

Apocalypse Now (Revelation Revisited)

Session 4 / Wednesday

JESUS' MESSAGE TO THE CHURCHES IN TURKEY - PART TWO

1 On a stark, little island in the Aegean Sea, 2000 years ago, an elderly prisoner had a most
2 distinguished visitor. The prisoner was the Apostle John. His visitor was the glorified
3 Son of God, Jesus Christ. The purpose of Jesus' visit was to inform John of "those
4 things would shortly come to pass" (Rev. 1:1). Further, John was to write it all in a book
5 (scroll) which we know today as the Book of Revelation, which concludes the New
6 Testament.

7
8 In chapters 2 and 3, Jesus gave John (who apparently served as the bishop of some
9 churches on Turkey's western regions) a customized message for each of those seven
10 churches. Last week we studied not only how Jesus appears (looks like) today, but the
11 messages to the first three of those churches: Ephesus, Smyrna and Pergamum. Today
12 we continue the messages with those to the churches of

13 Thyatira
14 Sardis
15 Philadelphia
16 Laodicea

The Message to the Church in Thyatira

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20 Rev. 2:18-29

21 **And unto the angel of the church in Thyatira write; These things saith the Son of**
22 **God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet are like fine brass; [19]**
23 **I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy**
24 **works; and the last to be more than the first. [20] Notwithstanding I have a few**
25 **things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself**
26 **a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat**
27 **things sacrificed unto idols. [21] And I gave her space to repent of her fornication;**
28 **and she repented not. [22] Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit**
29 **adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds. [23] And I**
30 **will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he which**
31 **searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to**
32 **your works. [24] But unto you I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira, as many as have**
33 **not this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak; I**
34 **will put upon you none other burden. [25] But that which ye have already hold fast**
35 **till I come. [26] And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him**



2 will I give power over the nations: [27] And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as
3 the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my
4 Father. [28] And I will give him the morning star. [29] He that hath an ear, let him
5 hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

6 This church era is fascinating for both spiritual and historical reasons. If you and I think
7 of “the Middle Ages” or “the Dark Ages” as it’s also known, we think of that period of
8 time roughly between 500 and 1500 AD. It ended with the Renaissance when heroes
9 such as Martin Luther, Zwingli, Calvin and others broke the hold of the church in Rome
10 over the known world, brought the Bible into the hands of the common people, and
11 brought lights into cultural and spiritual darkness. But the Dark Ages got its start in the
12 time of the church in Thyatira. When the Christian church loses its influence in
13 society, calamity always results!

14 Thyatira City

15
16
17 This city was located northeast of Ephesus in western Turkey. It was famous for its
18 textile production and particularly of its dyeing and indigo trade. Among the ancient
19 ruins of the city, inscriptions have been found relating to the guild of dyers in the city.
20 Indeed, more guilds are known to Thyatira than any other contemporary city in the Roman
21 province of Asia Minor - wool workers, tanners, potters, bakers, slave dealers and bronze-
22 smiths. As far as we know, the first gentile convert in Europe, led to Christ by Paul and
23 Silas early in their second missionary journey, was Lydia, apparently a business woman
24 from Thyatira who had come to Philippi on business.

25
26 In early Christian times, Thyatira was home to a significant Christian church (which we
27 find in chapter 2 of Revelation). According to the Bible, a woman named Jezebel (not
28 the Jezebel of the Old Testament - but of the same evil) called herself a prophetess. She
29 taught and seduced many of the Christians of Thyatira to commit sexual immorality and
30 to eat things sacrificed to idols.

31 The Church of the Dark Ages (by Dr. Tim LaHaye)

32
33
34 The Church Age of Thyatira produced what is known in history as the Dark Ages.
35 “Dark” indicates that the program of merging paganism with Christianity, begun under
36 the church of Pergamum (see last week’s notes), increasingly emphasized paganism,
37 which is darkness. The light that Jesus Christ entrusted to His Church all but flickered
38 out during the Dark Ages and was not rekindled until the days of the Reformation (the
39 historical Renaissance).



Continuing the history of the Church where we left off in Pergamum, we note the following changes and doctrines that have their source in paganism added to the Church during this period:

AD 607 – Boniface III made first Pope (not Peter)

AD 786 – Worship of images and relics

AD 995 – Canonization of dead saints

AD 1079 – Celibacy of the priesthood

AD 1090 – Prayer beads

AD 1184 – The Inquisition

AD 1190 – Sale of indulgences

AD 1215 – Transubstantiation (wine and bread literally are Christ's body)

AD 1229 – Bible reading discouraged, if not forbidden, to believers

AD 1545 – Tradition granted equal authority with Bible

AD 1854 – Immaculate conception of Mary now taught

AD 1870 – Infallibility of the Pope declared

AD 1950 – Assumption of the Virgin Mary

AD 1965 – Mary proclaimed Mother of the Church

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On the next page you will find a full-page picture of the Church of the Holy Stairs in Rome. The mother of Emperor Constantine was in Jerusalem in the fourth century and believed she had found the original steps used to enter the presence of Pontius Pilate. Were that true, then Jesus would have probably ascended and descended them. Whether or not they are the actual stairs is anyone's guess.

scores of people ascend them on often-bloodied knees. It was an act of what they considered PENANCE, an attempt to eradicate sins by human works. Such acts are a waste of time, according to Scripture for we learn in Ephesians 2:8-9: **For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: [9] Not of works, lest any man should boast.**

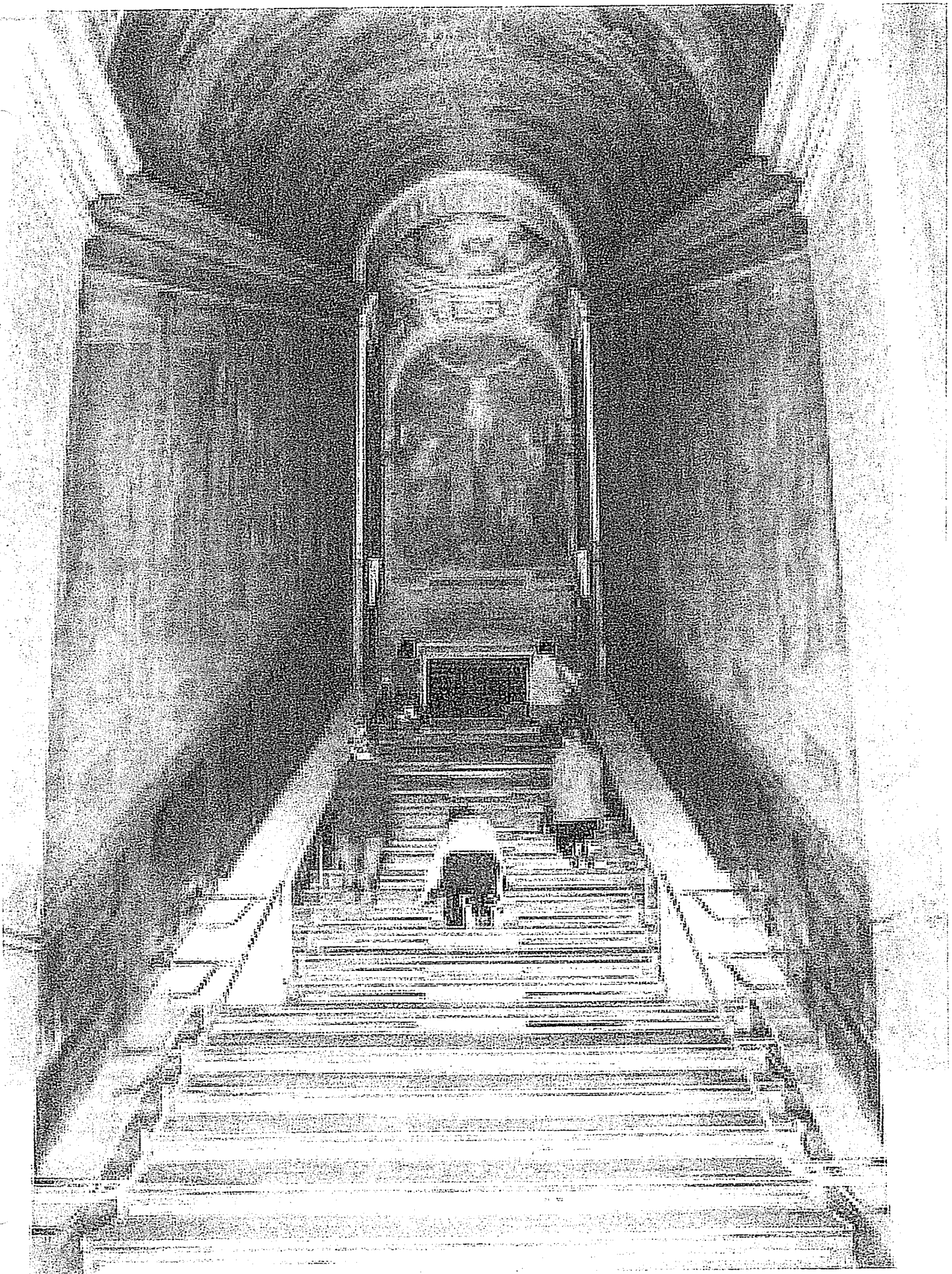
CHRIST'S COMMENDATION

The church in Thyatira is a text-book case of a body of believers doing a lot of things well but mixing them with activities, seriously thought to be right, that lead to destruction. Note the good things that Jesus mentioned: 1) "Deeds" They were doing good things, to be sure. 2) "Love" This was a body of believers who had a social conscience, who believed that Christians should show compassion for that's what Jesus did in His earthly ministry. 3) "Service" Yes, the people there did some really noteworthy things. 4) "Perseverance" Not just hit and miss activity for the Lord - but for a period of time.

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CHRIST'S CONDEMNATION

2
3 Rev. 2:20

4 **Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that**
5 **woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my**
6 **servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols.**

7
8 There was a woman there who called herself a prophetess. There are a lot of folks today
9 who call themselves prophets or prophetesses. Highly questionable!! This character
10 had influenced some of the believers to commit immorality and also to somehow
11 participate in idol worship by eating such committed food.

12
13 Jesus told John that He had convicted this woman and given her time to repent - for the
14 Lord is very long-suffering. However she was unwilling. So Jesus said He would deal
15 with her. But those who "fell for" her teaching would also be accountable. Rev.
16 2:22-23 **Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her**
17 **into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds. [23] And I will kill her**
18 **children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth**
19 **the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works.**
20 Here is a dire warning that sins unrepented of and continued can severely affect your
children.

21
22
23 Jesus then challenged the believers of Thyatira to know the Word, to believe the Word
24 and to practice it.

25
26 Apparently the warning was unheeded for history records that mankind suffered dearly
27 because of the direction begun in the Thyatira era.

Christ's Message To The Church In Sardis

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29
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31 Rev. 3:1-6

32 **And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write; These things saith he that hath**
33 **the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a**
34 **name that thou livest, and art dead. [2] Be watchful, and strengthen the things which**
35 **remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God. [3]**
36 **Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If**
37 **therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not**
38 **know what hour I will come upon thee. [4] Thou hast a few names even in Sardis**
39 **which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for**
40 **they are worthy. [5] He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment;**



1 and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name
2 before my Father, and before his angels. [6] He that hath an ear, let him hear what
3 the Spirit saith unto the churches.
4

5 Ancient Sardis was located about 50 miles west of Izmir, Turkey. In earlier centuries it
6 had been part of the Persian Empire and, in fact, was the western terminus of the Persian
7 royal road.

8
9 Wealth was not a problem there. Sardis was the firsts city where gold and silver coins
10 were minted. From 560 to 546 BC it was ruled by Croesus, who was renowned for his
11 great wealth and was the last king of the province Lydia. Then the Persians came.
12 Sardis through the centuries would be ruled by the Athenians, and the remnant of
13 Alexander the Great's family until the Romans took over in 133 B.C. Under the Roman
14 Empire (during which the Apostle John would have lived) it was the metropolitan capital.
15

16 Sardis was destroyed by an earthquake in 17 AD and then rebuilt. During John's time it
17 had a church that was quite well accepted, but for time and eternity it didn't amount to
18 much. This would be the case of the Sardis Church Age in history around the time of
19 the Reformation A (1500 or so AD). It was a dead church!
20

21 What did Jesus say about this church? (Verse 1) "I know you are busy....but as far as I
22 am concerned you are dead!" Remember that these were not only churches of John's
23 time, but each church represented an "age" or "a time" in history. The Sardis church
24 certainly was the case of the church in the Middle Ages. Yes, there were some good
25 works - especially in the early part of the Reformation with Martin Luther and others.
26 But "ritual" and "ceremony" replaced the truth of Jesus and the impact of the Holy Spirit.
27 As one writer put it, "The Reformation leaders began well, but they did not proceed to
28 complete the work to the blessing, the anointing, of the Holy Spirit.
29

30 "Wake Up!"
31

32 I have been privileged to visit many ruins of Middle Ages churches. Architecturally
33 they were wonders. The arches, the stone work, the layout of the buildings (often in the
34 form of the cross), were certainly fascinating. But now they are just that - ruins.
35 Nothing remains.
36

37 I am concerned about the church in general today. Those mainline churches have
38 dwindling numbers in them. There isn't much life. Although it must be said in some
39 local communities those churches are alive and vibrant; but the denominations the
40 represent grow more feeble by the year. On the other hand are those charismatic



churches that proclaim they are “alive” because the music is upbeat and there’s a lot of bodily movement in them; but their impact in missions and evangelism is far from the Book of Acts model.

Our Lord warned the church in Sardis to wake up, to strengthen the good doctrinal teachings which meant:

- * Salvation by faith Christ
- * Man cannot save himself because he is born with a sinful nature that must be born again - redeemed
- * And the absolute authority of the Bible, God’s Holy Word

The warning from Christ was ominous: Repent! Turn back to God. Have an obedient and humble heart before Him. If not, Jesus said, “I will come like a thief in the night and you will be left.” (Verse 3)

Overcoming

We read these words (or those with the same general meaning) from Christ to all seven of the churches: “He who overcomes....” Overcoming in life is the key to reward in heaven. It’s not the also-ran, the one who starts and stops, the malingerer who will be blessed in eternity - but HE WHO OVERCOMES.

Christ’s Message To The Church In Philadelphia

Rev. 3:7-13

And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write; These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth; [8] I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name. [9] Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee. [10] Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, 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. [11] Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown. [12] Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name. [13] He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.



1 This church was outstanding! We note in the scripture that Jesus had no condemnation
2 directed to it. There was only this caution: Rev. 3:11 **Behold, I come quickly: hold**
3 **that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.**
4

5 There is so much change in Christian churches today - some of it good and some of it not
6 so good. Some church leaders, in an effort to attract new people, to be "relevant," have
7 made major changes even in their theology. The holy Word of God has taken a back
8 seat to projection systems, music with little or no theological or musical merit, and casual
9 appearance - so much so that the majesty of God has almost been lost. Worshipers are
10 almost made to feel as if God is their "buddy," not their Creator, Judge and Master.
11 There is assuredly a degree to which making the Gospel available at every level is a good
12 thing; however, when overdone it produces some pretty weak believers.

13 Descriptions of Jesus

14 He is Holy

15
16 Verse 7: "He is holy." 1 Peter 1:16 **Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am**
17 **holy.** From the pen of A. W. Tozer:

18
19
20
21 *Without doubt, the mightiest thought the mind can entertain is the thought of God, and the*
22 *weightiest word in any language is its word for God. That our idea of God correspond*
23 *as nearly as possible to the true being of God is of immense importance to us.*

24 *Compared with our actual thoughts about Him, our creedal statements are of little*
25 *consequence. Our real idea of God may lie buried under the rubbish of conventional*
26 *religious notions and may require an intelligent and vigorous search before it is finally*
27 *unearthed and exposed for what it is.*

28
29 *It is my opinion that the Christian conception of God current in these years is so decadent*
30 *as to be utterly beneath the dignity of the Most High God and actually to constitute for*
31 *professed believers something amounting to a moral calamity.*

32 THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE HOLY / TOZER / CHRISTIAN PUBLICATIONS / P. 10
33

34 I am always deeply concerned that what is preached from this pulpit represent truly who
35 God is. **The essence of idolatry is the consideration of God to be anything other**
36 **than Who or What He truly is.** The question in my life must be, "Do I know Him - is
37 it really Him - or have I manufactured my own God to suit my needs and lifestyle?"
38

39 He is True

40



2 Note the phrasing in Rev. 3:7: "He is true!" Our Lord's claim about Himself: John
3 14:6 **Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, [the truth], and the life: no man cometh**
4 **unto the Father, but by me.** A denial of Christ is a denial of truth, of reality.

5 He Holds the Keys of David

6
7 This passage speaks to the authority of Christ. Rev. 1:5 **And from Jesus Christ, who**
8 **is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings**
9 **of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood,**

10
11 We Americans do not know or understand a whole lot about a monarchy for we live in a
12 republic. So when the Word speaks of Jesus in His kingly role, it sort of leaves us
13 blank. The day is coming, however, when Jesus will rule over all the Earth during the
14 glorious Millennium. That being the case, if He is the authority over all things, what
15 should be our relationship to Him?

16 He Opens and Shuts The Doors Of Life

17
18 It hasn't been all that long ago that thoughts of evangelizing the former Soviet Union
19 seemed impossible. But in recent years, the doors have been wide open and thousands of
20 churches and preaching stations have been opened there.

21 several St. Petersburg to Kazil in Siberia near the border of Mongolia and
22 have witnessed churches packed to the breaking point with people worshipping Jesus.
23 That being said, those doors that now seem closed to the Gospel will not remain that way
24 because: Rev. 3:7 **...he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no**
25 **man openeth;**

26 Christ's Commendations To The Church In Philadelphia

27
28 I KNOW YOUR DEEDS.... It was a church DOING something, not just talking about
29 it.

30
31 YOU HAVE A LITTLE STRENGTH.... The Church of Jesus Christ has no idea of its
32 potential in this wicked world. Rather than suffering from pride, most churches are
33 gripped by a sense of inferiority. That's tragic. You and I don't know our own
34 strength in Christ!

35
36 YOU HAVE KEPT MY WORD... This church not only knew the scriptures, but they
37 obeyed them.



2 YOU HAVE NOT DENIED MY NAME.... We are living in a "church age" in which
3 the Name of Christ is all-too-often denied or maligned.
4

5 The Divine Promises To The Philadelphia Church
6

7 **Rev. 3:9 Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are**
8 **Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before**
9 **thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee. Those who attacked the church in**
10 **Philadelphia were of dubious character, at best. Jesus promised that their threats and**
11 **taunts would come to nothing.**
12

13 THE CHURCH AND THE TRIBULATION
14

15 **PERSERVATION: Rev. 3:10 Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I**
16 **also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world,**
17 **to try them that dwell upon the earth.**
18

19 Remember that these seven churches are not ONLY the actual churches in Turkey 2000
20 years ago, but they represent the seven church eras or ages that would follow. To the
21 church in Philadelphia (which corresponds to our own current church age), Jesus
22 promised to keep them from the hour of temptation which would cover the earth. I
23 believe He was referring to the Tribulation.
24

Tim LaHaye observed, "The world has never known a universal period of tribulation. This passage is an obvious reference to the Tribulation Period of seven years. The promise is clear: the church will be raptured before the Tribulation begins."

25 *It seems difficult to understand why some false teachers suggest that the Church must go*
26 *through the Tribulation in view of this clear-cut statement of our Lord to "keep you" out*
27 *of the hour of trial, which must be understood in the light of Jesus' description of that*
28 *period in Matthew 24:21 as the time when "there will be great distress, unequalled from*
29 *the beginning of the world until now - and never equaled again."*

30 REVELATION UNVEILED / LAHAYE / PAGE 83 / ZONDERVAN
31

32 Christ's Message To The Church Of Laodicea
33

34 Rev. 3:14-22

35 **And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the**



1 Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God; [15] I
2 know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot.
3 [16] So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee
4 out of my mouth. [17] Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and
5 have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and
6 poor, and blind, and naked: [18] I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire,
7 that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that
8 the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that
9 thou mayest see. [19] As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore,
10 and repent. [20] Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice,
11 and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me. [21]
12 To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also
13 overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne. [22] He that hath an ear,
14 let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

15
16 This is the last message to the Churches of Asia Minor (Turkey). The Laodicean Church
17 corresponds to the church age today. And that's disappointing because that church was
18 lukewarm.

19
20 Jesus did not have one good thing to say about this church. This church had the
21 "distinction" of being the only congregation to which Jesus could not find one thing to
22 commend. But He had a number of negative observations:

- 23 • The church was lukewarm - neither hot nor cold
- 24 • It thought it was pretty great; Jesus disagreed with their assumption.
- 25 • Jesus said the people there were blind.

26
27 While the Laodicean church existed 1900 years ago, the Laodicean age began around
28 1900. This was the time when critics of the Bible became very belligerent and accepted
29 as "apostles of truth." 2 Tim. 3:5 **Having a form of godliness, but denying the**
30 **power thereof: from such turn away.**

31
32
33 I preached on the coming of Christ. A man and his wife
34 sat very near the front, laughing out loud at such scriptural teaching. We should not be
35 surprised. Even in evangelical churches, the basic truths of the Gospel are diminished in
36 favor of soft theology and entertainment.

37 The plight of the Laodicean church was clearly
38 warned of in our Lord's statement: Matthew 7:22-23 **Many will say to me in that**
39 **day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast**
40 **out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? [23] And then will I**



1 **profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.**

2
3 Jesus warned the Laodiceans to “buy refined gold,” rather than shallow teaching (and
4 teachers). 1 Peter 1:7 **That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than**
5 **of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and**
6 **honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ:**

7
8 Jesus warned them to exchange their self-righteous garb for His righteousness. Isaiah
9 61:10 **I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he**
10 **hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of**
11 **righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride**
12 **adorneth herself with her jewels.**

13
14 And Jesus cautioned that church to treat their spiritual blindness with His eye salve. 1
15 Cor. 2:14 **But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for**
16 **they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are**
17 **spiritually discerned.**

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20
21 Next week we deal with Chapter Four - the Rapture and the appearance of the saints
22 around the colossal throne of Christ. This chapter is a block-buster!

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