



Revelation

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The Seven Churches of Revelation

God's Messages for today's church

A brief study of God's grace to His church, then and now, from
the Book of Revelation Chapters 1 to 3

Bible Seminar by
Ian Ridpath – Three Cord Ministries © 2010

Introduction:

Some of the greatest words of *COMMENDATION*, some of the clearest words of *WARNING* and some of the most uplifting words of *PROMISE* were spoken by Christ to the seven churches in Asia Minor.

These words were written down about the year
AD-95 ... just 65 years after Christ's
resurrection

The messages of Jesus Christ to the seven churches in Asia Minor is as **relevant today** as it was nearly 2000 years ago!

The Journey

I was curious why Jesus spoke these words to those seven churches.

Why not to other churches or groups in the area?

Was it enough to speak to just these churches?

Why was He so insistent that John write down exactly what He told him to – word for word - and deliver it in the form of letters to churches in Asia Minor (now Turkey)?

I believe that Christ's **seven** messages were **complete** as is the **number seven** being the **number of completeness**.

Jesus said to those seven churches **all He wanted to say to them and to us**, His modern church - whether we are in **seven** communities or **seven** hundred communities.

Extra: References to seven in the Book of Revelation.

- 7 Churches (1:4, 11, 20),
- 7 Spirits (1:4; 3:1; 4:5; 5:6)
- 7 Candlesticks (1:12, 13, 20: 2:1),
- 7 Stars (1:16, 20; 2:1; 3:1)
- 7 Lamps (4:5),
- 7 Seals (5:1; 5:5),
- 7 Horns (5:6),
- 7 Eyes (5:6)
- 7 Angels who stand before God (8:2, 6),
- 7 Trumpets (8:2, 6)
- 7 Thunders (10:3, 4),
- 7 Thousand (seven thousand people killed) (11:13)
- 7 Heads (12:3; 13:1; 17:3, 7, 9),
- 7 Crowns (12:3)
- 7 Angels (15:1, 6, 7, 8; 16:1; 17:1; 21:9),
- 7 Plagues (15:1, 6, 8; 21:9)
- 7 Vials (15:7; 17:1; 21:9),
- 7 Mountains (17:9)
- 7 Kings (17:10, 11)

Historical setting:

Christ had been back in Heaven with His Father for just a few decades (approximately 60 years).

All the apostles had been martyred and John himself had been tortured and imprisoned and forced to live out the rest of his life in isolation on the island of **Patmos** in the Aegean Sea off the coast of **Asia Minor** (Turkey).

Patmos

Asia Minor



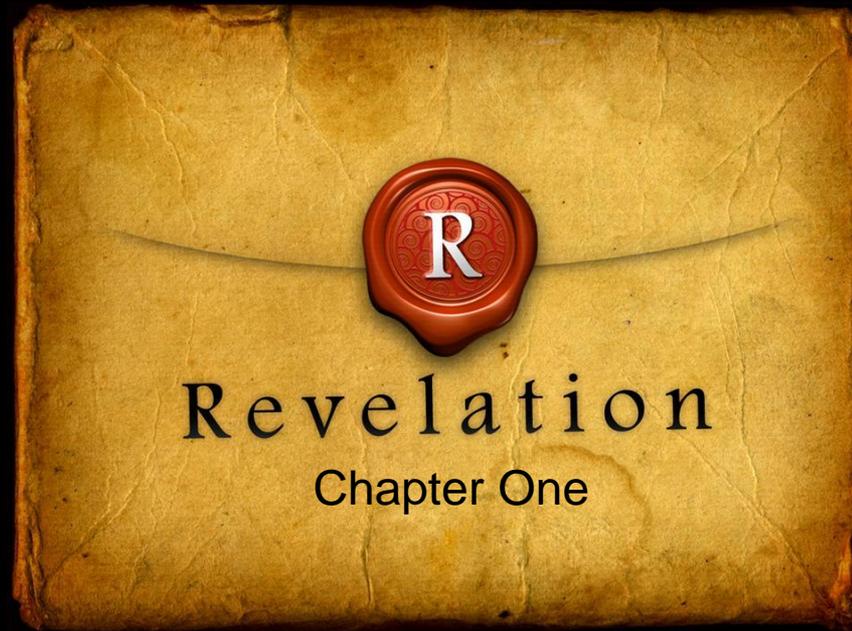
The church had grown greatly during those six decades but was still being persecuted. The Gospel had reached Asia Minor (now Turkey) and beyond thanks to Paul and the other apostles. Christ chose the apostle '*whom He loved*' to do one final thing to close the Apostolic Era ...

He asked him to ...“Write about those things that you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after these things.”
(Rev 1:19).



Revelation

Chapter One



Verses 1 to 8

(Christ revealed)

(V1) “*The Revelation of **Jesus Christ**, which **God** gave **Him** to show to **His bond-servants [Christians]**, the things which must soon take place; and **He [God]** sent and communicated it by **His** angel [one of the seven messengers] to **His bond-servant, John ...**”*

THE TRUTH FOR US IS ...

The revelation of Jesus Christ is directly from God to us and for us! The infallibility of the Bible as originally written cannot be disputed. It is God's Word for His creation.

(V2) “[John] ...who testified to the Word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, {even} to all that he [John] saw.”

THE TRUTH FOR US IS ..

John was a first-hand witness of all that happened. He had been with Christ, he had witnessed His death and resurrection and had seen Christ alive after He ascended.

We have not seen Christ in the flesh but we do 'seen' Him through His Word by the Holy Spirit.

We are witnesses by the Spirit and the Word.

(V3) *“Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of the prophecy, and heed the things which are written in it; for time is near.”*

THE TRUTH FOR US IS ...

We will be blessed if we read, hear and heed (do) this revelation!

It is our duty to read the Revelation of Jesus Christ and to understand as the Spirit leads. This is the one Book of the Bible like no other in that Christ said do not add to nor take away from this prophecy (Rev 22:18-19). We have what we have and need to study this book.

(V4) “*John* to the seven churches in Asia:
“Grace to you and peace, from *Him [God]* who
is and was and *who* is to come, and from the
seven *Spirits* who are before *His* throne ...”

THE TRUTH FOR US IS ...

These greetings are directly from God's throne and His angels, through John to the churches in Asia Minor.

(V5) “... and from *Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To Him who loves us and released us from our sins by His blood ...*”

THE TRUTH FOR US IS ...

Christ has been given all authority in this revelation (Matt 28:18).

He is the image of the invisible God and He is the first born of all creation (Col 1:15, 1 Cor 15:23),
He is the King of kings and Lord of lords (Rev 19:16).

He saved us by His blood (Rom 5:9).

(V6)“... and *He [Jesus]* has made us to be a kingdom, priests to *His God and Father* – to *Him [God]* be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen”

THE TRUTH FOR US IS ...

We are made a kingdom and priests to God
through Jesus Christ (1 Peter 2:9).

(V7) “BEHOLD *HE [JESUS]* IS COMING WITH THE CLOUDS, and every generation will see *Him* even those who pierced *Him*; and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over *Him*. So it is to be. Amen.”

THE TRUTH FOR US IS ...

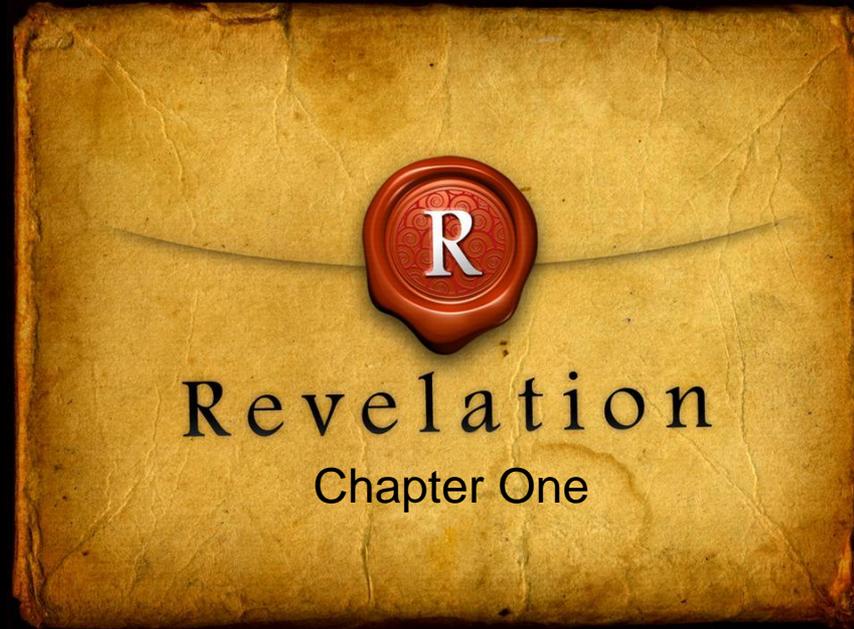
ALL, both good and evil will see Jesus again!
Every knee will bow and every tongue confess
that Jesus Christ is Lord” (Phil 2:10).

(V8) *“I [God] am the Alpha and Omega,” says the Lord, God, “who is and was and who is to come, the Almighty.”*

THE TRUTH FOR US IS ...

God is the Almighty One that was and is and is to come (Rev 4:8, 22:13). He is everlasting and never changes. It is His Word that shows us this. If we do not know His Word, then we cannot have faith in Him as Father, Son and Holy Spirit as we should (Rom 10:17).

We can know about Him but not know Him except through His revealed Word.



Verses 9 to 11

(The task of John)

(V9) *“I, John, your brother and fellow partaker in the tribulation and kingdom and perseverance which are in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.”*

THE TRUTH FOR US IS ...

John's authorship is confirmed and he was where he was and in the circumstances he was in because he believed in, suffered with and persevered for Christ.

(V10) “I [John] was in the Spirit of the Lord’s day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like the sound of a trumpet ...”

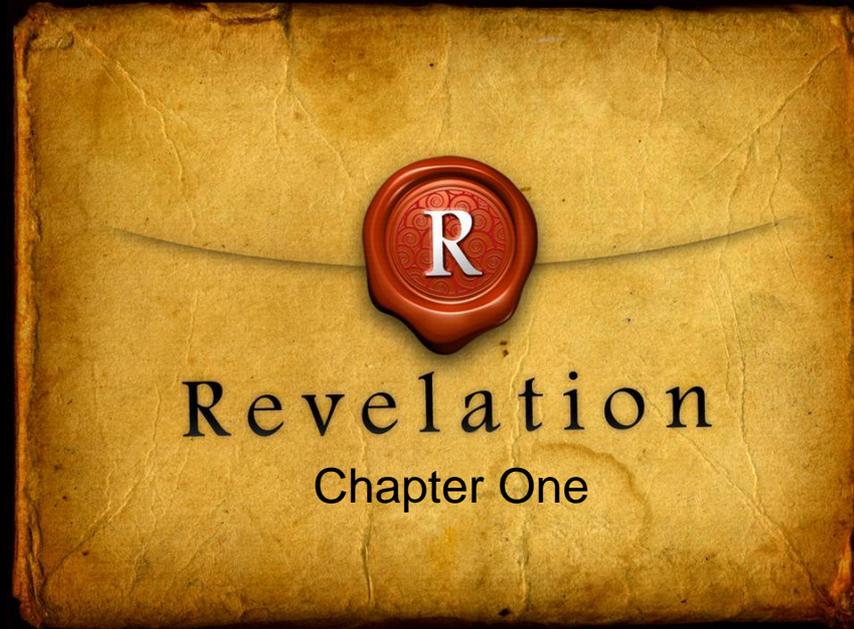
THE TRUTH FOR US IS ...

John was filled with the Holy Spirit and found it normal to be 'in the Spirit' especially on the Lord's day. This could explain the vivid metaphors and imagery used in the rest of the prophecies.

(V11) “... saying ‘Write a book what *you [John]* see and send it to the seven churches:
to *Ephesus* and to *Smyrna*
and to *Pergamum* and to *Thyatira*
and to *Sardis* and to *Philadelphia*
and to *Laodicea*’”

THE TRUTH FOR US IS ...

God's instructions to us are often very clear – write, say, go, do, preach, teach, heal. Why do we sometimes find it difficult to know what God wants us to do. “Go into all the world and make disciples ...” (Matt 28:19-20)



Verses 12 to 20

(A different view of Jesus)

The following verses (12-16) provide us a brand new look at our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. I would even say that they presented a brand new look for John himself!

Only did Daniel see '*a certain man*' in a similar fashion as described in **Daniel 10:5-6**.

(V12) “Then I [John] turned to see the voice that was speaking to me. And having turned I saw *seven golden lampstands; ...*”

THE TRUTH FOR US IS ...

John heard God's voice and could not help but turn to the source. When we 'hear' God's voice, we must respond.

(V13) “... and in the middle of the lampstands I [John] saw one like a son of man, clothed in a robe reaching to the feet and girded across His chest a golden sash.”

THE TRUTH FOR US IS ...

John's vision is very detailed, but so far nothing too unordinary – a robe and a sash. Did he yet know it was Christ – do we recognize Christ when we 'see' Him with our spiritual eyes?

(V14) “... *His* head and *His* hair were *white like white wool*, like snow; and *His* eyes were like a *flame of fire.*”

THE TRUTH FOR US IS ...

This is a new vision of Christ that even John had not seen before. We also need to see Christ as we have never seen Him before.

(V15) “*His* feet were like *burnished bronze*,
when it has been made to glow in a furnace,
and His voice was like the *sound of many*
waters.”

THE TRUTH FOR US IS ...

What must John have thought? The feet of burnished bronze is quite different from the sandals that Christ probably wore on Earth. How does the ocean sound when there is a storm?

*(V16) “In **His** right hand **He** held **seven stars**,
and out of **His** mouth came a sharp **two-edged**
sword; and His face was like the **sun shining in**
its strength.”*

THE TRUTH FOR US IS ...

How can an ordinary man hold stars in his hand and have a sword coming out of his mouth and look as bright as the sun? He can't but Christ can!

Our classical but mistaken view of Christ as portrayed in the movies and in pictures must be dramatically revised when we imagine Him in these circumstances.

What did he look like? Many artists have tried to capture the image of what John saw that day.
Here is but one.

The Christ of John's vision?

This is far different than the image we have of Christ when He was on earth preaching and teaching and healing.



Artwork by Pat Marvenko Smith ©1992, 1993
www.revelationillustrated.com

Extra: Comparison of John's Description and Daniel's description of
the *One like a son of man*...

Revelation 1:13b-16

- Robe reached down to His feet
- Chest girded with a golden sash
- Head and hair white like wool, snow
 - Eyes like flame of fire
 - Feet like burnished bronze
 - Voice like many waters
 - Mouth give words like sword
- Face like sun shining in its strength

Daniel 10:5-6

- Dressed in linen
- Waist girded with pure gold of Uphaz
 - Face like lightning
 - Eyes like flaming torches
- Arms and feet like polished bronze
 - Words sound like roaring
 - Body like beryl

(V17) “When I [John] saw Him, I fell at His feet like a dead man. And He placed His right hand on me saying, ‘Do not be afraid: I am the first and the last, ...’”

THE TRUTH FOR US IS ...

When we see Jesus, we too will fall on our faces like 'dead men'. Joshua reacted the same way when he saw the angel of the Lord (Joshua 5:14).

(V18) "... and the living One; and I was dead and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades."

THE TRUTH FOR US IS ...

We should have no doubt that Jesus was and is
and is forever the one who gives life now and
forever.

(V19) “Therefore write the things which you [John] have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after these things.”

THE TRUTH FOR US IS ...

John's threefold mission was to record everything spoken to him – the past events, the present events and future events.

Jesus knows our past, present and future and has the events our lives written in the His book.

(V20) “As for the mystery of the seven stars which you saw in My right hand, and the seven golden lampstands: the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.”

THE TRUTH FOR US IS ...

God reveals Himself and explains about Himself in His word. He is always clear on who He is and what He wants us to know about Him. We look to other books and other people to tell about God when He has shown us everything in the Bible (2 Tim 3:16-17). We must be in His word **DAILY** in order to know who God is. All other information is actually second-hand.



Revelation

Chapter Two

The Letters
to the churches at
Ephesus, Smyrna,
Pergamum, and Thyatira

Chapter 2, Verses 1-29

All the letters will be broken down into five sections.

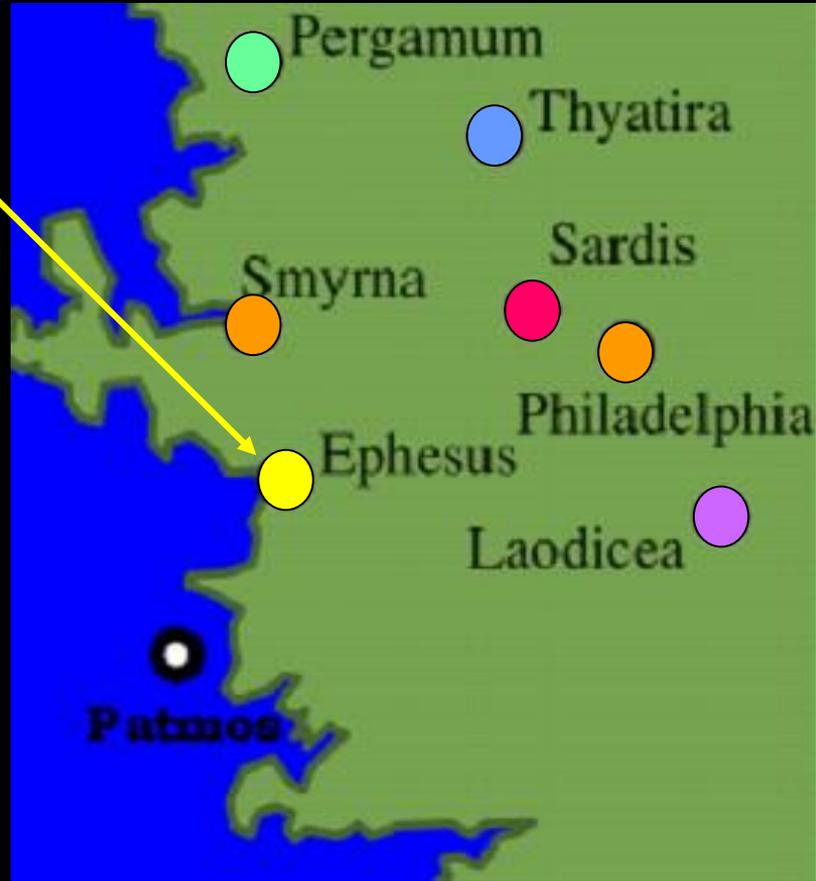
- 1) How Jesus describes **the recipient** of the letter.
- 2) How Jesus, **the author**, describes Himself.
- 3) How Jesus **commends** the church.
- 4) How Jesus **warns and instructs** the church.
- 5) What Jesus says to **those who overcome**?

Practically we will make a chart to show these for all seven churches.

Church	Recipient of Letter	Description of Jesus	Commendations	Warnings & Instructions	Reward for Overcomers
Ephesus					
Smyrna					
Pergamum					
Thyatira					
Sardis					
Philadelphia					
Laodicea					

1. To the Church at Ephesus

Ephesus:



Ephesus:

- Was the largest city in the Roman Province of Asia Minor (approx 300,000 population).
- It was a well situated sea port on the Adriatic Sea.
 - It was a center of commerce.
- It was the center of worship to the pagan goddess Artemis (Diana according to the Roman name).



Ruins at present day **Ephesus**

Letter to the church at **Ephesus**:

The recipient: (v1) *“To the **angel** [overseer] of the church at Ephesus write:”*

The author: (v1) *“The **One [Jesus]** who holds the seven stars [messengers of the seven churches] in **His** right hand, the **One who** walks among the seven golden lampstands [the seven churches] says this:”*

THE TRUTH FOR US IS ...

Jesus does walk among us – in our churches and communities and in our homes. He knows our names and desires to commune with us – daily.

Letter to the church at **Ephesus**:

The commendation: (v2, 3) *“I know your deeds [good works] and toils [labours of love] and perseverance [in the Lord] and that you cannot tolerate evil men, and you put to the test those who call them selves apostles, and they are not, and you found them to be false.”*

(v6) *Yet this you do have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.”*

THE TRUTH FOR US IS ...

God knows the deeds of His church. He is not blind. He knows the good works we do – feeding the poor and looking after widows. He knows that we continue daily in His word and pray daily and persevere in our lives. He knows that we won't tolerate false doctrine and false prophets and apostles in our midst ...
or does He?

Letter to the church at Ephesus:

The warnings and instructions: (v4,5) “But I have this against you, that you have left your first love [love of Jesus]. Therefore remember from where you have fallen [saved from] and repent and do the deeds you did at first; or else I am coming to you and will remove your lampstand [your church] out of its place – unless you repent.”

THE TRUTH FOR US IS ...

We have lost our first love if we do not daily die to self and live for Him (Luke 9:23-24).

We forget from where we came – we were all dead in our sins (Eph 2:1-3). We forget what He has done for us and forget what we now need to do for Him. He will not be mocked we reap whatever we sow (Gal 6:7).”

Letter to the church at Ephesus:

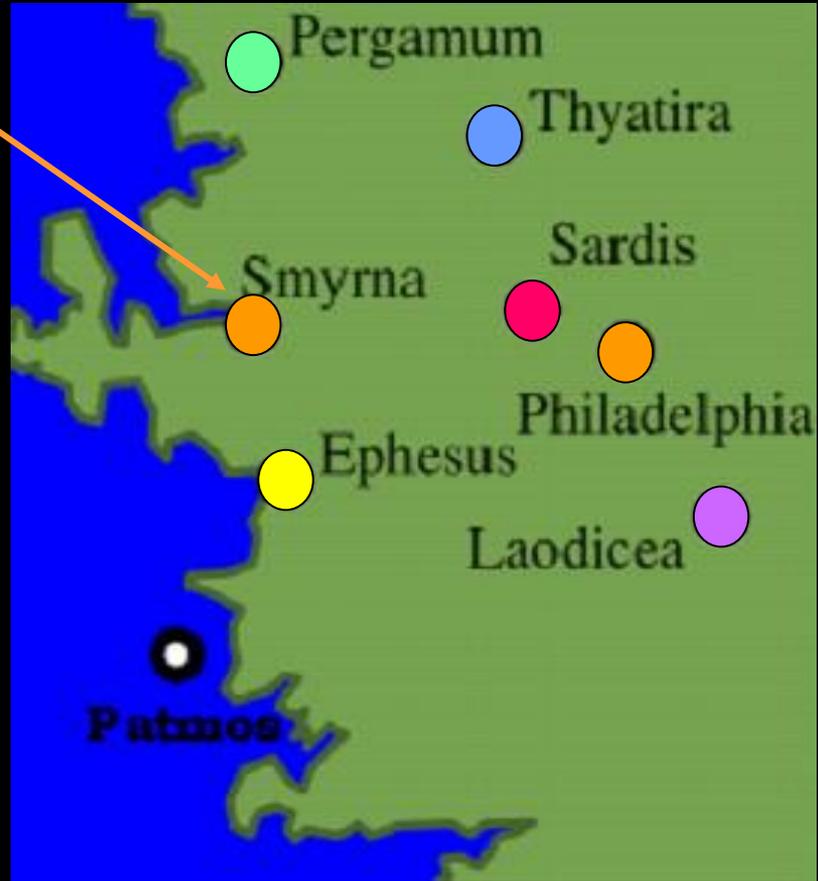
The promise to overcomers: (v7) *“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will grant to eat of the tree of life which is in the Paradise of God”*

THE TRUTH FOR US IS ...

If we persevere and don't give up and daily overcome the flesh through living by His Spirit (Rom 8:12) then we will inherit the Kingdom of God. We who overcome this world and will enjoy the fruit of the tree of life that is in Heaven.

2. To the church at Smyrna

Smyrna:



Smyrna:

- Had a superb harbour on the Adriatic Sea making it an important commercial center.
 - Called itself the 'first city of Asia.'
- It built temples to Emperor Tiberius – the city became a centre for cult emperor worship.
 - It is known today as Izmir.



Ruins at present day **Smyrna**

Letter to the church at **Smyrna**:

The recipient: (v8a) *“And to the angel [overseer] of the church at Smyrna write:”*

The author: (v8b) *“The first and the last, who was dead, and has come to life says this:”*

THE TRUTH FOR US IS ...

Jesus was the first and He will be the last. He was dead but is alive! He is the firstborn of many sons (and daughters) (Col 1:18, Heb 12:23) to be in Heaven.

Letter to the church at Smyrna:

The commendation: (v9a) “I [Jesus] know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich)...”

THE TRUTH FOR US IS ...

God knows the trials and tribulations and the poverty of spirit that we are presently going through. He knows our burdens. But he also says that we are not poor at all but are rich in Him (Phil 5:19). Why do we continue to measure our wealth by our possessions!

Letter to the church at Smyrna:

The warnings and instructions: (v9b-10) *“and [I know] the blasphemy by those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, so that you will be tested, and you will have tribulation for ten days. Be faithful and I will give you the Crown of life.”*

THE TRUTH FOR US IS ...

God knows there are 'wolves in sheep's clothing' (Matt 7:15) amongst our brothers and sisters even in the church. Gods also knows there a re those who call themselves Christians but are really workers of Satan in other sects and cults in our communities. Seek out those who seek to destroy our society by their satanic beliefs, their immoral lifestyles and actions. Bring LIFE to them through the Gospel.

Letter to the church at **Smyrna**:

The promise to overcomers: (v11) *“He who has an ear, let him hear what the **Spirit** says to the churches. He who **overcomes** will not be hurt by the second death.”*

THE TRUTH FOR US IS ...

If we persevere and don't give up and daily overcome our flesh and live by His Spirit and His grace and His power, then we will not be cast into the **Lake of Fire** and will not be affected by God's **judgement to death** (Rev 20:14-15) called the second death (Rev 21:8) but rather his call to eternal life with Him in the New Jerusalem (Rev 21:1-21).

3. To the church at Pergamum

Pergamum (Pergamon):



Pergamum (Pergamon):

- Had the second largest library of the time.
- It became the capital of the Roman Province of Asia.
- It was the site of the pagan temple to Askelops – god of medicine and healing.
- Huge statue of Zeus and temples of Athena and many other gods.



Ruins at present day Pergamon

Letter to the church at Pergamum:

The recipient: (v12a) *“And to the angel [overseer] of the church at Pergamum write:”*

The author: (v12b) *“The One, who has the sharp two-edged sword says this:”*

THE TRUTH FOR US IS ...

Jesus holds all truth through the sword of His Spirit and His word (Eph 6:17, Heb 4:12)!

Letter to the church at Pergamum:

The commendation: (v13) *“I know where you dwell, where Satan’s throne is; and you hold fast My name, and did not deny My faith even in the days of Antipas, My witness, My faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells.”*

THE TRUTH FOR US IS ...

God knows where Satan dwells – even amongst us. He also knows when we hold fast and come under his loving authority in our lives – to do His good will (Rom 12:2).

Letter to the church at Pergamum:

The warnings and instructions: (v14-16) *“But I have a few things against you, because you have there some who hold the teaching of Balaam, who kept teaching Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit acts of immorality. So you have some who in the same way hold the teachings of the Nicolaitians. Therefore repent; or else I am coming to you quickly, and I will make war against them with the sword of My mouth.”*

THE TRUTH FOR US IS ...

God knows that there are amongst us those who would try to put stumbling blocks in front of us – even in the name of religion. And if we allow them to continue to operate in our midst He will come with His Word and pierce them.

There is pressure to compromise and conform to this world's values and systems but we must
REPENT.

Letter to the church at Pergamum:

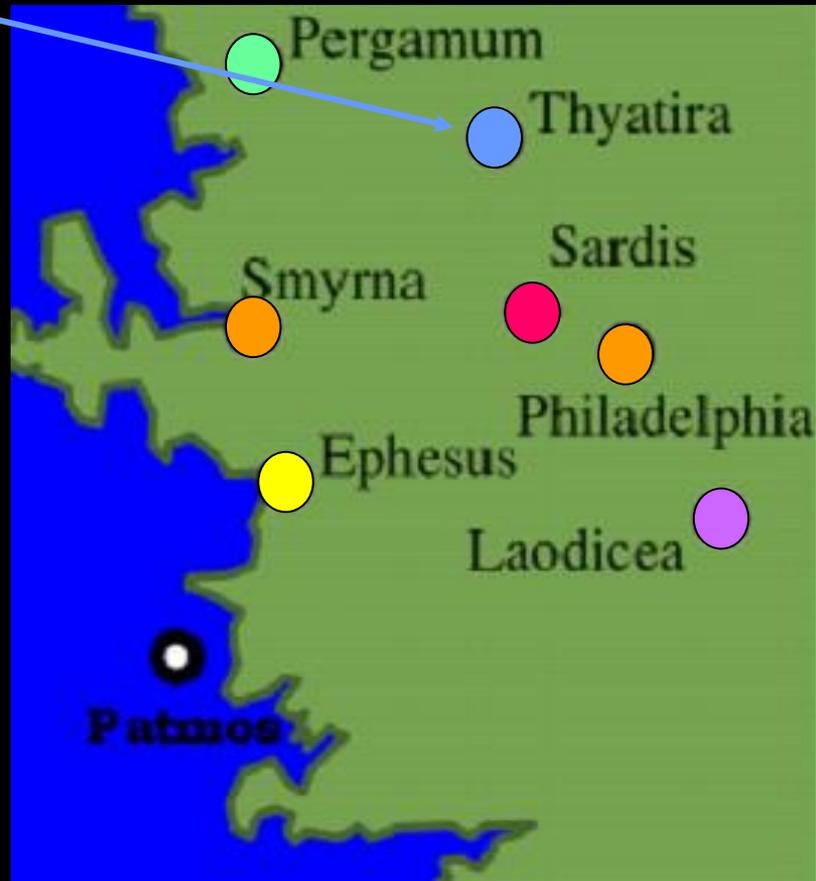
The promise to overcomers: (v17) *“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and a new name written on the stone which no one knows but he who receives it.”*

THE TRUTH FOR US IS ...

The first manna (Psalm 78:24) sustained the children of Israel in the wilderness and His new manna – His word will sustain us today. His hidden manna that was in the Tabernacle (Heb 9:4) is also our Spiritual manna in Christ. The white stone is in reference to being acquitted. The new name will be written on it (Isaiah 62:2) – written in the Book of Life that only the receiver knows..

4. To the church at Thyatira

Thyatira:



Thyatira:

- Was a smaller city but a thriving manufacturing and commercial center – many trades and guilds.
- It was steeped in superstition and pagan rituals.
- It accepted many cults and ‘tradesman’ secret societies.
- A woman called Jezebel taught and fooled many Christians to conform to paganism.



Ruins at present day Thyatira

Letter to the church at Thyatira:

The recipient: (v18a) *“And to the angel [overseer] of the church at Thyatira write:”*

The author: (v18b) *“The Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet are like burnished bronze says this:”*

THE TRUTH FOR US IS ...

Jesus will return in power and authority riding on a white horse with a banner reading “King of kings and Lord of Lords” (Rev 19:16). There will be no doubt that His authority will be with fire and His feet will be heavy upon the Earth to tread out the winepress.

Letter to the church at Thyatira:

The commendation: (v19) *“I know your deeds, and your love and faith and service and perseverance, and that your deeds of late are greater than at first.”*

THE TRUTH FOR US IS ...

Jesus commends us even today for those things done in His name that glorify Him. He also knows that we have grown and our present good deeds are greater than our first deeds.

Letter to the church at Thyatira:

The warnings and instructions: (v20-22) *“But I have this against you, that you tolerate the woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, and teaches and leads **My** bond servants astray so that they commit acts of immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols. I gave her time to repent, and she does not want to repent of her immorality. Behold I will throw her on a bed of sickness, and those who commit adultery with her to great tribulation, unless they repent of their deeds.”*

THE TRUTH FOR US IS ...

This first set of warnings are the most stern so far. We cannot tolerate or put up with false prophets in our midst or those who spread a different or distorted Gospel (Col 2:8, Gal 1:6-8).

Letter to the church at Thyatira:

More warnings and instructions: (v23) *“And I will kill her children with pestilence, and all the churches will know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts; and I will give to each one of you according to your deeds.”*

THE TRUTH FOR US IS ...

We should not be deceived, God cannot be mocked (Gal 6:7). What we do in secret now will be revealed by the light (Luke 8:17). Just because our streets may be dark and our homes private, nothing is out of God's sight!

We will be accountable for our deeds, both good and bad (Mat 16:27).

Letter to the church at Thyatira:

More commendations: (v24-25) *“But I say to you, the rest who are in Thyatira, who do not hold this teaching, who have not known the deep things of Satan, as they call them – I place no other burden on you. Nevertheless, what you have, hold fast until I come.”*

THE TRUTH FOR US IS ...

Jesus will commend us for walking in His word (1 Jn 2:4-6) and not seeking after the winds of this world – even through religiosity or signs and wonders - if they do not glorify Jesus.

If we are known by Satan and have come under his spell, we must repent and daily walk in the Spirit not in the flesh (Rom 8:13).

Letter to the church at Thyatira:

The promise to overcomers: (v26-29) *“He who overcomes, and he who keeps **My** deeds until the end, ‘**TO HIM [Jesus] SHALL I [God] GIVE AUTHORITY OVER THE NATIONS. AND HE [Jesus] SHALL RULE THEM WITH A ROD OF IRON AS THE VESSELS OF THE POTTER ARE BROKEN TO PIECES**’, as **I** have received authority from **My Father**; and **I** will give him the morning star. He who has an ear, let him listen to what the **Spirit** says to the churches.”*

THE TRUTH FOR US IS ...

Jesus has ALL authority over every nation, every tribe, every people. His rule shall be with an iron rod and we will judge nations and angels (1 Cor 6:1-3).



Revelation

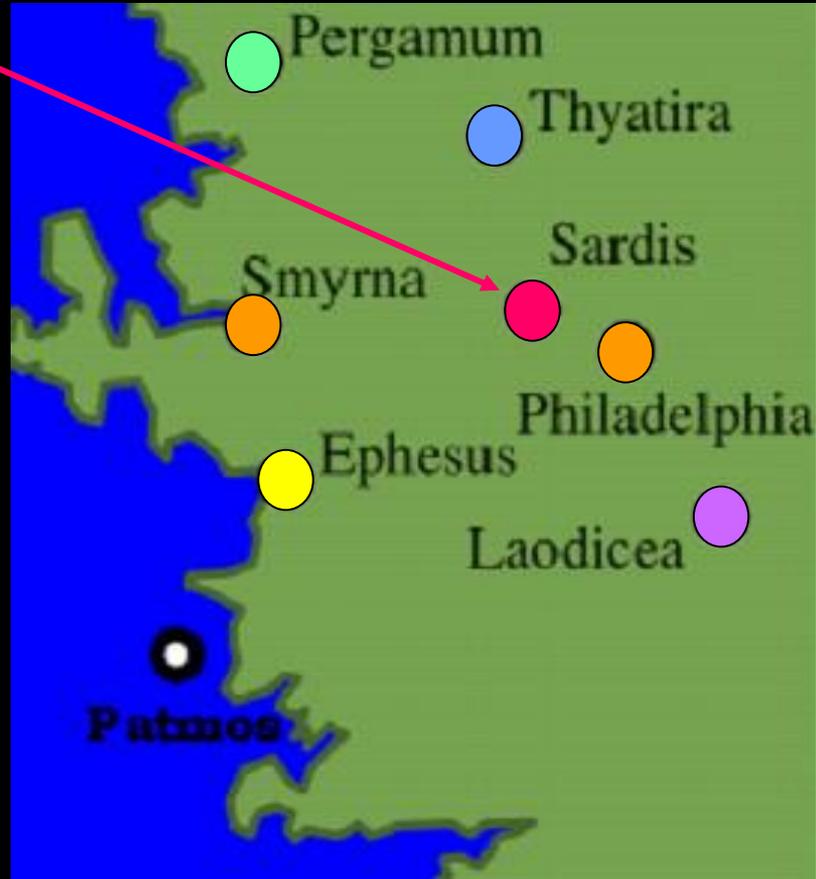
Chapter Three

The Letters
to the churches at
Sardis, Philadelphia,
and Laodicea

Chapter 3 Verses 1-22

5. To the church at Sardis

Sardis:



Sardis

- Was the capital city of Lydia about 80 km from Smyrna.
 - It was well fortified and not easily conquered.
- It became an important Christian center.
- But it relied on past glories and became complacent and died.



Ruins at present day **Sardis**

Letter to the church at **Sardis**:

The recipient: (v1a) *“To the **angel** [overseer] of the church at Sardis write:”*

The author: (v1b) *“**He who** has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars says this:”*

THE TRUTH FOR US IS ...

Jesus does hold everything in His hand, the universe, the angels and us.

Letter to the church at **Sardis**:

The commendation: (v1c) *“I know your deeds, that you have a name that you are alive, ...”*

THE TRUTH FOR US IS ...

As before, God does know our deeds that are done in His name and for His glory. He knows that some churches are indeed alive but ...

Letter to the church at Sardis:

The warnings and instructions: (v1b-4) *“But you are dead. Wake up, and strengthen the things that remain, which were about to die; for I [Jesus] have not found your deeds completed in the sight of My God. So remember what you have received and heard; and keep it, and repent. Therefore if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know the hour I will come to you.*”

THE TRUTH FOR US IS ...

Many of us are dead spiritually – we are asleep spiritually and need waking up! Jesus knows what has not been completed in our personal lives and in our community and in our churches. If we do not complete what He has called us to do and to be, then He will come unrepentantly and it will be too late.

Letter to the church at Sardis:

More commendations: (v4) *“But you have a few people in Sardis who have not soiled their garments; and they will walk with Me in white, for they are worthy.”*

THE TRUTH FOR US IS ...

The 'good news' is that there are some (Jesus says a few) here whose hearts are after the Lord and are continuing. They have repented of their sins, have not fallen back and **WILL** walk in white garments with the Lord.

Letter to the church at Sardis:

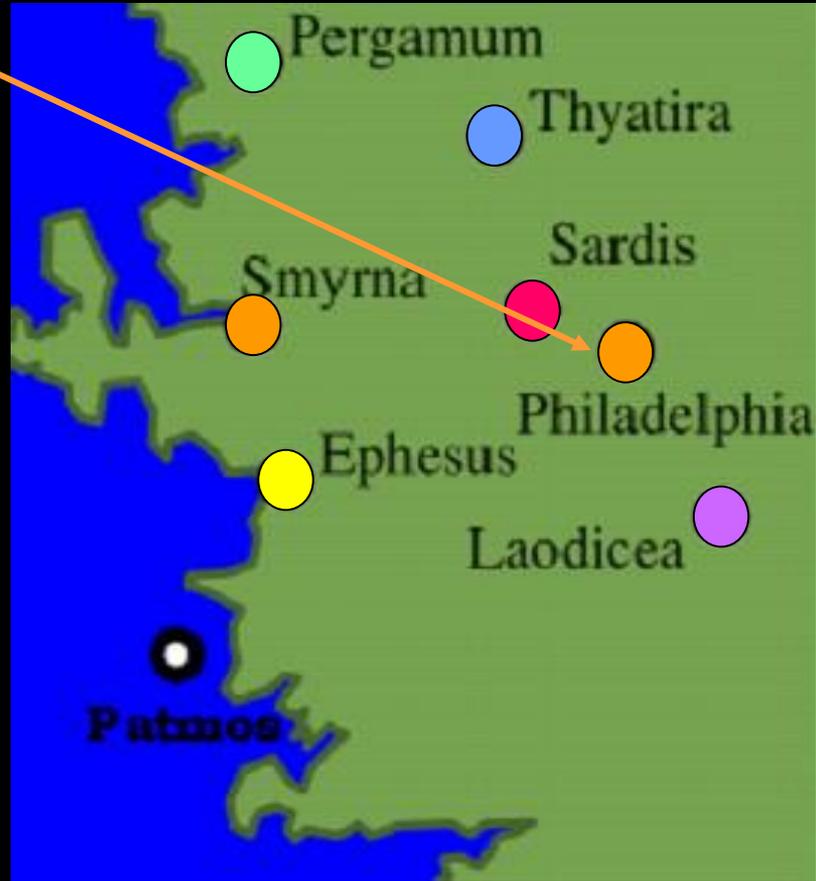
The promise to overcomers: (v5-6) *“He who overcomes will thus be clothed in white garments; and I [Jesus] will not erase his name from the book of life, and I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”*

THE TRUTH FOR US IS ...

This is a repeat of what is in store for those who overcome – they will be dressed in white garments and will be part of the King's returning army.

6. To the church at Philadelphia

Philadelphia:



Philadelphia:

- The name means ‘the city of brotherly love’
- It was a city in the province of Lydia (Like Sardis)
 - It was the center of the wine industry.
- The church there was considered a faithful church.



Ruins at present day **Philadelphia**

Letter to the church at **Philadelphia**:

The recipient: (v7a) *“And to the **angel** [overseer] of the church at Philadelphia write:”*

The author: (v18b) *“**He who** is holy, **who** is true and **who** has the key of David, **who** opens and no one will shut, and **who** shuts and no one will open, says this:”*

THE TRUTH FOR US IS ...

Jesus is the one who opens and shuts doors for us, our churches and ministries. We can try to force open doors to what we would consider 'the new' but quite often close the door to 'the old' – the OLAM or wise paths (Jer 6:16).

Letter to the church at Philadelphia:

The commendation: (v8-9) *“I [Jesus] know your deeds. Behold I have put before you an open door which no one can shut, because you have a little power, and have kept My word, and have not denied My name. Behold, I will cause those of the synagogue of Satan, who say they are Jews and are not, but lie – I will make them come and bow down at your feet, and make them know that I have loved you.”*

THE TRUTH FOR US IS ...

Jesus has already put before us doors in our churches and communities. Sometimes we fail to open those doors that He wants opened and instead close doors to the Holy Spirit and conversely, we sometimes close doors that He wants opened. We need to seek His Word for every door we come to.

Letter to the church at **Philadelphia**:

Commendations continued: (v10-11) *“Because you have kept the word of **My** perseverance, **I** also will keep you from the hour of testing, that hour which is about to come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on Earth. **I** am coming quickly; hold fast what you have, so that no one will take your crown.”*

THE TRUTH FOR US IS ...

If we have not yet experience testing in our personal lives, in our community and especially in our churches, it will come. In this case, we who persevere will not be put to the same tests that the world will. If we have been already tested, have we persevered or have we wandered? Testing is part of God's plan for our sanctification and His glory (Rom 5:3-5).

Letter to the church at **Philadelphia**:

There are no warnings for the church at Philadelphia!

THE TRUTH FOR US IS ...

Because we may have no warnings (now), we are still urged to keep on persevering. We are still urged to keep His Word because we will be tested!

Letter to the church at Philadelphia:

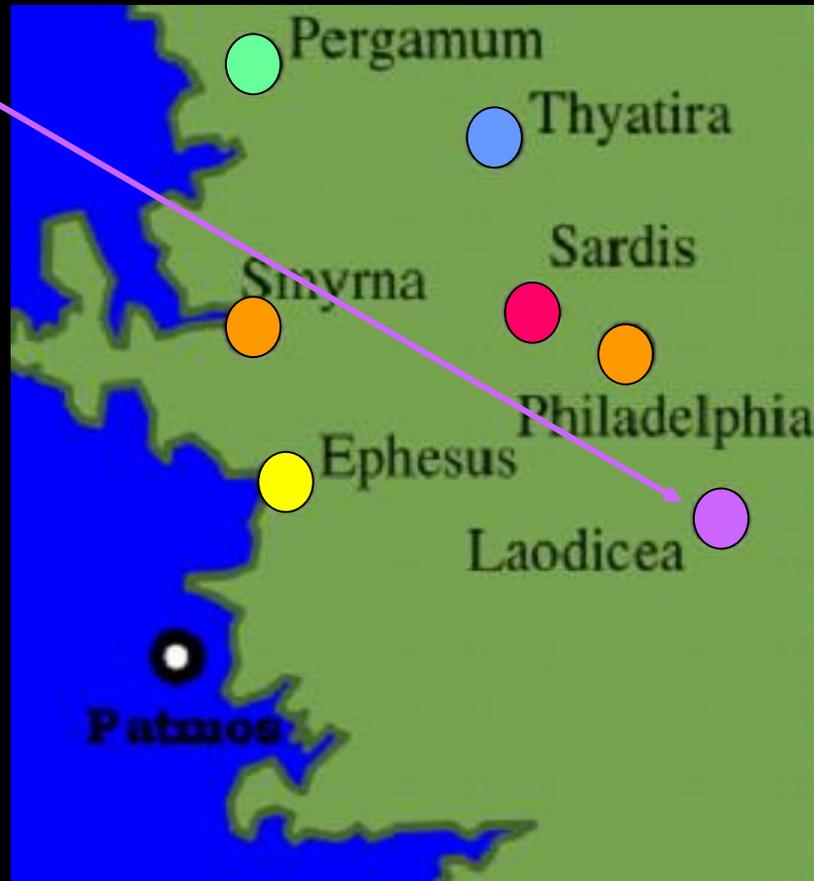
The promise to overcomers: (v12-13) *“He who overcomes, I [Jesus] will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he will not go out from it anymore; and I will write on him, the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God, and My new name. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”*

THE TRUTH FOR US IS ...

The references here are from many places in Revelation and elsewhere. The pillar of the temple represents the strength of the church (we are the temple of God), not going out references the angels going out with the bowls of wrath (Rev 16: 1-16), the name as before represents our names in the book of life, the New Jerusalem (Rev 21:1-27) all point to Jesus' return in Glory.

7. To the church at Laodicea

Laodicea – the last church letter:



Laodicea:

- Was economically prosperous and of high social prestige.
 - It was destroyed in an earthquake in 60 AD but refused aid from Rome (was prideful).
 - It was known for its black wool garments.
- Water carried by aqueducts and barrel pipes was warmed on its long journey.
- The church considered itself 'self-sufficient'



Ruins at present day **Laodicea**

Letter to the church at Laodicea:

The recipient: (v14a) *“To the angel [overseer] of the church at Loadicea write:”*

The author: (v14b) *“The Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God, says this:”*

THE TRUTH FOR US IS ...

These are three new names of Jesus not seen before. There is no doubt of who He is and should be in our lives.

Letter to the church at Laodicea:

The commendation: (v15a) *“I know your deeds,*
”
...

THE TRUTH FOR US IS ...

Jesus does not have anything positive to say to this church except that he knows what they (and we) are doing.

Letter to the church at Laodicea:

The warnings and instructions: (v15b-17) *“that you are neither cold nor hot; I wish that you were cold or hot. So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth. Because you say ‘ I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing,’ and you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked, ...”*

THE TRUTH FOR US IS ...

His truth is that he doesn't want us to be lukewarm Christians. Indeed He is almost saying – be either HOT or COLD but don't be lukewarm. How can the fire be rekindled and kept burning in our lives, our communities and our churches?

Letter to the church at Laodicea:

More warnings and instructions: (v18) *“I advise you to buy from Me gold refined by fire so that you may become rich and white garments so that you may clothe yourself, and that the shame of your nakedness will not be revealed; and eye salve (ointment or cream) to anoint your eyes so that you may see.”*

THE TRUTH FOR US IS ...

This is my testimony and I am sure the testimony of many of you. We thought we had it all and were 'rich' but God opened our eyes to the truth. Without Him we are nothing – with Him we can be everything!

Letter to the church at Laodicea:

More warnings and instructions: (v19-20) *“Those whom I [Jesus] love, I reprove and discipline; therefore be zealous and repent. Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me.”*

THE TRUTH FOR US IS ...

God through Jesus Christ is calling us every day. He is standing at the door of our hearts. Some will come and open the door and others won't. He will not open the door himself. Oh, if we will only open that door and dine on Him and with Him!

Letter to the church at Laodicea:

The promise to overcomers: (v21-22) *“He who overcomes, I [Jesus] will grant him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”*

THE TRUTH FOR US IS ...

These are some of the most powerful words spoken by Christ.

They are the call to us to come to Him regardless of our condition. We are invited to sit down with Christ on His throne! It is fitting that this last letter is the most powerful!

Conclusions

The thirteen rewards for the overcomer:

- (1) Authority over nations (2:26)
- (2) Name not erased from book of life (3:5)
- (3) Inherits the earth (21:7)
- (4) New name on a white stone (2:17)
- (5) Eat of hidden manna (2:17)
- (6) Pillar in temple (3:12)
- (7) Sits on Christ's throne (3:21)
- (8) Tree of life (2:7)
- (9) Not hurt by second death (2:11)
- (10) Morning star (2:28)
- (11) White Garments (3:5)
- (12) Name of God, city, and Christ written on him (3:12)
- (13) Name confessed before the Father and His angels (3:5)

Concluding remarks

The overcomer is the individual Christian who enjoys special benefits in eternity for refusing to give up his faith in spite of persecution during life on earth.

True believers do not have to persevere to win salvation, nor must they be faithful to keep it.

Concluding remarks

There has been much written about the prophetic Book of Revelation and in particular the letters to the seven churches.

I have tried to look at the factual aspects of the churches and letters and intermingle spiritual truths.

Only the Holy Spirit can enlighten minds to the deeper meaning of the letters.

Concluding remarks

God the father revealed through His son Jesus Christ and through His angels and His bondservant John what He wanted us to know about our churches. All is not good to those who do not have ears to listen and hearts to obey. But, to those who overcome and run the race, as Paul put it (Phil 3:13-14) , towards the upward calling of God in Christ Jesus, will be rewarded in eternity.



Revealed