

2/8/04

Revelation 3

We want to continue in our study of the seven churches of Revelation in Chapter three .

They are actual churches in John's day, representing the total church.

They cover a period of church history.

They identify a type of church in every age.

They identify a type of Christian in every age.

There is also an obvious pattern to the letters as we stated last week, with few exceptions.

3:1-6 The church of Sardis, the dead church.

3:1a-b The confrontation.

- 1) The message is addressed to the angel "angeli", the pastor most likely, not an angel.
- 2) The church of Sardis is the dead church, which occupies the period of church history between 1500-1750 A.D.
- 3) Marked the Protestant Reformation period of Luther, Knox, Calvin and Tyndale.
- 4) The name means escaping ones or those who come out.

- 5) The church was located about thirty to thirty-five miles S.E. of Thyatira and was the ancient capital of Lydia.
- 6) The city was situated on a northern spur of Mt. Tmolus overlooking the broad and fertile plain of the Hermus and it was known for its impregnable city built on the slopes, with its acropolis nearly perpendicular rock walls that rose 1500 feet above the lower valley on very side, except the south side.
- 7) In the sixth century B.C. Sardis was one of the most powerful cities of the ancient world that was conquered by King Cyrus in 546 B.C., then Alexander the Great, then it passed to Roman in its declined condition.
- 8) The city was wealthy due to the gold, silver and dye industry and claimed to be the first to discover the art of dying wool.
- 9) The city was destroyed by an earthquake in A.D. 17 and rebuilt with the help of emperor Tiberius and completed in A.D. 26 but struggled to regain its past glory and stature.
- 10) Ramsay described it as "a relic of the period of barbaric warfare, which lived rather on its ancient prestige than on its suitability to present conditions."

- 11) The city had the worship of the goddess Cybele, similar to that of Diana and Greek Artemis.
- 12) Jesus identifies Himself from chapter one.
 - a) He who has the seven Spirits of God, the third person of the holy Spirit is ever present and aware of all that goes on in the church. Rev. 1:4; Is. 11:2
 - b) He who has the seven stars, the pastors of the churches. Rev. 1:20; 2:1
 - c) He is the One who seeks to make Himself known and in control of His church by the H.S.
 - d) There is no real direct commendation to Sardis!

3:1c-e The church is condemned for sin.

- 1) I know your works, the motive and genuineness of the activity.
- 2) You have a name that you are alive, but you are dead.
 - a) It had an outward appearance by much activity and work but not by the Spirit of God. being spiritually dead.
 - b) Luther's withdrawal resulted in a state church which would become dead.

3:2-3 The church is exhorted.

- 1) Be watchful "agrupneo", which means to become awake with the idea of vigilance,

they were careless, complacent and lethargic. Rom. 13:11-14

* This is the first of five imperatives.

- 2) Strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die.
 - a) I have not found your works perfect before God.
 - 1)) Not completely in accord with God's standard.
 - 2)) Tetzal proclaimed the selling of indulgences to rescue people from purgatory.
 - 3)) October 31, 1571 Luther nailed his 95 thesis against Rome.
 - 4)) The reformation did not come out far enough though their cry was "justification by faith". the word is the standard.
- 3) Remember how you have received and heard, the focus is the past. vs. 3a
 - a) The reference is to the gospel, Jesus said, "Take heed how you hear."
 - b) The tense is present imperative, to remember.
 - c) The word "receive" is the perfect, they had received the faith as an abiding trust and "heard" is in the aorist, the moment they heard the gospel.
 - 1)) The majority of the church had compromised.

- 2)) The small remnant remained faithful.
* “A bruised reed He will not break, And smoking flax He will not quench” Matt. 12:20
- 3)) They were ignorant of their condition.
- 4) Hold fast, focusing on the present.
a) To be a doer, faithfully.
b) To guard and attend carefully to.
- 5) Repent, focuses again on the present.
a) An examination of self-judgment.
b) A change of mind and heart, turning around. 2Cor. 7:10
- 6) The warning is accompanied with an absolute promise, focusing on the future.
a) Therefore, if you do not watch. vs. 3c
b) I will come upon you as a thief and will not know what hour I will come upon you. vs. 3d-e
- 1)) Twice Sardis had been conquered because the guard was asleep and careless 549 and 218 B.C.
- 2)) The concept of thief speaks of unexpectedness, imminence and is used for both the rapture and the Second Coming, the church is to be looking for Jesus. Matt. 24:42-44, 1Thess. 5:1-4; 2Pet. 3:10
- 3)) But perhaps in the context, it is a warning against direct judgment to

come upon them, if they did not repent.

3:4 The church is commended.

- 1) The pronouncement is, “You have a few names that have not defiled their garments.”
a) Moral purity in their relationship with Christ, and allusion to the dyed garments of Sardis.
b) Moral purity involves what you don't do.
- 2) The promise is, “They shall walk with Me in white.” Rev. 7:9-10; 14:4-5
- 3) The proclamation is, “For they are worthy.” Eph. 4:1
a) Not that they have merited or worked for this privilege but rather that they have trusted the righteousness of Jesus and remained faithful to Jesus. Rev. 4-5
b) They had resisted the compromise and apostasy.
* There is no condemnation to Philadelphia nor Smyrna!

3:5-6 The church is given a promise.

- 1) The overcomers shall be clothed in white garments. Rev. 3:18; 4:4; 6:11; 7:9, 13; 19:8, 14
a) Made white by the blood of the Lamb. Rev. 7:14

- b) A miraculous contrast with the dying of their industry.
- 2) I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life.
 - a) The book of life is mentioned several times. Ex. 32:32; Rev. 13:8; 17:8; 20:12, 15; 21:27; 22:19
 - b) The common practice was to have a register of citizens and when a criminal's name was removed, he lost his citizenship.
 - c) Some say this is not possible for the believe but if not why the warning, the context is the church who is dead.
- 3) But I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels Rom. 10:9; Mat. 10:32
- 4) To whosoever hears and responds, no one is excluded and churches plural. vs. 6
 - a) The individual is addressed to pay heed.
 - b) The individual is to learn from the messages to the churches, plural.

3:7-13 Philadelphia, the loving-faithful church.

3:7 The confrontation.

- 1) The message is addressed to the angel "angeloi", the pastor most likely, not an angel.

- 2) The church occupies the period of history of 1750-1925-50.
- 3) The founder was Altalus II king of Pergamus in 189 B.C.
- 4) The city was named after his brother Eumenos whose loyalty had earned him the name Philadelphia, the city of brotherly love.
- 5) Their intention for the city was that it might serve as a "missionary city" to spread the Greek culture and language, replacing the Lydian language.
- 6) The area was known for earthquakes and the city was destroyed in 17 A.D. and was named Neocaesaria, in appreciation of the imperial help to rebuilt it, later under Vespasian, the name Flavia began to appear on coins.
- 7) The chief worship was Dionysus or Bacchus, god of wine and revelers, due to its wine-growing industry, which flourished in the volcanic fertile land, making it the center of grape-growing.
- 8) The city of Philadelphia is the modern day city of Alashehir, located at the east end of the broad valley that passing through Sardis leads down to the Aegean Sea, near Smyrna.
- 9) The strategic location at the junction of trade routes leading to Mysia, Lydia and Phrygia had helped it to earned the title

of “gateway to the East”, having great commercial importance.

3:7 Jesus identifies Himself from a combination of Scripture.

- 1) He who is holy. Is. 6; 40:25; Hab. 3:3; 2Cor. 5:21
* The holiness is implied in Chapter one.
- 2) He who is true, meaning genuine, real opposed to false. Jn.14:6
- 3) He who has the keys of David.
 - a) He is the ultimate authority, exercising absolute power. Rev. 1:18
 - b) He is in absolute and complete control of what goes on in the Kingdom.
 - c) Eliakim over David’s house. Is. 22:22
 - d) Jesus is over the throne of David
1Sam. 7:12-13
- e) Jesus unlocks all the mysteries of life and the door to God.

3:8 The church is commended.

- 1) "I know your works".
- 2) I have set before you an open door and no man can shut it.
 - a) The metaphor of “door’ refers to opportunity for missions and service.
 - b) Remember the city was known as “The gateway to the East”, due to her commerce opportunities.

c) Paul spoke the great door for affective work opened to him. 1Cor. 16:9; 2Cor. 2:12; Col. 4:3

3) For you have little strength.

- a) They are not necessarily great in number or confident in their own abilities but humbly dependent on God.
- b) Jesus said to His disciples, "Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Lk. 12:37

4) You have kept My Word.

- a) Opposed to the synagogue of Satan. vs. 9
- b) Not mere obedience but trusting it to be God’s word, inspired.

5) You have not denied My name.

- a) Both in private or public,
- b) By acknowledging Jesus as the God-Man, the Savior of the world.

3:9-10 The church is given a promise.

1) The faithful would be honored by the Lord. vs. 9

- a) Their true identity is revealed, “Indeed I will make those of the synagogue of Satan, who say they are Jews and are not, but lie.”

* Satan is found in four of the seven churches. Rev. 2:9, 13, 24; 3:9

- b) Their abasement is revealed in contrast to their honor, “Indeed I will make them come and worship before your feet, and to know that I have loved you.
* Some interpret this to mean their conversion but the context is foreign.
- c) They had withstood the opposition by Judaizers, the synagogues of Satan.
- 2) The faithful would be given exemption by the Lord from the Great -Tribulation. vs. 10
- a) Because they had kept His command to persevere, I will also will keep you from the hour of trial.
* A specific hour of trial, the article is present, the hour.
- b) On the whole world, to test those on the earth. Rev. 6:10; 8:13; 11:10; 13:8, 14; 17:8
- 1)) The scope is the entire earth, not a part of it.
- 2)) The indication is earth-dwellers, those who have made this world their home, the believer is a heavenly citizens, a pilgrim and sojourner. 1Pet. 2:11
- c) This is the 70th week of Daniel, Jacob’s trouble. Dan. 9.27; Jer. 30:7

- d) God has not appointed us to wrath but to obtain salvation, through our Lord Jesus Christ. Rom. 5:9; 1Thes. 5:9; 4:13-18
- e) We must distinguish between trials and tribulations and the great tribulation Jn. 16:33; 1Pet.4:12
- 3:11** The church is exhorted.
- 1) Behold I come quickly.
- a) 1/5 of Scripture is related to prophecy.
- b) 1/3 of that 1/5 is in regards to His Second coming.
- c) Three times in the last chapter Jesus says He is coming quickly.
- 2) Hold fast what you have.
- a) Personal accountability.
- b) Personal perseverance.
- 3) That no one may take your crown.
- a) A victor’s crown of reward, like an athlete in the games. 1Cor. 9:25; 2Tim. 4:8
- b) A festive crown for celebration.
- 3:12-13** The church is given a promise.
- 1) The overcomers will be made a pillar in the temple of His God, and he shall go out no more. vs. 12
- a) The metaphor speaks of the individual being permanently with God. Gal. 2:9; 1Tim. 3:15

- b) He will no longer have to battle the flesh or the enemy. marking stability, perhaps implying the devastating earthquakes in the region.
- 2) And I will write on him two names.
 - a) Of My God.
 - * Yahweh is His covenant name, “I Am that I Am, the becoming God. Ex. 3:14
 - b) Of the city of My God.
 - 1)) The New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God. Rev. 21
 - 2)) The citizens of heaven. Gal. 4:26; Phil. 3:20
- 3) And I will write on him My new name.
 - a) Marking ownership and sonship.
 - b) Marking privilege and authority.
 - c) On forehead. Rev. 22:4
- 4) He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.
 - a) The individual is addresses to pay heed, once again.
 - b) The individual is to learn from the messages to the churches, plural.

3:14-22 Laodicea, the apostate church.

3:14 The confrontation.

- 1) The message is addressed to the angel “angeli”, the pastor most likely, not an

- 2) The church of Laodicea occupies the period of church history from 1925-50 to Christ's return.
- 3) The name means the rule of the people, modern day Eski-hisar.
- 4) It identifies the church that is controlled by the people and not Christ through his servants.
- 5) Laodicea was founded by Antiochus of Syria and named it after his wife, a very affluent city.
- 6) Located in the Lycus Valley on the road to Colosse, the third city was Hieropolis.
- 7) The city had a great banking center and clothing manufacture and commanded the gateway to Phrygia.
- 8) They were famous for their soft, glossy black wool called the “trimita”
- 9) In 61 A.D. it was destroyed by an earthquake and refused help from Rome being more than adequate to rebuild by her own wealth.
- 9) The city was known for its medical schools of Asklepios and was famous for two ointments for the ears and eyes and were exported all over the world.
- 10) The city lacked a convenient water source and water had to come from six miles away from some springs.
- 11) Jesus identifies Himself from a combination of Scripture.

- a) The Amen. Is. 65:16
 * Title implying reliable and trustworthy. 2Cor. 1:20; Rev. 22:20, 21
- b) The faithful and true witness in contrast to Laodicea. Rev 1:5; 1Tim. 6:13; Jn. 18:37
- 1) The One who will not distort the truth.
- 2) The One who the epitome of truth.
- 3) The beginning of the creation of God.
- a) He is the Eternal One, who has always existed.
- b) He is the creator and God of all things created. Gen. 1:1; Col. 1:16; Jn. 1:3
- c) This church has failed to acknowledge Jesus in all three statements!

3:15-17 The church is condemned.

- * There is no commendation at all!
- 1) They were indifferent, "I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot." vs. 15
- a) Cold means against Christ, chilly cold.
- b) Hot means for Christ, boiling hot.
- c) Jesus wished they were one or the other.
- 2) They were going to be rejected by Jesus, "So then, because you are lukewarm, and

neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth." vs. 16

- a) They were nauseating, tepid and tasting of the calcium deposits.
- b) They stood for nothing.
- c) This is the only time the word lukewarm appears in the New Testament.
- d) The famous hot springs of Hierapolis located six miles north traveled across the plateau and spilled over a broad escarpment directly opposite Laodicea. The cliff was about 300 feet high and a mile wide before it cascaded over the edge, by then the water had become lukewarm.
- 3) They were filled with pride, "Because you say, 'I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing' --and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked." vs. 17
- a) They had come to trust their material possessions for their safety, banking, medical schools and industry.
- b) They had come to spiritual poverty of soul.
- c) The very city and people who helped others to see by her ointment was blind herself.

3:18-20 The church is exhorted.

3:18 The only way God can except us is repentance.

- 1) I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire.
 - a) The invitation is emphatic, “from Me”, to repent.
 - b) The personal response allowed the Lord to purge their sin!
- 2) To be rich, spiritually.
- 3) To be clothed with white garments, this is what they were to be know for, in contrast to the black wool they were famous for.
 - * White garments to cover the shame of their nakedness, the righteousness of Jesus.
- 4) To anoint their eyes with the eye salve of the Holy Spirit to see. 1Cor. 2:14

3:19 The evidence of God’s love.

- 1) The extent of God’s love, “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten.” Prov. 3:11-12; Heb. 12:5
 - * This means that God is still dealing with them.
- 2) The depth of God’s love, “Therefore be zealous and repent.”
 - a) The patience of God is incredible, as He gives opportunity to repent.

b) This opportunity comes to a close sooner or later.

3:20 The means to the benefits of God’s love.

- 1) Behold I stand at the door and knock.
 - a) Jesus is outside this church knocking.
 - b) Jesus is addressing each individual in the congregation to repent from their apostate condition.
 - c) Jesus knocks on the individual heart to respond by opening the door to exercise their own free-will.
- 2) If anyone hears My voice and opens the door.
 - a) Salvation is based on meeting this condition, it is individual and personal.
 - b) Salvation is responded to, not worked for by any means.
- 3) I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.
 - a) The outcome is fellowship with God.
 - b) The implication of eating with someone was one of intimacy, for eating was one of the closest and affectionate things one could do.
 - c) Jesus told His disciples that in the kingdom they would eat and drink at His table. Matt. 26:29; Rev. 19:9

3:21-22 The church is given a promise.

- 1) The overcomer will be granted to sit with Christ on His throne.
 - a) The one who repents and depends on Christ for salvation.
 - b) This is the one who will rule and reign in the Kingdom. Mat. 25:33-34;
2Tim. 2:12
 - c) The disciples will sit on twelve thrones in the kingdom. Matt. 19:28
- 2) Even as He overcame and sat down with His father on His throne. Rev. 22:1
- 3) The individual is addressed to pay heed, no one is excluded.
- 4) The individual is to learn from the messages to the churches, plural.

Conclusion

These are the last three churches.

1. Sardis: The dead church.
2. Philadelphia: The loving church.
3. Laodicea: The apostate church.