

THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST

Revelation: 3:7-22 | Session 7 | Philadelphia and Laodicea | Notes

The seven letters to the seven assemblies (churches) in chapters 2 and 3 are messages from Jesus Christ to the messenger, or the leader, of each assembly. To see this, you must have a Bible that differentiates the various pronouns, “you, ye (plural), thou, and thee (singular).” Most Christians believe the commendations and the condemnations from Christ are directed toward the entire assembly, but by following the pronouns, you will discover this is not the case. All modern translations mislead us and are responsible for Christians misinterpreting the seven letters and making them be about “us.”

In this study, we will look at the final two messengers of the assemblies, Philadelphia and Laodicea. As with the previous five assemblies, these are future Jewish synagogues meeting during the seven-year tribulation.¹ As a reminder, these *churches are not us*. The Church as we know it today (the Body of Christ) is not found in the Revelation.

All of these assemblies will need the instruction given in these letters. As we have already seen in these letters, illustrations are used from the Old Testament (e.g., Balaam, Jezebel, etc.). These illustrations will give the Jews help in overcoming the trials they are facing by pointing to God as their complete and only hope. The promise given throughout these letters is that they will be delivered through the trial, and we will see that promise being fulfilled in chapters 7, 14, and 15.

An issue we face in studying these seven letters is that many statements are made in them in which an interpretation becomes more or less guesswork. For example, the *crown of life* in chapter 2:10. In reality, no one knows what it is. We can speculate that it means everlasting life, but it is impossible to state that dogmatically. Or in this session, Jesus mentions *The Key of David* in 3:7. While we will look at an Old Testament passage that contains those words, we still have to say we’re not entirely sure what Jesus means when he makes that statement. Ultimately, we must be ready to say “We don’t know” and leave it at that. And that’s okay to say! We should take heart in knowing that the meaning of the ambiguous or uncertain passages will be made especially clear to these assemblies, their messengers, and Israel during the Tribulation.

To the Angel of the church in Philadelphia (3:7-13).

Verse 7—

Like all the others, **Philadelphia** (city of brotherly love) is located in modern Turkey (Republic of Türkiye) and is known today by the name Alasehir. It is worth noting that before the 7th century, Turkey was a Christian nation, as was most of the middle east.

¹ For a map of the location of these assemblies see the notes from session 6.

In the other letters, Jesus identifies himself from John's description in chapter 1:4-18. In this letter, he describes himself by seven attributes not listed in the first chapter.

1. **He that is holy:** His title of Deity, as in Psalm 16:10 *"Neither will thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption."* Next week in 4:8 we are going to read about four creatures surrounding the throne of God and *"they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty."* God is perfectly holy in his act of Creation and Redemption. Holiness is God's primary attribute and for the Believer today, we are *Complete in Christ* which means He sees us as holy. And yet while we may fail to live up to that holiness, Jesus Christ sets the pattern for us in that He never fails. One day we will be like Him which is why we look forward to the Blessed Hope of meeting Him in the air one day soon.
2. **He that is true:** As in, He is the real thing; as opposed to a fake idol (1 Thessalonians 1:9; *"The living and true God."*) One of the greatest things missing in our society today is truth. People have lost all confidence in any truth. Skepticism is nothing new. Pontius Pilate was skeptical when it came to truth. In John 18:37-38, he asked Jesus, *"Art thou a king?"* Jesus's response was, *"To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth,"* Do you remember Pilate's famous reply? *"Pilate saith unto him, What is truth?"* Regardless of what our culture may say, Jesus is the truth.
3. **He that hath the key of David:** This must refer to a quote from Isaiah 22:22, *"And the key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder; so he shall open, and none shall shut; And he shall shut, and none shall open."* This Isaiah reference was directed to a man named *Eliakim*, a high official and faithful servant under King Hezekiah². The **key of the house of David** expressly referred to the keys to the treasuries of the kings of Judah but also, in a figurative sense, refers to all the extraordinary responsibilities of government that would rest on his shoulder. This is the same prophetic promise that Isaiah 9:6,7 makes about the coming Savior, *"and the government shall be upon his shoulder,"* and that he would occupy the house of David forever. So Eliakim was a visible type of the coming Messiah. Therefore, Jesus is introducing himself to the assembly leader as the One who possesses all authority and alone has the ability and prerogative of opening and shutting doors to the Kingdom in which He is about to bring in at the end of this time of trial for Israel.

Which would follow that these next four relate to Jesus's ability to provide or deny access to His coming Kingdom.

4. **He that opens.**
5. **And no one can shut.**
6. **He that shuts.**

² From our Daniel study, we learned that Jehoiakim was the 18th king of the southern kingdom of Judah. Hezekiah was the 13th king, five kings before Jehoiakim.

7. And no one can open.

Verse 8—

I know thy works. The same knowledge Christ knows about all the messengers. Whatever his works were, they pleased the Lord. **I have set an open door before thee;** this may have to do with *deliverance from adversaries*. **For thou hast little strength,** is a good thing. It means this messenger depended wholly on the Lord. Jesus said to the apostle Paul, “My strength is made perfect in weakness” (2 Corinthians 12:9). **And hast not denied my name.** One will deny the name of Jesus in the Tribulation by taking the mark: The name of the beast (Revelation 13:17).

Verse 9—

Of the synagogue of Satan, we saw this in Revelation 2:9. Some have also crept into this assembly, **which say they are Jews and are not, but do lie.** Speculation: Are these people those who take the *mark* of the beast but join in this Jewish synagogue thinking they could still enter the Kingdom? They said they were Jews and were not, and Jesus called them out for lying! These fakes will one day worship Christ the King of kings just as the messenger of Philadelphia worships, “That at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, and every tongue confess” (Philippians 2:10-11). This is a condemnation of the phony Jews who are really of Satan.

Verse 10—

Thou hast kept the word of my patience, “Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus” (Revelation 14:12). These are the ones during the Tribulation who are looking to Christ for deliverance out of them, and when they do Jesus said, **I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.** These days were foretold by the prophet Zephaniah 1:14-18 and by the Lord Jesus while on earth, Luke 21:36.

Verse 11—

Behold, I come quickly. Quickly is the word *tachos* meaning when he comes, it will happen with great speed. **Hold fast...that no man take thy crown.** What crown? In 2:10, we read about the *crown of life*. That could just mean *eternal life*. He doesn't say what this crown is. I am not sure that Christians in the Body of Christ have literal crowns, and even if we did, since we are complete in Christ, how could anyone take them away from us? The subject of *crowns* is one that deserves a lot more study.

Verse 12—

The *overcomer* is mentioned again here. He will be made **a pillar in the temple of my God.** Certainly, this is not meaning he will be turned to stone and become an actual pillar, so we have to take this figuratively. Maybe we should do the same with *crowns*? A pillar supports something, so it could be “Him that overcometh I will make him a support or a help in the temple of my God”? **He shall go no more out;** he will always serve the Lord throughout eternity. Instead of the mark of the beast, he will have *God's name*, the **city of God**, and his own **new name** written upon him!

Verse 13—

See other sessions regarding this closing remark of Jesus to this messenger.

Unto the Angel of the church of the Laodiceans (3:14-22)

Nearly all Christians who have heard about this church make the claim that the Body of Christ today is the “church of Laodicea.” I disagree since I do not believe the Body of Christ is found in the Tribulation and thus in the book of Revelation. We have been raptured and are with the Lord, presumably in heaven at this time.

This is the last of the letters to the seven church messengers and marks the last stage of apostasy and of the Tribulation.

Verse 14—

Jesus describes Himself as the **Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God**. This does not mean Jesus was created. Rather, the Greek word for beginning is *arche*, meaning *principality* or even *the origin* of all creation; and sure enough, Colossians 1:15-17 shows us that He is the actual Creator. Everything comes from Him.

Verse 15,16—

I know thy works. This messenger is neither **cold nor hot**, but he desires that he was **cold or hot**. Instead, this messenger is **lukewarm**. That is, he’s wishy-washy. He cannot fake any kind of a relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. For the other messengers who were failing (they were cold), Jesus gave them a chance to repent. They weren’t necessarily trying to hide their coldness.

Verse 17—

Perhaps he is saying, “I can get through this on my own!”

Verse 18—

Jesus tells him, *if you really want to be rich, you are going to have to go through the fire; that’s real wealth*. He will have to suffer for Christ, and he needs **eyesalve** so that he might have spiritual eyes to understand what Jesus is telling him.

Verse 19—

Rebuke, chasten, repent. These are all works of the kingdom, not of those who are saved by grace through faith.

Verse 20—

This verse is often taken as a salvation verse, e.g., *Jesus is standing at the door of your heart knocking, and all you have to do is let Him into your heart*. Instead, this is Jesus calling Israel to the wedding feast, which we will see in Revelation 19:9, which Jesus pointed to in Luke 12:35-38, where He is talking to His disciples about the Kingdom.

Verse 21—

The grace of the Lord Jesus is again shown. The one who was about to be spewed out of His mouth, if he performs the works necessary and **overcometh**, will be granted permission to sit with Jesus on His throne.

Verse 22—

In looking at these seven churches, it should be evident that they do not belong in our dispensation of grace. Here is how we can always know which dispensation is in view: “When *works* and *not grace* form the standing; then Israel and not the Body of Christ (The Church) is the subject.