

THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST

Revelation: 3:7-22 | Doors to the Kingdom | Session 7

The seven letters to the seven assemblies (churches) in chapters 2 and 3 are messages from Jesus Christ to each assembly's messenger or the leader (i.e., *angelos*). To see this, you must have a Bible that differentiates the various pronouns, like the King James Version, e.g., "You, ye (plural), thou, and thee (singular)." While each letter is addressed to the *angelos*, there are, at times, some commendations and *condemnations* from Christ directed toward the entire assembly. But each leader is being held accountable by Jesus Christ. The lack of differentiating pronouns in most Bible translations has caused Christians to misinterpret the seven letters, making them be about "us."

One of the key questions is how these letters are to be interpreted. One of the most popular is the historical view that all seven types of churches existed throughout the Church Age. This is known as the historical-prophetic interpretation. No matter what part of church history one may turn to, he will find all seven types of churches.¹ I do not hold to this view for several reasons:

1. Revelation is one book of prophecy dealing with The Time of Jacob's Trouble. The Church we are a part of today will not go through this time designated specifically for Israel.
2. All seven of the letters concern overcoming and persevering to the end. To do so, these assemblies must do certain work.
3. To achieve entrance into the Kingdom of God, each letter demands individual works. This violates the apostle Paul's message in the dispensation of grace, of the gift of salvation by grace through faith and not of yourselves, not of works.

During *The Time of Jacob's Trouble*, Israel will need the instructions in these letters. As we have seen in these letters, illustrations are used from the Hebrew Scriptures (e.g., Balaam, Jezebel, etc.) and tied in with a new message from the Messiah, which will give the Jews, attempting to survive in the Tribulation, help in overcoming the trials through their patient endurance and obedience through their works. 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 which an interpretation becomes more or less guesswork. For example, we read about the meaning of the *crown of life* in chapter 2:10. 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* (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. Ultimately, we must be ready to say, "We don't know," and leave it at that. And that's okay to say! Let's not make up things from which the Bible does not explain. We should take heart in knowing that the meaning of the ambiguous or uncertain passages will be especially clear to these assemblies, their messengers, and Israel during the Tribulation.

¹Fruchtenbaum, Arnold G. *The Footsteps of the Messiah : A Study of the Sequence of Prophetic Events*. Rev. ed., Ariel Ministries, 2003.

As stated in other sessions, my view is that these are seven letters addressed to literal Jewish assemblies that represent the whole. While this view raises other questions, it keeps our Biblical hermeneutic (interpretation) consistent.

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.² As noted, these *churches are not us*. The Church as we know it today (the Body of Christ) is not the subject of Revelation.

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

Verse 7—

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

In the other letters (Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergomas, Thyatira, and Sardis), Jesus identified himself based on John's description in chapter 1:4-18. In this letter, Jesus 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 Revelation 4:8, we will read about four creatures surrounding God's throne. The passage states, *"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 have been made holy (1 Corinthians 6:11). Because we have been made holy, though still sinful, we are no longer sinners. We are *Complete in Christ* (Colossians 2:10). While we may fail to live up to that holiness, we have a pattern set for us by Jesus Christ in that He is perfectly holy and never fails. We stand holy before the Lord because of Jesus Christ's work, not our own. One day we will be glorified and like Him, which is why we look forward to the Blessed Hope (Titus 2:13) of meeting Him in the air one day (1 Thessalonians 4:16,17).
2. **He that is true:** 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 runs rampant today, and yet it is nothing new. Pontius Pilate was skeptical when it came to the truth. In John 18:37-38, he asked Jesus, *"Art thou a king?"* Jesus responded, *"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. (John 14:6).
3. **He that hath the key of David:** This may 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."* A key represents some kind of responsibility and authority. This

² For a map of the location of these assemblies see the notes from session 6.

Isaiah reference was directed to *Eliakim*, a high official and faithful servant under King Hezekiah³. The *key of the house of David* expressly referred to the keys to the treasuries of the kings of Judah but also, figuratively, refers to all the extraordinary responsibilities of government that would rest on the king's 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, a respected leader, faithful administrator, and one who made wise decisions, was a visible type of the coming Messiah (See 2 Kings 18:18, 26, 37; Isaiah 36:3, 11, 22; 37:2). Jesus holds the keys of "hell and death" (1:18) and will take back dominion of the earth.

Therefore, Jesus is introducing himself to the messenger in Philadelphia, as the One who possesses all authority and alone has the ability and prerogative of opening and shutting doors to the Kingdom, which He is about to bring in at the end of this time of trial for Israel. It 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.**
7. **And no one can open.**

Verse 8—

I know thy works. This is the same knowledge Christ knows about all the messengers that have been addressed thus far. Whatever this messenger of the assembly in Philadelphia's **works** are, they pleased the Lord. **I have set an open door before thee** (that no one can shut); maybe this means *deliverance from adversaries, but more likely, it ties in with verse 7, that this messenger is assured of entering the Kingdom.* **For thou hast little strength.** This is a compliment. It means this messenger depends wholly on the Lord. Jesus said to the apostle Paul, "*My strength is made perfect in weakness*" (2 Corinthians 12:9). *The Lord uses the weak things to confound the things that are mighty* (1 Corinthians 1:27). **And hast not denied my name.** The way that Jesus will be denied in the Tribulation is by many who will take the Mark, which is the name of the *Beast* (Revelation 13:17).

Verse 9—

Of the synagogue of Satan, we saw this phrase in Revelation 2:9. In Philadelphia; some fake Jews have also crept into this assembly, **which say they are Jews and are not, but do lie.** They are of a different synagogue. Speculation: Are these people those who will have taken the *mark* of the beast but join in this Jewish synagogue, thinking that by doing so, 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 truly 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). But as for them entering the Kingdom, it will be too late. This is a condemnation of the phony Jews who are really of Satan.

³ 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.

We can likely find some application here because, as a general principle, the world hates God and the things of God and will do much to try and destroy God's work. This is why Pastors and all those in the Church today and our families must be on guard to protect our doctrine and ensure we rightly divide the word of truth (2 Timothy 2:15).

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). Commandment keeping will be required during the Tribulation, and when they are kept 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.** This hour and the great day of the Lord was 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. This is a statement Jesus makes to the future assembly. Quickly is the word *tachos* meaning when he comes, it will happen with great speed⁴. **Hold fast...that no man take thy crown.** What crown? In 2:10, we read about the *crown of life*. Here He doesn't say what this crown is. It is my view that those of us in the Body of Christ do not receive crowns. But even if we will receive them since we are *complete in Christ*, how could a crown be taken away? There is much made-up teaching about *crowns*; it deserves more study.

Verse 12—

Him that overcometh is mentioned again. 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. This likely means, “Him that overcometh I will make him a support or a help (a servant/priest) 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, this overcomer will have *God's name*, the **city of God**, and a **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)

Those who hold to the historical-prophetic interpretation of the *seven churches* claim that the Body of Christ today is the “church of Laodicea.” I disagree, as noted above since I do not believe the Body of Christ is the subject of Revelation and, thus, is not mentioned or alluded to. The Body of Christ will have been raptured, and we are with the Lord, presumably in heaven at this time, but not the subject on Earth or in Heaven in the book of Revelation.

This is the last of the letters to the seven church messengers and marks the last stage of apostasy in the Tribulation. It is time for Israel to make a decision.

⁴ *tachos* is a speed word, not a time word.

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, as we allow Scripture to interpret Scripture, Colossians 1:15-17 shows us that He is the actual Creator, not a created being. Everything comes from Him.

Verse 15,16—

I know thy works. This messenger is neither **cold nor hot**, but Jesus desires that he is **cold or hot**. Instead, this messenger is **lukewarm**. That is, he's wishy-washy. He cannot fake any kind of relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. This is an apostate pastor and church.

An apostate church denies Jesus as Messiah. They propagate false teachings like denying the Virgin Birth or the Trinity—even the Second Coming. The result is that God will **spue** him **out of his mouth**. This word **spue** is the Greek word *emeo*, and the KJV softens it to some degree; it means to *throw up or vomit forth*. Perhaps we could say *Jesus will spew this messenger from His mouth like undrinkable water*.

Yes, there are apostate churches today, and have been throughout 2,000 years of church history. We should avoid churches like that at all costs. How can we recognize this kind of apostasy? Second Timothy 3:5 says, *“Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away. For of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts....”*

This kind of apostasy is not going to go away; it is going to get worse, *“Evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived”* (2 Timothy 3:13). What we are seeing in the Church today is a prelude to the end times. This Laodicean leader will deny the power of the Messiah and the promise of His return well into the Tribulation. For the leaders in the other assemblies who were failing (they were cold), Jesus gave them a chance to repent.

Verse 17,18—

I counsel thee. Jesus is the Wonderful Counselor (Isaiah 9:6). Perhaps this church messenger's attitude is that he has enough to get through this on his own. He doesn't need any help from the Lord. But Jesus says, **Buy from me**.

Wealth and material things cannot buy one what he truly needs. Isaiah 55:1 says, *“Everyone that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; Come ye, buy, and eat; Yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.”* What is the price this messenger must pay? He must recognize **that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked**. The only way for his spiritual **nakedness** to be covered is for him to be clothed **in white raiment**, i.e., purity. For believers in the dispensation of grace, Christ makes us pure when we believe.

FOR THOSE IN THE BODY OF CHRIST, THERE IS NOTHING WE BUY FROM OUR LORD. HE PAID THE PRICE FOR US.

Jesus tells this messenger that to be rich and have real weath; he must *go through the fire*. **Eyesalve** is for physical blindness, but this messenger needs spiritual **eyesalve** so that he might have spiritual eyes to understand what Jesus is telling him to impart truth to his apostate assembly. The Holy Spirit says, *“The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints.”* Ephesians 1:18.

An old hymn from the 1800s says, *Open my eyes that I may see glimpses of truth thou hast for me. Place in my hands the wonderful key that shall unclasp and set me free*⁵. The eyesalve we need, or the key as the song puts it, is the Word of God. Our spiritual eyes are opened as we study it and gain knowledge of its truth.

Verse 19—

As many as I love. Certainly, “God so loved the world,” but over and over again in Scripture, we see God voicing His love for His People, Israel. The context in the Book of Revelation is *Jacob’s Trouble*. Israel was created and “formed” by God (Isaiah 43:1). God’s prophecies throughout Scripture were that if Israel rejected Him and turned away from Him, they would be **rebuked, chastened, and compelled to repent**.

The Body of Christ is never threatened with rebuke or chastening since Christ could not and would not discipline Himself. For those who are “in Christ,” there is “no condemnation” (Romans 8:1). There are people who hold to the doctrine that God disciplines Christians. I do not. How would one ever know if he was being disciplined? If you break an arm, are you being disciplined? If you get COVID, are you being chastised? If you die, is it because of God’s wrath upon you? What about the passages in Hebrews 12 that deal with the chastening of the Lord? Ask yourself, to *whom is the Book of Hebrews written?*

We are the Body of Christ; washed, sanctified, justified, complete, holy, unblameable, unreprouvable, rooted in Christ, built up in Him, established in the faith, buried with Him in baptism, risen with him through faith, dead in sins, forgiven of all trespasses, nourished by Christ the Head, hid with Christ in God, and more. The warning in this verse concerns kingdom works, which do not apply to those saved by grace through faith.

Verse 20—

This verse is often taken as a salvation verse, e.g., *Jesus is knocking at the door of your heart, and all you have to do is let Him into your heart*. Many have come to Christ after hearing those words, but the verse is not a salvation verse. While there is nothing necessarily wrong with using it to lead someone to Christ, we miss the actual meaning of the passage.

The return of Jesus is at the door; Israel needs to recognize that and invite him in. Jesus told Israel, *“For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.”* Matthew 23:39. He is still outside of Israel (this assembly of Laodicea) as the Tribulation draws to a close. Israel must decide; shall we keep Christ out of our assembly or invite Him in?

This is not a call to salvation during the dispensation of grace. It is a call to salvation for Israel during the dispensation of the Tribulation.

Verse 21—

⁵ Clara Scott. 1895.

The one who was about to be spewed out of His mouth, if he performs the works necessary and **overcometh** the apostasy of unbelief and invites Jesus into his assembly, will share in the Messianic Kingdom and will be granted permission to sit with **Jesus on His throne**.

Verse 22—

Looking at these seven churches, it should be evident that they do not belong in our dispensation of grace.

WHEN READING AND STUDYING SCRIPTURE, WE CAN ALWAYS KNOW WHICH DISPENSATION IS IN VIEW: WHEN WORKS AND NOT GRACE FORM THE STANDING, ISRAEL (NOT THE BODY OF CHRIST, AKA, THE CHURCH) IS THE SUBJECT.