

Week 5 – Rev. 3

Today, last three of seven churches. Two have similar issues and the other stands apart.

Jesus is showing Himself to the churches exalted above the gods who are the center of worship in each of these cities.

“To the angel of the church in Sardis write: (Zombie Church)

The greek historian Herodotus wrote about the lack of morality and perversion in Sardis.

These are the words of him who holds the seven spirits of God and the seven stars (Seven characteristics of the Holy Spirit and the seven churches). I know your deeds; you have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead. (I see dead people, they don't know they are dead, they only see what they want to see, Eph. 2) ²Wake up! Strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have not found your deeds complete in the sight of my God (start with lots of promises and commitments) . ³Remember, therefore, what you have received and heard; obey it, and repent. But if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what time I will come to you.

They had a form of godliness but no power. (2 Tim. 3:5)

Jesus coming will not be like a thief in the night for those who are watching, expectant, and love His appearing. (1 Thess. 5:1-5)

One of reasons these specific letters are included because we see all of the principles of the Gospels and especially the epistles, the writing of Paul lived out successfully and unsuccessfully.

Their problem was that through compromise they had lost sensitivity to God or interest in Him. They became dull and their hearts were hardened. (Rom. 1:21-25)

Remedy is five commands in just 12 words. **Remember** what **received & heard**, **obey**, and **repent**.

⁴Yet you have a few people in Sardis who have not soiled their clothes. (or stained by sin) They will walk with me, dressed in white, for they are worthy. ⁵He who overcomes will, like them, be dressed in white. I will never blot out his name from the book of life, but will acknowledge his name before my Father and his angels. ⁶He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

This whole letter begs the question, “can a person lose their salvation?” It seems that either these people hung around the church and never really understood the Gospel or they deliberately chose to walk away from Christ. This topic has been at the center of debate for 500 years and we are not going to settle it today. The bottom line is that why would we want to walk away from Christ? Our goal should be to press in and draw closer rather than pushing back.

We all go through seasons of dryness and disappointment. Christ calls us to “strengthen what remains” or to “fan into a flame” as Paul instructs Timothy. If the passion for God is cooled in your life

then come back. Humble yourself, repent, draw close to God and He will forgive and draw close to you.

We have a nice interlude between one church that is dead, and another one making God nauseous.

⁷***To the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: (Church of brotherly love, & good steak sandwiches)***

These are the words of him who is holy and true, who holds the key of David. What he opens no one can shut, and what he shuts no one can open. ⁸I know your deeds. See, I have placed before you an open door that no one can shut. (probably door of ministry 1 Cor. 16:9; Col. 4:3-4) I know that you have little strength, yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name. ⁹I will make those who are of the synagogue of Satan, who claim to be Jews though they are not, but are liars—I will make them come and fall down at your feet and acknowledge that I have loved you. ¹⁰Since you have kept my command to endure patiently, I will also keep you from the hour of trial that is going to come upon the whole world to test those who live on the earth.

No complaint from Christ. They have no false doctrine or spiritual apathy. They were doing the most with what they had. They didn't complain that they were in a small city, or being persecuted, or lacked resources, or opportunities. Jesus is encouraging them. He is going to protect them.

¹¹***I am coming soon. (not second coming, but coming to help them) Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take your crown. ¹²Him who overcomes I will make a pillar in the temple of my God (Pillar is unshakeable, an earthquake had wiped out the city in 17AD). Never again will he leave it. I will write on him the name of my God and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which is coming down out of heaven from my God; and I will also write on him my new name. ¹³He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.***

You hear a challenge to them to be stronger, more aggressive in their outreach. If they reach out many of the people who respond will be people who persecuted them. By winning their enemies they bring on themselves and God's blessing on the community.

The last and most popular church, because this is the age almost every church leader going back 1,000 believed they were in.

¹⁴***To the angel of the church in Laodicea write: (Church which Spews)***

Some believe that the letter to the Ephesians may have also been addressing Laodicea. It is interesting to read Ephesians in light of the challenges external and internal these churches were facing.

These are the words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God's creation. ¹⁵I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! ¹⁶So, because you are lukewarm — neither hot nor cold — I am about to spit you out of my mouth.

There is absolutely no compliment from Christ to this church. Jesus knows the danger of skin-deep Christianity. He knows how respectable religion puts God in the background and soothes the conscience. This has been one of the greatest issues in the church and why each generation identifies with Laodicea.

Whether through direct persecution, or a desire to fit in, or a lust for the things of this world, this group of church people had lost the idea of what it means to follow Christ. They were blind.

¹⁷ You say, 'I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.' But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked.

If you study some of this history of Laodicea you learn that this was a commerce, trade and banking center. They were known for an eye salve Aristotle referred to called Phrygian powder, and exotic fabrics. But Jesus saw through the material things they were trusting in and what he saw was spiritually poor, blind and naked people.

¹⁸ I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see.

Jesus can only counsel them, He will not force them to come to Him. His gold is the purest, His cloth the whitest, and His salve the best at curing spiritual blindness. Stop trusting yourself, start trusting Me.

¹⁹ Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest, and repent. ²⁰ Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me.

Jesus tells them why He is being so strong in His language, it is out of love. He is right there waiting to be invited to help them, provide for them and set them free.

He stands at your door today as well and asks you to invite Him to take the place of leadership by giving him control of your life.

²¹ To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne. ²² He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."

If we let Him come in a rule our lives, He in turn will invite us to come and sit with Him and rule for eternity. We get to walk with Him here and reign with Him forever.

The Doorway

There is this relationship of the closeness Christ wants with us. God desires an intimate relationship with His children. It is what every father wants. There is this picture of a door used which starts in Rev. 2 and progresses into Rev. 4. This door represents access to the presence of God. It is used metaphorically throughout the Bible.

Christ ends each letter with a promise of what the believer will experience if they overcome the spiritual challenges they face.

The churches are told right away in each letter where are spiritually in proximity to the door. They range from complete deadness (Sardis), or drifting away (Ephesus), or deceived (Laodicea), to ready to enter (Philadelphia).

Jesus then tells them what they must do to respond and move toward the door to Heaven.

Church	Promise of Heaven	Situation & proximity to door	What you must do
Ephesus	Tree of Life	Moved away from door	Repent, do first works
Smyrna	No more death, Crown of Life	Held back by suffering for limited time	Do not be afraid, be faithful
Pergamum	Hidden manna, white stone (access)	Live where Satan rules but will be where God rules	Repent of false teachings
Thyatira	Authority to rule nations	Being led away by Jezebel	Repent if fallen, hold on if not
Sardis	Dressed in White, name in Book of Life, acknowledged before God	Spiritually dead. If dead or asleep will miss when Christ comes.	Wake up! Repent, obey.
Philadelphia	Pillar in House of God	An open door to Heaven	Hold on to what you have
Laodicea	Sit with Me on My Throne	Lukewarm, deceived	Jesus is standing at the door waiting to be invited in
Rev. 4	Throne room of Heaven	"In the Spirit", carried into Throne room	Accept the invitation into God's house

As we invite Christ into our house, our lives to rule, He in turn invites us into His house, Heaven to rule with Him.

The following pages contain additional insights from scripture about this door or gateway to God and to our lives.

1. The Kingdom of God is available to all who seek it.

“Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. ⁸ For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened. Matt. 7:7-8

2. There will be signs to let us know the end is near.

*Even so, when you see all these things, you know that it is near, right at the door.
Matt. 24:33*

3. We are to stay near the door and keep watch.

It’s like a man going away: He leaves his house and puts his servants in charge, each with his assigned task, and tells the one at the door to keep watch. Matt. 13:34

4. We are to ready at any moment to follow Christ.

like men waiting for their master to return from a wedding banquet, so that when he comes and knocks they can immediately open the door for him. Luke 12:36

5. Those who are distracted and deceived will miss Christ’s return.

“But while they were on their way to buy the oil, the bridegroom arrived. The virgins who were ready went in with him to the wedding banquet. And the door was shut.

¹¹“Later the others also came. ‘Sir! Sir!’ they said. ‘Open the door for us!’

¹²“But he replied, ‘I tell you the truth, I don’t know you.’ Matt. 25:10-12

6. Even those who thought they knew God will miss out.

“Make every effort to enter through the narrow door, because many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able to. ²⁵Once the owner of the house gets up and closes the door, you will stand outside knocking and pleading, ‘Sir, open the door for us.’

“But he will answer, ‘I don’t know you or where you come from.’

²⁶“Then you will say, ‘We ate and drank with you, and you taught in our streets.’

²⁷“But he will reply, ‘I don’t know you or where you come from. Away from me, all you evildoers!’ Luke 13:24-27

7. Jesus is our good Shepherd and our gateway into the Kingdom of God.

Therefore Jesus said again, “I tell you the truth, I am the gate for the sheep. ⁸ All who ever came before me were thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. ⁹ I am the gate;

whoever enters through me will be saved. He will come in and go out, and find pasture.¹⁰ The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full. John 10:7-10

Acts 3, the crippled man begged just outside the gate. Peter gave him what he had inside, the presence of God. The man was healed and allowed hi to walk into the temple. The temple represented the presence of God or Heaven to the Jews. This new Gospel of the Kingdom gave this man access to Heaven. That is what the gospel does for us and for others as we share what is in us.

There is another consideration about the gateway to the Kingdom of God and the world. Scripture indicates that we go in and out of this gate to access God now and out to reach the world.

And so Jesus also suffered outside the city gate to make the people holy through his own blood.¹³ Let us, then, go to him outside the camp, bearing the disgrace he bore. Heb. 13:12

The door also represents the place in our lives where we meet God.

If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must master it. Gen. 4:7

But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. Matt. 6:6

Gen. 19, Lot protects the presence of god by shutting the door to those outside who want to defile Him and God's presence. The presence of God in turn protects him.
(see also Judges 19)

The door represents our heart

Take a bunch of hyssop, dip it into the blood in the basin and put some of the blood on the top and on both sides of the doorframe. Not one of you shall go out the door of his house until morning.²³ When the LORD goes through the land to strike down the Egyptians, he will see the blood on the top and sides of the doorframe and will pass over that doorway, and he will not permit the destroyer to enter your houses and strike you down. Ex. 12:22-23

He shall take him to the door or the doorpost and pierce his ear with an awl. Then he will be his servant for life. Ex. 21:6

2 Kings 4:4-5, Elisha tells the widow to shut the door and begin filling the pots with oil. We get filled with God's presence when we shut the door to outside doubt, influences, and distraction.

Set a guard over my mouth, O LORD; keep watch over the door of my lips. Ps. 141:3

He was afraid and said, "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God; this

is the gate of heaven.” Gen. 28:17

Open for me the gates of righteousness; I will enter and give thanks to the LORD.

²⁰ *This is the gate of the LORD through which the righteous may enter. Ps. 118:19-20*

He will be a spirit of justice to him who sits in judgment, a source of strength to those who turn back the battle at the gate. Isa. 28:6

“Stand at the gate of the LORD’S house and there proclaim this message:

“Hear the word of the LORD, all you people of Judah who come through these gates to worship the LORD. ³ This is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says: Reform your ways and your actions, and I will let you live in this place. Jer. 7:2-3

The job of leadership is to open the gateway to Christ.

The watchman opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. John 10:3

When the church goes into the world the goal is to break down the gates of Hell keeping people in bondage, to share the truth with them, and lead them to the Christ and into His kingdom.

And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. Matt. 16:18

This is the goal of our lives.

Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city. Rev. 22:14