman in the church at Thyatira, named Jezebel, called herself a “prophetess.” She encouraged promiscuous behavior, idolatry and eating meat offered to idols. In pagan temples, meat was often offered to idols. The meat that wasn't burned was sold to shoppers in the temple marketplace. Eating meat offered to idols wasn't wrong in itself but bothered weaker Christians. Jezebel was more concerned about her own selfish pleasure and freedom than about the concerns of fellow believers. Paul addressed this very matter in II Corinthians 8. He taught that although eating meat offered to idols isn't a sin against God, and although eating meat offered to idols won't affect us personally, it might affect those around us. So, we need to be willing to forgo “our rights” if they confuse or adversely impact our weaker brothers or sisters. This is what it means to truly “love God and love people.”
- The “deeper truths” (Verse 24) were “secret insights” by so-called teachers “guaranteed” to promote deeper spiritual life. They were saying they alone knew certain “mysteries” and “deep things.” Beware of these teachings that are not clearly found in scripture. “Until I come” (Verse 25) is the first promise of the return of Jesus Christ found in these letters to

the 7 churches. This is how we know this church goes on to Jesus' second coming. The Old Testament image of Jesus Christ is the "Sun of Righteousness" (Malachi 4:2). In the New Testament, He's seen as the "Morning Star" (Revelation 22:16). A morning star appears just before dawn, when the night is the coldest and darkest. When the world is at its bleakest point, Jesus Christ will burst upon the scene, bringing His promised reward.

The message to the church in Sardis

- **Revelation 3:1 – 6:** *"Write this letter to the angel of the church in Sardis. This is the message from the one who has the sevenfold Spirit of God and the seven stars: "I know all the things you do, and that you have a reputation for being alive—but you are dead. ²Wake up! Strengthen what little remains, for even what is left is almost dead. I find that your actions do not meet the requirements of my God. ³Go back to what you heard and believed at first; hold to it firmly. Repent and turn to me again. If you don't wake up, I will come to you suddenly, as unexpected as a thief. ⁴"Yet there are some in the church in Sardis who have not soiled their clothes with evil. They will walk with me in white, for they are worthy. ⁵All who are victorious will be clothed in white. I will never erase their names from the Book of Life, but I will announce before my Father and his angels that they are mine. ⁶"Anyone with ears to hear must listen to the Spirit and understand what he is saying to the churches."*
- When Sergius III became Pope (904 – 967), he ushered in the "Rule of Harlots." His mistresses publicly accompanied him to the papal palace. His grandson, John X, continued this legacy until he was killed while committing adultery. Next came Benedict IX, who became pope when he was 12 years old. Benedict IX was so corrupt that the citizens of Rome drove him out of the city. So, King Henry III replaced him with Clement III. King Henry III wrote, "I appoint no one from Rome because no priest can be found in this city who is free from the pollution of fornication and simony" ("simony" was the practice of positions of leadership within the church to the highest bidder).
- John Wycliffe was born in England in 1330. He challenged papal control, church hierarchy and continual sacrifice, so he was excommunicated by the church. Believing that the people needed Scripture in their own language, he completed the first English translation of the New Testament in 1380. The English translation of the Old Testament was completed in 1382. Bible translators working with him, including John Hus and Hugh Latimer were burned at the stake by the church for their work. After his death, John Wycliffe's body was exhumed, burned, and his ashes were scattered.
- In 1483 Martin Luther was born in Saxon Germany. He enrolled in seminary and earned his Doctorate in Theology. To earn God's favor, he regularly beat himself, slept outside in freezing temperatures, and fasted for long periods of time. But he felt he could never become righteous enough to earn God's favor. One of his friends, a monk, urged Luther to read the Book of Habakkuk. Why Habakkuk? Because Habakkuk also wrestled with religious questions. When Luther read Habakkuk 2:4 (*"Look at the proud! They trust in themselves, and their lives are crooked. But the righteous will live by their faithfulness to*

God”). “That’s it!” he cried. “If I’m going to be just, it’s not because of what I do or who I am, but by faith in what God has done and who He is.” So, in 1517, he nailed a parchment containing 95 theses to the university door in Wittenberg. When the church in Rome asked him to recant, Martin Luther replied, “Here I stand. I can do no other, so help me God.” The Reformation swept across Europe and people turned to Jesus Christ and the Bible. By 1600, over 80% of the people living in Bohemia, Austria and Hungary were “Protest-ants”. However, the worst bloodshed in history took place immediately following the Reformation. By 1602, over 70% of these Christians had been killed by the church. Even worse than the persecution of Christians under the Roman emperors and the holocaust of Nazi Germany under Hitler. Understanding the context of the Reformation is vital to understanding the message to the church in Sardis.

- Sardis, located at the foot of Mount Tumulus, is 32 miles from Pergamum and 27 miles) from Philadelphia (Alasehir). The word “Sardis” means “remnant.” Built on a 1,000’ high bluff, Sardis was an extremely wealthy city that seemed invincible. Gold was discovered along the banks of a nearby river. King Alyattes, who reigned from about 610 to 560 B.C., minted and distributed the world’s first coins. Sardis was home to the temple of the pagan goddess Cybele, very similar to the pagan goddess Diana (Artemis) found at Ephesus. But, in 549, when Cyrus conquered the city of Babylon, he also conquered Sardis.
- The problem in the Sardis church wasn’t heresy, but spiritual death. Jesus said although the church had a reputation for being alive, they were dead (Verse 1). The church in Sardis was infested with sin. Its deeds were evil. It looked good on the outside but was corrupt on the inside. Jesus said (Verse 3) “If you don’t get back to basics, I’m going to come to you as a thief.” To be “clothed in white” (Verse 5) means to be made pure. Jesus says every believer is eternally secure; *“²⁸ I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one can snatch them away from me, ²⁹ for my Father has given them to me, and he is more powerful than anyone else. No one can snatch them from the Father’s hand”* (John 10:28-29). Paul writes nothing can separate us from the love of God; *“³⁸ And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God’s love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God’s love. ³⁹ No power in the sky above or in the earth below—indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord”* (Romans 8:38-39). Here, Jesus said, *“⁵ All who are victorious will be clothed in white. I will never erase their names from the Book of Life, but I will announce before my Father and his angels that they are mine”* (Revelation 3:5).

The message to the church in Philadelphia

- **Revelation 3:7 – 13:** *“⁷ Write this letter to the angel of the church in Philadelphia. This is the message from the one who is holy and true, the one who has the key of David. What he opens, no one can close; and what he closes, no one can open:⁸ “I know all the things you do, and I have opened a door for you that no one can close. You have little strength, yet you*

obeyed my word and did not deny me. ⁹Look, I will force those who belong to Satan's synagogue—those liars who say they are Jews but are not—to come and bow down at your feet. They will acknowledge that you are the ones I love. ¹⁰“Because you have obeyed my command to persevere, I will protect you from the great time of testing that will come upon the whole world to test those who belong to this world. ¹¹I am coming soon. Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take away your crown. ¹²All who are victorious will become pillars in the Temple of my God, and they will never have to leave it. And I will write on them the name of my God, and they will be citizens in the city of my God—the new Jerusalem that comes down from heaven from my God. And I will also write on them my new name. ¹³“Anyone with ears to hear must listen to the Spirit and understand what he is saying to the churches.”

- The church in Philadelphia represents the modern missionary movement. The letter to Philadelphia is one of only two letters to the 7 churches in which Jesus has nothing critical to say. Why? Perhaps it is because the Philadelphians were involved in evangelism. They loved God and they loved people. And love covers a multitude of sins (1 Peter 4:8). The ancient city of Philadelphia, 27 miles from Sardis and 48 miles from Laodicea. On one side of the city the land was fertile enough to grow grapes. The quality of wine produced by the fields of Philadelphia was such that the Roman poet Virgil wrote about its excellence. Philadelphia was founded in 189 B.C. by King Eumenes II. When he died, his younger brother, Attalus II, named buildings after his older brother, minted coins bearing his brother's image, and constantly talked about his brother. Consequently, the people of the town began to call this place “Philo-delphia” (the city of brotherly love).
- On May 30, 1792, a radical, young Christian man named William Carey, preached a short sermon from Acts 1:8; *“⁸But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”* His theme was: “Expect great things from God and attempt great things for God.” William said it was time for Christians to reach beyond their own borders. And bring the Gospel to a world that was dying. William had been working full-time, as a shoemaker, since he was 14. Although he never attended high school, by the time he was 20, he had taught himself Hebrew, Italian, Dutch, French and Greek. At the age of 22, he was invited to pastor the local Baptist Church. It was there that God gave William a vision of sailing across the ocean to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ. And an anointing to do just that. So, he said goodbye to his church, and set sail for India. Before he returned home from India, William Carey had not only shared the Gospel of Jesus Christ, but had planted churches, translated the entire Bible into Bengali (one of the main languages of India), built schools and hospitals, and supervised the start of India's first printing press, paper mill, and steam engine to run the mill. He wrote the first Bengali-English dictionary and founded the first Christian college in all of Asia. Before he returned home from India, William Carey had translated the complete Bible into 6 languages, and portions of the Bible into 29 additional languages. William Carey “expected great things from God and attempted great things for God” and God brought them to pass. Whenever

God wants to do something wonderful, He gives that person a vision. The Bible teaches that God doesn't call the anointed; He anoints the called!

- We read in Revelation 1:18 that Jesus holds the “keys of death and the grave.” To this missionary church in Philadelphia, He says He holds an additional key, the key of David (Verses 7-8). This key represents Christ’s authority to open the door to His future Kingdom. After the door is opened, no one can close it. Salvation is assured. Once it is closed, no one can close it. Judgment is certain. Jesus is the One who opened the doors for William Carey in India; for Hudson Taylor in China; for The Orchard in Vanuatu and Afghanistan. But He also shuts doors that can't be opened. Those continually saying “no” to the Holy Spirit of God convicting them of their need for a Savior, will be unable to say “yes” at the time they're locked into eternal destruction.
- Although the church in Philadelphia has “little strength,” it's a church that's returned to the Word, has a desire for the Word, and studies the Word (Verse 8). Who are these people “... *who belong to Satan's synagogue—those liars who say they are Jews but are not ...*” (Verse 9)? In John's day, these would have been the Jews who persecuted the believers. In our day, the reference may be to the increasing number of people in the Christian community who say, “Because God is through with the Jew, we are Israel.” It's interesting to note that 100 years prior to the deaths of 6 million Jew during World War II, preachers began to teach that God was through with the Jew. Anti-Semitism is always a sign of those who aren't reading the Bible. Scripture clearly teaches God is not through with Israel (Romans 9 – 11). There are three categories of people in the Bible – Jews, Gentiles and the church. Who is the church? Former Jews and former Gentiles. In fact, the reason for the Tribulation is that God isn't through with Israel. The Rapture is when Jesus comes to get us, but the Second Coming is when Jesus comes back to restore Israel.
- Jesus said to the church in Philadelphia, ¹⁰ “*Because you have obeyed my command to persevere, I will protect you **from** the great time of testing that will come upon the whole world to test those who belong to this world*” (Verse 10). The Greek word “from” (Verse 10) is “ek” which means “out of.” In other words, Jesus is saying “You of little strength, you've kept My Word and haven't denied My Name. You've gone through the open door, and you did not deny Me. Because of this, I will take you “out of” the time of testing that will come upon the **whole world.**” This “testing” is not simply a local persecution of the church in Philadelphia, but a time of testing that encompasses the entire globe. There's only one event that fits this description, the Tribulation.
- Jesus said, “I am coming soon” (Verse 11). The Greek word translated “quickly” is “tachu”, which means “suddenly.” Jesus Christ could come at any moment! It could be today! Therefore, Jesus tells us, “*Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take away your crown*” (Verse 11). What crown? The answer is found in I Thessalonians 2:19 – 20: ¹⁹ “*After all, what gives us hope and joy, and what will be our proud reward and crown as we stand before our Lord Jesus when he returns? It is you!*” ²⁰ “*Yes, you are our pride and joy.*” Paul identifies the crown as our brothers and sisters in Christ. And, the Bible says Jesus “will

write on them the name of my God, and they will be citizens in the city of my God—the new Jerusalem that comes down from heaven from my God. And I will also write on them my new name” (Verse 12). The Bible says you’re not only going to have the glory of God emblazoned upon you, but you’ll be a citizen of the new Jerusalem. Proverbs 25:2 says: *“It is God’s privilege to conceal things and the king’s privilege to discover them.”* Because we’re a nation of kings and priests (Revelation 1:6), we’ll spending eternity exploring and enjoying incomprehensible aspects of God’s majesty, and creativity. There will be ever increasing ecstasy as we explore His creation and being. Everything will be new, incredible and pure.

- So, may we have a heart for evangelism, a commitment to persevere, a love for God and a love for people as we look forward to the return of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The message to the church in Laodicea

- **Revelation 3:14 – 22:** *“¹⁴ Write this letter to the angel of the church in Laodicea. This is the message from the one who is the Amen—the faithful and true witness, the beginning of God’s new creation: ¹⁵“I know all the things you do, that you are neither hot nor cold. I wish that you were one or the other! ¹⁶But since you are like lukewarm water, neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth! ¹⁷You say, ‘I am rich. I have everything I want. I don’t need a thing!’ And you don’t realize that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked. ¹⁸So I advise you to buy gold from me—gold that has been purified by fire. Then you will be rich. Also buy white garments from me so you will not be shamed by your nakedness, and ointment for your eyes so you will be able to see. ¹⁹I correct and discipline everyone I love. So be diligent and turn from your indifference. ²⁰“Look! I stand at the door and knock. If you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in, and we will share a meal together as friends. ²¹Those who are victorious will sit with me on my throne, just as I was victorious and sat with my Father on his throne. ²²“Anyone with ears to hear must listen to the Spirit and understand what he is saying to the churches.”*