

CONCERNING THE WAY

June 23, 2009

LESSON 62: THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST

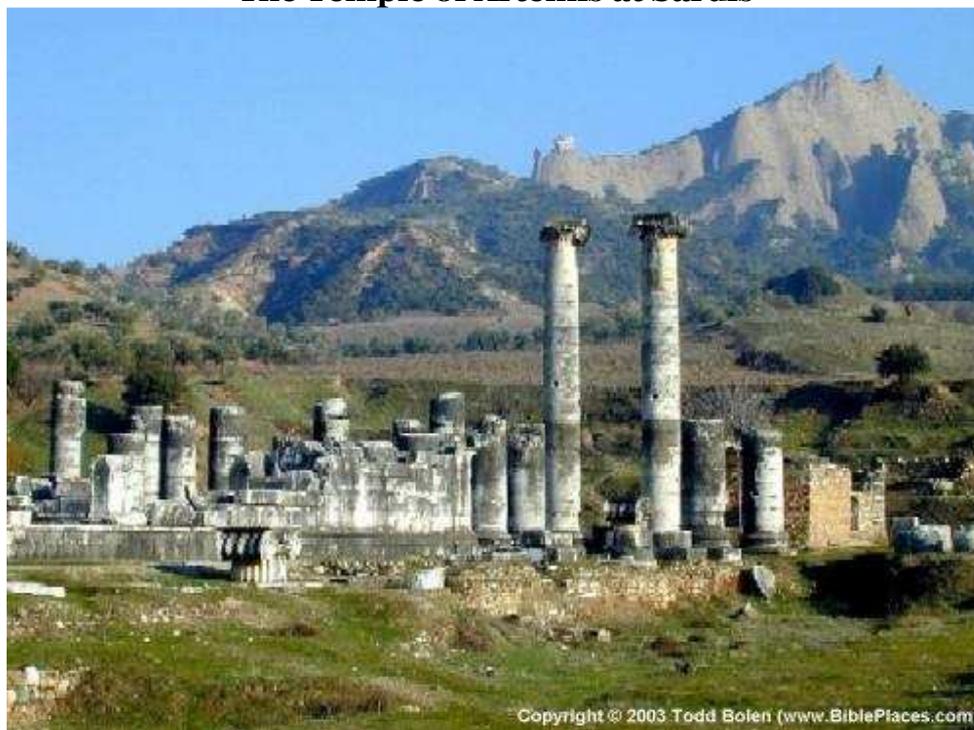


Chapter 3

The Dead Church

Revelation 3:1 "To the messenger of the church in Sardis, write: 'The one who has the seven spirits of God and the seven stars says this: 'I know your works. You are known for being alive, but you are dead. (ISV)

The Temple of Artemis at Sardis



Sardis was the capital city of Lydia, in western Asia Minor. In John's time Sardis was a trade center known for textile manufacture, dyeing, and jewelry. The most impressive building in Sardis must have been the Temple of Artemis, built in 4 B.C. It was 327 feet long and 163 feet wide and had 78 columns, each 58 feet high. Some are still standing, as you can see in the photo.

Sardis is now a Turkish village called Sart, where herdsmen, buffaloes, and oxen live, at the foot of Mount Tmolus, on the banks of the Pactolus, between 30 and 40 miles east from Smyrna. The ruins of Sardis are impressive, and show the ancient glory of this city; but now not a single Christian family lives there.

This church apparently did not have the Holy Spirit working among them. Because of this, they could not see themselves as God saw them. They were full of religious activity, but no real spiritual production or growth.

This church expressed to the world that they were Christians; they professed to have true spiritual life. But what they said and what they did were two different things – they were dead spiritually. Many churches are

similar to this one where they start out well but lose their spiritual fervency after a generation or two and just live on their past laurels. This dead church represents the dying churches we have today. It was a church in name only, just going through the motions.

A church should focus on worship, teaching, and service, NOT ritual and ceremony. If God is really God, we should be concentrating on making disciples, not putting on a show, that's just pretending to worship a God you don't really believe exists.

Some say this church represents the period of time from the Reformation in 1517 to the 18th century. The Reformation was a great start in correcting error in the church and recovering the truths of the scriptures, but after a time the movement stalled and spiritual lethargy set in. The church on the whole needed a revival, but most just lived off their reputations.

We discussed the seven spirits and seven stars in the last lesson. Some believe these are angels, but the best understanding of the seven spirits is that it is seven aspects of the Holy Spirit Who was poured out on the Messiah in Isaiah 11:2. The number of spirits matches the number of lampstands and would seem to represent the activity of Christ through the Holy Spirit in and to the seven churches. The stars are the angels, or messengers of the seven churches (Revelation 1:20).

Revelation 3:2 Wake up then, and strengthen what remains that was about to die, because I have not found your deeds complete in the sight of my God. (NET)

The Greek sense of the words "wake up" are to be continually watching. This is a command given to believers throughout the Bible. *"It is not merely the call to be awake; it is to remain awake, to keep a vigil as a watchman in the midst of a sleeping encampment."* Donald Barnhouse

There are three aspects of watchfulness. First we must watch for Christ. Secondly, we must watch ourselves:

Luke 21:34-36 "Constantly be on your guard so that your hearts will not be loaded down with self-indulgence, drunkenness, and the worries of this life, or that day will take you by surprise (35) like a trap, because it will come on everyone who lives on the face of the earth. (36) So be alert at all times, praying that you may have strength to escape all these things that are going to take place and to take your stand in the presence of the Son of Man." (ISV)

And we are to watch others to guard the community of believers:

Acts 20:28-31 Watch out for yourselves and for all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God that he obtained with the blood of his own Son. (29) I know that after I am gone fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. (30) Even from among your own group men will arise, teaching perversions of the truth to draw the disciples away after them. (31) Therefore be alert, remembering that night and day for three years I did not stop warning each one of you with tears. (NET)

If they woke up spiritually, they could recover lost ground and get back on track. But the Sardian church would be unable to strengthen what remains unless they renewed their dependence upon the Holy Spirit. In their own efforts, they were totally incapable of what Jesus commands here. The works that they had were done to please or impress men and so their motivation was wrong.

Revelation 3:3 '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 at what hour I will come to you. (NASB)

Jesus was telling them to remember what they had been taught and obey it, or Christ would come suddenly to judge them. He wanted them to return to His teachings.

History shows that two different times the city of Sardis was captured by enemy armies when her guards fell asleep. Jesus may be using this example to teach an important truth. If we do not return to worshipping, believing, and living the way we once did, we won't recognize the prophetic signs of His coming. Remember that there are two phases to Christ's return. In the first phase, the Rapture, He comes as a Bridegroom for His bride, the Church. In the 2nd phase, His return to the earth to reign and establish His Kingdom, He will come as a thief in judgment, to destroy. Paul speaks of this in 1 Thessalonians:

1 Thessalonians 5:2-10 For you know quite well that the day of the Lord will come in the same way as a thief in the night. (3) Now when they are saying, "There is peace and security," then sudden destruction comes on them, like labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will surely not escape. (4) But you, brothers and sisters, are not in the darkness for the day to overtake you like a thief would. (5) For you all are sons of the light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of the darkness. (6) So then we must not sleep as the rest, but must stay alert and sober. (7) For those who sleep, sleep at night and those who get drunk are drunk at night. (8) But since we are of the day, we must stay sober by putting on the breastplate of faith and love and as a helmet our hope for salvation. (9) For God did not destine us for wrath but for gaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. (10) He died for us so that whether we are alert or asleep we will come to life together with him. (NET)

Believers who are asleep will be taken by surprise by Christ's coming and, though they will go in the Rapture, they will lose rewards at the Judgment Seat of Christ. Unbelievers will miss the Rapture and have to go through the Tribulation, and then face judgment when Christ returns to the earth.

Research shows that fewer than half the people who call themselves Christian attend church on a regular basis. Many of those who attend do so for the wrong reasons. Now, I am not saying that you have to be a church member to be saved, and I know that some do not attend church because of their inability to find one that truly worships God and teaches the Bible. That is the case in some areas of the country. But the local church has a purpose - to make disciples - and it needs to wake up and fulfill it before it's too late.

Revelation 3:4 But you have a few individuals in Sardis who have not stained their clothes, and they will walk with me dressed in white, because they are worthy. (NET)

This does not mean these people had not sinned, but by confessing their sins, these few had remained in close fellowship with God (1 John. 1:9). They have shown themselves worthy to be followers of Christ. Even in dead churches there may be some people who do not embrace unbiblical traditions but truly worship the living Jesus Christ.

There are two aspects of walking with Christ. Today believers are guided by the Holy Spirit to walk in His ways (Romans 8:4-6, Galatians 5:16). In the future Kingdom, we will walk in full fellowship with God as Adam did in the Garden of Eden (Revelation 21:3; 22:3-4).

"Dressed in white" - this is in contrast to the filthy garments they wore before coming to faith in Christ:

Zechariah 3:3-5 Now Joshua was dressed in filthy clothes as he stood there before the angel. (4) The angel spoke up to those standing all around, "Remove his filthy clothes." Then he said to Joshua, "I have freely forgiven your iniquity and will dress you in fine clothing." (5) Then I spoke up, "Let a clean turban be put on his head." So they put a clean turban on his head and clothed him, while the angel of the LORD stood nearby.

The white color speaks of the righteousness of Christ, but also of the marriage clothing worn by His bride and those who attend the wedding feast who are found to be "spotless and without blemish" and "white and clean". Notice that it is God who makes us righteous (clean); there is nothing we can do to make ourselves righteous. These individuals who will walk with Christ dressed in white are worthy not because of anything they have done, but because they have placed their faith in the only one who is worthy, Jesus Christ. So it is with all believers.

Revelation 3:5-6 In the same way, the victor will be dressed in white clothes, and I will never erase his name from the book of life, but will acknowledge his name before My Father and before His angels. (6) Anyone who has an ear should listen to what the Spirit says to the churches. (HCSB)

As we said in the last study, "the victor", translated by many versions as "the overcomer", is one who has overcome the pull of this world and trusted Christ for his salvation, not one who has attained a higher state of spirituality. The white clothes are representative of righteousness, which we have in Christ.

"The armies of heaven who appear with the warrior Messiah are "arrayed in fine linen, white and pure" (Rev. 19:14). It would seem, therefore, that the white garments promised to the overcomer in Rev. 3:5 represent an attire appropriate to the heavenly state. Since they are made white by washing in the blood of the Lamb (Rev. 7:13), the figure is highly appropriate to portray justification." Mounce

"Never erase his name" - some believe the way this is worded it implies that it is possible to have your name erased from the book of life. Does this mean that a believer could have his name removed from the book of life and lose salvation? If that's true, that would contradict many other Bible verses that affirm that a true believer cannot lose his salvation. There are a couple of possibilities here:

1. This verse does not suggest that anyone who eventually will go to hell was ever in the book of life to begin with. This verse could be taken as a figure of speech called litotes. Litotes is when a certain statement is expressed by denying its opposite. For example, rather than merely saying that a person is rather attractive (or even very attractive), one might say that he or she is "not unattractive." It is a form of understatement.
2. Some scholars believe that there are two different books of life. The Book of Life (Revelation 20:12-15) appears to be a book in which everyone's name is written in when they're born. The Lamb's Book of Life (Revelation 21:27) is a list of all who are born twice - all who accept Jesus Christ. It is possible for your name to be erased from the Book of Life for sinning against God, for denying Jesus, and for taking away or adding to the words of Revelation. But many believe it is impossible for a saved person's name to be erased out of the Lamb's Book of Life.

For those of us who are victors, Jesus will acknowledge before the Father and the angels that we are His followers (Matthew 10:32-33). What a fantastic thing to hear!

The Faithful Church

Revelation 3:7 "To the messenger of the church in Philadelphia, write: 'The one who is holy, who is true, who has the key of David, who opens a door that no one can shut, and who shuts a door that no one can open, says this: (ISV)

Architrave Fragment at Philadelphia



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Philadelphia ("brotherly love") was a city in the province of Lydia, 28 miles southeast of Sardis. There were frequent earthquakes in Philadelphia, one of which nearly destroyed it during the reign of Tiberius Philadelphia. The wine industry was big there, and not surprisingly their chief God was Dionysus, the Greek god of wine, or the Roman god Bacchus. Still a good-sized city today, it is now named Alasehir (Allah-shehr).

"Philadelphia, so called from its founder, Attalus Philadelphus, still exists in the town called Allah-sheer, 'the city of God.' . . . The number of houses is said to be about 3000, of which 250 are Greek, the rest Turkish; and the Christians have twenty-five places of worship, five of them large and regular churches, a resident bishop, and twenty inferior clergy." Smith, *The New Treasury of Scripture Knowledge*

This church must have been faithful because the Lord gave them nothing but praise. The key of David refers to the legal right of Jesus to claim the authority as King, being descended from David (See Isaiah 22:22). And Jesus is holding the door open for people to come to Him.

Matthew 25:10 But while they had gone to buy it, the bridegroom arrived, and those who were ready went inside with him to the wedding banquet. Then the door was shut.

Luke 13:24-25 "Exert every effort to enter through the narrow door, because many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able to. (25) Once the head of the house gets up and shuts the door, then you will stand outside and start to knock on the door and beg him, 'Lord, let us in!' But he will answer you, 'I don't know where you come from.'

People must respond while the door is open, because once it is shut, no one else will be able to come in.

Revelation 3:8 'I know your deeds. (Look! I have put in front of you an open door that no one can shut.) I know that you have little strength, but you have obeyed my word and have not denied my name. (NET)

This church was more like the church should be than any of the other churches. Note that Jesus is ultimately the one who opens and closes doors. We can't do it; we're totally dependent on Him. It was a working, Bible-believing church.

Some believe this "open door" refers to missions, an opportunity set before us by Christ in this age to evangelize the world (Luke 24:45; Acts 14:27; Acts 16:14; 1 Corinthians 16:9; 2 Corinthians 2:12; Colossians 4:3). It could also mean the entrance to the messianic kingdom (Matthew 25:10; Luke 13:25).

"In the mid-1800s, people began to be converted at the rate of 10,000 a week in New York City. The movement spread throughout New England. Church bells would bring people to prayer at eight in the morning, twelve noon, and six in the evening. The revival went up the Hudson and down the Mohawk. Baptists had so many people to baptize, they couldn't get them into their churches. They went down to the river, cut a big square in the ice, and baptized them in cold water. In one year (1857), more than one million people were converted. The revival crossed the Atlantic, broke out in Northern Ireland, Scotland, Wales, England, South Africa, South India – anywhere there was an evangelical cause, there was revival - and its effect was felt for 40 years". J. Edwin Orr

This is happening in other countries today. Could it ever happen in the United States again? Of course! But not until people start humbling themselves in repentance and obedience, and not unless Jesus starts it.

Little strength – They must have had great opposition in this city, probably by the Judaizers mentioned in the next verse, and yet remained faithful to Jesus. It may have also been a small congregation.

Revelation 3:9 Listen! I am going to make those people from the synagogue of Satan – who say they are Jews yet are not, but are lying – Look, I will make them come and bow down at your feet and acknowledge that I have loved you. (NET)

Here again we have Jews mentioned that were denying that Jesus was their Messiah, and that's why Jesus says they're from the synagogue of Satan. "Judaizers", or legalists, have been around in all church ages. Anyone who adds legalism or works to the free gift of salvation destroys the "gift of God" (Ephesians 2:8-9)

Apparently at least some of these Jews who were persecuting this church would eventually repent, believe the truth about Jesus, and come acknowledge Him to the church. We don't know when this might have happened in history, but it might be a prophecy of something that will happen in the Tribulation period or the Millennial Kingdom.

Revelation 3:10 Because you have kept my admonition to endure steadfastly, I will also keep you from the hour of testing that is about to come on the whole world to test those who live on the earth. (NET)

It is possible that the "hour of testing" mentioned here is referring to something bad that was about to

happen to all of these churches very soon, maybe perpetrated by the Romans. However, because it clearly says “the whole world”, I believe this “hour of testing” has to be the Tribulation period, and Jesus is promising that the church will not have to go through that (1 Thessalonians 1:10, 5:9) This may be why John starts the next chapter with an example of the Rapture. The phrase “about to come” in the Greek has the idea of “inevitable, with certainty”, not that it would necessarily happen soon.

Some will say that this means that God will protect believers *during* the Tribulation and keep them from being harmed by His judgments. But if you read this promise carefully you see that Jesus is saying He will keep the believers from the “hour”. It refers to the *time* of the testing, not the *effects* of the testing. He will keep them out of the time of the Tribulation itself! Plus, the “kept through” view makes no sense, because we’ll see great numbers of believers suffering violent deaths during the Tribulation described later in Revelation.

“To test those who live on the earth” – this means the unsaved at the time of the end who continue in their rejection of God, in contrast to the faithful who are aliens and sojourners upon the earth (Leviticus 25:23; 1Chronicles 29:15; John 15:19; 17:14, 16; Philippians 3:20; Hebrews 11:13) and whose hope is in heaven (Hebrews 11:13-16; Revelation 13:6), these who live on the earth are trusting in man and his environment. These are like the humanists of our day. Believers are not among these earth dwellers, for the earth dwellers ultimately hate believers (John 15:19). When the earth dwellers give us praise and love us, then we need to question our heavenly witness.

There are at least three purposes for the Tribulation period:

1. to serve as a witness to God (Daniel 11:35; 12:10)
2. to purge the rebels from Israel and turn the elect Jews to God (Zechariah 13:7-9; Mark 13:13)
3. to show the hard hearts and unrepentant state of the earth dwellers

Revelation 3:11 'I am coming quickly; hold fast what you have, so that no one will take your crown. (NASB)

A better translation of the word shown as “quickly” in this verse is “suddenly”. Jesus wasn’t saying here that He was coming the next week. He was saying when He comes, He will come suddenly. As John Madden would say, it will be BOOM, there He is (1 Corinthians 15:52, Matthew 24:27). Jesus wants believers to live every day as if this is the day He will return.

Hold fast what you have – this means don’t abandon your doctrines and your work. Keep believing the Bible, keep praying, keep witnessing, and keep sending out missionaries to tell the world about Jesus.

Why would someone take my crown? Because if you don’t do the work of God, someone else will – God’s work will still be accomplished. So don’t let someone else have your reward.

Revelation 3:12-13 The victor: I will make him a pillar in the sanctuary of My God, and he will never go out again. 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. (13) Anyone who has an ear should listen to what the Spirit says to the churches. (HCSB)

Jesus promises two things to the victor:

1. I will make Him a pillar in the sanctuary – Jesus will give him a permanent place in the presence of

God. This phrase relates to fellowship with God. This is what the entire message of the Bible from Genesis to Revelation is about! We will have full fellowship with God once again, like it was in the Garden of Eden before the Fall.

2. I will write on him...
 - a. The name of God to designate them as a child of God – we belong to Him
 - b. The name of his eternal home which is the New Jerusalem
 - c. A new name of Jesus, representing their personal relationship to the King of Kings

What is this about Christ getting a new name? It's possible that when we see Him in His full glory, we will see him in a way that we could not have imagined, an unrevealed aspect of the Lord Jesus. This "new name" could be an expression of this, of Christ as King.

This may be where Satan gets the idea to "mark" the followers of the antichrist. Satan never has any original ideas, he is always a copycat.

The Lukewarm Church

Revelation 3:14 **"To the messenger of the church in Laodicea, write: 'The Amen, the witness who is faithful and true, the originator of God's creation, says this: (ISV)**

Bathroom Arches at Laodicea



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Laodicea was a city in the province of Phrygia about 30 miles east of Ephesus, ten miles west of Colosse, and it was a wealthy city filled with Greek culture and learning. Jesus' words to this church contain allusions to the prosperity and social prominence of the city. Named for Laodice, the wife of Antiochus II (261-247 B.C.), it became extremely wealthy during the Roman period. It was destroyed by an earthquake in 60 A.D., but was wealthy enough to rebuild themselves without help from the Romans. They were known for their black wool industry, which they manufactured clothing from. The site of Laodicea is today only a heap of ruins that the Turks call Eskithsar ("old castle").

Some believe this church represents the last period of the church age, the one we are living in today. This is the only church to which there is no praise given by Jesus, only condemnation.

Jesus is the Amen, the Truth, the One we can trust. He is the creator of the universe (John 1:3, Colossians 1:16-17), the source of all things. Some think that the universe began as an explosion that took place billions of years ago, some people think we came into being through evolution. Jesus says HE created all things. Jesus, in all these letters, describes aspects of Himself that leave us no doubt that He is God.

Revelation 3:15-16 'I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either cold or hot! (16) So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I am going to vomit you out of my mouth! (NET)

Any church or individual believer can be in one of three states: cold, lukewarm, or hot. Cold can mean formal or without spiritual life, lukewarm means indifferent or straddling the fence, and hot means passionate or zealous. This church was not being persecuted, and they were comfortable and self-satisfied. Jesus says this is the worst state of all! It's easy to judge a cold church or bless a hot church, but what do you do with an indifferent church? I think this is the condition of MANY churches and individuals who claim to be Christians today. This church was at peace with the culture, it was no longer a shining light.

The only thing God hates more than lack of faith (cold) is hypocritical faith (lukewarm). *"There is no one farther from the truth in Christ than the one who makes an idle profession without real faith."* John Walvoord

How shall we then understand this exclamation of the Saviour, . . . namely, by regarding the "cold" here as one hitherto untouched by the powers of grace. There is always hope of such an one, that, when he does come under those powers, he may become a zealous and earnest Christian. He is not one on whom the grand experiment of the Gospel has been tried and has failed. But the "lukewarm" is one who has tasted of the good gift and of the powers of the world to come, who has been a subject of Divine grace, but in whom that grace has failed to kindle more than the feeblest spark. The publicans and harlots were "cold," the Apostles "hot." The Scribes and Pharisees, . . . were "lukewarm." Richard Trench

We should constantly be evaluating ourselves to see if we're in this state. Are we complacent, indifferent, self-righteous? Is our faith sincere?

"vomit you out of my mouth" – Basically the same threat given to the Ephesians of removing their lampstand (Revelation 2:5). When things get so bad that repentance just will not happen, God turns men loose to their own destruction and loss (Jeremiah 15:1-4; Zechariah 11:9; Romans 1:20-28).

Revelation 3:17 Because you say, "I am rich and have acquired great wealth, and need nothing," but do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind, and naked, (NET)

They didn't see themselves the way Jesus did. Unlike Philadelphia, which recognized that they had little strength of their own and needed the power of God, this church thought they needed nothing. Apparently they had a lot of pride in their wealth, but they were spiritually poor. Remember that God judges things differently than we do. We tend to think that if we are prospering, then we are a good Christian and God must be pleased with us. No, God looks at the heart, at our spiritual state. This church had placed all their hope in money and material things, but they had lost sight of Jesus.

"There is this health and wealth gospel that is out today that is a flat out error...that's leading many

astray...that says that God is going to make you rich, and if you are not, you are just not believing God.” Hal Lindsey

Here we see the curse of blessing. The Bible records that where men receive God's blessing they soon drift away from the very source of their blessing. Everywhere, the pattern of history is a revolving wheel:

1. Men suffer lack and affliction and turn to God.
2. God responds to repentance with provision and blessings.
3. Men glory in their condition of prosperity and grow cold toward God.
4. Judgment falls and the wheel goes around again.

I believe that today we are experiencing stage 3 and are getting close, if not entering into stage 4. Man seems unable to receive blessings from God without eventually thinking that he gained these by his own achievements (Jeremiah 9:23-24; Hosea 12:8-9; Luke 12:16-21) which then becomes the focus, which leads to evil:

1 Timothy 6:6-10 Now godliness combined with contentment brings great profit. (7) For we have brought nothing into this world and so we cannot take a single thing out either. (8) But if we have food and shelter, we will be satisfied with that. (9) Those who long to be rich, however, stumble into temptation and a trap and many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. (10) For the love of money is the root of all evils. Some people in reaching for it have strayed from the faith and stabbed themselves with many pains.

“need nothing” - Many people think that they don't need God, that they can make it just fine on their own. In Revelation 3:17 Jesus tells us the true condition of those people, which they don't realize. They are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind, and naked.

Man cannot perceive his corruption (Ephesians 4:18). He believes in the good in himself and deifies himself (2 Thessalonians 2:3-4): So long as he believes that, he will never see his need for Christ (Matthew 9:12). And so it is with many churches today who think that their attendance, social activities and programs are an indication of their spiritual health. If they're not teaching the literal Word of God, they have no measure of their true condition.

Revelation 3:18 take my advice and buy gold from me refined by fire so you can become rich! Buy from me white clothing so you can be clothed and your shameful nakedness will not be exposed, and buy eye salve to put on your eyes so you can see! (NET)

Mined gold is put into a hot furnace to purify it. The ore is melted, the impurities are drawn out, and you're left with pure gold. We are put into God's furnace of testing not to destroy us, but to refine us (1 Peter 1:6-7).

If we want to be rich, we have to buy gold from Jesus, using the spiritual currency of our faith. Without this faith we are poor and destitute. And the clothing we buy from Him, using faith, is His righteousness. The only thing that can cover our nakedness before God is the righteousness of Christ. Jesus also said this church was blind, and they needed to buy eye salve from Him so they could see (John 3:3, 1 Corinthians 2:12-14).

This church was trying to do the same thing that Adam and Eve did when they tried to clothe themselves to cover their nakedness. Anything we do to cover ourselves is not sufficient. They had attempted to

substitute their own righteousness (Matthew 5:20; Luke 10:29; 18:9) for the righteousness that can only come from God (Romans 10:3).

Revelation 3:19 All those I love, I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest and repent! (NET)

Discipline can mean punishment and correction. Trials that come upon us are not accidents. God is in charge, and He uses these things to cause us to be honest with ourselves and cause us to repent. Discipline should also humble us, and make us grow into who He wants us to be. (Hebrews 12:5-8) And Jesus is telling us to run to repentance! He's telling this church that they're not too far gone, He still loves them and wants them to return to Him.

Revelation 3:20-22 Listen! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and have dinner with him, and he with Me. (21) The victor: I will give him the right to sit with Me on My throne, just as I also won the victory and sat down with My Father on His throne. (22) Anyone who has an ear should listen to what the Spirit says to the churches. (HCSB)

Notice the contrast between this church and the church at Philadelphia. At Philadelphia Jesus was holding the door open, and here He is knocking at the door, waiting for someone to open it and invite Him in. Christ is standing outside His own church, wanting to be invited back in!

Verse 20 can be taken two ways. Many take it as an appeal to the lost by Jesus. Others see it as an appeal to lukewarm Christians. The context would seem to say that Jesus is speaking to lukewarm Christians here.

"The verse contains nothing of the gospel message as such—no mention of substitutionary atonement, of Christ's resurrection, of repentance, of faith in the person and work of Christ. Neither is there anything in the adjacent context about these vital matters. Yet evangelists and personal workers everywhere commonly employ this verse as a gospel invitation. God, in His grace, does occasionally use it to help bring an unsaved person to Christ, since it does enjoin a proper attitude of openness to God's call, but that is not its intent. It is addressed only to compromising, lukewarm Christians in compromising, lukewarm churches, and it is they whom Christ is seeking to draw back to Himself" Henry Morris

In any case, notice that Jesus doesn't force us to knock, or beg and cry at His door. He knocks at our door, and He is the one who is begging and pleading with us to open the door. But He will never force open the door. He allows us to have the volition to let Him in or refuse to open the door.

And then Jesus tells us again that we who have trusted Christ will share authority with Him in His Kingdom on earth. We don't know how that will work, but it is clear that we will have some role of authority in the Kingdom.

Some believe that Jesus' Davidic throne and the Father's throne are the same, but verse 21 completely disproves that theory. There are two different thrones being spoken of here. Jesus is not currently sitting on His throne, the throne of David (Luke 1:32-33), but He is sitting with the Father on the Father's throne. The "throne" in the ancient world included the steps around the actual chair, so "sit with me on my throne" could mean we'll get to sit around Christ's throne.

That is the seven letters to the churches. Notice that five out of the seven (more than 70%) are told to repent.

“After reading the seven letters to the seven churches, we cannot escape the fact that compromise of God’s word is anathema to Christ and is the root of all Christian weakness. Let us each individually resolve to uphold the full teaching of our Lord and Savior—in the strength He provides.” Mills, Revelations: An Exegetical Study of the Revelation to John

The Seven Churches of Revelation

Church	Characteristics	Comment	Promise to the Victor (Overcomer)
Ephesus	Faith and patience, doctrinal truth	You have strayed from your love for Christ	To eat from the tree of life (Rev. 2:7+).
Smyrna	Martyrdom, persecution	Have no fear in the midst of Tribulation; be faithful	Not be hurt by the second death (Rev. 2:11+).
Pergamos	Worldly alliance, great external growth	You are holding to false doctrines	Hidden manna to eat, a white stone with a new name written (Rev. 2:17+).
Thyatira	False teachers, doctrinal corruption	You have some committing sexual immorality, you who are faithful, hold fast until I come	Power over the nations, the morning star (Rev. 2:26-28+).
Sardis	Dying faith, ritualism	You appear to be alive, but in your heart you are dying, and your works are incomplete	Clothed in white garments, name never blotted out from the Book of Life, name confessed before the Father and angels (Rev. 3:5-6+).
Philadelphia	Evangelism, missions	Hold fast and continue to keep my Word	Made a pillar in the temple of God, name of God, New Jerusalem, and Jesus’ new name written upon (Rev. 3:12+).
Laodicea	Apostasy	Your material riches have blinded you to your spiritual poverty	Sit with Jesus on His throne (Rev. 3:21+).

Questions:

1. What false reputation did the church at Sardis have?
2. Why was the church at Philadelphia so weak?
3. What was the admonition to the church at Laodicea?
4. Which letter probably applies to today’s church?
5. How does one avoid being lukewarm?