LIVING FOR CHRIST THROUGH THE BOOK OF REVELATION

PART 1: CHRIST AND HIS CHURCH – Revelation 1-3

LESSON 1: THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST

Revelation 1:1–20 (KJV)

The Setting

- John the beloved was exiled to Patmos by the Roman emperor Domitian around A.D. 95 – Rev. 1:9; Mat. 24:9
- Domitian desired worship and persecuted Christians who refused to worship him – Acts 5:29; Dan. 3:16-18
  - Domitian was a cruel man who desired to be worshipped and when Christians wouldn't worship him, he demanded leader of the Christians be put to death
    - Believed that John the Apostle was put in boiling water or wax but did not die and afterward was banished by Domitian to Patmos
- Patmos was a barren place of isolation and suffering – Rev. 1:9; Psa. 142:4-7
  - Yet, in the middle of great trial, John heard clearly from God – James 1:2-4; Gen. 28:16
  - Many of God's greatest revelations come during difficult seasons – Exo. 3:1-4; Gen. 22:14

Understanding Revelation

- The word revelation comes from the Greek word apokalupsis meaning unveiling or disclosure – Dan. 2:28; Luke 8:17
- Revelation is not John's revelation but the Revelation of Jesus Christ – Rev. 1:1; John 1:18
- The revelation was given by God to show His servants things which must shortly come to pass – Rev. 1:1; Amos 3:7

  *"*Shortly *come to pass?" you say. "This book is over two thousand years old!" The Greek word translated "shortly" is en tachei, meaning "must come to pass with rapidity." It's the same Greek word from which we get the word "tachometer"—the instrument used to determine the speed of an engine. Thus, the Lord is telling us in this verse that when end-time events begin to happen, they'll increase their rpms and happen with greater rapidity." – Jon Courson's Application Commentary – New Testament*

- God's people are repeatedly identified as His servants – Rev. 2:20; Rom. 1:1
- The revelation was communicated through signs and symbols – Rev. 1:1; Dan. 7:1-7

Revelation 1:1-2

- The revelation was given by God, through Jesus Christ, unto John – Rev. 1:1; John 3:32
- The purpose of Revelation was to show God's servants things that must come to pass – Rev. 1:1; Dan. 2:28
- "Shortly come to pass" speaks of rapidity once events begin unfolding – Rev. 1:1; Mat. 24:33
- The revelation was signified through signs – Rev. 1:1; John 21:25
- John faithfully bore record of what he saw and heard – Rev. 1:2; 1 John 1:1-4

Revelation 1:3 - The Blessing the Enemy Wants You to Avoid

- Blessing is attached to reading, hearing, and keeping Revelation – Rev. 1:3; Luke 11:28
- The blessing is not merely in hearing but in obeying – James 1:22; Psa. 19:7-11
- The time is at hand, requiring believers to remain spiritually alert – James 5:7-8; Rom. 13:11
- Many believers avoid Revelation because of fear or confusion but Revelation begins with blessing – Rev. 1:3

Revelation 1:4-6 - Greetings to the Seven Churches

- The message was directed to seven churches in Asia – Rev. 1:4; Rev. 1:11
- God is identified as:
  - Which is – Exo. 3:14
  - Which was – John 1:1
  - Which is to come – Rev. 1:8
- The seven Spirits before the throne represent fullness and perfection of the Spirit – Isa. 11:2; Zech. 4:10
- Jesus is:
  - The faithful witness – Isa. 55:4; John 8:14
  - The first begotten of the dead – Col. 1:18; 1 Cor. 15:20
  - The prince of the kings of the earth – Rev. 17:14; Phil. 2:9-11
- Jesus loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood – Heb. 9:14; Eph. 1:7
- Believers have been made kings and priests unto God – 1 Pet. 2:5,9; Rom. 5:1-2
- Glory and dominion belong to God forever – 1 Tim. 6:16; Rev. 5:13

Revelation 1:7-8 - Who Jesus Is

- Jesus is coming again visibly and publicly – Rev. 1:7; Mat. 24:27
- Every eye shall see Him – Acts 1:9-11; Mat. 24:30
- The clouds represent God's presence and glory – Exo. 13:21-22; Heb. 12:1
- Those who pierced Him shall look upon Him – Zech. 12:10; John 19:37
- The prophecy of Christ's return connects directly to Zechariah's prophecy – Zech. 12:10; Mat. 24:30
- Jesus identifies Himself as:
  - Alpha and Omega – Isa. 41:4; Rev. 22:13
  - The Almighty – Isa. 9:6; Rev. 19:6

Revelation 1:9-11 - John's Position and Assignment

- John identified himself as a companion in tribulation with believers – Rev. 1:9; Phil. 1:7
- John suffered because of the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ – Rev. 1:9; 2 Tim. 3:12
- John was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day – Rev. 1:10; Acts 10:10
- John heard a great voice like a trumpet – Rev. 1:10; Exo. 19:16
- Jesus commanded John to write what he saw and send it to the churches – Rev. 1:11; Hab. 2:2

Revelation 1:12-16 - Vision of the Son of Man

- What John heard caused him to turn and see Jesus – Rev. 1:12; Jer. 33:3
- The seven golden candlesticks represent the churches – Rev. 1:20; Mat. 5:14-16
  - The candlestick imagery points back to the tabernacle lampstand – Exo. 25:31-37; Zech. 4:2
  - Jesus stood in the midst of the candlesticks showing His presence among the churches – Rev. 1:13; Mat. 18:20
- Jesus standing in the midst of the candlesticks reminds us that:
  - Jesus is present in the midst of His churches
  - Church activity does not hide church condition
  - A church can impress people while grieving Christ – 1 Sam. 16:7; Rev. 2:4
- Jesus was clothed in garments representing authority and priesthood – Heb. 4:14-16; Exo. 28:4

- His white hair speaks of wisdom and eternity – Dan. 7:9; Mic. 5:2
- His white hair connects Jesus to the Ancient of Days imagery in Daniel – Dan. 7:9; Rev. 1:14
- His eyes like fire reveal perfect vision and judgment – Heb. 4:13; Dan. 10:6
- His feet like brass represent judgment and endurance – Exo. 27:1-6; Eze. 1:7
  - Brass is associated with judgment and sacrifice throughout Scripture (Brazen altar – Exo. 27:1-6) Endurance through fire – Dan. 3:24-25

- His voice as many waters reveals majesty and authority – Eze. 43:2; Psa. 29:3-4

- The 7 stars represent the messengers of the churches – Rev. 1:20; Rev. 2:1
- The sword from His mouth represents the power of His Word – Heb. 4:12; Eph. 6:17
- The church does not need entertainment more than it needs the Word of God ¬ The sword from His mouth represents truth, authority, and correction – Heb. 4:12; Eph. 6:17
- His countenance shined like the sun in strength – Mat. 17:2; Num. 6:24-26

Revelation 1:17-20 - Assurance From Christ

- John fell at Jesus' feet in awe, but Jesus touched him – Rev. 1:17; Dan. 10:10
- Believers do not have to fear because of who Jesus is – Isa. 41:4; Rev. 1:17
- Jesus is the first and the last – Isa. 44:6; Rev. 22:13
- Jesus lives forevermore and has authority over death and hell – Rev. 1:18; Psa. 68:20
- Because Christ conquered death, believers do not have to fear death – 1 Cor. 15:54-57; Phil. 1:21-23
- The seven stars are the angels or messengers of the churches – Rev. 1:20; Rev. 2:1
- The seven candlesticks represent the churches – Rev. 1:20; Mat. 5:14-16

LESSON 2: THE CHURCH AT EPHESUS – BUSY BUT DRIFTING

Revelation 2:1–7 (KJV)

The Message to the Church at Ephesus

- Ephesus was considered the mother church to these others and was connected to them by the same road
- The name Ephesus means darling or love
- Ephesus was famous as a religious, cultural and financial center – Acts 19:21-41
  - The city contained a large temple to Diana, a fertility goddess worshipped through immoral sexual practices – Acts 19:27; Acts 19:35
- Ephesus was also known for satanic practices, sorcery, and was the melding of religions and compromise – Acts 19:13-20
- Church tradition teaches that John later lived in Ephesus
- The church at Ephesus had strong doctrine, strong leadership, strong activity, and strong discernment but still drifted spiritually.

Revelation 2:1 – Christ Among the Churches

- Jesus holds the seven stars in His right hand – Rev. 1:16; Rev. 2:1
- The seven stars represent the messengers of the churches – Rev. 1:20
- Notice the stars are in His Right hand
  - Protected – John 10:27-29; Isa. 41:10
  - Secured – Rom. 8:38-39; Col. 3:3
  - Under His authority – Mat. 28:18; Eph. 1:20-22
    - The right hand throughout Scripture often represents:
      - Power – Exo. 15:6
      - Authority – Psa. 110:1
      - Strength – Psa. 63:8
      - Victory – Psa. 98:1
- Jesus walks in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks – Rev. 1:13
- The candlesticks represent the churches – Rev. 1:20
- Jesus is not distant from His church
  - He walks among His people
  - He observes the condition of His churches
  - He evaluates more than appearances – 1 Sam. 16:7

Revelation 2:2 – What Jesus Knew About the Church

- Works: ergon: anything done or to be done; a deed, work, action (Mounce Concise Greek-English Dictionary)
- Labor: kopos: trouble, difficulty, uneasiness, travail, toil (Mounce Concise Greek-English Dictionary)
- Patience (steadfast endurance) – hypomonē: patient endurance, awaiting, frame of mind, perseverance (Mounce Concise Greek-English Dictionary)
  - Now look at:

- Work – James 2:14-26
- Toil – 1 Thes. 1:3
- Endurance under pressure – Rom. 5:3-4

❖ Jesus sees the labor others overlook – Heb. 6:10

Revelation 2:2 – Discernment in the Church

❖ The church at Ephesus refused to tolerate evil people – Psa. 1:1; Eph. 5:11
❖ They knew how to identify false teaching and false leaders
  ➢ "You have tried them which say they are apostles, and are not" – Rev. 2:2
  ➢ They knew a phony when they saw one – Acts 20:29-31; Mat. 7:15-16
❖ False apostles often:
  ➢ Seek influence without accountability
  ➢ Desire titles without sacrifice
  ➢ Want authority without submission
❖ The church can't lose discernment in an age of deception – 2 Cor. 11:13-15

Revelation 2:3 – Persevering Without Quitting

❖ The church continued serving under pressure
❖ They persevered and did not become weary – Gal. 6:9
❖ Perseverance matters because:
  ➢ Ministry can become exhausting – Gal. 6:9; 2 Cor. 4:1
  ➢ Church conflict can become draining – Acts 15:36-39; Phil. 4:2-3
  ➢ People can become discouraging – Num. 11:10-15; 1 Kings 19:1-4
  ➢ Yet believers are called to remain steadfast – 1 Cor. 15:58; Heb. 10:35-36

The Problem and Solution

Revelation 2:4 -Leaving First Love

❖ The issue was not false doctrine. Their issue was relational drift.
❖ They were sound in doctrine and actions yet had left their first love of Christ
❖ Leaving first love does not usually happen suddenly
  ➢ It happens gradually – Heb. 2:1; Song 5:2-6
  ➢ Prayer becomes routine – Mat. 6:5-7; Isa. 29:13
  ➢ Worship becomes mechanical – Amos 5:21-23; Mat. 15:8-9
  ➢ Service replaces intimacy – Luke 10:38-42; John 15:4-5
  ➢ Duty replaces devotion – 2 Tim. 3:5; Titus 1:16
❖ Still wearing the ring but not sharing the heart
❖ It is possible to defend truth publicly yet drift from Christ privately
❖ A church can be Orthodox in doctrine but cold in devotion
❖ Jesus was not rebuking their activity
  ➢ He was exposing their distance – Jer. 2:2-13
❖ God does not only desire correct theology
  ➢ He desires relationship – Eph. 5:23-33

Revelation 2:5 – Remember, Repent, and Return

Remember

- Remember where you have fallen from – Rev. 2:5
- The prodigal son first changed when he remembered – Luke 15:17-19
- Revival often begins with remembering what was lost
- Some believers remember:
  - When prayer was fresh
  - When worship was passionate
  - When serving Christ brought joy

Repent

- Repentance means changing direction – Mat. 4:17; Acts 2:38
- Repentance is more than emotion. It requires change
- True repentance involves honesty, humility
  - Returning to God – Lev. 26:40-42

Return

- Return and do thy first works – Rev. 2:5
- Jesus did not merely call them to feel differently. He called them to return relationally
- Love produces action – Gal. 5:5-6
- Without love, spiritual activity becomes empty – 1 Cor. 13:1-3
- Refusing Christ's warning would result in removal of their candlestick
  - Their light
  - Their influence
  - Their effectiveness – Mat. 5:13-16
- A church can continue existing physically while losing spiritual impact

Revelation 2:6 – The Nicolaitans

- Jesus hated the deeds of the Nicolaitans – Rev. 2:6; Rev. 2:15
- The Nicolaitans promoted:
  - Loose living – Jude 4; Rom. 13:13
  - Self-indulgence – Phil. 3:18-19; 2 Pet. 2:13
  - Immorality – 1 Cor. 6:18; Gal. 5:19-21
  - Compromise – Num. 25:1-3; Rev. 2:14-15
- False teaching often attempts to:
  - Excuse sin – Rom. 6:1-2; Jude 4
  - Normalize compromise – Isa. 5:20; 1 Kings 11:1-8
  - Reduce conviction – 2 Tim. 4:3-4; Eph. 4:18-19
- The church correctly rejected false teaching while still neglecting intimacy with Christ – Rev. 2:2-4; Mat. 22:37-38
- Truth without relationship can eventually become cold religion – Mat. 15:8-9; 2 Tim. 3:5

Revelation 2:7 – The Call to Hear and Overcome

- Those willing to hear should listen to what the Spirit says – Mat. 11:15
- Every church message in Revelation requires spiritual hearing
- "To him that overcometh" – Rev. 2:7
- Believers overcome through faith in Christ – John 16:33; 1 John 5:4-5
- The overcomer is promised access to the tree of life – Rev. 22:2,14
- The tree of life points back to Eden, God's original design
  - Eternal fellowship with God – Gen. 2:9; Gen. 3:22

NOTES:

LESSON 3: THE CHURCH AT SMYRNA – FAITHFUL UNDER PRESSURE

Revelation 2:8-11 (KJV)

The Message to the Church at Smyrna

- Smyrna means Myrrh: Fragrance used to anoint dead bodies but only released when crushed
  - Used:
    - Jesus' birth – Mat. 2:11
    - The Cross – Mark 15:23
    - Jesus' burial – John 19:39
- Smyrna was a prosperous city but had become devoted to emperor worship
  - Citizens were expected to worship Caesar as lord
  - Christians suffered persecution because they refused
- Polycarp served as pastor of this church
- Martyred for refusing to deny Christ – Revelation 2:10; James 1:12; 2 Tim. 4:7-8
- Unlike Ephesus, Smyrna received no rebuke from Christ
  - The church at Smyrna teaches us that suffering is not always a sign of God's displeasure
    - Sometimes suffering is evidence of faithfulness

Christ's Description (Vs. 8)

- Jesus introduces Himself according to their need
  - The First and the Last – Isa. 44:6; Isa. 46:9-10; Rev. 1:17
    - He is sovereign in and throughout history and will still be when Rome is long gone
  - Which was dead and is alive – Rev. 1:18; John 11:25
    - They were facing death
    - Death could not hold Jesus – Acts 2:24; Rev. 1:18
      - Since the grave can't hold Jesus, it can't hold His believers either – 1 Cor. 15:54-57
- They were facing suffering but Jesus had already overcome the world – John 16:33
- Before addressing their suffering, Jesus reminds them of His victory

What Jesus Knows About the Church (Vs. 9)

- Jesus knew their works (ergon: toil, labor), and tribulation
- Tribulation: Thlípsis: pressure, affliction, anguish, persecution – John 16:33; Acts 14:22
- Jesus knew their poverty
  - Although Smyrna was prosperous, believers suffered financially because of their faith – Heb. 10:34
    - Jesus sees suffering others overlook – Exo. 3:7; Heb. 4:15
  - Yet Jesus says, "But thou art rich"
    - Rich toward God – Luke 12:21
    - Rich in faith – James 2:5
    - Rich in grace despite poverty – 2 Cor. 8:2
    - Possessing treasures in heaven – Mat. 6:20
    - As having nothing, yet possessing all things – 2 Cor. 6:10

- God's measurement of wealth is different from man's
  - Smyrna was poor but rich
  - Laodicea was rich but poor – Rev. 3:17

What Jesus Knows About Their Opposition (Vs. 9)

"The blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not"

- Religious profession without real devotion to Christ – Rom. 2:17-29
- While some Jews rejected and persecuted Christians, not all Jews
  - True worship is spiritual, not merely external – Phil. 3:3
- "The synagogue of satan" – Rev. 2:9; Rev. 3:9
  - Synagogue: gathering or assembly
  - These individuals claimed to represent God, claimed spiritual authority, claimed covenant relationship with God, and even claimed to be God's people
  - We have a better test than mere claiming when we can check your actions – Mat. 7:16-20; Titus 1:16
    - They rejected Christ – Acts 4:10-11
    - Opposed the Gospel – Acts 13:45; Acts 17:5
    - Persecuted believers – Acts 8:1-3
    - Worked against God's purposes – Acts 7:51-52; Mat. 23:13

- Opposition often comes from religious people who reject God's truth
- Not everyone claiming to represent God truly belongs to Him – Mat. 7:21-23

Fear None of Those Things (Vs. 10)

- Jesus even though you're going to go through, don't fear any of it – Mat. 10:22; 2 Tim. 1:7
  - Jesus promises His presence during suffering – Isa. 43:2; Heb. 13:5
- Our only true fear should be reverent fear of God – Pro. 9:10; Eccl. 12:13

Ten Days of Tribulation (Vs. 10)

- Some believe the ten days represent:
  - Ten Roman emperors during major persecutions
  - Ten years of persecution under Diocletian
  - A figurative period of testing
- Regardless of interpretation
- It won't last because God established the limit – Job 1:12; 1 Cor. 10:13

Be Faithful Unto Death (Vs. 10)

- Jesus called them to faithfulness and not convenience – Mat. 24:13; 1 Cor. 4:2
  - Faithfulness is measured by obedience, not comfort
- God rewards those who endure – Gal. 6:9; Heb. 10:36
- The goal is not to just to start well but to finish well – 2 Tim. 4:7-8

The Crown of Life (Vs. 10)

- This particular crown: Stephanos: victor's crown, a reward crown, a crown of honor
  - Not the same as the crown of a king
    - Diadema – Rev. 19:12
- Promised to those who remain faithful – James 1:12

The Overcomer's Promise (Vs. 11)

"He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches"

- Those willing to hear should listen to the Spirit – Mat. 11:15; Rev. 13:9
- Overcomers will not be impacted by the second death – Rev. 20:6,14
- The believer may experience the first death but never the second death – John 11:25-26; Phil. 1:21-23
- Christ has already given us the victory – 1 Cor. 15:54-57

The Fragrance of a Crushed Life

- Remember the meaning of Smyrna
  - Myrrh only releases its fragrance when crushed
- God often uses our greatest trials to produce our greatest testimony
  - Paul's imprisonment advanced the Gospel – Phil. 1:12-14
- God's strength is revealed in weakness – 2 Cor. 12:9-10
- What the enemy meant for evil, God can use for good – Gen. 50:20; Rom. 8:28
- What once tried to destroy you can become the area God uses most
- God comforts us so we can comfort others – 2 Cor. 1:3-4
- Your testimony often comes from your trial – Psa. 66:16

NOTES:

LESSON 4: THE CHURCH AT PERGAMOS – HOLDING FAST IN A COMPROMISING CULTURE

Revelation 2:12-17 (KJV)

The Message to the Church at Pergamos

- Pergamos (height or elevation): the capital city of Asia
- Pergamos was one of the most influential cities in Asia Minor
- Pergamos was famous for its temples dedicated to false gods, especially the throne-like altar of Zeus
- Pergamos was known for worship of the deity Asclepios
  - Symbolized by a serpent wrapped around a pole
  - Had a medical school that attracted people from throughout the Roman Empire
- Pergamos has been described as "thoroughly married"
  - A picture of compromise with the world
  - A church dwelling in a culture dominated by pagan influence

Christ's Description (Vs. 12)

- Jesus introduces Himself as the One who has the sharp two-edged sword – Rev. 1:16-18; Heb. 4:12

What Jesus Knew About the Church (Vs. 13)

- Jesus knows their works and where they dwell, even where satan's seat is – Eph. 6:12-13
- Seat refers to a throne or place of authority – Rev. 1:4; Rev. 3:21; Rev. 4:2-6
- They held fast the name of Jesus – Heb. 4:14; Heb. 6:18
- They did not deny the faith despite living in a hostile environment – Rev. 2:13
- Antipas was martyred for refusing to worship the emperor – Rev. 2:13

A Few Things Against You (Vs. 14-15)

- Smyrna was attacked from the outside through persecution but Pergamos was being weakened from the inside through compromise
- satan couldn't destroy the Church through pressure, so tried to corrupt the church through persuasion

The Doctrine of Balaam

- Jesus commends their faithfulness but confronts their compromise
- Balaam became a picture of compromise within God's people – Num. 22-25; Num. 31; 2 Pet. 2:15; Jude 11
- Balaam could not curse Israel so he taught Balak how to corrupt Israel from within – Num. 31:16
- Balaam taught Balak how to cast a stumbling block before Israel – Num. 31:16; 1 Cor. 8
- He encouraged participation in idolatry – Acts 15:29
- He encouraged sexual immorality – 1 Cor. 5:1; 1 Cor. 6:12-20
- Balaam's strategy to weaken God's people through compromise rather than confrontation – Num. 25:1-3
- The danger at Pergamos was not abandoning Christ but attempting to hold on to Christ while embracing worldly practices – Rom. 12:2; 2 Cor. 6:14-17
- What is tolerated becomes accepted, and what is accepted becomes practiced – Gal. 5:9
- The Doctrine of Balaam teaches that God's people can gradually compromise with the world while still claiming devotion to God

The Doctrine of the Nicolaitans

- Pergamos tolerated the doctrine of the Nicolaitans which Jesus hated – Rev. 2:15
- Ephesus hated their deeds while Pergamos tolerated their doctrine – Rev. 2:6; Rev. 2:15
- The Nicolaitans appear to have promoted compromise with the surrounding culture
- They encouraged believers to participate in practices connected to idolatry and immorality – Rev. 2:14-15
- They attempted to make sinful behavior acceptable within the church – Isa. 5:20
- They blurred the distinction between holy living and worldly living – Rom. 12:2
- False teaching often seeks to excuse sin, normalize compromise, and reduce conviction – 2 Tim. 4:3-4
- What Ephesus rejected, Pergamos tolerated
  - Error tolerated becomes accepted, and accepted error becomes practiced – Gal. 5:9
- The Doctrine of the Nicolaitans teaches that believers can embrace worldly practices without spiritual consequences

The Solution (Vs. 16)

- Jesus' command was simple: Repent – Rev. 2:16
- The problem was not persecution but compromise
- If they refused to repent, Jesus would fight against them with the sword of His mouth – Isa. 11:4; 2 Thes. 2:8; Rev. 19:15
- The same Word that comforts believers also judges compromise – Heb. 4:12

The Overcomer's Reward (Vs. 17)

- Overcomers will receive the hidden manna – Exo. 16:33-34
- Overcomers will receive a white stone – Rev. 2:17
- Overcomers will receive a new name known only to Christ and the recipient – Rev. 2:17
  - God has often marked new beginnings with new names – Isa. 56:5; Isa. 62:2; Isa. 65:15; Rev. 3:12

NOTES:

LESSON 5: THE CHURCH AT THYATIRA – TOLERATING WHAT GOD CONDEMNS

Revelation 2:18-29 (KJV)

The Message to the Church at Thyatira

- Thyatira (continual sacrifice), is often referred to as the apostate church
  - Apostate means abandoning or departing from previously held truth
- Thyatira is believed by many to represent the Dark Ages period from approximately 600 A.D. to 1500 A.D.
  - Bible reading was often restricted to clergy
  - Religious traditions were elevated above Scripture
- The title "Queen of Heaven" became associated with religious devotion during this period
  - Jeremiah warned against worship connected to the queen of heaven – Jer. 7:18; Jer. 44:17
  - Mary herself directed attention to God, not herself – Luke 1:46-56
  - Jesus alone is the mediator between God and men – 1 Tim. 2:5
  - Salvation is through Christ alone – John 14:6; Rom. 10:9-10
  - Thyatira was known for its trade guilds that often required participation in pagan ceremonies
  - Economic success was frequently connected to religious compromise
- Lydia, Paul's first convert in Macedonia, was from Thyatira – Acts 16:14-15
  - Thyatira considered least important city among the seven churches yet Jesus knew everything about them – Rev. 2:19
  - Small church or big church, Christ sees and knows

Christ's Description (Vs. 18)

- Jesus introduces Himself as the Son of God – Rev. 2:18
  - Affirms Christ's authority, deity, and supremacy – Matt. 16:16; John 20:31
- His eyes are like a flame of fire – Rev. 1:14
  - Speaks of His perfect discernment and penetrating vision – Heb. 4:13
  - Nothing is hidden from His sight – Prov. 15:3
  - He sees beyond outward appearances into the heart – 1 Sam. 16:7
- His feet are like fine brass – Rev. 1:15
  - Brass is associated with judgment in Scripture – Num. 21:9; John 3:14
  - Christ comes not only as Savior but as Judge – Acts 17:31
  - He will judge sin, compromise, and false teaching – Rev. 2:23

The Good (Vs. 19)

- Jesus knew their works – Rev. 2:19
- Their latter works exceeded their first works
- They were growing in love, service, faith, and patience
- Thyatira was not a lazy church and increased their works as their ministry increased
- This is the only church specifically commended for its love

The Problem (Vs. 20)
- The issue was not what they were doing
- The issue was what they were tolerating

Jezebel
- Jesus identifies the problem as Jezebel – Rev. 2:20
- Whether a literal woman or symbolic influence, Jezebel represents corrupt spiritual influence
- Jezebel became a symbol of idolatry, compromise, and rebellion – 1 Kgs. 16:31; 1 Kgs. 21:25; 2 Kgs. 9:22
- She married Ahab and introduced pagan worship into Israel – 1 Kgs. 16:31
- She promoted Baal worship and opposed God's prophets
- She called herself a prophetess – Rev. 2:20
- She was given influence within the church
- She used that influence to lead people astray

Her Teaching
- She taught and seduced God's servants – Rev. 2:20
- To commit fornication – Ex. 34:15
- To eat things sacrificed unto idols – Rev. 2:20
- False teachers often seek positions of influence before introducing error – Matt. 24:11
- The danger was not merely false teaching but tolerated false teaching

Refusal to Repent & The Consequences
- Jesus gave her space to repent and she refused – Rev. 2:21
- God's judgment is preceded by God's mercy – Rom. 2:4; 2 Pet. 3:9
- Persistent rebellion eventually results in judgment – Rom. 2:5; Rev. 9:20
- Jesus warns of a bed of suffering and great tribulation – Rev. 2:22
- Sickness can sometimes result from sin – 1 Cor. 11:29-30
- Jesus searches the hearts and minds – Rev. 2:23

The Faithful Remnant (Vs. 24-25)
- Not everyone in Thyatira embraced the false teaching
- Jesus recognized those who had not followed her doctrine – Rev. 2:24
- God always preserves a faithful remnant
- Hold fast what you have until I come – Rev. 2:25

The Overcomer's Reward (Vs. 26-28)
- Overcomers will receive authority over the nations – Rev. 2:26-27
- Believers will reign with Christ – Rev. 20:4
- They will receive the morning star – Rev. 2:28
- Jesus Himself is the Bright and Morning Star – Rev. 22:16
- The faithful receive both His reward and His presence

The Message of Thyatira

- Ephesus lost its first love
- Smyrna suffered persecution
- Pergamos tolerated compromise
- Thyatira tolerated corruption
- Good works can never compensate for tolerated sin
- Love without truth becomes dangerous
- A growing church must still guard its doctrine
- Christ commends faithfulness but confronts compromise
- What God condemns must never become what the church tolerates

NOTES:

LESSON 6: THE CHURCH AT SARDIS – A REPUTATION WITHOUT LIFE

Revelation 3:1-6 (KJV)

The Message to the Church at Sardis

- Sardis was one of the wealthiest and most influential cities in Asia Minor
- Sardis was built upon a high plateau and was considered nearly impregnable
  - The city was captured twice because the inhabitants failed to remain watchful
  - Their confidence led to carelessness
  - Their history provides the backdrop for Jesus' warning to "watch"
- Sardis is often associated with the Reformation period (approximately A.D. 1500-1750)
  - Many biblical truths were rediscovered and restored
  - Yet much spiritual deadness remained
- Sardis had a reputation for greatness but was already in decline
  - They looked strong on the outside
  - Their reality did not match their reputation

Christ's Description (Vs. 1)

- Jesus introduces Himself as the One who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars – Rev. 3:1
  - The seven Spirits speak of the fullness and completeness of the Holy Spirit – Isa. 11:2; Rev. 1:4
  - The seven stars represent the messengers of the churches – Rev. 1:20
  - Christ possesses all spiritual authority and power needed to revive His church
- The church at Sardis needed spiritual life
  - The answer to spiritual deadness is the Spirit of God – John 6:63
  - Revival begins when God's Spirit is at work – Zech. 4:6

The Problem (Vs. 1)

- Jesus knew their works – Rev. 3:1
- They had a name that they lived but were dead
- They looked alive on the outside but were dead on the inside
- They had a good reputation with people but a poor condition before God
- Everybody thought they were doing well
- Jesus saw what nobody else could see
- A church can be active and still not be spiritually healthy
  - Looking alive and being alive are not always the same thing
  - Having church and having God's power are not always the same thing – 2 Tim. 3:5
  - It is possible to know church without truly knowing Christ – Matt. 7:21-23

The Solution (Vs. 2-3)

- Jesus did not tell them to start over
- Jesus told them to strengthen what remained – Rev. 3:2
- Not everything was dead and there was still something worth saving

Be Watchful

- Be watchful – Rev. 3:2
  - Spiritual drift usually happens little by little
  - People do not usually wake up one day far from God
  - What you neglect today will be a problem tomorrow
  - Watchfulness is necessary for spiritual health – Matt. 26:41; 1 Pet. 5:8

Strengthen What Remains

- Strengthen the things which remain – Rev. 3:2
  - Fan the flame before it goes out
  - Feed what is helping you grow spiritually
  - God can restore what has become weak – Isa. 40:29; Joel 2:25
  - A bruised reed He will not break – Isa. 42:3

Remember, Hold Fast, and Repent

- Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard – Rev. 3:3
  - Remember where God brought you from
  - Remember what God has taught you
  - Remember what God has done in your life – Deut. 8:2; Jer. 2:2
- Hold fast – Rev. 3:3
  - Do not let go of God's Word
  - Stay anchored in biblical truth – Heb. 10:23; 2 Tim. 1:13-14
- Repent – Rev. 3:3
  - Turn around before things get worse
  - Revival begins when God's people repent – Acts 3:19; 2 Chr. 7:14

The Warning (Vs. 3)

- If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief – Rev. 3:3
- Jesus warns Sardis of unexpected judgment
- Sardis fell because they stopped paying attention
- The church was making the same mistake spiritually
  - What happened to the city had happened to the church
  - Spiritual carelessness always creates spiritual vulnerability - Matt. 26:41; 1 Pet. 5:8; 1 Cor. 10:12
  - You cannot sleep spiritually and expect to stay strong spiritually – Luke 21:36

The Faithful Remnant (Vs. 4)

- Not everyone in Sardis had compromised
- Thou hast a few names even in Sardis – Rev. 3:4
- Some believers remained faithful
- They had not defiled their garments
- God always has somebody who will stand for Him
  - Elijah thought he was alone, but God had seven thousand others – Rom. 11:4

- You can be faithful even when everybody around you is drifting – Dan. 1:8
- God knows who belongs to Him – 2 Tim. 2:19

❖ They shall walk with Christ in white – Rev. 3:4

The Overcomer's Reward (Vs. 5)

❖ Overcomers shall be clothed in white raiment – Rev. 3:5
- White garments speak of purity, victory, and righteousness – Rev. 19:8; Isa. 61:10

❖ Their names will not be blotted out of the Book of Life – Rev. 3:5
- Those who belong to Christ are secure in Christ – John 10:27-29
- The promise emphasizes assurance, not insecurity

❖ Jesus will confess their names before the Father and His angels – Rev. 3:5
- Jesus will acknowledge those who faithfully acknowledged Him – Matt. 10:32; Luke 12:8

The Overcomer's Promise (Vs. 6)

"He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches."

❖ Those willing to hear should listen to the Spirit – Matt. 11:15; Rev. 2:7
❖ This message was not only for Sardis but for all churches
❖ Every church must regularly examine its spiritual condition – 2 Cor. 13:5; Lam. 3:40
❖ Christ desires genuine spiritual life, not merely religious activity – John 4:23-24; John 10:10

The Message of Sardis

❖ Ephesus lost its first love – Rev. 2:4
❖ Smyrna suffered persecution – Rev. 2:9-10; 2 Tim. 3:12
❖ Pergamos tolerated compromise – Rev. 2:14-15; Rom. 12:2
❖ Thyatira tolerated corruption – Rev. 2:20; 1 Cor. 5:6
❖ Sardis had a reputation without life – Rev. 3:1; 2 Tim. 3:5
❖ Looking alive is not the same as being alive – Matt. 23:27-28; Isa. 29:13
❖ What Jesus knows about us matters more than what people think about us – 1 Sam. 16:7; Heb. 4:13
❖ Activity cannot replace spirituality – Luke 10:38-42; John 15:5
❖ Christ calls His church to wake up, strengthen what remains, and repent – Rev. 3:2-3; Acts 3:19
❖ A church can fool people but never fool Christ – Heb. 4:13; Rev. 2:23
❖ God is not looking for churches that merely look alive – Isa. 29:13; Matt. 15:8
❖ God is looking for churches that are alive through the power of His Spirit – John 6:63; Rom. 8:11; Zech. 4:6
❖ Reputation without reality is a dangerous place to be – Titus 1:16; Matt. 7:21-23
❖ The church must be alive not only in appearance but also in reality – John 4:23-24; 1 Cor. 4:20

LESSON 7: THE CHURCH AT PHILADELPHIA – FAITHFUL THROUGH THE OPEN DOOR

Revelation 3:7-13 (KJV)

The Message to the Church at Philadelphia

- Philadelphia (brotherly love) was strategically located and became known as a gateway city
  - People and ideas constantly passed through the city
  - It became a center for spreading Greek culture and language
- Philadelphia experienced frequent earthquakes
  - People often lived with uncertainty and they deeply valued stability
  - Christ's promises would have special meaning to people who lived with constant instability
- Philadelphia is often associated with the Missionary Church period (approximately A.D. 1750-1900)
  - A period marked by worldwide evangelism, faithfulness to God's Word, and missionary expansion around the world

Christ's Description (Vs. 7)

- Jesus introduces Himself as He that is holy and He that is true – Rev. 3:7
  - Christ is completely separate from sin – Isa. 6:3; 1 Pet. 1:16
  - Christ is truth itself – John 14:6
  - Everything Christ says can be trusted – Num. 23:19; Titus 1:2

The Key of David

- Jesus possesses the key of David – Rev. 3:7
  - The key speaks of authority – Isa. 22:22
  - What Christ opens no man can shut and what Christ shuts no man can open
  - The key represents Christ's authority over God's kingdom and God's purposes
- Jesus is in control of every opportunity, every door, and every assignment
  - Nobody can stop what God has ordained – Job 42:2; Isa. 46:10

What Jesus Knew About the Church (Vs. 8)

- Jesus knew their works – Rev. 3:8
- They had a little strength
  - They were not the biggest church
  - They were not the most powerful or most influential church
- But they were faithful
  - God often does His greatest work through those who depend upon Him – 2 Cor. 12:9
- They kept His Word – Rev. 3:8
  - They stayed committed to Scripture – Ps. 119:89; 2 Tim. 3:16
  - They stayed committed to truth – John 17:17
- They had not denied His name – Rev. 3:8
  - They remained loyal to Christ
  - They refused to compromise their testimony

The Open Door (Vs. 8)

- The open door speaks of opportunity
  - Opportunity to serve, witness and advance the Gospel – 1 Cor. 16:9; Col. 4:3
  - Opportunity for kingdom impact
- No man could shut the door Christ had opened
  - When God opens a door, no enemy can close it
  - What God purposes cannot be stopped by people
  - Open doors are given by God but must be walked through by faith – Heb. 11:6; Acts 14:27

The Promise Concerning Their Enemies (Vs. 9)

- Jesus speaks of the synagogue of satan – Rev. 3:9
  - These were people who claimed to belong to God while opposing God's work
  - Their actions contradicted their claims
  - We have a better test than mere claiming when we can examine a person's actions – Matt. 7:16-20
- They rejected Christ, opposed the Gospel, and persecuted believers
- They worked against God's purposes
- Christ promised to vindicate His faithful people – Ps. 91:1-4; 2 Thess. 3:3
  - Those who opposed them would ultimately know that Christ loved His church
  - God knows how to defend His own – Ex. 14:14; Rom. 12:19
  - The battle belongs to the Lord – 2 Chr. 20:15

The Promise of Preservation (Vs. 10)

- Philadelphia had kept Christ's word patiently – Rev. 3:10
- Christ promised to keep them from the hour of temptation

The Hour of Temptation

- The hour of temptation refers to a future period of worldwide testing – Rev. 3:10
- This trial will affect the whole world
- Many understand this to refer to the coming Tribulation period – Dan. 9:27; Matt. 24:21
- Christ promises protection for His faithful people
- Faithfulness always brings divine reward
  - God honors those who honor Him – 1 Sam. 2:30
  - God is able to keep His people – Jude 24

Hold Fast (Vs. 11)

- Jesus says, "Behold, I come quickly" – Rev. 3:11
- Hold that fast which thou hast
  - Do not let go of what God has given you
  - Do not abandon your convictions
  - Do not stop doing what made you faithful
  - Stay faithful until Jesus comes

- Do not lose your crown through carelessness

❖ A crown is promised to those who endure faithfully – James 1:12

The Overcomer's Reward (Vs. 12)

A Pillar in the Temple

❖ Overcomers will be made pillars in the temple of God – Rev. 3:12
- A pillar speaks of strength, stability and permanence
- Philadelphia's residents understood instability because of frequent earthquakes
- Christ promises what the city itself could never provide
- What was unstable on earth will be secure in heaven

❖ Christ promises security
- They shall go no more out
- No more instability
- No more uncertainty
- No more separation

A New Identity

❖ Christ promises identification:
- The name of God
- The name of the New Jerusalem
- Christ's new name

❖ These names speak of ownership, belonging, and relationship – 2 Tim. 2:19; Rev. 22:4

The Overcomer's Promise (Vs. 13)

❖ Those willing to hear should listen to the Spirit – Matt. 11:15; Rev. 2:7
❖ This message applies to every generation of believers
❖ Faithfulness remains God's expectation for His church
❖ The blessings promised to Philadelphia are available to those who remain faithful to Christ

The Message of Philadelphia

❖ Faithfulness matters more than size, strength, or resources – Rev. 3:8; Luke 16:10
❖ God can do great things through people who have little strength but trust Him completely – 2 Cor. 12:9; Zech. 4:6
❖ The church must remain committed to God's Word and refuse to deny Christ – Rev. 3:8; Matt. 10:32-33
❖ When Christ opens a door, no person, obstacle, or enemy can close it – Rev. 3:7-8; Isa. 22:22
❖ God knows how to protect, preserve, and defend those who remain faithful to Him – Rev. 3:9-10; Ex. 14:14
❖ Faithfulness today leads to greater opportunities, greater usefulness, and eternal rewards tomorrow – Luke 16:10; Rev. 3:12
❖ God is not looking for impressive churches; God is looking for faithful churches – Matt. 25:21; Rev. 3:8

LESSON 8: THE CHURCH AT LAODICEA – WHEN ENOUGH IS NEVER ENOUGH

Revelation 3:14-22 (KJV)

The Message to the Church at Laodicea

- Laodicea means "rule of the people" or "people's rights."
  - Laodicea was one of the wealthiest cities in Asia Minor, known for banking, black wool, and a famous eye salve.
- Laodicea formed a closely connected tri-city region with Hierapolis and Colossae.
  - Hierapolis was known for its hot healing waters.
  - Colossae was known for its cold, refreshing mountain waters.
  - Laodicea received its water through aqueducts.
    - By the time it reached the city, it had become lukewarm.

Christ's Description (Vs. 14)

- Jesus introduces Himself as the Amen – Rev. 3:14
  - Everything Christ says is true and final – 2 Cor. 1:20
  - His Word never changes – Num. 23:19
- Jesus is the faithful and true witness – Rev. 3:14
  - He sees us as we really are – 1 Sam. 16:7
  - He tells us what we need to hear, not what we want to hear – Heb. 4:13
- Jesus is the beginning of the creation of God – Rev. 3:14
  - Beginning speaks of Christ as the origin, source, and ruler of creation, not the first created being – John 1:1-3
  - He is the Creator and source of all things – Col. 1:16-17; Heb. 1:2-3

The Problem – Lukewarmness (Vs. 15-16)

- Lukewarmness is:
  - Being satisfied with religion while neglecting relationship.
  - Knowing God's Word but failing to live it – James 1:22
  - Being busy in church while growing distant from Christ.
- A lukewarm believer has enough Christianity to feel comfortable but not enough commitment to be transformed.
- A lukewarm believer loses both a hunger for God's Word and a desire for God's presence – Matt. 5:6; Psa. 42:1-2
- Hot water heals, cold water refreshes, but lukewarm water serves neither purpose.
  - Jesus was not condemning temperature but spiritual uselessness.
- When the church becomes comfortable in the world, it loses its influence on the world – Matt. 22:37
- God is not pleased when His people become spiritually indifferent – Rom. 12:11; Col. 3:23

The Danger of Self-Sufficiency (Vs. 17)

- They believed they needed nothing but were spiritually bankrupt.
- Self-sufficiency often blinds us to our dependence upon God – John 15:5

- God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble – James 4:6
- Earthly wealth can never replace spiritual riches – Matt. 6:19-21; Luke 12:15
- God warns us not to glory in our riches but in knowing Him – Jer. 9:23-24

Jesus' Evaluation

- Jesus declared they were:
  - Wretched – Spiritually defeated and in desperate need of God's help – Rom. 7:24
  - Miserable – Spiritually pitiful even though they thought they had everything.
  - Poor – Spiritually bankrupt though materially wealthy.
  - Blind – Unable to see themselves as God saw them.
  - Naked – Exposed before God without His righteousness – Gen. 3:7-10
- Spiritual pride keeps us from seeing our spiritual need – Prov. 16:18
- Until we see ourselves correctly, we cannot seek Christ completely – Luke 18:9-14

Christ's Counsel (Vs. 18)

Gold Tried in the Fire

- Christ offered them gold tried in the fire – Rev. 3:18
  - Gold represents genuine spiritual riches refined through faith – 1 Pet. 1:7
  - Spiritual riches are worth more than earthly wealth – Matt. 6:19-21
  - True riches are found in Christ alone – Eph. 1:7; Col. 2:3

White Raiment

- Laodicea famous for producing expensive black wool garments and took pride in what they wore
- Jesus said they were spiritually naked – Rev. 3:17
  - Outward appearance can never cover inward sin – Gen. 3:7-10
- Christ offered them white raiment – Rev. 3:18
  - White garments represent Christ's righteousness – Rev. 19:8
  - Their black wool could cover the body but not the soul.
  - Only Christ can cover our shame – Isa. 61:10
  - Our righteousness is found in Christ, not ourselves – 2 Cor. 5:21

Eye Salve

- Laodicea was known throughout the Roman Empire for its medical school and eye salve.
  - They could help people see physically but couldn't see their own spiritual condition – John 9:39-41
- Christ offered them spiritual sight – Rev. 3:18
  - Only Christ can open blinded eyes – Eph. 1:18
  - God's Word gives spiritual understanding – Ps. 119:18
  - Spiritual sight enables us to see ourselves as God sees us – Heb. 4:12-13
- Jesus was not asking them to purchase salvation.
- He was calling them to exchange worldly confidence for spiritual riches.
- What Christ offers cannot be bought with money – Isa. 55:1, Col. 2:9-10

Christ's Love (Vs. 19)

- Christ's correction is evidence of His love, not His rejection – Heb. 12:6; Prov. 3:11-12
- Conviction is God's invitation to repentance – 2 Chron. 7:14
- Jesus commands them to be zealous and repent – Rev. 3:19
  - To be zealous is to pursue Christ with renewed passion and commitment – Rom. 12:11
  - Repentance is more than feeling sorry; it is changing our mind so our direction changes – Acts 3:19

Christ's Invitation (Vs. 20)

  - After exposing their true condition, Jesus lovingly invited them back into fellowship.
- This invitation was given to a church – Rev. 3:20
- They had church without Christ.
  - They had become so comfortable that Christ was standing outside – Rev. 3:17, 20
  - They had religion without relationship – Matt. 15:8-9; 2 Tim. 3:5
  - They had programs without His presence – Ex. 33:15; Ps. 127:1
  - They had success without surrender – Luke 6:46; John 14:15
- Jesus does not force His way in but lovingly calls His people back to Himself.
  - Christ desires fellowship before service – John 15:4-5
- If anyone hears His voice and opens the door, Christ promises fellowship with them – Rev. 3:20
  - Fellowship with Christ begins with responding to His voice – John 10:27
  - Before He changes what's around us, He wants to change what's within us – Ezek. 36:26-27; Phil. 2:13
- Revival begins when Christ is welcomed back to His rightful place – Acts 3:19; Ps. 85:6

The Overcomer's Reward (Vs. 21)

- Overcomers will sit with Christ in His throne – Rev. 3:21
  - Believers will reign with Christ – 2 Tim. 2:12; Rev. 20:4
  - As Christ overcame and is seated with the Father, we who overcome will share in His reign – Rev. 3:21
  - Faithfulness today prepares us for reigning with Christ tomorrow – Matt. 25:21; Luke 19:17

The Overcomer's Promise (Vs. 22)

- Those willing to hear should listen to what the Spirit says to the churches – Matt. 11:15; Rev. 2:7; Rev. 3:22
- Every church must honestly examine its spiritual condition – 2 Cor. 13:5
- Christ still calls His people to repentance today – Acts 3:19
  - Every generation must decide whether it will welcome Christ or leave Him standing outside – Heb. 3:15

The Message of Laodicea

- Material prosperity can never replace spiritual prosperity – Matt. 6:19-21; Luke 12:15
- Self-sufficiency often replaces dependence upon God – John 15:5; Prov. 3:5-6
- It is possible to have church without Christ – Rev. 3:20
- It is possible to have religion without relationship – Matt. 15:8-9; 2 Tim. 3:5
- Jesus desires wholehearted devotion, not spiritual indifference – Rev. 3:15-16; Matt. 22:37
- God's correction is evidence of His love – Heb. 12:6
- The greatest danger is becoming satisfied without Christ – Rev. 3:17; John 15:5