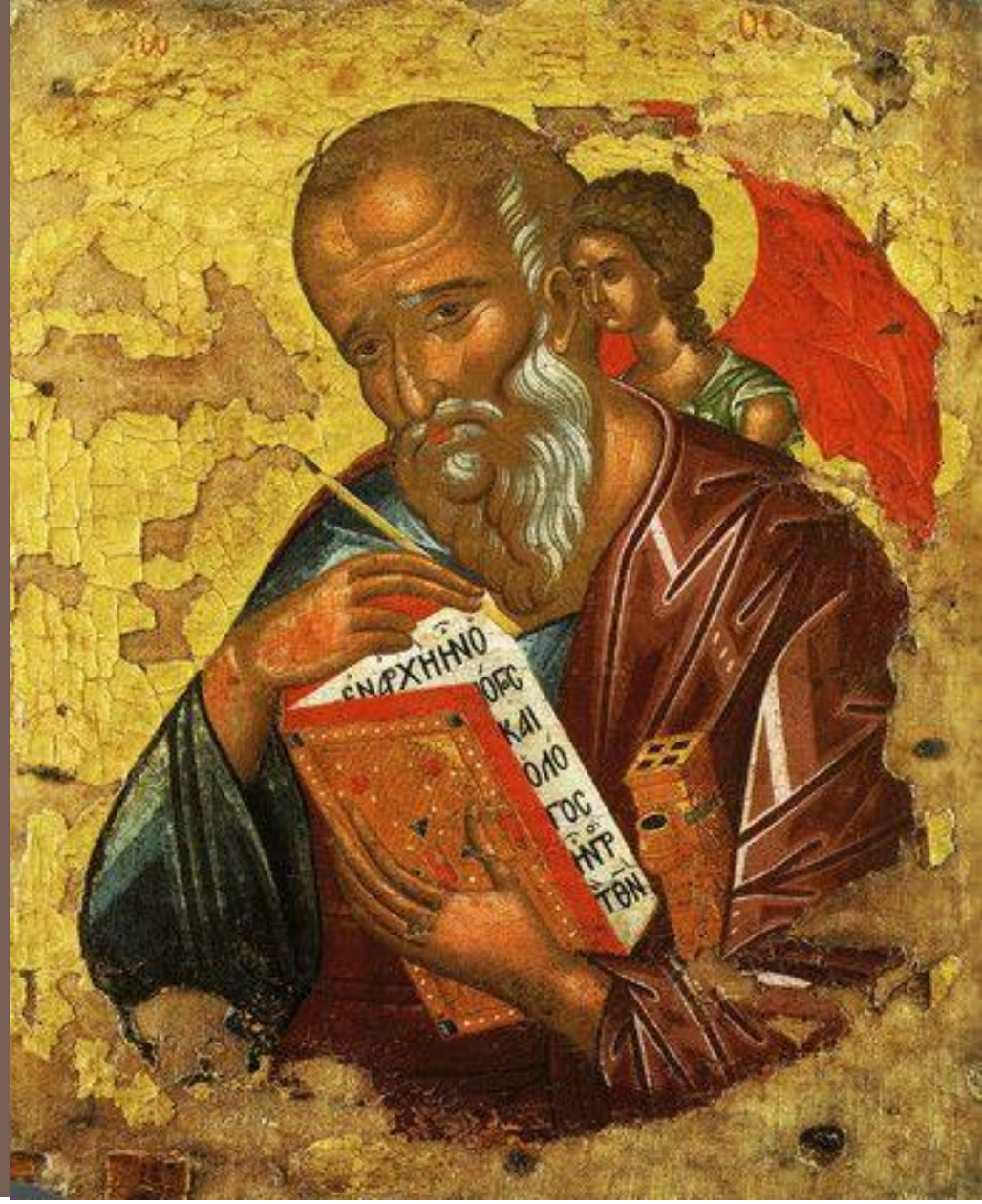
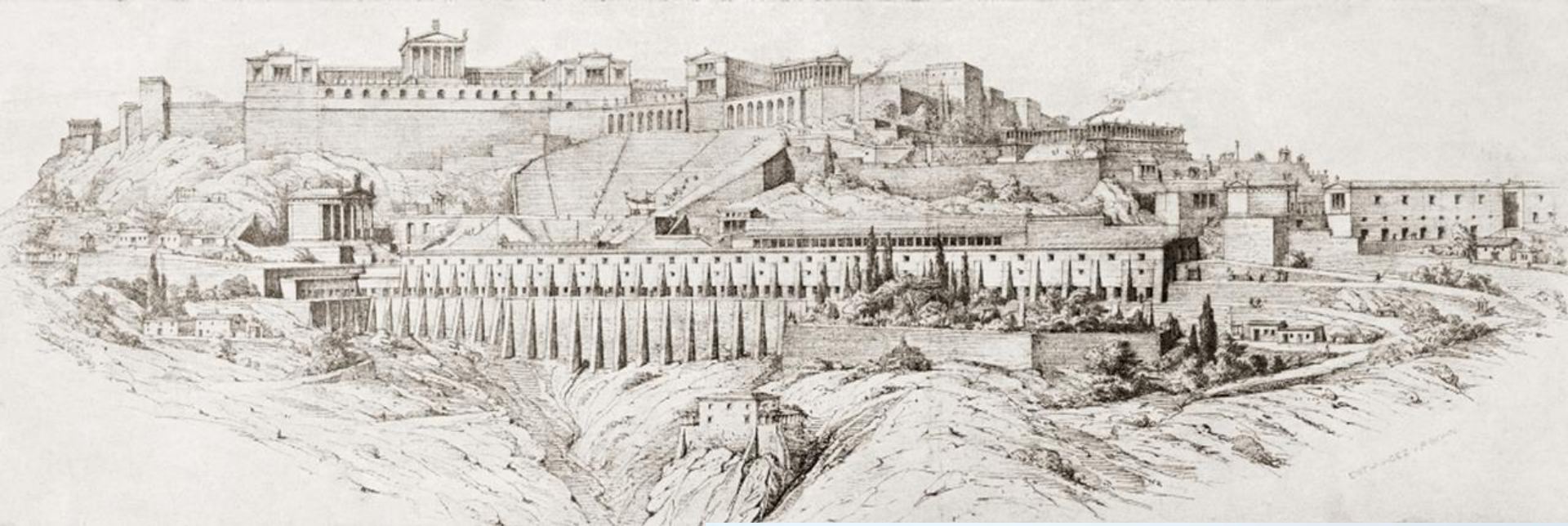


The Letter to the Church in: Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea



Rev. 2:12- 3:22

The Apocalypse of Jesus Christ



In ancient times it was a city of size and importance. Today is a city of 14,000 called *Bergama*.



Rev. 2:12-17

Pergamum

Pergamum was an especially bad place to be a Christian. The false religions were influential and it's through any false religion that the devil rules. His rule was strong here. The temptations to light a incense to Zeus or Athena rather than be killed were intense.

The fastest way for a Christian to become a martyr was to refuse to worship the emperor. In their continued faithfulness in the midst of all this the Lord praises them.

Rev. 2:13

Pergamum

Balaam was the pagan prophet of the OT who was commanded by Balak, king of Moab, to curse Israel. Instead he blessed Israel (Num. 22-24). He convinced the Israelites to eat things which had been sacrificed to idols and to commit fornication with the daughters of Moab (Num. 25:1-2, Exod. 34:14-15).



Rev. 2:14

Pergamum

This stumbling block was also cast before the Christians at Pergamum who were eating food sacrificed to idols at social gatherings and taking part in sexual immorality that typified the religious worship of the pagan temples.

Nicolaitans -- the church at Ephesus was praised for resisting this group which taught that one could be Christian and still indulge in the pleasures of the flesh. Pergamum also had a group of these people who were tolerated by the Christians there. Apparently the Christians at Pergamum did not practice church discipline, excommunication, as they should have, in an effort to show these people their sin and, hopefully, bring them to repentance.

Rev. 2:15

Pergamum

So the Lord says, **Repent!** The sword of His mouth is, again, the law which mercilessly condemns and the Gospel which brings forgiveness to the repentant. Repentance is not just being sorry you did “something” (*or that you were caught!!*). This is repentance to God from the heart. Such true repentance can be seen in that it always leads to a desire to amend sinful ways.



To him who overcomes -- perseveres through temptations, and only to him, “...will I give to eat of the hidden manna.” In contrast to the meat sacrificed to idols. This is a symbolic term for that which nourishes men’s souls here on earth and shall be our only nourishment in heaven.

The term “hidden manna” refers to The Lord’s Supper and its “hidden.” Since, the future banquet is now “hidden” from view.

The “white stone” is another blessing for faithfulness. White is the symbol of Holiness and a stone would

have been seen in
religion, as a gift
were said to be
Emperor also gave
which entitled
law, the casting



Greek
e. Such stones
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tten on them
ncient Greek
vote for

acquittal (innocence). As it appears here we may understand it as referring to the gift of God’s favor in the forgiveness of sins and holiness in Christ Jesus.

Rev. 2:17

Pergamum

The new Name is: Christ's Name! This is a clear reference to Holy Baptism! When the Name of our Holy Triune God is placed upon a person in baptism, we are told in Acts 19:5 that this a baptism “*...into the name of the Lord Jesus*” (cf. Acts 2:38; 10:48).



This naming in Baptism also involves the inscribing of your name in the Book of Life (Rev. 3:5; 21:27).

• **Rev. 2:17**

Pergamum

The Churches of Revelation:

Thyatira
(2:18-29)

The origin of the church at Thyatira is unknown, but Lydia of Thyatira (Acts 16:14) may have helped Christ's cause there.

Thyatira, in what is today central Turkey, was the smallest of the seven churches, yet the longest letter! We have no idea how large the church and it no longer exist. Its modern name is *Akhisar*.



Rev. 2:18-29

Thyatira



Thyatira was known as a manufacturing center. Yet, to have a job, you had to belong to a guild and partake of “guild dinners” held in pagan temples.

The Christians, therefore, faced some important questions. Could Christians attend guild banquets held in pagan temples, even if not doing so meant losing or never getting a job? Could Christians eat meat which had been offered to idols, even if they didn’t believe in the idols, and needed the work?

Rev. 2:18-29

Thyatira

The church at Thyatira thus becomes an example of how compromise with the culture leads to a degeneration process caused by a persistent failure to recognize God as He truly is. This process can silently and almost invisibly take a believing Christian and reduce him or her to the most degenerate levels.

It is described in detail in Rom. 1:20-32.

This is the only verse in Revelation where the title *Son of God* appears.

Eyes like a flame of fire -- penetrating, judging look of Christ filled with the fire of righteous indignation.

Feet like burnished bronze (cf. Rev. 1:15) -- strong, and able to crush all enemies underfoot. Some within the Thyatiran church are signified as such enemies.



Rev. 2:18

Thyatira

The Lord knows and recognizes their works, especially their faithful service and patience. He also knows that the faithful are growing in faith and Christian service.

But they must recognize the grave sin that is in their midst.

They tolerate that woman Jezebel!

What is the “sin of that woman Jezebel?”

Possibly this was the woman’s real name, perhaps it’s only symbolic. Jezebel in the Old Testament was the wicked idolatrous wife of King Ahab of Israel who seduced the Israelites into pagan worship which included all manner of sexual vices (cf. 2 Kgs 9:22, 30-37).

Whether this was the real name of the woman causing trouble in Thyatira or is a symbolic name cannot be determined. Yet, that not our Lord’s point!

What is the “sin of that woman Jezebel?”

What our Lord is pointing out to the Church at Thyatira is that they are tolerating...

Syncretism! A universalistic belief that ALL religions are of value and are able to be of benefit before God.

To witness to and to live in the truth of Jesus Christ is the only truth about God and the only Name by which human beings can be saved...was to court economic and social ostracism...and ultimately death (cf. Acts 4:1-12; 5:27-32).

His Call to Repent!

The Lord desired her repentance but she would not; her heart was hardened against the Lord. Being hardened (caused by ignoring His Word), she was able to find all sorts of reasons for not heeding the only true and living God, who would crush her (see 2 Peter 3:8-9).

Her bed of passion will result in a bed of sickness. Great trouble shall come from the Lord's Hand upon those who have tolerated and/or followed her, unless they repent!

His Call to Repent!

Here is the Law -- condemnation for Jezebel's spiritual children (followers)...spiritual death!

Jezebel's activities were probably seen as socially acceptable. Greek culture at this time was much more enlightened than ours. Homosexuality was considered not only stylish, but a virtue. But with the Lord, cultural standards don't matter. Judgment is certain, according to deeds which show the real condition of the heart. As Romans 2:1-11 makes clear, we can either be judged by our own works, or by the works of Jesus Christ.

His Exhortation

The “depths of Satan” is another way of referring to the teachings and sins of Jezebel. The sin of syncretism and universalism deny the uniqueness of Christianity!

This is a lie of Satan. One could even say, THE lie, by which the devil attempts to subvert the truth of Jesus Christ.

Jesus now tells the Christians at Thyatira that He will not burden them further...they have suffered enough! Instead, He encourages them to hold on faithfully until He returns. Hold on to His works, namely, His redeeming death and triumphal resurrection for their eternal life.

His Promise

The Law is the sure word of judgment and eternal death to all who refuse to repent! The righteous in Christ shall be part of this process. We are prepared for this work by God through a life of living faith. Obviously, those who come now and then; or even regularly -- but have no real relationship with the Lord -- are unfit for salvation or His work until they repent!

The morning star – Jesus Christ (Rev. 22:16) which signifies not only Him as we now know Him, but a much closer, warmer, more intimate relationship with Him. This the true believer never fails to desire.



Founded around 1200 B.C. Sardis was universally recognized as the first metropolis of Asia and of Lydia and of Hellenism...

...according to the oldest coins found. It was a royal city as well as a great manufacturing center. By the time of John the city was in decay.



Rev. 3:1-6

SARDIS

In 547 B.C.
Sardis was
besieged by
Cyrus the Great.
His plan was to
starve them out,
yet one evening
a Lydian soldier
dropped his helmet over the wall, so he took a secret
path down to retrieve his helmet...one of Cyrus'
soldiers saw this and that night Cyrus lead his army up
the path, and easily took the city, since the Lydian
commander, King Croesus, failed to post sentries!



Rev. 3:1-6

SARDIS

Two centuries later Antiochus the Great, seeking to conquer Sardis, again found it unguarded, and the city fell to him.

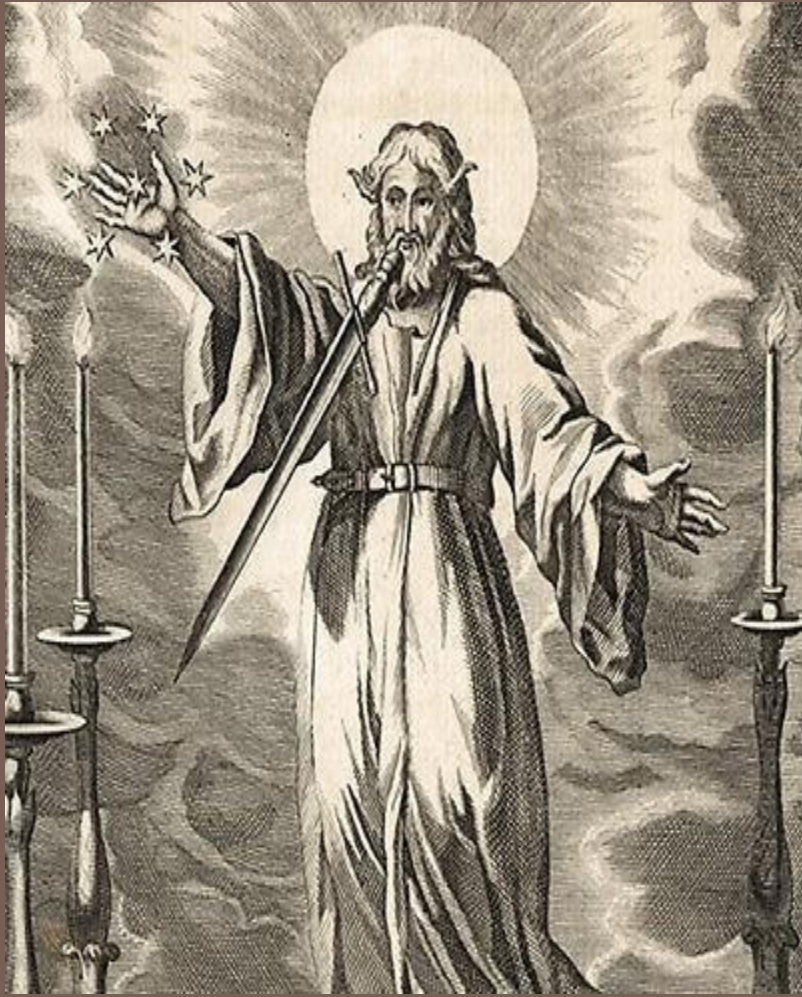
So the Lord writes to the church at Sardis, **“Be watchful and strengthen the remaining things, which were about to die.”**

Like the city of Sardis the church there, too, was dying. The church at Sardis, like the church at Ephesus, had left her First Love. Sardis, however, had degenerated more than Ephesus. Little else is known of the church there aside from what the Lord speaks and today there is no church there...a grim reminder that the Lord will not force what is best for us upon us if we refuse it.

Rev. 3:1-6

SARDIS

Our Lord Speaks



Jesus clearly identifies Himself and reminds His church that through the Holy Spirit and by means of His angels He communicates His Word.

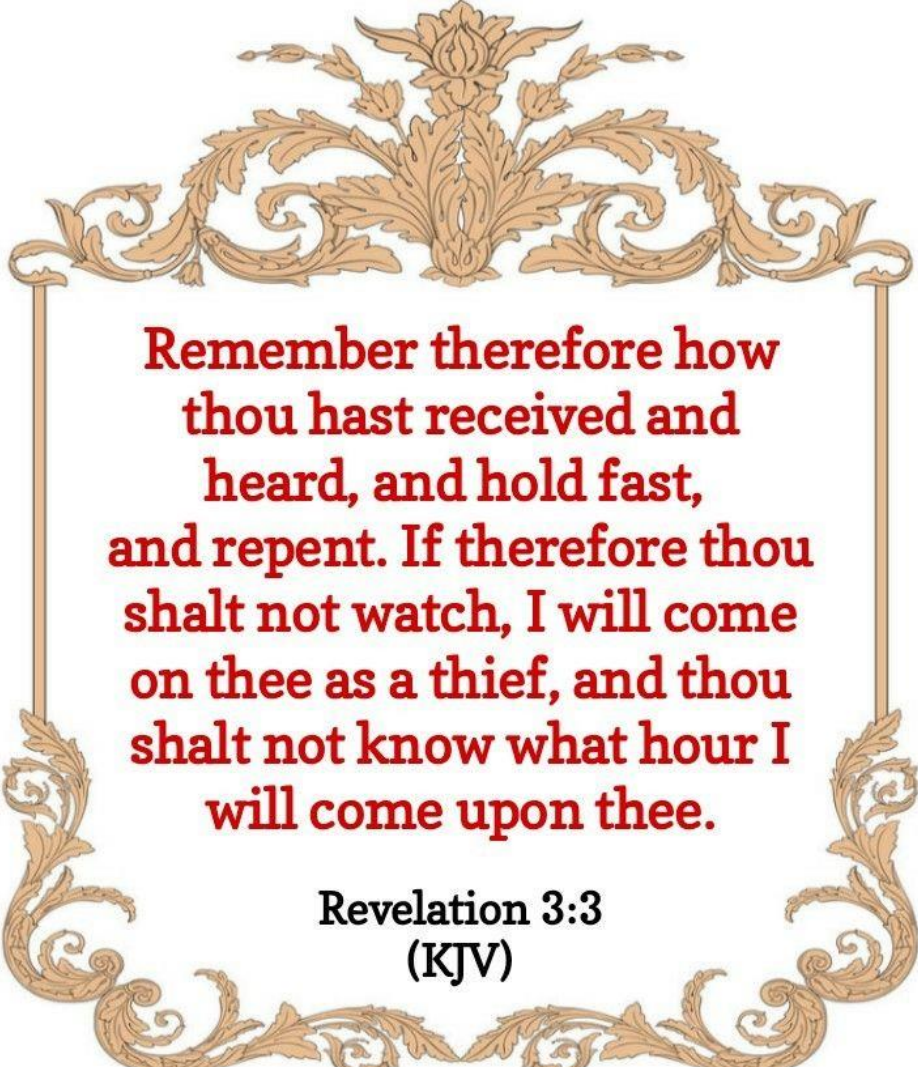
This letter is the most severe, since the Lord is aware of their works...yet they are dead works (cf. Is 64:6).

Rev. 3:1-2

SARDIS

Our Lord's Call to Repentance

Even today, our Lord, through His Word, warns us not to be apathetic. Since with the Lord NOW is the last minute, for there will be no other. Judgment for the unrepentant shall be rendered before they even know the Lord is present.



**Remember therefore how
thou hast received and
heard, and hold fast,
and repent. If therefore thou
shalt not watch, I will come
on thee as a thief, and thou
shalt not know what hour I
will come upon thee.**

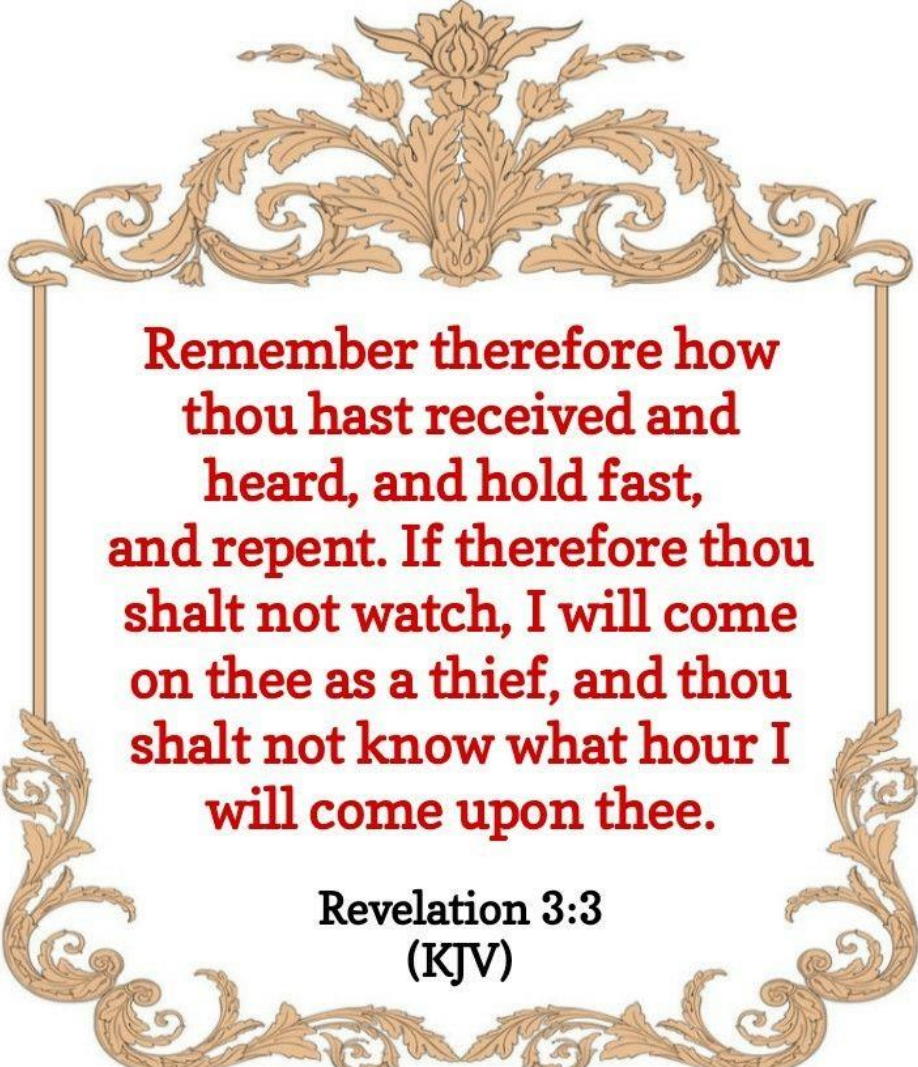
Revelation 3:3
(KJV)

Rev. 3:3

SARDIS

Our Lord's Call to Repentance

The Greek clearly expresses our Lord's impatience toward false security. Judgment never seems immanent. God will warn, as He did for over a century before the Great Flood, and people will still be caught in complacency (cf. Matt. 24:36-44).



**Remember therefore how
thou hast received and
heard, and hold fast,
and repent. If therefore thou
shalt not watch, I will come
on thee as a thief, and thou
shalt not know what hour I
will come upon thee.**

Revelation 3:3
(KJV)

Rev. 3:3

SARDIS

Our Lord's Promise

The remaining faithful ones haven't fallen prey to the deadness of faith and they give clear witness of their living faith by their service to their neighbor. Their way of life proves they have been washed in the blood of the Lamb (cf. 7:13-14).

They are the worthy ones, who have been made worthy by receiving in faith God's favor. Their white robes refer to and symbolize the blood and righteousness of Jesus, which covers all who repent! Their names are written in the Book of Life!

Little is known of the city or of the history of the church there, but it was named after its founder, King Attalus II of Philadelphia.



Rev. 3:7-13

Philadelphía

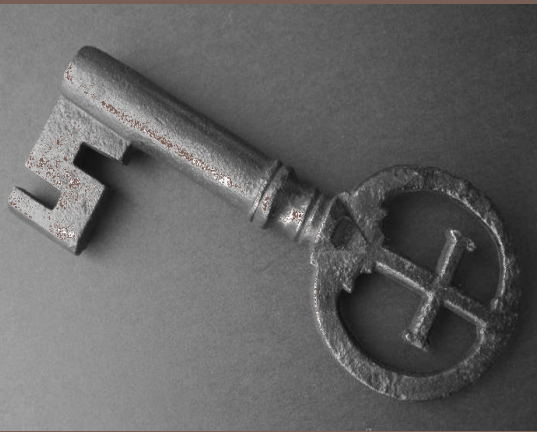


Rev. 3:7-13

Philadelp̄hía

Our Lord Speaks

Jesus identifies Himself as the Son of man, the Lord of the Church, by saying that He is, “the holy One, the true One.” He further says that He has the key of David. Thus, what He opens no one can close, and what He closes no one can open (cf. Is. 22:15-24).



The Key of David symbolizes His authority now by which He has opened His Father's Kingdom to all people.

Rev. 3:7

Philadelphia

Our Lord Knows...

...that at the church in Philadelphia He has placed an opened door, which means it has the opportunity of mission...to bring the message of Christ's victory!

The reference to "a little power" may reflect the possibility that the church was small. Here's an illustrated principle voiced by Walther: the size of a church doesn't matter, what matters is its faithfulness to the Word of God. This is the key to true growth of the church.

Rev. 3:8-9

Philadelphia

Our Lord's Knows...

Jesus is also aware of the conflict between the Jews and the Christians, which was causing suffering and persecution.

These Jews are not true children of Abraham, rather they are liars. True children of Abraham, the true Israel, are those Jews and Gentiles who believe that Jesus is the Messiah!

Our Lord's Promise

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Rev. 3:9-11

Philadelphia

Our Lord's Promise

The Lord charges the Christians in Philadelphia to be vigilant. In verse 11, there is certainly an element of urgency; be quick about it, since, “I am coming quickly.”

Then Jesus gives a brief exhortation in the last half of verse 11:

**HOLD FAST WHAT YOU HAVE,
SO THAT NO ONE WILL TAKE YOUR**



Rev. 3:9-11

Philadelphia

More Promises



In earthquake-prone Philadelphia, the pillar was a symbol of solid permanence. Not only will the faithful who remain faithful to the end of their lives be made so solid and permanent, but they shall be so in the temple of God.

Rev. 3:12-13

Philadelphia

More Promises

The Name of God -- adopted and named as a child of God through Jesus Christ;

The Name of the City of God -- the New Jerusalem the permanent address of all the saved (Phil. 3:20). This New Jerusalem is of special significance to the Jewish convert.

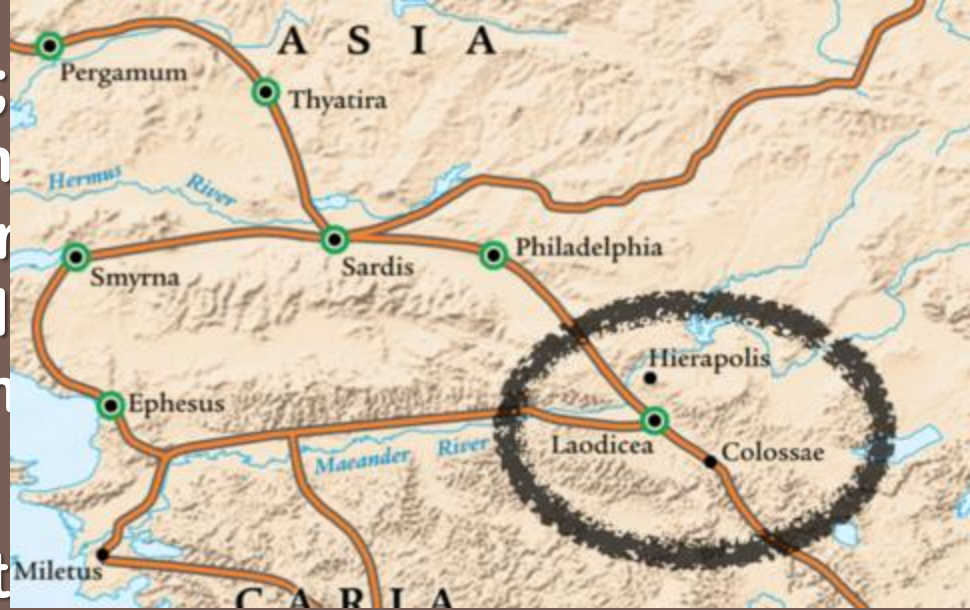
My New Name -- we are not told what this new name is.

The City of God -- The New Jerusalem is described in detail in Rev. 21:2-22:5.

Rev. 3:12

Philadelphia

The wealthiest city in Phrygia; financial center as well as a many years old at the time this letter. The sheep produced soft glossy black wool manufactured into cloth, garments brought premium prices.



Laodicea was also noted for its wealth among other achievements discovered a soothing eye salve. Laodicea is also known for its cold and hot springs, located some six miles from the city. This water was piped to the city. As it traveled through the pipes the water cooled, making it neither hot nor cold, and quite nauseating because of its mineral content. As in the other letters, these local features are used by our Lord to illustrate His points.

Rev. 3:14-22

Laodicea



The old city is in ruins and the modern city of *Pamukkale* stands next to the ruins with a population of about 17,000. The church there seems to have been started by one of St. Paul's assistants, possibly Epaphras (see Col. 4:12-13).

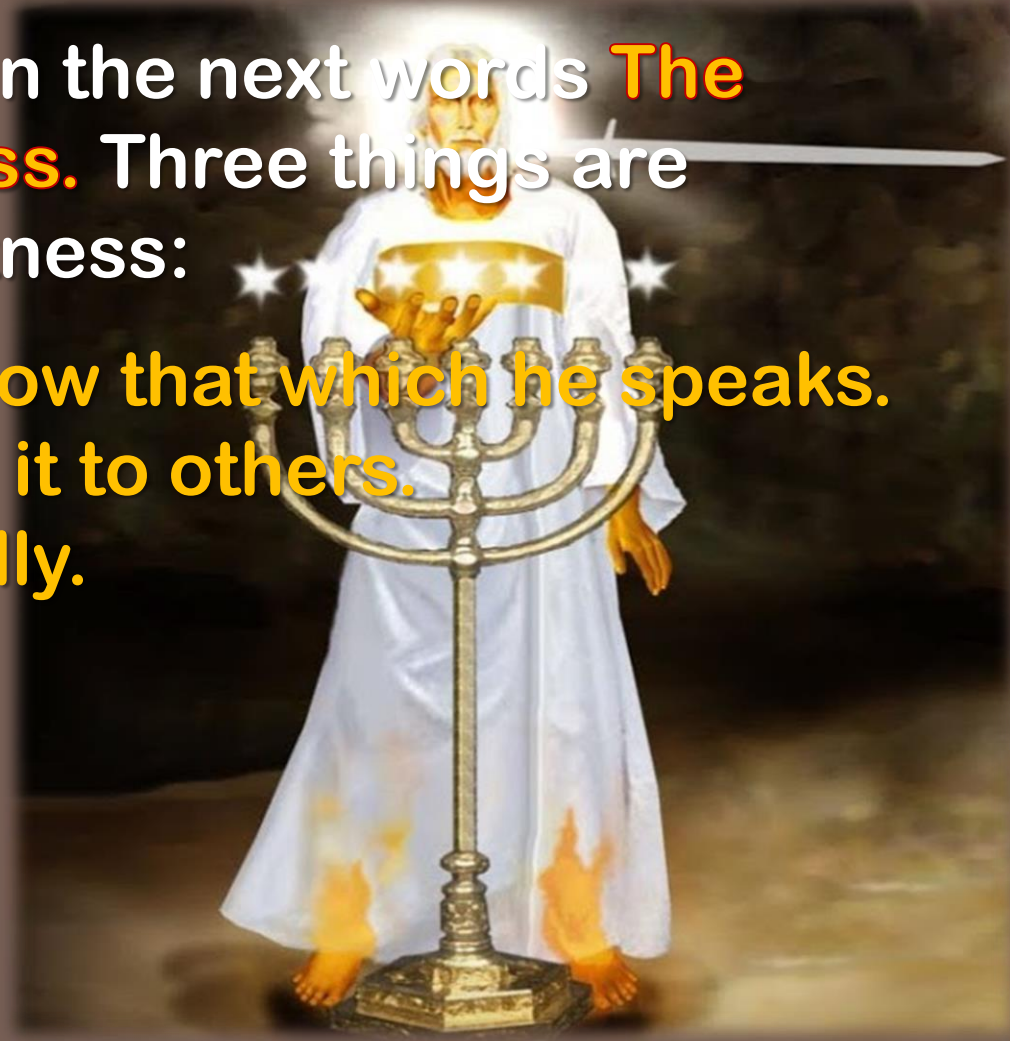
Rev. 3:14-22

Laodicea

Jesus Speaks

The Amen is explained in the next words **The Faithful and True Witness**. Three things are necessary for a true witness:

- + to personally know that which he speaks.
- + to be able to tell it to others.
- + to speak truthfully.



Rev. 3:14

Laodicea

Jesus Speaks

The source of the creation of God -- Jesus is NOT created as is the material wealth of the Laodiceans, but He is the Creator through whom all things were made. The Greek word, *ajrchv* may be translated as either ruler or first source, since it can mean first in the point of time or first in rank. These titles apply to the Laodicean church in this way: Amen and truth are closely tied to sincerity of heart but affluence normally leads a person to forget the Creator. Worship becomes empty ritual when people have forgotten that Jesus Christ is the ruler of all creation.

Rev. 3:14

Laodicea



knows...

ld nor hot..."

e hearts are not set on

faith and burning love and

**The image should have been
people who had to deal with
mineral water as the city**



Rev. 3:15-17

Laodicea

Jesus Knows...

“I would that you were cold or hot!”

The middle ground between cold and hot is hypocrisy.

Saving faith is fervent and full of zeal for the Lord. Such zeal should not be confused with emotionalism. True zeal for the Lord is characterized by true godliness, pervasive love, sincerity of purpose, self-control, and single-minded dedication to spreading the Gospel.

Jesus Knows...

“I am going to spit you out of My mouth!”



The Laodiceans knew how bad their hot spring water tasted when it cooled down. They knew the Lord's imagery.

Jesus Knows...

“...you are saying, ‘I am wealthy and I have acquired riches and I have need of nothing more.’”

Being a banking center, a mint, and having several very profitable industries the Laodiceans also knew about wealth. But they do not know their real need of those things that God provides. The self-reliance that is engendered when things go well, works against faithful reliance on the Lord for all things spiritual and material.

Jesus Knows...

The Sin of the Laodiceans is...

APATHY

Rev. 3:15-17

Laodicea

Jesus Knows...

The Church at Laodicea was...

living primarily for earthly wealth and selfish desires. The works the Christians were producing from such an attitude demonstrated neither anger nor enthusiasm toward God. All that they did was self-centered!

Our Lord's Call to Repentance

Jesus urges His church not only to heed His stinging word of Law, but also His gracious call in His Gospel:

Gold refined by fire -- riches of heaven by faith, tried, strengthened and purified in the trials of life. Given freely.

White garments -- Laodicea was known for its black wool. White is the color of holiness. Nakedness brings shame, yet the garment of holiness covers the shame of our sin and, even more, makes us holy.

Our Lord's Call to Repentance

Jesus urges His church not only to heed His stinging word of Law, but also His gracious call in His Gospel:

Eye salve to anoint your eyes -- Materialism, including reliance on their renowned medical accomplishments, had blinded their sight and made their spiritual needs invisible. All their relative comfort gave them a false view of reality.

Faith is the eye salve that gives true sight.

Our Lord's Call to Repentance

But the Lord is not interested in these lukewarm people being condemned. He speaks to them with the hope that they will become full of zeal of the Lord in living, vibrant faith - living a life of repentance.



Rev. 3:18-20

Laodicea

Our Lord's Call to Repentance

In fact, now is the time to repent! The Lord is waiting Now! If by God's grace one hears Jesus' Words in faith and opens the door of his heart, he will be saved. But if one rejects faith he is about to be condemned.

Our Lord's Call to Repentance

This passage uses picture language that is not intended to teach that we cooperate with the Lord in coming to faith (*synergism*). Rom. 10:17 and 1 Cor. 12:3 explains the process of coming to faith, making clear that when Christ stands at the door and knocks, we can refuse Him entrance, but we cannot open the door under our own power.



Rev. 3:18-20

Laodicea

Our Lord's Promise



Oriental rulers sat on large, wide thrones, almost like benches, and they would allow those who particularly pleased them to sit with them.

Rev. 3:21

Laodicea