

The Book of Revelation

Commentaries to Recommend

Triumph of the Lamb by Dennis Johnson, published in 2001 by Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, 384 pages, clothbound.

More than Conquerors by William Hendriksen, published in 1962 by Baker Book House, 216 pages, clothbound.

The Returning of the King by Vern Poythress, published in 2000 by Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, 213 pages, paperback.

The Book of Revelation: The New International Greek Testament Commentary by G.K. Beale, published in 1999 by William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1245 pages, clothbound.

Type of Literature

- The book of Revelation is a vision that God gave to the apostle John.
- A vision reveals God's message in symbolic terms.
- The visions in Ezekiel, Zechariah and Daniel serve as a model for this type of revelation.
- When we seek to interpret a vision we would not think to interpret it literally but rather symbolically since it is that kind of literature.

Understanding the Book of Revelation

The book of Revelation is first and foremost a devotional book. It is a book of comfort for believers who live in an ungodly world. This is a book that corrects our perspective on life so that we will live a life of thanks and joy. *1 Thessalonians 5:16-18*

The Prologue

Revelation 1:1-3

Purpose

- God, through an angel, gave a revelation to the apostle John that reveals how the new covenant era will unfold and the fullness of the kingdom will be ushered in.
- John is given a revelation of what "soon" will take place. This means that the book of Revelation is not just about the 2nd Coming of Jesus Christ. It had relevance for those who first received it.

Blessing

- The book of Revelation is especially said to be blessing to all those who read it.
- This book gives us the true perspective of what is happening in this world.
- This book describes in great detail to what length the Lord goes to care for his children.

Greetings

Revelation 1:4-8

Destination of Revelation

- The book of Revelation is given to seven historical churches in the Roman province of Asia (modern day Turkey).

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- Beginning with Ephesus the seven churches are geographically located one after the other in the form of a “mail route.”

Grace and Peace

- The grace of God that we believers experience gets us a salvation that is full and free.
Ephesians 2:8-10
- The peace of God that we experience as believers is the result of Jesus paying for our sins on the cross. If our sins are paid for then the God of heaven and earth is no longer angry with us.
Romans 5:1

Seven Spirits

- This most likely refers to the working of the Holy Spirit.
- The role of the Spirit is to carry out the plans of the Son who reigns from the throne.
1 Peter 1:10-11
- The number seven may well refer to the completeness of the work of the Spirit.

The Identification of the Son

- Jesus, the Redeemer, is God, the 2nd person of the Trinity, who came to this earth to purchase a people for himself. *Matthew 1:21*
- Whatever Jesus says is true for his words are the word of God.
- When Jesus died on the cross and rose from the dead he purchased a people to be with him forever. *1 Corinthians 15:20-22*
- By virtue of his securing salvation by his death on the cross he is the God-man who reigns over all creation. *Matthew 28:18-20*

What Jesus Accomplished

- He died for his people and purchased for them eternal unconditional acceptance and a transformed life. *Hebrews 10:14-18, Romans 5:6-8*
- To be a believer is to be a priest in the order of Melchizedek, which means that we are saved by the work of Jesus Christ. *1 Peter 1:9-11, Hebrews 10:1-18*
- Because Jesus is our Redeemer all of life and all of eternity is to glorify him.
1 Corinthians 10:31

The Coming of Jesus

- In the book of Daniel Daniel is given a vision that reveals the son of man as coming on the clouds of heaven and he is given by the Ancient of Days a kingdom that will last forever.
Daniel 7:13-14
- In the book of Revelation Jesus is described as coming to set up his eternal kingdom. This is the 2nd coming of Jesus Christ.
- In the book of Zechariah salvation comes to Israel and this is a picture of salvation coming to the real people of God in the new covenant era. *Zechariah 12:10*
- The regathering of Israel back into the land is fulfilled not literally but spiritually in the church in the new covenant era. *Romans 9:22-26, Hosea 1:10, 2:23*

Final Thought

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- The resurrected Christ has always existed and he will always exist as the Lord of heaven and earth.
- Jesus Christ is the center of all history and all things. *Romans 11:33-36*

The First Vision *Revelation 1:9-20*

The Setting

Revelation 1:9-10

- The apostle John seems to have been exiled by the Romans to the island of Patmos, which is located southern portion of the Aegean Sea and just southwest of modern day Turkey or the Roman province of Asia.
- The mention of the Lord's Day can be interpreted in one of two ways. It can refer to the 1st day of the week, Sunday, and the commemoration of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, or it can refer to the Day of the Lord as the time in which God is revealing his plan to bring judgment and his plan to completion.
- The problem with view the Lord's Day as referring to Sunday is that it is never used that way outside of this one reference in the book of Revelation.
- There is also the problem that in the New Covenant era under the law of Christ there are no longer any special days to God. *Romans 14:1-8, Colossians 2:16-23, Galatians 4:8-11*
- The view that the Lord's Day refers to the final revealing of God's plan of judgment is criticized because not all of the visions in the book of Revelation refer to the 2nd coming of Jesus Christ.
- The Day of the Lord in the Old Testament prophets always refers to a time of divine judgment. *Isaiah 13:6, Joel 1:15*
- It is my opinion the view that the Lord's Day refers to the revealing of the final judgment and the events that lead up to it best fits into the context of Scripture. *1 Corinthians 10:11*

"In the Spirit"

Revelation 1:10a

- This would refer to the experience of the apostle John in receiving these visions from the Lord. *Ezekiel 2:2, 3:12*
- This would not refer to giving the Spirit control since the believer is always under the control of the Spirit in the sense that the believer cannot miss the changed life that Jesus purchased for him on the cross. *Romans 8:5-14*

"voice like a trumpet"

Revelation 1:10b

- At the beginning of the old covenant era at Mount Sinai the Lord summons Moses and Israel to the mountain by the sound of the trumpet. *Exodus 19:16-19*
- This sounding of the trumpet is used in the *book of Revelation* to introduce John as he is brought by means of a vision into the presence of God to the throne room in heaven.

"write on a scroll what you see"

Revelation 1:11

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- John is commanded to record what he hears and sees and to send it to the seven churches in the Roman province of Asia.
- The order of the seven churches cannot be determined by Scripture to have any significance.
- Each of the letters was to be read in all the seven churches. *Revelation 2:7*
- There is no biblical evidence to suggest that each church refers to a church age.

Seven Golden Lampstands

Revelation 1:12

- The seven golden lampstands represent the seven churches mentioned in *Revelation 1:11* and therefore the church. *Revelation 1:20*
- The imagery of the seven lampstands is first seen in the instructions regarding the building of the tabernacle and would seem to represent Israel. *Exodus 25:31-40*
- The number seven most likely refers to completeness.
- The other significant use of the lampstand would come from *Zechariah 4:1-14*. Here the lampstand would seem to also refer to Israel.
- The church as the lampstands is the vehicle that God uses to implement his plan of redemption.

“like a son of man”

Revelation 1:12-16

- The imagery of the son of man comes from the *book of Daniel*. *Daniel 7:8-14*
- In *Daniel* the son of man is given the kingdom which is also given to the believers in the kingdom. *Daniel 7:18, 27*
- The imagery of the ancient of days becomes the imagery of the son in the *book of Revelation*. The ancient of days comes in judgment so also Jesus, the son of man, comes in judgment.
- The robe most likely refers to the priestly robes that the Aaronic priests wore during under the old covenant. *Exodus 28:1-5*
- Jesus’ role in redemption is a priestly role. *Hebrews 10:11-18*
- “His eyes were like blazing fire” does have some connection with *Daniel 7* where the throne of the ancient of days is “flaming with fire and the wheels were all ablaze.” This most likely refers to the judgment that is being exercised by the son. This is also seen in the letter to the church at Thyatira where Jesus sits in evaluation of his church there. *Revelation 2:18-23*
- “His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace” would seem to refer to a purity that will apply to those who seek to be his children. *Revelation 3:18*
- “Voice was like the sound of rushing waters” finds its Old Covenant connection in the book of Ezekiel where the use of rushing waters would seem to refer to the authority and power of the one who spoke. *Ezekiel 43:1-2*
- “Out of his mouth came a double-edged sword” has a connection with role of the Messiah in bringing judgment. This metaphor is repeated at the end of the *book of Revelation* where Jesus returns in judgment. The sword most likely refers to the Roman short sword that was used in battle. *Isaiah 11:1-4, Revelation 19:5*
- “His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance” most likely refers to his holiness. *Daniel 10:5-6, Matthew 17:2*

Words of Encouragement

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

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Revelation 1:16-18

- The response to the vision of the son of man is overwhelming. During his first coming Jesus hid his glory most of the time.
- Jesus comforts John by reminding him of who he is.
- “I am the First and the Last” states that the Messiah is clearly in charge of history since he is God who became man and therefore we as his children have no need to fear the future. *Isaiah 44:6, Revelation 21:6*
- “I am the living one” refers to Jesus as the resurrected redeemer who through his resurrection proved that he was God who became man. *Daniel 4:34-35*
- “I hold the keys of death and Hades” refers to the authority that Jesus holds over the realm of death. *1 Corinthians 15:50-57*

Time Frame

Revelation 1:19

- John is told to write what he has seen in his vision.
- John’s vision addresses both the present and the future. This would mean that the content of the visions have relevance to both the original hearers as well as all the readers that come after them.

Seven Stars

Revelation 1:20

- Some think that the stars, which are said to be angels, are the pastors of the seven churches. The problem with this is that there is no example or mention of a single pastor in the New Testament. *Hebrews 13:7,13, Titus 1:5, Acts 14:23*
- Some think that the stars are the messengers of each church that will carry the letter to their respective church. This idea has a problem in that the Greek word is always used for angels in the *book of Revelation*. The idea of a messenger has merit yet the rebukes by the Lord are addressed to the “angels” as well as the churches, though if you understand the messenger as representing the church then it does seem to work out.
- Some think that the stars refer to literal angels who watch over each of the seven churches (guardian angels). It is true that we do have a reference to the angel Michael who watches over the people of God (*Daniel 12:1*). We also have demons that are described as being attached to specific nations (*Daniel 10:12-21*). But, the problem with this view is that we do not know how an angel could represent a church.
- The other view is that *the angel of each church is not literally an angel—that is, a distinct spiritual being charged with the welfare of the church. Rather, the angel is the church, viewed from the perspective of Christ’s control over his churches: the stars are in his hand.* (*Triumph of the Lamb*, page 63.)

Seven Lampstands

Revelation 1:20

- The lampstands are the seven churches of the *book of Revelation*.
- The lampstand in the Old Covenant speaks of the lampstand that was put into the tabernacle which referred to the nation of Israel, the temporary, unbelieving picture of the people of God, while the lampstands in the *book of Revelation* refer to the church of Jesus Christ. Both

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Israel and the church are what the Spirit used and uses to bring about the plan of redemption.
Zechariah 4:1-14, Exodus 25

Letters to the Seven Churches

Revelation 2,3

The Structure of the Letters

The letters follow a standard template of seven parts though not all the letters contain all seven parts:

1. Address
2. Identification of Jesus
3. Commending the good stuff
4. Pointing out the bad stuff
5. Call to repentance
6. Call to listen to what was said
7. Call to overcome

Ephesus

Revelation 2:1-7

Ephesus was wealthy, prosperous, magnificent, and famous for its shrine of Diana. The city was located near the western coast of Asia Minor, on the Aegean Sea and near the mouth of the Cayster River. Its harbour—in the days of its glory—accommodated the largest ships. Moreover, it was easily accessible by land, for Ephesus was connected by highways with the most important cities of Asia Minor. Ephesus was for a long time the commercial centre of Asia. The temple of Diana was at the same time a treasure house, a museum, and a place of refuge for criminals. It furnished employment for many, including the silversmiths who made miniature shrines of Diana. (Hendriksen, page 60.)

A View of the King

Here the risen Christ is viewed as the Sovereign Lord of his church. He watches over and controls the seven churches. It does not yet appear that the Lord is in sovereign control of all things but he is. *Matthew 28:18-20*

The Issue

The church at Ephesus is a church of **doers**. They are also a church that does not tolerate false teaching. They would seem to be a church that was doctrinally sound. They were not a faint-hearted church in their pursuit of ministry. *Titus 1:9, 2 Timothy 4:2*

The Nicolaitans may be defined as follows: *These constituted a heretical sect in the early church about which we know nothing apart from the references in the Revelation. Ancient church fathers, beginning with Irenaeus, speculated that they formed a heretical sect which was founded by*

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Nicolaus, a proselyte of Antioch (Acts 6:5) who was one of the seven. But we have no sure information to this effect. John refers again to these false teachers in the letter to Pergamum where he gives us more information about them. (Ladd, page 40.)

The Sin

- The believers at Ephesus had **forsaken their first love**. Our faith is first and foremost a relationship. When one becomes a believer one becomes a God-lover. Works of ministry are

to be motivated by our love for our Savior. Anything short of that is unacceptable. *Matthew 22:34-40, Hebrews 8:6-13*

- It is also true that love for God will always bring about a love for one another. One cannot be a God-lover and not have a desire to love one another. *1 John 4:19-21*

The Solution

The Christian life begins with repentance and continues with repentance. Repentance is the evidence of the work of the Spirit in the life of the believer. *Acts 26:20, 2 Corinthians 7:8-11*

The Reward

- Only those who **overcome** get to eat of the tree of life in the paradise of God.
- All true believers will persevere in their faith until they die. Perseverance is the evidence of saving faith. *Hebrews 3:14, Philippians 1:6, Romans 8:30, Philippians 2:12-13*

The tree of life in the paradise of God is a figure for eternal life. The imagery that is used is that of the garden of Eden. Heaven is described in the same imagery as the garden of Eden yet with much more for the believer than Eden. *Genesis 2:8-9, 3:23-24, Revelation 22:1-2*

Smyrna

Revelation 2:8-11

This city, located on an arm of the Aegean Sea, was a rival of Ephesus. It claimed to be the 'First City of Asia in beauty and size'. A gloriously picturesque city, it sloped up from the sea, and its splendid public buildings on the rounded top of the hill Pagos formed what was known as 'the crown of Smyrna'. The westerly breeze, the zephyr, comes from the sea and blows through every part of the city rendering it fresh and cool even during the summer. From the very beginning of Rome's rise to power, even before its days of greatness, Smyrna was its loyal ally and was recognized as such by Rome. The faithfulness and loyalty of the Smyrnians became proverbial. (Hendriksen, page 63.)

A View of the King

Jesus is described as the one "who died and came to life again." These are words of assurance to a church that is about to go through suffering. We must always remember that God uses difficult times for the good of the believer. There are no exceptions to this truth. *1 Peter 1:6-7*

The Issue

#1 their poverty

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The origin of the poverty in Smyrna bears some relationship to the church's affliction, according to the statement of v. 9. It is unlikely that it can be traced to the converts' belonging to the poorer class of society. Smyrna was too rich a city this (Swete). Nor is it probable that the Christians' deprived condition came from losing their property when put out of the synagogues at conversion to Christ. In such a Gentile city the church population would have been mostly non-Jewish. Possibly their goods had been pillaged by Jewish or Gentile mobs (Swete), as seems to have been the fate of some (cf. Heb. 10:34). The context suggests that something of this nature was at least a contributing cause of their poverty (cf. 2:9-10). Without excluding this as a factor,

the best explanation is that their poverty resulted from demands made of them because of their faith in Christ.

(Thomas, page 163.)

#2 their afflictions

The believers at Smyrna were about to undergo a time of persecution. Believers are called to suffer since our Savior suffered on our behalf. To be identified with Jesus Christ in suffering ought to be an honor for the believer. *1 Peter 2:18-23*

The Sin

There is no sin mentioned in this letter only the warning to the believers to persevere. Our Father in Heaven never puts the believer in a situation that is too difficult for him or which makes sin inevitable.

Philippians 2:12-13, 1 Corinthians 10:13

The Solution

Perseverance is a mark of true belief. Only those who overcome will enter heaven. Everyone whom Jesus died for on the cross will persevere in their faith until the end. Lack of perseverance is a sure sign of a lack of saving faith. *Romans 8:28-30, Hebrews 3:14, John 6:44*

The Reward

Only those who **overcome** will not be hurt by the second death. It is in difficult times that believers shine. Suffering or physical death can be the gateway for the believer to eternity with the one they love the most. *Revelation 20:14, Romans 8:10-11*

Pergamum

Revelation 2:12-17

This city was located upon a huge rocky hill which, as it were, plants its foot upon the great surrounding valley. The Romans made it the capital of the province of Asia. Here Aesculapius, the god of healing, was worshipped under the emblem of a serpent, which to believers in Christ was the very symbol of Satan. Here were to be seen the many pagan altars and the great altar of Zeus. All these things may have been in the mind of Christ when he called Pergamum the place 'where Satan dwells'. Yet, it seems to us that the obvious purpose of the Author is to direct our attention to the fact that Pergamum was the capital of the province and, as such, also the centre of emperor-worship. Here the government was carried on and here were the temples dedicated to the worship of Caesar. Here believers were asked to offer incense to the image of the

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emperors and to say 'Caesar is Lord'. Here Satan has his throne; here he has free rein. (Hendricksen, page 66.)

A View of the King

The Redeemer is viewed as the one *who has the sharp, double-edged sword*. This is picture of judgement and conquest. The book of Revelation shows Jesus Christ as the conqueror over the realm of Satan. *1 John 3:8*

The Issue

The believers at Pergamum lived in a very difficult situation. Living in the very center of emperor worship meant that the believers would live in constant peril. Yet, they have remained faithful to their Lord and they are commended for this.

The Sin

#1 Toleration of those who follow the teaching of Balaam.

In Numbers 24 Balaam persistently refused the request of Barak, king of Moab, to curse Israel. In the account of Israel's seduction to worship Baal in Num. 25 no mention is made of Balaam's agency in causing this defection. Nevertheless, according to Num. 31:16, he had apparently advised Balak that Israel would forfeit God's protection if he could induce them to worship idols, which he did. This tragic incident at Baal-Peor made a deep impression on subsequent generations of Israelites. The doctrine relevant to the downfall resulting from Balaam's counsel advocates that the people of God commit sexual immorality or intermarry with the heathen and compromise in the matter of idolatrous worship. Balaam bears more guilt than even antagonistic King Barak. As an alleged prophet of God, he betrayed his calling and is viewed as the real instigator of the seduction in which 24,000 of God's people fell into idolatrous worship and practices...

The emphasis here is not on selling his prophetic gift for money as in 2 Peter or on assuming erroneously that God would curse Israel as in Jude. It is simply on teaching them to eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit fornication. (Thomas, pages 190-191.)

#2 Toleration of those who hold to the teachings of the Nicolaitans.

The best conclusion is that there were two different but similar groups in this church, both of which had disobeyed the decision of the Jerusalem council in regard to idolatrous practices and fornication (cf. Acts 15:20,29). (Thomas, page 193.)

The Solution

Toleration with the world demands repentance. A continued refusal to repent is a denial that we have saving faith. *Matthew 18:15-20, 1 John 2:3-6*

The Reward

#1 Hidden Manna – A figure for eternal life. Jesus Christ is our spiritual manna forever. *John 6:25-40*

#2 White Stone – It could be a ticket of entrance into eternal life, an everyday picture from Roman life.

Thyatira

Revelation 2:18-29

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This place was situated in a valley connecting two other valleys. Lacking natural fortifications and being wide open to attack and invasion, a garrison was generally stationed here in order not only to defend the town but also to obstruct the path of the enemy to Pergamum, the capital. Being the centre of communication, with many people passing through it, Thyatira became a trading city. Here were to be found the trade-guilds: wool-workers, tanners, potters, etc. These trade-guilds were associated with the worship of tutelary deities: each guild had its guardian god. The situation, therefore, was somewhat as follows: if you wish to get ahead in this world, you must belong to a guild; if you belong to a guild, your very membership implies that you

worship its god. You will be expected to attend the guild-festivals and eat food part of which is offered to the tutelary deity and which you receive on your table as a gift from the god. And then, when the feast ends, and the real—grossly immoral—fun begins, you must not walk out unless you desire to become the object of ridicule and persecution! (Hendriksen, page 71.)

A View of the King

This allusion to 1:14 designates Christ as the one whose eyes flash with anger and who is prepared to tread under his feet the enemies of the Christian faith. This stern portrayal prepares us for the equally stern words in verses 26-27. (Ladd, page 50.) Hebrews 10:31

The Issue

Thyatira is distinguished among all seven churches as being the only one commended for both love and service. This church deserves credit for its standards in maintaining this emblem of discipleship called love (cf. John 13:35). (Thomas, pages 211-212.)

The Sin

The church at Thyatira was committing the sin of tolerating the sin of a certain prophetess. Jezebel was the name of the Phoenician wife of Ahab (1 Kings 16:31) who sought to carry the Northern Kingdom of Israel into the worship of Baal and Astarte (2 Kgs. 9:22) and to engage in associated immoralities and magical practices (Swete). (Thomas, page 213.)

The problem in Thyatira was an unhealthy tolerance. They recognized the presence of the false prophetess; they recognized also the evil character of her teaching, but they tolerantly refused to deal with her. Here is the opposite situation from that in Ephesus. The Ephesians had tested those who called themselves apostles and had rejected pseudo-apostles, but this conflict them harsh and censorious. Here is a church abounding and increasing in love and faith which is tolerant of false prophets to her own detriment. (Ladd, pages 51-52.)

The Solution

#1 repent

Faithfulness is the only thing that matters to the believer. There is never an occasion when failure to obey is ever acceptable. *Matthew 7:21-23, 1 Corinthians 5:9-13*

#2 hold on

Perseverance is the responsibility of the believer. Our Father in heaven has promised to keep us, but we must exercise effort in staying faithful to our Lord. *Hebrews 12:4-11, John 10:27-30*

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The Reward

#1 authority over the nations - (amil - judge with Christ at the end, premil – reign during millenium)

#2 give the morning star – reference to Jesus Christ (cf. *Revelation 22:16*)

Sardis

Revelation 3:1-6

Sardis, the impregnable, was situated upon a nearly inaccessible hill, overseer of the Hermus Valley, and in ancient times the proud capital of Lydia. Its people were arrogant, over-confident. There were sure—too sure, alas!—that no-one could scale this hill with its perpendicular sides. There was only one point of access: a very narrow neck of land toward the south and this could easily be fortified. But the enemy came, in 549 BC and again in 218 BC, and...took Sardis. One unobserved, unguarded weak point, and oblique crack in the rockwall, the one chance in a thousand for a night attack by skillful mountain-climbers, was all that was necessary to deal a crushing blow to the arrogance of the over-confident citizens of this proud capital. The hill upon which Sardis stood was too small for a growing city. Therefore the ancient Sardis, the acropolis, began to be deserted and a new city arose in its vicinity. When the Apocalypse was written, Sardis was facing decay, a slow but sure death. In the year AD 17 the city was partly destroyed by an earthquake. Thus, again and again, the self-satisfied and boastful inhabitants of Sardis had seen destruction coming upon them 'as a thief in the night', most suddenly and unexpectedly. (Hendricksen, page 73.)

A View of the King

*These are the words of him who holds the seven spirits of God and the seven stars. The Lord Jesus Christ does not function as the God of the Deists who creates and then sits back to let the creation go its own way. *Matthew 28:18-20**

The Issue

Sardis was sinking into spiritual stupor... Whereas in Pergamum and Thyatira a small element of the congregation had fallen into the temptation of the world, in Sardis the congregation as a whole had 'defiled its garments'. Sardis, too, was in the world. It should have been a light-bearer. It failed in its duty. Neither the Jews nor the Gentiles seem greatly to have troubled the people of Sardis. Sardis was a very 'peaceful' church. It enjoyed peace, but it was the peace of the cemetery. (Hendriksen, page 73.)

The Sin

*The church at Sardis was a living corpse. The church had become caught up in the world. The sin of compromise characterized the church as a whole. *1 John 2:15-17, Matthew 23:25-29, Galatians 1:10**

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The Solution

1. Remember

Those who profess to believe are called to remember what it means to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. When you receive Jesus you embrace him for all that he is. It is all or nothing. *Joshua 22, 1 Corinthians 11:23-26*

2. Repent

True saving faith will always result in a life that lives for Jesus Christ. Every true believer is a God-lover. *Matthew 3:1-10, James 14-24*

The Reward

#1 with me dressed in white

To be truly righteous and to be with our Lord is the best of all worlds, Heaven. *Romans 3:21-26, 5:1*

#2 kept in the book of life

True believers always heed the warning and persevere in the faith.

Hebrews 10:26-31, Philippians 2:12-13, Matthew 10:32-33, 1 Timothy 2:11-13

Philadelphia

Revelation 3:7-13

This city was situated in a valley, on an important road. It derived its name from Attalus II, 159-138 BC, whose loyalty to his brother Eumenes won him the epithet 'brother-lover'. It was founded with the intention of being a centre for the spread of the Greek language and manners in Lydia and in Phrygia and so from the very beginning it was a missionary city and very successful in its purpose.

A View of the King

Jesus is described as the one "who holds the key of David."

The key of David can be understood only in its Old Testament setting. In Isaiah 22:22, Eliakim received the key of the chief steward of the king's household, and as the representative of the king, he was authorized to exercise full administrative authority in the king's name. The key of David is the key to David's house—the messianic Kingdom. The immediate background of the phrase was the claim of the Jews in Philadelphia that they were the true people of God who held the key to the Kingdom of God. John contradicts this claim by asserting that the key to the kingdom which had belonged to Israel really belongs to Jesus as the Davidic Messiah (5:5; 22:16) and had been forfeited by Israel because she had rejected her Messiah. It is Christ alone and no longer Israel who can give men entrance into the messianic Kingdom. (Ladd, pages 58-59.)

The Issue

Open Door – 2 Options

#1 *The more common interpretation is that it denotes a great opportunity for missionary activity. Paul uses the metaphor in this way. He writes to the Corinthians of his plans to stay in Ephesus until Pentecost, "for a wide door for effective work has opened to me" (1 Cor 16:9; cf. II Cor 2:12; Col 4:3). (Mounce, page 117.)*

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- #2 The open door seems to be referring to the issue of salvation and more specifically to the promise of God to save completely those who come to Jesus in repentance and faith. The synagogue of Satan will not keep the believers in Philadelphia from entering into the presence of the Lord.
Philippians 1:6

Jews at your feet – 2 Options

- #1 The church in Philadelphia would be exalted before the Jews.

- #2 The ultimate conversion of the Jews at the end of the age would bring Jews to “acknowledge that I have loved you.” The SinIt is only the churches of Smyrna and

Philadelphia that receive no rebukes. There is no specific sin for which they are called to repent.

The Solution

The hour of trial seems to be referring to a time of persecution that the Lord will keep the church in Philadelphia from experiencing.

The Reward (figures for eternal life)

pillar in the temple – Believers are described as living stones making up a spiritual temple. *1 Peter 2:4-10* The place of the believer in God’s temple is permanent, lasting into eternity.
Romans 8:30

write on him the name of my God

When Christ comes as the mighty conqueror, he has a name inscribed which no one knows but himself (19:12). This is a symbolic way of suggesting the glory and majesty of Christ at his revelation, which will be shared by his followers. (Ladd, pages 63-64.)

Laodicea

Revelation 3:14-22

Laodicea was situated in the neighborhood of hot springs. Emitting lukewarm water from the mouth was a figure which its citizens could easily understand. A famous school of medicine grew up here, producing, among other things, a remedy for weak eyes. In this city the soft black wool for the sheep of the valley was woven into garments. But Laodicea was especially famous for its wealth. Located at the confluence of three great highways—be sure to consult a map—it grew rapidly into a great commercial and financial centre. It was the home of the millionaires. There were, of course, theatres, a stadium, and a gymnasium equipped with baths. It was a city of bankers and finance. So wealthy was this city that its inhabitants declined to receive aid from the government after the place had been partly wrecked by an earthquake. (Hendriksen, page 76.)

A View of the King

These are the words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness,

The Book of Revelation

In *John 18:37* Jesus states *for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth*. Unlike the Laodiceans, Jesus was faithful to his father and all that he said and did reflected this. Faithfulness is the only thing that counts for the believer.

The Issue

The physical location of Laodicea put it in the vicinity of two other cities, Hieropolis and Colosse. Hieropolis had the hot springs that had medicinal value. Colosse had cold springs that provided refreshing drinking water. By the time the water from both sources reached Laodicea the temperature of both sources of water would have been lukewarm. Thus, the hot springs would have lost its medicinal value and the cold springs would have lost their refreshing value.

The Laodiceans are accused of having lukewarm hearts that are not fit for the kingdom of God. Their deeds were spiritual indifferent and therefore merited the divine judgment for their deeds were not the evidence of those redeemed by the Savior. *Romans 6:17*

The Sin

The church at Laodicea was self-satisfied and did not need the Lord. They saw themselves as having it all, when, if the truth were to be told, they were spiritually poor and in need of everything. *Luke 18:9-14*

The Solution

Revelation 3:20 calls all professed believers to bring the Lordship of Jesus Christ to every part of their lives. Believers are to have Jesus Christ as the focal point of their lives. True faith always brings about a changed life. Saving faith is then described in three different ways.

- #1 *buy from me gold refined in the fire so that you can become rich*
A believer values what his Savior and Lord values. *Matthew 6:33*
- #2 *white clothes to wear so that you can cover your shameful nakedness*
A believer has a new heart and desires to live for Jesus. *Titus 3:3-7*
- #3 *salve to put on your eyes, so that you can see*
A believer has the mind of Christ. *1 Corinthians 2:14-16*

The Reward

I will give the right to sit with me on my throne

If we persevere until the end then we will be with our Lord and will reign with him for all eternity. Although the details of this are not clear it is clear that we will be IN CHRIST for all eternity. *2 Timothy 2:12*