

# Read Revelation!

*“Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand.” (Revelation 1:3)*

## Chapter 2 and 3: Messages to Seven Churches!

### I. Ephesus: THE COLD CHURCH

(2:1-7)

Remember that the Book of Revelation was written by John the Apostle, and addressed at first to *“the seven churches which are in Asia”* (Revelation 1:4-11). The *“churches”* were congregations of Christians. The term translated *“church”* means an assembly or a congregation, and never refers to a building. The *“Asia”* where they were located was a province of the Roman Empire that was part of what we now call Turkey or *“Asia Minor.”* The first Christian church in this area was the one at Ephesus, and according to Acts 19 and 20, it evangelized the rest of the province (See Acts 19:0 and 20:25-31). We suppose that the other six churches were organized as a result of this evangelistic effort. The *“mother”* church of Asia is addressed first in this series of messages from Christ to His flocks.

- A. The first verse reminds us that Christ is always walking in the midst of His churches, and always has His messengers in His right hand. Compare verse 1 with the symbols in Chapter 1.
- A. The Lord says that He knows what is going on in the church (vs. 2-3), and He commends them for their hard work, their patience, their intolerance of evil and false doctrine, and for not quitting!
- B. Then He rebukes them for one thing: leaving their *“first love”* (vs. 4-6). He counsels them to *“remember”* how it used to be, and to *“repent,”* and He warns them that the great Ephesian church is about to die out as a testimony to the truth!
- C. Finally, He makes a promise to the overcomers that is fulfilled in Chapter 22.

### II. Smyrna: THE SUFFERING CHURCH

(2:8-22)

- A. The Lord addressed this congregation in terms derived from Chapter 1 (v. 8).
- B. He says that He knows what is going on in the church (*“I know thy works”*—v. 9), and reminds them that they are *“rich”* in Christ in spite of their material poverty.
- C. Jesus rebukes them for nothing, but encourages them to stay *“faithful”* through all of their trials and tribulations (v. 10). Notice that these troubles were under God’s control, and can result in a reward (Look up James 1:12 about the *“crown of life”*).
- D. Finally, the Lord Jesus makes a promise to the overcomers that is fulfilled in Chapter 20.

### **III. Pergamas: THE LAX CHURCH (2:12-17)**

- A. In the message, the Lord again identifies Himself in terms of the vision in Chapter 1 (v.12).
- B. He says that He knows what is going on in the church (v. 13), and commends them for not denying the faith in the face of great pressure.
- C. Then He rebukes them for tolerating those who hold to false doctrine in their congregation (vs. 14-16). “*The doctrine of Balaam*” involved mixing pagan ideas and practices with Biblical truth. “*The doctrine of the Nicolaitans*” involved elevating pastors to an unwarranted position of dominance over the common church members (“laity”). Churches are supposed to purge their membership of professing believers who believe or live falsely (See Matthew 16:6-12, I Corinthians 5:6-8, and Titus 3:10-11). The church is supposed to be a lighthouse of truth (I Timothy 3:15-16)! This church must “*repent*” and discipline the erring members, or expect the Lord to take action Himself!
- D. Jesus then makes some mysterious promises to the overcomers (v. 17).

### **IV. Thyatira: THE DEFILED CHURCH (2:18-29)**

- A. Again, the Lord comes to the church in terms of the vision in Chapter 1 (v. 18).
- B. Again, He says that He knows what is going on in the church (v. 19). He commends them for their love (“*charity*”), their service, their faith, their patience, and their ever-increasing ministry for Him.
- C. Then He rebukes them for letting false prophets teach (vs. 20-23). Since they won’t correct the situation, Jesus will have to do it! Can you see that this church is like the “Lax Church,” only worse! When you start to compromise and cut corners, you are on your way *down*!
- D. Jesus promises several good things to the overcomers (vs. 24-29), which are explained by the rest of the Book.

### **V. Sardis: THE DEAD CHURCH (3:1-6)**

- A. Jesus identifies Himself to this church with references to the vision in Chapter 1.
- B. He says that He knows what is going on in the church (v. 1), and He pronounces them “*dead*”! There are two routes to death for a church: COLDNESS (as at Ephesus) and COMPROMISE (as in Pergamos and Thyatira).
- C. He gives hope that even a dead church can be revived (vs. 2-4). The Second Coming of Christ will separate the saved from the lost members of this church. Notice in I Thessalonians 5 that the unsaved are the ones for whom Christ will come “*as a thief*” (vs. 2-5; See also Luke 12:39-40).

- D. He promises eternal security to the overcomers, with references to Chapters 19, 20, 21, and 22. See in I John 5:4-5 who the overcomers are!

## **VI. Philadelphia: THE HOT CHURCH (3:7-13)**

- A. The Lord identifies Himself as “*holy*” and “*true*” and says that He has “*the key of David*” (v. 7).
- B. He says that He knows what is going on in the church (v. 8), and He promises to open a door for them (See I Corinthians 16:7-9). He will do this because they have “*kept*” His Word (vs. 9-10).
- C. He does not rebuke this zealous church, but promises them deliverance from the Great Tribulation (v. 10) and a reward for their faithfulness (v. 11). These things are associated with the Rapture of the Church (See Luke 21:36, II Corinthians 5:10, I Thessalonians 4:16-17, and II Timothy 4:7-8).
- D. He promises the overcomers several wonderful things that are explained by the rest of the Book.

## **VII. Laodecia: THE LUKEWARM CHURCH (3:14-22).**

- A. The Lord Jesus refers to statements in Chapter 1 as He addresses this final church (v. 14).
- B. He says that He knows what is going on in the church (v. 15), and He pronounces them “*lukewarm*” (v. 16, too). He wishes they were cold like Ephesus or hot like Philadelphia, because there is more hope for them.
- C. He rebukes them by saying that their lukewarmness can be seen in their refusal to acknowledge any need in their lives (v. 17). He counsels them to seek a revival from God (vs. 18-19).
- D. He promises individual overcomers fellowship with Him in His throne (vs. 20-22). Some things about the throne will be explained in the next two chapters (4 and 5).

In the messages to the seven churches, we can see at least four important truths:

1. Different churches have different needs. These are seven typical churches. Which one is most like ours?
2. There are different ways for a church to lose its effectiveness. When we detect some of these problems, we need to call a congregation to repent!
3. The Lord Jesus knows all about our church!
4. What we do in our church has eternal consequences!