

**Christ in Prophecy**  
**Revelation 26: Seven Love Letters to the Church**

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## Opening

**Tim Moore:** Greetings in the name of Jesus are soon returning King and welcome to Christ in Prophecy.

**Nathan Jones:** The Book of Revelation begins with this introductory passage in verses 1-2, “The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants—things which must shortly take place. And He sent and signified it by His angel to His servant John, who bore witness to the Word of God, and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, to all things that he saw.” And then in verse 3, a tremendous blessing is given. “Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; for the time is near.” Who gave this special message for us to read and so be blessed? None other than God Almighty in the person of the glorified Jesus Christ. The name God Almighty in Greek is the word “pantokrator” meaning the all-powerful One.

**Tim Moore:** In chapter 1, the central figure and hero of the entire Bible, Jesus Christ Himself came to the little cave where the Apostle John was exiled on the island of Patmos. Seeing the Lord in all His radiant glory John fell at His feet, dumbstruck, but Jesus reassured John with the same words He utters to all who trust in Him: “Do not be afraid.” He had come to reveal wonderful things which must soon take place.

In a voice as loud as a trumpet, the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last commanded John, also known as the Elder, “What you see write in a book and send it to the seven churches.” Eleven more times John would be required to write specifically what Christ and the angels would show him. But for this first command to write, John was directed to address seven churches.

**Nathan Jones:** The Keeper of the keys of Hades and Death continued, “Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after this.” So by using this wording God provided what will become the outline for the Book of Revelation divided into three segments.

1. “What you have seen,” meaning what John had just witnessed when seeing Christ arrive, Revelation 1.
2. “What is now,” meaning the present experience of the seven churches John will write to in Revelation 2-3.
3. “What will take place,” meaning the future as it relates to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, chapters 4-22.

**Tim Moore:** Today we are going to focus on the what is now as detailed in Revelation 2 & 3. These chapters contain Christ’s seven love letters to the Church. To help us better understand what Jesus wants us to learn from His seven letters, we are joined by Dennis and Dawn Morris.

Dennis is a former Navy submariner turned successful businessman and Sunday school teacher. And Dawn is a homeschool mom, a business owner and a gifted Christian novelist. Like me and Nathan, they are both eager for the soon return of Jesus Christ. Welcome, Dennis and Dawn.

**Dawn Morris:** Thank you very much for having us.

## Part 1

**Tim Moore:** Okay, Dennis I'm glad to know that used all those weeks and months underwater to do something besides just watching old movies. And so you were studying the Word of God. So give us an understanding as to the background of these seven churches. Were they seven literal historical churches?

**Dennis Morris:** Yeah, they were actual literal churches that existed at the time that John wrote this letter around 95 AD or so. And they're churches that you can see historically around what is now modern day Turkey. And these churches also represent seven periods in church history as well. That represents individual churches throughout history from beginning in John's day up to the Tribulation, which will be coming fairly soon. But we see each of these seven church types throughout the Church Age in different forms and across different times. But one church type really tends to kind of pop up in each specific period of time. And interestingly enough, that in the order in which John writes the letters to these churches, these church characteristics pop up in that same order, which shows a very interesting prophetic view of what these churches are meant to be.

**Nathan Jones:** Well, Dawn, I found it interesting that as I read through the letters that they seem to follow a certain outline. Each one, each seven, can you tell us what that outline is?

**Dawn Morris:** Sure. They each of them introduce a name or description of Jesus Christ that has to do with what He's going to say to that church. So that's interesting. They have praise and encouragement in them. They have criticisms or condemnations as well. There are warnings. There is something for the church to do or request or a task that Jesus wants for them, and this is Jesus speaking to these individual churches. And then He gives a promise to those who are the overcomers.

So five of these churches receive all six of these structural pieces. Two of the churches, He has no condemnation for them, He has no condemnation for Smyrna or for Philadelphia. And one receives no praise, and that's the last church of the group Laodicea.

**Tim Moore:** So if we almost did a bottom line up front in terms of application to us as individual believers, what are these overcomers? Who is that referring to, and how can I be an overcomer?

**Dennis Morris:** Well an overcomer is really just someone who is a believer, a believer in Jesus Christ, and we will kind of see that theme running throughout this. But it's really that simple and it's really referenced in 1 John 5:5.

**Tim Moore:** So, it is that simple, but it also has the great challenge that I should apply myself to remaining faithful. In other words, yes, I am guaranteed I am an overcomer, but I should also aspire to live as an overcomer.

**Dennis Morris:** And we'll see that as we go through the different churches and discuss them. The fact that there's different characteristics, different challenges, tasks, different failures, and those are all representative of the things that we need to take on as individuals. And so there's individual application from this. There's corporate application to churches. And then there's clearly everything to the body that we have to follow up with.

**Nathan Jones:** Well, I wish we had time to read two whole chapters, both chapter two and three. But to better understand this outline, Dawn, maybe you could do this, read the first letter to the Church of Ephesus. It's Revelation 2:1-7. Would you?

**Dawn Morris:** Sure. "To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: The One who holds the seven stars in His right hand, the One who walks among the seven golden lampstands, says this: 'I know your deeds and your toil and perseverance, and that you cannot tolerate evil men, and you put to the test those who call themselves apostles, and they are not, and you found them to be false; and you have perseverance and have endured for My name's sake, and have not grown weary. 'But I have this against you, that you have left your first love. 'Therefore remember from where you have fallen, and repent and do the deeds you did at first; or else I am coming to you and will remove your lampstand out of its place—unless you repent. 'Yet this you do have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. '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.'

**Nathan Jones:** Excellent. And what does this structure teach us about the message that the Lord wants us to know concerning the Church of Ephesus?

**Dennis Morris:** Well, it's an interesting, first, I want to just kind of clarify something, too, that while these letters were written to specific churches, they have applications throughout all of church history to us. And it's interesting you bring up the Church of Ephesus because Paul wrote a letter to the church in Ephesus, which was to a very specific church dealing with some very specific issues in Ephesians, but that has application to us today and through all time. And so there is a similar application to the way we should be reading these. You know, Ephesus was a very great city, but it had a lot of, you know, it was very religious and very cultural. And so there's a lot of a lot of things going on there for the believers there. And, you know, he mentions the name of Christ, it covers, you know, the seven stars who holds the seven in His right hand He holds the seven lamp stands. The stars are the angels of these seven churches, and the seven lamp stands are the churches themselves. So it's kind of setting that that initial stage for what's about to come through the rest of these couple chapters.

It gives them praise for their good works. And he doesn't bear evil, they've tested against false teaching and they didn't become weary. They persevered through a lot of things. They were given a warning, remember therefore from where you have fallen, or else I will come quickly and remove your lamp stand. Meaning He'll take them away from being an effective church to be something here. That's a pretty stark warning, and something that clearly should get their attention. And repent and do the first works.

And so one of the things that we're going to talk about, so what is this church of Ephesus? What's the, as you say, the bottom line up front? Well, this is the church that lost their first love. Meaning that first love was their relationship with Christ, focusing on Christ. And so what they did was they became more legalistic in their processes and the things they did and became more focused on the how and not the what, which is Christ. And so he tells them to repent and

do the things of your first works, go back to the basics. And the promise He gives them is eat from the Tree of Life, that's fellowshiping with Christ in Heaven. And that's an incredible promise and a blessing.

**Tim Moore:** What would the time frame be for this church to represent in church history if we're tying it to a particular period of time?

**Dennis Morris:** This is really kind of coming from the time when Christ's ministry began up until the time John was writing this book. So it was sort of that first stage of the--

**Tim Moore:** So, 30 or 95.

**Dennis Morris:** 30 to 95 AD when Christianity was really just getting started.

**Tim Moore:** Okay, and I appreciate the fact that you pointed out that this first letter is to a church, that we have a whole book which contains a letter written to that church by Paul. But let's move to the second church, the Church of Smyrna, in verses 8-11. So how does that apply in church history and even to us today?

**Dennis Morris:** Sure. Well, first, I'm going to just comment that there is so much detail in here that we're going to be kind of zipping through this really quickly. There are entire studies on each of these churches, so we're going to kind of hit just some of the key high points. But Smyrna, the way Christ was introduced was the First and the Last, the Alpha and the Omega you know, for He who is dead and came to life. That just demonstrates Christ's life and what He did. And they were given praise for their works and they suffered through tribulation. Smyrna is a church that suffered through a lot of tribulation. That's what it was known for. And the praise, they received no criticism, this is one of the few that received zero criticism, which is a real blessing.

But He warns them, do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Meaning they're going to be coming through a period of Roman persecution in that physical church of that time. And it's indicative to us that we were going to be experiencing persecution as we move along as well. And the task is to be faithful unto death. That's a pretty big ask.

**Nathan Jones:** Yes.

**Dennis Morris:** And not something to be taken lightly. And then the promise, if they overcome, they believe and like we are, He'll give them the crown of life, which is that relationship with Christ in heaven.

**Tim Moore:** I'm reminded almost how the Lord promises a bruised reed He will not break. So those who are under great persecution, He doesn't even have a word of condemnation for in this regard. And of course, we know that there are churches today who are under great persecution and not us in this country yet, but in other parts of the world, certainly even today.

**Dennis Morris:** Yeah, and this kind of, this church took on that next phase in the church history, kind of beginning from the time that John wrote this letter into the sometime into the 300 AD time frame. And again, there's different agreements on timeframes. But that's roughly when this church existed.

**Nathan Jones:** Excellent. Well, let's get to the third church, then, the Church of Pergamum or Pergamos as it's sometimes called. You can read it in chapter two, verses 12-17. What's the Lord trying to teach us through that?

**Dennis Morris:** Well, Pergamon was a political capital of one of the provinces at the time. There was a lot of idol worship that occurred. And that's a common theme you'll see through a lot of these churches in this area. But it also had three temples to the emperors, the Caesars at the time. And but Jesus was introduced He who has a sharp two edged sword. And for those who have ever held a two edged sword, that's a pretty difficult and pretty challenging weapon. And in His description to them, His praise is works, and they held fast to His name and that did not deny His faith.

However, the criticism is, almost seems like the exact opposite of that, is that they held to the doctrines of Balaam or Baal, which is false teaching. And they ate things sacrificed to idols, which is, you know, according to Leviticus, absolutely anathema to the Jews and to the believers. And they held to the doctrine of the Nicolaitans. And you say, what is that? These are people who, there's some discussion about who the Nicolaitans are, but they ate things sacrificed to idols and they practiced great sexual immorality at the time. And basically this was a false doctrine that they were buying into. So they were they had this belief, but then they were marrying it up with the false doctrine and living that out. And so the warning is pretty simple, repent. A pretty clear statement.

And then the task is He'll come to you quickly and He will fight against them with you, with the sword in My mouth. So Christ is going to bring that two edged sword and fight with them. And then the promises that He's given, He will give hidden manna to eat, which is an example of God's pure fulfillment, as He showed to the Jews when they were wandering in the desert, He provided for them as provision. And give them a white stone. And a white stone is indicative a lot of times of someone who wins a contest or a race, that's sort of an award, and they're going to have their name written on it. And which is something that is very special.

But this is often called the apostate church. You know, in that next phase and the early beginning of the church history from the 312 or so to 590 AD. And this is uniquely when Emperor Constantine sort of consolidated the religious center in Constantinople, current Istanbul and really started bringing government and church together. And that really started to kind of erode the effectiveness of churches.

**Tim Moore:** It sure did. And we see that even today how sometimes the government wants to supplement or bring in the church to even give it more power, or to just get everything under one roof. What about the fourth church? Dawn, you may jump into this. The Church of Thyatira in Revelation 2:18-29, this fourth church that represents that next church age.

**Dawn Morris:** Yes, this is one of my favorite churches. This is the church of Thyatira. And the name of Christ that's given here is the Son of God who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet like fine brass. So He's pictured here as about to move out in judgment.

They're given a lot of praise and a lot of encouragement for the things they're doing. They have works, they have love, they have service, they have faith, they have patience. But they tolerate the woman, Jezebel, who's brought in this false teaching into the church. And they commit sexual immorality. And they eat things, sacrificed to idols. And Jesus says, "If she does not repent, He's going to throw her and all her children into the great tribulation." And so He gives

that warning and He tells the ones who have not known the deeper things of Satan to hold fast so that no one takes their crown.

And He then tells them their task is to hold fast until I come. And the promise to the overcomer here is, is that they will have power over the nations.

**Tim Moore:** I think it's an important that we realize the Lord does hold liable those who tolerate. And sometimes today we're told toleration is the ultimate thing that we should do, the ultimate virtue. But really, the Lord says there are things we should not be tolerating. And also it points out that Jesus Himself says, I will bring in this case, sickness. So there are folks that say, well, my God wouldn't hurt a fly, that's the God of the Old Testament. No, that is the God who never changes. And sometimes He uses even judgments to cause people to come to their senses, or to recognize that an even greater wrath awaits if they do not repent.

**Dawn Morris:** Right, and that's His mercy.

**Tim Moore:** It is His mercy.

**Dawn Morris:** That's His mercy being shown.

**Nathan Jones:** Well Thyatira was called the pagan church, and we associate it right, I assume, with the papacy. The time period, 590 until about 1517 AD, when a lot of Babylonian cults came in. But the church that followed is Sardis. So if you get to become a pagan church, what's the next church age going to result in? Revelation 3:1-6.

**Dennis Morris:** Actually Sardis is another one of the interesting ones with Jesus's identification being is He who has the seven spirits of God and the seven stars. So this is that that again, the angels of the church, He's holding them ready for this church. And He gave praise for their works. But their criticism and condemnation is that they're dead. You know, your name says you're alive, but you are dead. That's to me, that's a very heavy condemnation.

And His request is that he walk with me in white for they're worthy. And white is a sign of purity and righteousness with Him. And then the promises given is you'll be clothed in white garments, which means I will show you to be pure and I'll show you to be righteous. And I will not blot out your name from the Book of Life. That's a pretty heavy statement that you're going to be with Me forever, and I will confess your name before my Father and before His angels. What a great honor to be to be praised before God by Jesus Himself.

**Tim Moore:** And we know that this dead church really is indicative of the time period between the early 1500s until about the mid-1700s where the church needed to be reawakened to really hold to what was handed down, once for all by the Saints. What about the sixth church, the Church of Philadelphia? We think of Philadelphia as being a city of brotherly love. Not so much anymore, but the church at Philadelphia got no condemnation. What does the Lord have to say to them?

**Dawn Morris:** Okay, well, he says to them first His description, He who is holy, He who is true, He who has the key of David. And so then He praises them that they have kept His commitment to persevere. And He has no criticism for this church that had a little strength. And He put before them an open door that no one could shut. And then He promises them that to the overcomer, that He would make them a pillar in the temple of His God and he would go out no more. So permanence. 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 I will write on him my new name.

**Nathan Jones:** Wow. What defines this particular church? If we had a dead church and this was probably be called the?

**Dawn Morris:** This is a faithful church.

**Dennis Morris:** Faithful or alive church. It actually was in this church period, which kind of goes between from mid-1700s into the early 1920s or so, this is the church that sent missionaries out to the world. So they're very alive and really active and wanting to bring God's Word to the rest of the world. And this is another church that received no condemnation.

**Nathan Jones:** And yet it is followed by probably the saddest church in all seven, the Church of Laodicea in Revelation 3:14-22. Can you guys tell us about that? Why is it so sad?

**Dennis Morris:** The real crux of this one is, saying it right up front, this is the church timeframe we are living in today. This is what we're all about. You know, this church has received no praise from God, none at all. And worse, the condemnation that He gives to me is something that would be heartbreaking because it says, you are neither hot nor cold, you are a wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked. He's telling you, you basically have zero value in what's going on.

**Nathan Jones:** Yet we live in big churches, and lots of money, and all these programs.

**Dennis Morris:** And that's one of the things that comparing, you know Laodicea where they are materially wealthy but spiritually poor, comparing that to a church like Smyrna, who was they were actually very physically poor, and materially poor but were rich in their spiritual lives. This is such a juxtaposition, and the saddening part about it is this is the time that we're living in today.

And the warning is if you don't change, I will spit you, I will vomit you out of my mouth. That's such a visual image. And something that, you know, you never want to have that thought of about you or any of your family or anything like that. So it's just such a vivid image. And it's called the apathetic church. And there isn't any surprise in that because they don't have a real value they're bringing. It's very indicative of what we see today.

**Tim Moore:** And so almost from the church that tolerated too much, we've gotten to the point that the church doesn't even care about standing for truth. And which is why we've seen so much slide toward heresy, toward apostasy in our own day and age. Very tragic.

Well, folks, we're going to come back in just a minute and answer the question, how do these seven love letters apply to us and how can we apply them to our lives? But first, we want to tell you about a book that Nathan has written that gives us a tremendous overview of the entire book of Revelation. Stay tuned.

**AD:** Hello, my name is Nathan Jones, author of The Mighty Angels of Revelation. In this book you will encounter angels such as the Seraphim, the Wind Angel, the Red Dragon, the Trumpet Judgment Angel, the Bowl Judgment Angel, and nearly 70 more. You'll come away with a greater understanding of how God uses His mighty angels in your life today, and in the future as told throughout the book of Revelation. And you'll gain a renewed sense of hope that will guide

you in these troubling last days. Order your copy on-line at lamblion.com or call the number you see on the screen.

## Part 2

**Tim Moore:** Well, Dennis and Dawn, I think it's fascinating that John wrote these letters dictated by Jesus to churches that were in societies that were very, very pagan. And so today even Christians can recognize we are churches, sometimes small bodies of Christ, in a very large pagan culture that's all around us. But even for the individual Christian, how can we draw meaning from these love letters and apply it to our own lives?

**Dennis Morris:** Well, because these letters are written to very specific churches, I think, and you look at through how you can, the things we've just been talking about, there's a lot of application we can use to actually apply to examine ourselves. As individuals, we can actually use that to apply to the churches that we attend too and kind of use that as a measure of the world around us as well.

And so a couple of things that kind of come to mind when I say that is, you know, is Jesus still first in our lives? Like that Ephesians Church. Is Jesus still first in our lives? Who or what are we putting our faith in? And that is, you know, I can even say from my own personal situation that oftentimes that's not where it should be. And so you have to keep being brought back to us, who are what are we putting our faith in?

And then one thing that we're going to be seeing more, and Tim, you mentioned just a little bit earlier is how do we react to persecution? I think we in this country have not really seen much persecution. Other churches throughout the world, China and places like that, see a great deal of persecution. And I think, you know, we've only scratched the surface. I think the recent pandemic, I think, showed a little bit of kind of a just a bit of what that persecution might look like. And it was pretty mild when you think of that. And so, you know, when the time comes, what are we going to stand for? Are we going to stand? Are we going to fold under the pressure? Are we going to succumb to this? And, you know, we've all seen what that can be like when those governmental, or even familial family members putting those pressures on you who are not believers and want to hold to the world.

And then one thing that's becoming a big challenge is how do we manage the temptations of life? You hear a lot of the things in these seven churches about sexual immorality and being swayed by things. And, so how do we react to those temptations? As we all know, temptation and sin has just been exploding in those. And in so many ways that we can be swept up and taken over by the temptations of this world. So how do we push back, really push back, or will we succumb to those pressures? And this is something that's really big. Do you want to talk about the false teaching?

**Tim Moore:** Yeah. We live in a day and age where false teachers abound. And it's incumbent upon every believer to be capable of explaining the Gospel to someone else. Of knowing the truth that's in the New Testament so that we can discern. And to check out, like we're told to be Bereans and check out what we're hearing, what we're reading, what we're watching on television even.

**Nathan Jones:** You were telling me that you led Dennis to the Lord in the college years.



**Dawn Morris:** I did.

**Nathan Jones:** Dennis, maybe you could tell us or both of you tell us what brought you to the Lord? What made you part of the church universal?

**Dennis Morris:** Well, through Dawn's witness to me and through a lot of interesting struggle, I actually accepted Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior. And so what does that mean? We hear that phrase a lot. Well, you have to, really what it means is really believing in a couple of really key things in your heart. First of all, that we're sinners, that we need God's grace. And being a sinner means we don't meet God's standard, and therefore we're subject to His judgment. The next thing we need to believe in is that because God loved us so much, He sent His son Jesus to die on the cross for us to pay the price for our sin. The next thing is that Jesus not only did He die, but He rose from the dead. And when Jesus overcame death, He proved that His sacrifice was worthy from Him dying for all of our sins, once for all. I mean, accepting that. So becoming a believer is not about going to church, or ticking off lists, or following rituals. It's about having that personal relationship with Jesus Christ who's your personal Lord and Savior.

**Tim Moore:** And as we live out that faith and that personal relationship with Jesus Christ, we know that Satan is always trying to torpedo our faith. But we can be more than overcomers by staying united with Christ, by leaning upon the Holy Spirit to give us not just gifts but give us the power to overcome all those fiery darts and to remain secure in Christ. Well, Dawn, obviously, you have studied, you have written, how can people get in touch with you and through you, obviously, with Dennis, to get some of the resources that you've provided?

**Dawn Morris:** Sure, you can go to my website [dawn-morris.com](http://dawn-morris.com) and there's all sorts of resources and links to social media and to buying my books on different platforms.

## Conclusion

**Nathan Jones:** We pray that you too will become an overcomer by placing your faith and trust in Jesus Christ as your Savior. And then heed the warnings and promises that the Lord has made to the seven churches. In the final chapter of the Book of Revelation, which God gave Jesus to show to His bond servants the things which must soon take place. Jesus says three times, "I am coming quickly." Well, we believe that all of the end time signs are converging, assuring us that soon and very soon Christ will come for His Church. And if you put your trust in Him, then, as His letter to the Church of Philadelphia promises Jesus will keep you from the hour of trial, which shall come upon the whole world to test those who dwell on the earth.

**Tim Moore:** Until that glorious day when the Church is taken home to be with the Lord. All of us here at Lamb & Lion Ministries say "Maranatha! Amen. Come quickly, Lord Jesus. Godspeed.

## End of Program