

The image features three antique keys of various designs resting on a weathered, yellowish-brown map. The map has faint lines and some illegible text, suggesting an old document or parchment. The keys are made of dark metal, possibly iron or steel, and show signs of age and use. One key is a simple bow key with a circular head. Another is a more ornate key with a head featuring three interlocking loops. The third is a smaller, simpler key with a rectangular head. The lighting is warm, highlighting the textures of the metal and the map.

# The Seven Churches Keys to Overcoming

By Joanne Smith

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## Introduction to The Seven Churches

*“These things have I spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.”* John 16.33

Yes, Jesus overcame the world through his death and resurrection from the dead and the scriptures tell us that whosoever is born of God overcometh the world, but what is our part, as believers, in overcoming the world? Do we have a part? Didn't Jesus do it all? What can we possibly do to add to his marvelous gift of life eternal?

The word overcome in the context that I am referring to (as to overcome, not to be overcome) is only mentioned about 25 times in the scriptures. One of the most powerful citings is from Revelation 21.7 where it says, *“He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.”* The implication here is that we take an active role in overcoming. There are certain obstacles that we must overcome in order to obtain the inheritance.

The one book that talks about overcoming more than any other is the book of Revelation. We see in the seven letters to the churches, starting in chapter two, that each church has something to overcome. If we take these letters to the churches personally and apply them to our own individual walks then we see that there are, indeed, things that we must overcome to gain

the full inheritance of Christ. There are different schools of thought on the interpretation of the letters to the churches. Some say they apply only to those churches in existence at the time of the writing and others say they are strictly historical and do not apply to the church today. I believe the interpretation is many fold. The letters represent not only the churches in existence at the time of the writing, but they also give us an historical account of the development of the church through the ages as well as a picture of the condition of the church today, right on down to the individual believer. Let's take the individual approach in this discussion of overcoming.

In the first letter to the Ephesians, a type of the apostolic church, the Lord commends them for their labor, good works, patience and for not bearing them which are evil or holding to the deeds of the Nicolaitanes, which Christ also hates. The heretical doctrine of the Nicolaitanes was beginning to creep into the church at the time of this letter. The word itself is derived from two words, "nikoa" meaning "to conquer" and "laos" pertaining to the laity, which totally opposes the equality we have now obtained in Christ and the fact that He is our only mediator. The Lord chides the Ephesians for leaving their first love and promises the tree of life to them that overcome these things. Oftentimes Christians get so caught up in works and labor that they forget their "first works". We are told to repent and do the "first works".

The second letter to Smyrna, representing the church of persecution, holds no condemnation by the Lord as he lauds

them for their works, tribulation and poverty (but recognizes that they are rich) and acknowledges the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews (or chosen ones, Jew by faith) and are not, “*but are of the synagogue of Satan*” Rev. 2.9. Overcoming this persecution from within is perhaps the biggest challenge to Christians today. It’s one thing to be persecuted from unbelievers, but quite another from those who say they are Christians. To the overcomer is promised escape from the second death and a crown of life.

The church at Pergamos typifies the church of Imperial favor according to Gordan Lindsey, noted Bible scholar, in his Revelation Series, The Seven Churches of Prophecy, volume 2, published by; Christ For The Nations, Dallas TX. Christianity was proclaimed by Constantine as the official religion of the state at the time of Imperial favor. The deeds of the Nicolaitanes spoken of in the letter to the Ephesians had now become doctrine. Christ acknowledges the works of this church and the fact that they dwell in Satan’s seat but hold His name and have not denied their faith. Pergamos became the capital of Asia when it fell to the Romans and was considered a great center of learning as well as being a center of heathen and emperor worship. The doctrine of Balaam (Rev. 2.14) was also tolerated and Christ warned those who had committed spiritual fornication to repent or he would “*come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.*” To the overcomer is promised hidden manna and a white stone with a new name written that no man knows except the recipient.

The letter to Thyatira, representing the Papal church, strongly admonishes those who have allowed the woman, Jezebel, who proclaims to the world that she is a prophetess, to seduce the servants into spiritual adultery. The Jezebel of the Old Testament was an evil woman who enticed her husband, King Ahab, to commit idolatry against his God and ordered the prophets of the Lord to be slain. Her name became a byword for all generations to come for anything that was reprehensible. In the New Testament Jezebel represents the marriage of false doctrine with true Christian doctrine as exemplified in the Roman church. She is given a chance to repent but refuses (Rev. 2.21). Likewise, the Thyatirans are advised to repent or be thrown into great tribulation with her. Verse 23 of Rev. 2 warns, *“And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works.”* But to those who overcome and keep his works to the end, to those who have not adhered to Jezebel and her witcheries and to those who have not known the depths of Satan will the Lord put no other burden on if they hold on to what they already have, which is works, charity, service, faith and patience. He will give these overcomers power over the nations to rule them with a rod of iron and, finally, he will give them the morning star.

To the church in Sardis the Lord acknowledges their works and that they have a name that they live but are dead. Sardis, in church history, represents the Reformation. Many brave men, such as John Huss and Martin Luther, defied the woman, Jezebel,



at the cost of their very lives. But the Lord still has not found the works of the Sardis church perfect before God and cautions them to hold fast and repent. They appear to be alive, but are dead. How many churches have sprung up recently in the wake of the revival of the last 25 years that say they are alive but are really dead. The Lord refers to the overcomers who have not defiled their garments, they are worthy and shall walk with Him in white and He will not blot out their names from the book of life, but their names will he confess before the Father.

The last two churches, Philadelphia and Laodicea, represent the state of the church in these last days and are the culmination of all the churches.

The church at Philadelphia has little worldly strength, but the Lord has set before them an open door that no man can shut. The Philadelphian church, as well as the church of Smyrna (Persecution) are the only ones that the Lord does not reprimand for something. Both churches are poor and weak – two things we, personally, need to come to in order to be rich and strong in Christ. The list of promises for the Philadelphia church are indeed impressive: *“I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee. Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.”* (Rev. 3.9-10) The overcomer, in these last days, is promised the distinct honor of being made a pillar in His temple, the temple which is in the

city of God, New Jerusalem, and the Lord's new name will be written upon them.

Laodicea, on the other hand, is the lukewarm church of the current age. It is neither cold nor hot. The Lord has not one agreeable thing to say about the church of Laodicea. In fact, his feelings are so disagreeable that he says he will spue them out of his mouth. They proclaim themselves to be rich and in need of nothing, and don't even know that they are wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked. The Lord advises them to buy from Him gold tried in the fire, so that they may be truly rich, and white raiment, so that they may be clothed in righteousness so that the shame of their nakedness doesn't appear and to anoint their eyes with eye salve so that they will be able to see. To those he does love in the Laodicean church, does he entreat to repent and be zealous. Zealous to shed the riches and glory that the world has to offer and to obtain gold according to the riches of his grace. To the overcomer is granted a seat with the Lord on His throne.

*"He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches"* is the closing comment in all of the seven letters. Anoint your eyes with eyesalve and read these letters for yourselves that you may see; and listen, so that you may hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches in these, the last days. Can you identify with any of these churches? Is there something you need to overcome?

Let us seek and take the valuable advice of the Scriptures in our quest to gain the full inheritance of Christ.

*"Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good."* (Rom.

12.21)

*“For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God.” (1 John 5.4-5)*

And finally, brothers and sisters, *“Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him....And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever”.* (1 John 2.15-17)

# I. They Were in Danger of Losing Their First Love

## The Church of Ephesus

The following is the first in a series of articles. This series will cover the seven churches that Christ addresses in the book of Revelation. The apostle John was in exile on the isle of Patmos when he was commanded by Christ, the Alpha and Omega as he calls Himself to write what he saw in a vision and send it to the churches. John saw the Lord standing in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks, which represent the churches as we see in Revelation 1:13-19:

*“And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle.*

*His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire;*

*And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters.*

*And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp twoedged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength.*

*And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last:*

*I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.*

*Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter;”*

There are different schools of thought on the interpretation of the letters to the churches. Some say they apply only to those churches in existence at the time of the writing and others say they are strictly historical and do not apply to the church today, I believe the interpretation is many-fold. The letters represent not only the churches in existence at the time of the writing, but they also give us a historical account of the development of the church through the ages as well as a picture of the condition of the church today, and the faith the believer ought also to have. We are going to discuss Ephesus and how it characterizes a portion of today's church, as well as look at it on a personal level and how it applies to the individual believer's walk of salvation.

Ephesus, located in Asia Minor, was a city of great importance in the days of the early church. It was a political, religious and commercial hub that reached its pinnacle under Roman rule during the first and second centuries. The great Temple of Diana, Roman goddess of women and fertility, rebuilt from the destroyed Artemision temple built around 560 B.C., was considered one of the Seven Wonders of the World. Ephesus, with a population at the time of Paul estimated to be about 250,000, played a significant role in the spread of Christianity although not without much hindrance, as we read in Acts 19:24-41. A group of silversmiths, who made their living selling shrines

to Diana, initiated an uproar against Paul because he had turned many away from the goddess by preaching that “they be not gods, which are made with hands.”

*“Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks;*

*I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars:*

*And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name’s sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted.*

*Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.*

*Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.*

*But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitanes, which I also hate.*

*He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.”*

*Rev.2:1-7*

Christ’s salutation to each of the churches is different and reflects distinct aspects of who He really is. In His greeting to the Ephesians, the apostolic church, he states that He is the one who

holds the seven stars, signifying the angels or messengers of the churches (Rev. 1:20), in his right hand and walks in the midst of the seven candlesticks. The Lord commends them for their labor, good works, patience and for not bearing them which are evil and for trying them which say they are apostles and are not, finding them liars. They have laboured and have fainted not. He highly commends them for hating the deeds of the Nicolaitanes, which Christ also hates. The heretical doctrine of the Nicolaitanes was beginning to creep into the church at the time of this letter. The word itself is derived from two words, “nikoa” meaning “to conquer” and “laos” pertaining to the laity. The practice of “lording” it over the laity totally opposes the equality we have obtained in Christ and the fact that He, alone, is our only mediator.

But there is that one thing the Lord just cannot tolerate and He chides the Ephesians for leaving their first love. We must never put aside our love for Christ for the sake of works. We must always be as a bride preparing for her Bridegroom to come at any moment. Our love for Him has to be the most important “works” we do. From that everything else will fall into place. For if we are truly preparing for His return then we are doing the works He has prepared for us, as his **awaiting bride**.

As we see in verse 5 of Rev.2, the Ephesians are sternly told to remember where they came from and how they have fallen (out of love, I suppose) and repent and do the first works (of returning to their first love). The quick removal of the candlestick from its

place is the disaster waiting for those who don't repent and heed the warning.

To those that have ears, he tells us to listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches. Too often the church is listening to what the churches are saying to the churches. We are barraged in these days with multi-media communications, churches springing up on every street corner, evangelists crowding the airwaves and convention centers with all kinds of doctrines from the outlandish laughing "for the Lord" to the more stoic, traditional ones where praising the Lord out loud is even frowned upon. Where do you turn? Whose voice do you listen to? Who is and who isn't speaking for God? Follow the advice imparted by the Lord, Himself, to the church at Ephesus and seek to hear His voice, and the promise of eating from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God, will be yours – the overcomer.

*"Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent."*



## 2. The Persecuted Ones

### The Church At Smyrna

*“And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle.*

*His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire;*

*And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters.*

*And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp twoedged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength.*

*And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last:*

*I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.*

*Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter;”*

As noted in our first article of “The 7 Churches of Revelation”, there are different schools of thought on the interpretation of the letters to the churches. Some say they apply only to those churches in existence at the time of the writing and others say they are strictly historical and do not apply to the church today. I

believe the interpretation is many-fold. The letters represent not only the churches in existence at the time of the writing, but they also give us a historical account of the development of the church through the ages as well as a picture of the condition of the church today, and the faith the believer ought also to have. We are going to discuss the church at Smyrna and how it characterizes a portion of today's church, as well as look at it on a personal level and how it applies to the individual believer's walk.

### **The Letter to Smyrna**

(Rev. 2:8-11)

*“And unto the angel of the church in Smyrna write; These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive;*

*I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan.*

*Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.*

*He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.”*

Smyrna, located 35 miles north of Ephesus in Asia Minor, was at the time of writing a decidedly pro-Roman city of great value to the Empire as it served as headquarters for the imperial cult at emperor worship. The city boasted of many magnificent temples, including one dedicated to the Emperor Tiberius, which signified

the city's loyalty to the Empire. Temples to Cybele and Zeus were also centers for heathen worship.

It was during John's banishment to Patmos that Caesar worship became compulsory in the Roman Empire, and that ushered in a two hundred year period of great persecution on the saints who were faithful. Gordon Lindsey in his Revelation Series, Volume 1, points out that the name, Smyrna, means "myrrh", a fragrant spice which has to be beaten into fine pieces to give off its fragrance and was used in the burial of Christ. He suggests that this could typify the Christians who were beaten and bruised for Christ's sake, but the more they were persecuted the more fragrant was the testimony they gave.

Jesus greets the church at Smyrna as from the first and the last, from one who was dead and is now alive. He is the only one who can make that claim. He is the only one who died and is now alive and He is the only one who can grant us eternal life. What comfort to those persecuted saints who would lose their own lives for the gospel's sake. He commends the saints at Smyrna for their works, tribulation and poverty, *"(but thou art rich)"* (Rev. 2:9).

In the same verse the Lord acknowledges the blasphemy of those who say they are Jews, and are not, but are of the *"synagogue of Satan"*. This is a very serious matter and not to be taken lightly. Being of the *"synagogue of Satan"* is a pretty strong condemnation and if the Lord didn't want us to be aware of it he wouldn't have mentioned it here. What is a Jew? *"For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and*

*circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.” (Rom. 2:28 & 29)*

Did Abraham, the father of faith, receive the promise because he was circumcised in the flesh? No, *“Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.” (Rom. 4:3)* Circumcision was a sign, a seal of the righteousness of his faith, which he had while yet being uncircumcised. The promise that *“he would be the heir to the world”* was not given by the law but through the righteousness of faith. It is therefore faith that qualifies a Jew under the new covenant the covenant of the blood of Christ *“in whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ: buried with Him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.” (Col. 2:11 & 12)*

Who are these Jews who say they are Jews, and are not? Or a more suitable question would be, who are these Christians who say they are Christians, and are not? Jesus says we shall know them by their fruits and warns us that, *“Many will say to me in that day Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.” (Matt. 7:21 & 22)* You can be sure there are many people sitting in many born-again, spirit-filled gatherings calling themselves Christians that fall into this category. It can be safely said, then, that it is they who are of *“the synagogue of Satan.”*

What are we to do then? *“Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer”* is what he told the saints at Smyrna for he knew they were about to suffer severe persecution from not only unbelievers but also from those of the household of faith, the seed of Abraham. *“The devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days”*, probably refers to the ten major persecutions that took place under Roman rule in the second and third centuries A.D. (see Foxe’s Book of Martyrs; Marie Gentert King, Editor; Spire Books) but also refers to these perilous times we are living in now, which will only worsen in the future as the return of Christ draws nearer and nearer. Paul exhorts us in his warning of these end times in 2 Tim. 3:12-14: *“Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived. But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and has been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them.”*

Perhaps the worst persecution will come from within, from those who say they are Christians. Those that are poor in worldly recognition and gain (but are rich, remember) who have decided to enter in at the strait gate will stand alone in a world (and church) filled with hypocrisy and deceit because *“broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many thee be which go in thereat.”* (Matt. 7:13)

Jesus goes on to tell us in Matt. 7:14-16 that *“strait is the gate, and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it. Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s*

clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits." Beware, He warns us. So please, don't be afraid to examine the fruits, the real fruits of anyone who may call themselves a Christian.

The Lord calls the church at Smyrna to be faithful unto death and He will give them a crown of life. He is doing the same thing in the church today. He calls every aspiring disciple to lose his own life so that we may find it. When we come to Him we have to be willing to give up everything for Him so that He might live through us. We have to partake in the death of self and take the advice of Jesus from the following verse, "*If any man come to me and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple*" (Luke 14:26).

In His closing remarks to this church, like he does in all seven of the churches, the Lord entreats them to hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches. How many different voices are out there in the church today claiming to speak for God and promising to have all the answers? Strive to have ears to hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches and you will be an overcomer to whom the promise of not being hurt of the second death is given. Heed the warnings imparted to the seven churches and the crown of life will be yours.

### 3. Church of Imperial Favor

#### The Church At Pergamos

The following is the third in a series of articles on the seven churches of Revelation. The series will cover the seven churches that Christ addresses in the book of Revelation. The apostle John was in exile on the isle of Patmos when he was commanded by Christ, the Alpha and Omega as he calls Himself, to write what he saw in a vision and send it to the churches. John saw the Lord standing in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks, which represent the churches as we see in Revelation 1:13-19:

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*And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last:*

*I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for*

*evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.*

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As previously stated, there are different schools of thought on the interpretation of the letters to the churches. Some say they apply only to those churches in existence at the time of the writing and others say they are strictly historical and do not apply to the church today. I believe the interpretation is many fold. The letters represent not only the churches in existence at the time of the writing, but they also give us an historical account of the development of the church through the ages, as well as a picture of the condition of the church today, and the faith the believer ought also to have. Here we'll cover the church at Pergamos and see how it relates to the current condition of the church, as well as look at it on a personal level to see how it applies to the individual believer's walk.

Lying some fifty miles northeast of Ephesus, Pergamos, capital of the Roman province of Asia, boasted the first temple dedicated to a Roman Emperor, Augustus, which aptly illustrates the identity and spirit of this idolatrous city. It was also the home of one of the largest libraries in the world, second only to the one in Alexandria and where the use of parchment, derived from the word "Pergamos", was first initiated. It was considered one of the great centers of learning and culture with its many glorious temples, sculptures and altars. Unger's Bible Dictionary states that the city was "greatly addicted to idolatry" and was well-known as the center of worship of such gods as Asklepios, Zeus



and Isis to name a few but was more renowned as a primary center of Caesar worship Pergamos represents the period of time from about 312 – 476 A.D. when Constantine declared Christianity the official religion of the state. Caesar/emperor worship had really begun to take hold in the Roman Empire and was considered a test of one's loyalty. Before Constantine's edict much persecution was administered to Christians who did not submit to this form of idolatry.

In Christ's opening remarks to the church at Pergamos he refers to himself as the one who has the sharp sword with two edges. Hebrews 4:12 tells us that *"the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."* So he aptly describes himself as such with this stem greeting to the church of Imperial Favor. Take note that the greetings in the first two churches of Ephesus and Smyrna are not quite as severe. The Lord greets Ephesus as the one who holds the seven stars and Smyrna as being the first and the last. A sharp sword with two edges are, as they say "fightin' words" for, indeed, the battle for souls is particularly strong in this city of Pergamos and for the time it represents in church history. The only way the battle can be fought is by the Word of God, who is Jesus and who, alone, has the power to "pierce even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit."

He acknowledges the fact that these saints dwell where Satan's seat is, in the midst of idolatry in this extension of the Roman

Empire with its capital city being Rome, where the spirit of the Antichrist had taken over and was in full bloom. He knows them, that they have not denied His name, even in the face of martyrdom. But, of course, he does have a few bones to pick with them in that they allowed the doctrine of Balaam who *“cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel ... to commit fornication”*.

Balak, King of Moab, when he saw the size and strength of the children of Israel, tried to convince the prophet Balaam to curse Israel. Contrary to his own will, as we are told in the account of it in Numbers 22-25 Balaam found they could not be cursed because the Lord would not allow them to be cursed, only blessed as we read, *“God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good? Behold, I have received commandment to bless: and he hath blessed; and I cannot reverse it.”* (Num. 23.19,20) For money and power Balaam was willing to curse God’s people. How perfectly this scenario illustrates the church of Imperial Favor, the beginnings of the church of Rome, and the willingness for her to sell out to Satan for power and riches. Take a look around you and notice who has built up the biggest and most powerful religion in the world and ask yourself how it got like that?

Since the children of Israel, the people of God, could not be cursed, Balak sought to destroy them by other means and the two colluded to infiltrate them in another way – by having them intermingle with the Moabites (*“commit whoredom with the*

*daughters of Moab*” – Numbers 25:1) which eventually led to their sacrificing to idols and bowing down to other gods. We find the same thing happening here in Pergamos when Constantine’s declaration to make Christianity the official religion of the land only served to promote the marriage of Christianity with pagan beliefs, a practice that has gone on ever since in the church.

Balaam was full aware of what he was doing when he conspired with Balak, for riches, to seduce the Israelites to sin against their God and the punishment met on those who did was brutal and swift. *“And Israel joined himself unto Baalpeor: and the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel. And the Lord said unto Moses, Take all the heads of the people, and hang them up before the Lord against the sun, that the fierce anger of the Lord may be turned away from Israel. And Moses said unto the judges of Israel, Slay ye every one his men that were joined unto Baalpeor.”* (Num. 25.3-5) But God, in his mercy, turned his wrath from the children of Israel when Phinehas, grandson of Aaron the priest, in his zeal for the Lord and the children of Israel slew a Midianitish woman and a man of Israel for their whordom. As we read in Num. 25:11, *“Phinehas ... hath turned my wrath away from the children of Israel, while he was zealous for my sake among them, that I consumed not the children of Israel in my jealousy.”* Nonetheless twenty-four thousand people perished in the plague visited upon them before the Lord turned his wrath away. He then instructed Moses to kill the Midianites. God is a jealous God and he will not tolerate His people participating in idolatry of any sort and joining themselves with other gods, whatever they may be.

The next bone He has to pick with them is the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes, which he says he hates. Jesus only states twice in all of scripture that he hates something and that something happens to be the same thing – the deeds and the doctrines of the Nicolaitanes.

What is the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes? We know that the word itself is derived from two Greek words “nikao” meaning “to conquer” and “loas” meaning the laity. The practice of “lording” it over the laity totally opposes the equality we have obtained by Christ’s death and the fact the He is our one and only mediator as Paul tells us in I Timothy 2.5, “*For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus*”.

Who then should we be submitted to? A sampling from the following scriptures gives us a pretty clear picture of who and what we should be submitted to. “*Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God* “ (Ephesians 5:21)

“*Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.*” (James 4:7)

“*Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief for that is unprofitable for you.*” (Hebrews 13:17)

“*Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; Or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well.*” (I Peter 2:13-14)

The believers at Pergamos are warned to repent or else the Lord will come unto them quickly and actually fight against them with the sword of his mouth, probably the same sword that slew the Midianites. Just as the Midianites seduced His people to commit fornication; so too did those who held to the doctrine of Balaam and the Nicolaitanes try to seduce the Christians at Pergamos to commit spiritual fornication against the Lord. As I said before, “them’s fightin’ words” and anyone who gets in the way of the Lord better be prepared to suffer the consequences.

But to those who overcome will the Lord give to them hidden manna which, we know, is Jesus the Bread of Life. From John 6 we read *“And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst. And Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life. I am that bread of life. Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world. “*

Also to the overcomer is promised a white stone with a new name written on it which, the Scripture says, no man knows except him that receives it. What a promise of new and redeemed life in Christ to the overcomer of these idolatrous systems. Amen

## 4. The Papal Church

### The Church At Thyatira

The following is the fourth in a series on the seven churches of Revelation that Christ addresses in the book of Revelation. The apostle John was in exile on the isle of Patmos when he was commanded by Christ, the Alpha and Omega as he calls Himself, to write what he saw in a vision and send it to the churches. John saw the Lord standing in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks, which represent the churches as we see in Revelation 1.13-19:

*“And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle.*

*His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire;*

*And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters.*

*And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp twoedged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength.*

*And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last:*

*I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for*

*evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.*

*Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter;”*

There are different schools of thought on the interpretation of the letters to the churches. Some say they apply only to those churches in existence at the time of the writing and others say they are strictly historical and do not apply to the church today. I believe the interpretation is four-fold. The letters represent: 1) the churches in existence at the time of the writing, 2) they give us an historical account of the development of the church through the ages, 3) they picture the condition of the church today, and 4) they mirror the type of faith the individual believer ought to have in his or her own walk. In this article we'll cover the church at Thyatira and see how it relates to the current condition of the church, as well as look at it on a personal level to see how it applies to the individual believer.

### **Renown for Purple: Color of the Whore**

Politically speaking, the city of Thyatira held little inheritance but was renowned for its commercial vitality. The natural resources of the area were implemented to produce world famous purple dye. Trade guilds abounded in this city. Lydia, a convert of the apostle Paul's in Phillippi and a seller of purple (Acts 16.14), hailed from this ancient metropolis. The chief deity of the city, according to Unger's Bible Dictionary was Apollo, worshipped under the surname of Tyrimnas.

The church at Thyatira, representing the Papal church established around 450 A.D. at the fall of the Roman Empire, was

commended by the Lord for their many, many works and charitable service. However, Christ's greeting to them in this letter is from one who has eyes like a flame of fire and feet like fine brass. Fire, in the Scriptures, represents the process of refinement and brass symbolizes judgement. Why would he refer to himself in such a manner if he had not some bone to pick with them?

### **The Teachings of Jezebel had infiltrated this Church**

The bone was the woman Jezebel, a self-proclaimed prophetess who seduced the servants of the Lord into spiritual adultery. Jezebel of the Old Testament was an evil woman who enticed her husband, King Ahab, to commit idolatry against his God and ordered the prophets of the Lord to be slain. Her name has echoed through 3,000 years of history as a byword for anything that is reprehensible, polluted and idolatrous. Do we not instantly conjure up images of wickedness and evil manipulation when we just hear the name "Jezebel"?

It is interesting that Thyatira was known for its purple dye, probably used extensively for clothing. Could it be the same purple clothing worn by the great whore described in Revelation 17 with whom the *"kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication."* (Rev. 17.2)? Jezebel and this woman are one in the same, or at least a close relative, spiritually speaking.

The following name was written on this woman's forehead: MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS? Is Jezebel her daughter? This could be.



## **Who is this Mystery Babylon?**

Who is this woman? What is 'Mystery Babylon'?

It had its origins in ancient Babylon at the tower of Babel when men conspired to reach heaven by their inventions and make a show of themselves before heaven and earth while doing it. We all know the story from there, but why did the Lord have to confound the languages? Genesis 11.6 explains "And the Lord said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do." The Lord knew what men would do if left to their own devices and it was his mercy on us that he scattered the nations. He knew they were trying to reach heaven without Him. But the spirit of Babel was never destroyed and now, in this present day, we find it flourishing and permeating all aspects of life. Men are conspiring, in unity, to become the "brotherhood of man". Language is no longer a barrier and with satellites, cable television and travel so enhanced the whole world is at our fingertips. The spirit of Mystery Babylon lies lit the heart of all these endeavors. Intoxicated with her own lust for power she will stop at nothing to achieve her goal.

This evil woman, Babylon, is drunk with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. Revelation 17.18 tells us, "*And the woman which thou sawest is that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth.*" History proves that the city which has reigned over the earth for the last two millennia, in one way or another is Rome. When her political power was

stripped, her spiritual power over the souls of men thrived. That power is still thriving today in the Roman Catholic church. In her we find the epitome of the spiritual tower of Babel. Even her buildings are the finest in the world. You can go into any small city or town and find an ornately built Roman Catholic church.

So who is this Jezebel and what does she have to do with Babylon? In Gordon Lindsey's Revelation Series, The Seven Churches of Revelation, he states this;

“Jezebel is the Papal Church which arose during the Dark Ages. While the name doubtless referred to someone in the local church of Thyatira, prophetically it symbolizes the rise of the Papacy of which Jezebel is a type. This is the accepted interpretation of all evangelical interpreters, and there can be no doubt but that it is the true interpretation. The aptness of the symbology is obvious and striking.”

Though current Evangelical teaching is trying to sweep this knowledge under the rug it was not very long ago that every Bible-believing Christian understood about the whore of Babylon and the Jezebel spirit. The spirit of idolatry in the Christian church was given birth by Jezebel (Papacy) during this era of church history and has continued to flourish to this day. The many false practices and idolatries of the Roman system are too numerous to go into detail here, but to name a few: statue worship (graven images), Mary and “saint” worship, salvation by infant water baptism, transubstantiation (the mystery of turning bread and wine into the so-called “actual” body and blood of Christ – which is a feeble attempt to make oneself holy). The

advances the Church at large made against these polluted teachings of the Dark Ages were hard won, sometimes men and women gave up their lives resisting the whore's inquisitions and persecutions. We are saddened to see so many Christians cash in these doctrinal victories won by the blood of the saints for a false peace and ecumenism that will come to naught in the end. We urge every reader to ponder these rebukes of Jesus for themselves, and for those of you who seek the truth I encourage you to search the Scriptures and the Scriptures only, for only there will you find the true way to salvation and deliverance from corruption that has seeped into the Church over the centuries.

But why does the Catholic Church have so many devotees you may ask. How can so many people be wrong? The answer is simply, Noah and his family were eight out of the whole world who were found righteous before God and obeyed His voice. That is why we must take serious the voice of God speaking through Paul when He says,

“And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you”. (II Cor. 2.16-17)

### **Repent and Christ will Give you Great Reward**

In the New Testament Jezebel represents the marriage of false doctrine with true Christian doctrine as exemplified in the

Roman church. She is given a chance to repent but refuses (Rev. 2.21). Likewise, the Thyatirans are advised to repent or be thrown into great tribulation with her.

But to those who have not partaken of this doctrine and who have not known the depths of Satan, as Christ tells us in verse 24, he will put no other burden on them. The depths of Satan were felt in that dark period of church history with the atrocities of the inquisition and the martyrdom of faithful servants of Christ who refused to deny his name.

To quote Gordon Lindsey again,

“The horrors of the inquisition, the burning of ‘heretics’ at the stake, immorality among the Popes, a decadent priesthood forbidden to marry, doctrines of the harlot Babylon, image worship in its grossest forms, Mariolatry – all these evil things appeared in the Church of Thyatira. It was a time of gross darkness. It is an indication of the compassion and the love of Christ that He says to the people of this benighted time, ‘I will put upon you none other burden.’ As much as to say that ‘to whom much is given, of him much shall be required.’ But to those who live in the darkness of Thyatira, if they will but keep themselves from evil, from ‘the depths of Satan’, into which so many had fallen, they will do well.”

The Lord’s pleadings to repent to this church are many and the consequences quite severe for those who don’t, as we see in verse 21. Being cast into great tribulation await those who refuse to repent of the spiritual fornication which they have committed with the spirit of Jezebel.

To the overcomer in Thyatira, as with all seven of the churches, there is wonderful promise. Christ offers hope and redemption for those who will come to Him and repent. It is ironic that the promise given to this particular church is power over the nations to rule them with a rod of iron. Rome has, for centuries, tried to do the very same thing in several different ways, especially, as mentioned earlier, through the spiritual hold of the Roman Catholic Church. And now, to those who overcome the depths of Satan, will he give them what Rome has lusted after power over the nations. Not only that but, *“as vessels of a potter shall they (the nations) be broken to shivers”* (Rev 2.27).

The rule this time will be under the one true God and His Son, Jesus Christ. That will surely be one sight to see! And the saints are invited to be in that army.

The other promise to the overcomer is that they will be given the morning star, which is only mentioned one other place in Scripture; Rev. 22.16, *“I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star.”* And David, as we all know, was the greatest king Israel ever saw, the one who had a heart after God.

## 5. The Reformation Church

### The Church At Sardis

The following is the fifth in a series on the seven churches of Revelation that Christ addresses in the book of Revelation. The apostle John was in exile on the isle of Patmos when he was commanded by Christ, the Alpha and Omega as he calls Himself, to write what he saw in a vision and send it to the churches. John saw the Lord standing in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks, which represent the churches as we see in Revelation 1:13-19:

*“And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle.*

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*And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp twoedged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength.*

*And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead.*

*And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last: I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the*

*keys of hell and of Death.*

*Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter;"*

There are different schools of thought on the interpretation of the letters to the churches. Some say they apply only to those churches in existence at the time of the writing and others say they are strictly historical and do not apply to the church today. I believe the interpretation is four-fold. The letters represent: 1) the churches in existence at the time of the writing, 2) they give us a historical account of the development of the church through the ages, 3) they picture the condition of the church today, and 4) they mirror the type of faith the individual believer ought to have in his or her own walk.

In this writing, we'll cover the church at Sardis and see how it relates to the current condition of the church, as well as look at it on a personal level to see how it applies to the individual believer.

Lying 50 miles north of Ephesus, Sardis the capital of Lydia under the opulent king Croesus, was a great trading center made wealthy by textile manufacturing and the making of jewelry. It also boasted the distinction of being the first place where modern coins were minted. Deemed impregnable by many, it was, nevertheless, overcome by Cyrus the Great in 546 B.C. and then again in 218 B.C. by Antiochus the Great. The Romans took it over in 133 A.D.

Sardis represents the reformation period of time in church history when brave men such as John Huss and Martin Luther defied the woman, Jezebel, some with their very lives, and

refused to give in on their belief that salvation comes through faith and not works. Their willingness to withstand the force of the papacy and papal beliefs and stand on the Bible, alone, brought about a great awareness in the church and split the Christian world into two factions Catholics and Protestants.

The common belief among the early reformers in the final authority of the Bible, and their unwillingness to budge from that, single-handedly brought about the reformation. When the Scriptures were searched the truth about salvation was discovered and they couldn't deny it.

In his salutation to the church at Sardis, the Lord greets them from "*he who has the seven spirits of God and the seven stars*". He acknowledges their works and the fact that they have a name that they live but are dead!

Something was still lacking, what was it? Could the seven spirits be a clue to what was missing in the church at Sardis? Possibly. Who and what are the seven spirits? Isaiah 11:1-2 gives a pretty clear understanding:

*"And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots:*

*And the (1) spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the (2) spirit of wisdom and (3) understanding, the (4) spirit of counsel and (5) might, the (6) spirit of knowledge and (7) of the fear of the LORD;"*

The Lord has given staff member/writer, Leroy Gardenier, great insight into what was possibly lacking and has noted on many occasion that the one, great sin of the Jews (From a



Christian standpoint, that is. For I believe that the Jews are God's chosen people and it was only through them that we Gentiles are grafted into the promises of God – someday to be as one) is that they have rejected Christ – the One whom God sent, and that the one, great sin of the church is that they have rejected the Holy Ghost – the one whom Jesus sent. Perhaps that is what is meant by Christ, in his salutation, when he says they have a name that they are alive, but are dead.

The reformists resurrected some basic truths that had long been buried in tradition and ritual, but lacked one main ingredient – the Holy Ghost!

Gordon Lindsey in his REVELATION SERIES offers us this:

“The church at Sardis sadly needed the ministry of the Holy Spirit in its fullness, and Christ was thus calling attention to the fact that He was able to restore this ministry. Seven is the number of completeness. The number seven mentioned (see Zech. 4:1-10) as the “eyes of the Lord” is an obvious reference to the fullness of the Spirit, of God's ministry. It is interesting to note that the number seven is associated with the Spirit of God in Zechariah 4:6, where the Lord says, “*Not by might, nor by power but by my spirit, saith the Lord of hosts.*” Zerubbabel had laid the foundation of the house of the Lord, amidst extreme difficulties. It seemed to be a task beyond human power to accomplish. But the Lord told him not to depend upon his own strength, and that the work of restoration of the temple would be accomplished by relying on the Spirit of God. Likewise, the works of the Sardis Church were in an unfinished and imperfect state. The task that

the reformers faced in restoring the apostolic church could only be accomplished by the power of the Spirit.”

The Protestant movement managed to break away from the Catholic church but didn't altogether lose some of the subtle trappings. They realized and vehemently denied that salvation was obtained through the practice of indulgences (paying money), which brought great wealth to the church, but the proclamation of justification by faith” lost its purity in the tangled web that religion weaves. Man possesses an innate desire to have full control and in not allowing the Holy Ghost to have full control, Protestantism has, in general, gone the way of the very thing it protested against – the Papal Church.

The basic foundation of the truths of the Bible were established and adhered to but such things as the Rapture and the second coming of our Lord, and who the Jews really are, as well as the integral part they play in man's salvation were totally neglected. This resulted in ignorance and apostasy that was only lifted in the last 150 years with the current revival of the Holy Ghost.

One example of this ignorance, for instance, is baptism. We, as born-again believers, know that baptism in and of itself does not save anyone. The blatant act of baptizing infants to bring them into life eternal in the Roman church is frowned upon and even abhorred by most Protestants, yet they embrace the practice of baptizing children at around the age of 13 or 14 justifying it by the fact that they are old enough to make a choice. Often these children are only partaking out of a sense of duty, at best, or peer pressure. But now, because they are baptized, by their own free

will, they are suddenly saved. (That's not to say that children of that age cannot be saved – indeed they can and are!).

The age-old problem that the foolish Galatians were reprimanded for by Paul had fallen upon the church at Sardis. The law was embraced and the Spirit was rejected .

So it is with modern day Protestant churches, and in this group I would also include most non-denominational churches that basically preach the born-again message. Although they appear to be alive by believing in salvation through justification and adhering to the Scriptures, their lack of spiritual power has rendered them abysmally defeated and downtrodden. The victory of a walk with Jesus in the power of the Holy Ghost is not attainable under the burden of the law. Even the “spirit-filled” churches of today that have a reputation for being alive are bogged down in ritual and tradition.

Christ tells the church at Sardis to “be watchful and strengthen the things that remain, that are ready to die.” These “things” being, I believe, the basic truths of the gospel, which is salvation through the shed blood of Jesus Christ and holiness through the power of the one whom He sent – the Holy Ghost.

The works of those at Sardis were lacking. In fact, they were found to be not perfect and the Lord admonished them to remember what they have heard and already received and to repent and watch. If they don't watch he will come unto them as a thief in the night. In general, the numbers that are represented by this church are many, but the numbers who responded to His warnings are small for the Lord refers to the “*few names even in*

*Sardis which have not defiled their garments*". For this, the Lord has deemed them worthy enough to walk with Him in white. To the overcome, he also promises that he will not blot their names out of the book of life, but He will confess their names to the Father and to the angels. This scene from Revelation 19.7-9 will be a reality:

*"Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.*

*And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God"*

Don't you want to be an overcomer? Don't you want to be clothed in white, washed by the blood of the Lamb and seated at His great marriage supper? Then listen to what the spirit is saying to the churches. Amen.

## 6. The Faithful Church

### The Church At Philadelphia

The following is the sixth in a series on the seven churches of Revelation that Christ addresses in the book of Revelation. The apostle John was in exile on the isle of Patmos when he was commanded by Christ, the Alpha and Omega as he calls Himself, to write what he saw in a vision and send it to the churches. John saw the Lord standing in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks, which represent the churches as we see in Revelation 1:13-19:

*“And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle.*

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*And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters.*

*And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp twoedged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength.*

*And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last:*

*I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for*

*evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.*

*Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter;”*

There are different schools of thought on the interpretation of the letters to the churches. Some say they apply only to those churches in existence at the time of the writing and others say they are strictly historical and do not apply to the church today. I believe the interpretation is four-fold. The letters represent: 1) the churches in existence at the time of the writing, 2) they give us an historical account of the development of the church through the ages, 3) they picture the condition of the church today, and 4) they mirror the type of faith the individual believer ought to have in his or her own walk.

In this article we will cover the church at Philadelphia and see how it relates to the current condition of the church. as well as look at it on a personal level to see how it applies to the individual believer.

The ancient city of Philadelphia is located some thirty miles southeast of Sardis in Lydia, was founded in the second century B.C, by Attalus Philadelphus and was so named to commemorate the brotherly love that existed between him and Eumenes. A terrible earthquake that destroyed Sardis in A.D. 17 also devastated Philadelphia. The Roman emperor, Tiberius remitted taxation for the period of rebuilding and in return the citizens of Philadelphian changed its named to Neo-Ceasarea meaning “New Town of Caesar”, but it was later changed back to Philadelphia.

Despite the spread of Islam across Asia Minor the city has remained steadfastly Christian to this day.

In the scheme of church history, Philadelphia along with Laodicea, the last of the seven churches addressed in Revelation, represents the church of the current age. Philadelphia is the invisible church, the weak church with little or no worldly strength. It is the only church besides the church at Smyrna that the Lord does not have a rebuke for. Why? Let's find out.

In His greeting to the Philadelphians, the Lord writes that He is holy, He is true and that He has the key of David which no man can open or no man can shut. What is this key of David? David is the only king of Israel whose heart was after God's own heart as we see in Acts 13:22 & 23; *"And when he had removed him, he raised up unto them David to be their king; to whom also he gave testimony, and said, I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfill all my will. Of this man seed hath God according to his promise raised unto Israel a Saviour, Jesus."*

It was through David's seed that all the promises of Israel came – namely, Jesus the Messiah. Indeed, the Lord opened the door for David to be king of Israel for he was the youngest of Jesse's eight sons. After seven of the sons were brought before Samuel, who had orders from the Lord to go to Jesse's house, for from among his sons a king was to be chosen, the Lord said unto him *"Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature: because I have refused him: for the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on*

*the heart.*” (1 Sam. 16:7) Asked if there were any more sons, Jesse said yes, the youngest who keeps the sheep in the fields. David was reaped from the field and when Samuel looked upon him the Lord said to him, “*Arise, anoint him: for this is he.*” And the Scriptures say that the Spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward. David He chose and David it was.

His a familiar story to students of the Scriptures, I know, but I relate it here to show the parallel between David and the Philadelphia church. David is the least of his brothers, the most unlikely to be the future king of Israel, but God saw his heart and chose him over all the others. Likewise, the Lord acknowledges the church of Philadelphia, the weakest one, for their works and the fact that they have not denied His name and have kept His word.

The difference between the last two churches addressed in Revelation and the first five is that they are churches representing current day churches. True, they were churches that existed at the time of writing, but in our line of study remember that Philadelphia represents one of two types of churches in prominent existence today, the other being Laodicea which we will cover next. Also, keep in mind that remnants of each of the seven churches have been in existence down through the ages to this current age.

As in the letter to the church at Smyrna (the only other faultless church), the Lord refers to those who are of the “synagogue of Satan” who say they are Jews and are not, but do lie. Roman’s chapter two verses 28 & 29 tell us what a Jew is; “For



he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.”

This verse is an affirmation of the Lord’s reply to Samuel when he was about to anoint David king of Israel as mentioned previously.

In this letter to the Philadelphians, He says he will make those of the “synagogue of Satan” to come and worship at their feet and I quote *“and to know that I have loved thee.”* This will be quite the scenario. But who are these Jews? As explained in a previous article on the church at Smyrna, we can safely assume that these represent Christians who say they are Christians but do lie. *“Ye shall know them by their fruits”*.

In these last days there are many who say they are Christ’s and use Christ’s name to perform all manner of abominations as we see in Matthew 7:21 & 22). *“Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.”* Take for instance the current, popular “laughing revival” or the growth in the so called spirit-filled churches who merely use the Lord’s name to have fun and party. Salvation is touched upon but repentance and holiness are rarely, if at all, preached from the pulpit. The word of God is

watered down and made ineffective. The vast majority of Christianity flock to church every Sunday to be touched by the Spirit of God in some way but go away with no real victory in their lives. The fundamentals have been sorely ignored or forgotten.

Search the scriptures for yourself and ask the Lord exactly who and what the “*synagogue of Satan*” is comprised of. Strive to be a member of the Philadelphia church and the promises of Revelation 3:10-12 will be yours.

The Lord assures those who have kept the word of his patience that he will keep them from the hour of temptation which shall come upon the world. This refers to the rapture of the bride also spoken of in 1 Thessalonians chapter four that will take place at an hour that no man knoweth. We can surmise from the promise given here in Revelation, it will most likely occur at the beginning or during the first half of the great seven year tribulation period. A warning is then issued by the Lord that He will come quickly and to hold fast that which you have, so that no man will take your crown. No doubt this is the crown of righteousness spoken of in II Timothy 4:8 “*Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.*”

To the overcomer is the additional promise of being made a pillar in the temple of God. The twelve tribes of Israel and the twelve apostles also share in this distinct honor of actually being part of God’s holy dwelling place – Heavenly Jerusalem, as

pictured in Rev 21:12&14. *“And had a wall great and high, and had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel.... And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.”*

The promises don't stop there for we are also told that He will write upon the overcomer the name of his God, the name of the city of His God and His, Jesus', new name.

Don't you want to be an overcomer? Don't you want to be a pillar in the eternal city of New Jerusalem? Then follow the advice in the Scriptures when it says, *“He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.”*

## 7. The Lukewarm Church

### The Church At Laodicea

The following is the seventh and last in a series on the seven churches of Revelation that Christ addresses in the book of Revelation. The apostle John was in exile on the isle of Patmos when he was commanded by Christ, the Alpha and Omega as he calls Himself, to write what he saw in a vision and send it to the churches. John saw the Lord standing in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks, which represent the churches as we see in Revelation 1:13-19:

*“And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle.*

*His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire;*

*And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters.*

*And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp twoedged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength.*

*And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last:*

*I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for*

*evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.*

*Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter;”*

There are different schools of thought on the interpretation of the letters to the churches. Some say they apply only to those churches in existence at the time of the writing and others say they are strictly historical and do not apply to the church today. I believe the interpretation IS four-fold. The letters represent: 1) the churches in existence at the time of the writing, 2) they give us an historical account of the development of the church through the ages, 3) they picture the condition of the church today, and 4) they mirror the type of faith the individual believer ought to have in his or her own walk.

In this article we'll cover the church at Laodicea and see how it relates to the current condition of the church, as well as look at it on a personal level to see how it applies to the individual believer.

Laodicea, the last of the seven churches addressed in Revelation, represents the visible church of the current age. As we saw in last month's article it is one of two that illustrate the condition of the current church age, the other being Philadelphia, the invisible church. Unlike Philadelphia, the weak church who possess little or no worldly strength, Laodicea is the epitome of worldly wealth and strength. It's quite possible this church is the end-times culmination of all those members of the previous churches, excluding Philadelphia, who haven't followed the advice the Lord gives to hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches and overcome the sin of that particular church. Perhaps

this church represents those who refuse to repent, refuse to overcome.

The city Laodicea in ancient Asia Minor was a city noted for its wealth and prosperity. It was destroyed by a great earthquake that also destroyed Sardis and Philadelphia. Because of its self-reliance Laodicea refused financial help from Rome that the others cities had accepted preferring to rebuild from its own resources. One of these resources, interestingly enough as we will see later on, was the production of black wool. Another noteworthy fact is that Laodicea was known for its medical school where spikenard for the treatment of eye and ear soars was manufactured. Banking also held a prominent place in society. One of the cities major weaknesses was the lack of a water supply, which, as a result of its wealth, was able to have piped in from the north.

Christ's greeting to the Laodiceans is from the Amen, the one who IS a faithful and true witness. He wastes no time in getting straight to the point of the whole letter when he tells them he knows their works and they are neither hot nor cold. In fact, he wishes they were one or the other, but because they are lukewarm he will spew them out of His mouth. So utterly distasteful are they that he has to spew them out. This, indeed, is a powerful depiction of how the Lord feels about such Christians.

Isn't it ironic that he goes on to tell them, who are widely known for their success in banking, black wool making and manufacturing of eyesalve, to buy from him gold tried in the fire, white raiment and to anoint their eyes with eyesalve that they

may see? This letter needs little explanation as its meaning is quite clear.

Of Laodicea Joseph Seiss wrote in his 19th century work, Apocalypse:

“And it is self-satisfied, boastful and empty. Having come down to the world’s tastes, and gained the world’s praise and patronage, the Laodiceans think they are rich and increased with goods and have need of nothing. Such splendid churches, and influential and intelligent congregations, and learned agreeable preachers. Such admirable worship and music! Such excellently manned and endowed institutions ... So much given for magnificent charities! Such an array in all the attributes of greatness and power. What more can be wanted? “

“And will it answer to say that all this is not largely and characteristically the state of things at this very hour? Can anyone scrutinize narrowly the professed church of our day, and say we have not reached the Laodicean Age? Is it not equally a fact that this selfsame Christendom of ours is the wretched, and the pitiable, and poor, and blind, and naked.”

These words written 100 years ago aptly describe the current condition of the Laodicean church of today. Just take a look around you. Opulence and greed have risen to high, high places in the church today. The spectacle so-called Christendom has made out of Christ is absolutely shameful. Take for instance Robert Schuller’s Crystal Cathedral or Jim Bakker’s kingdom on earth Heritage U.S.A. Not to mention the traditional churches

that have built up their kingdoms over hundreds of years with stately and grandiose structures.

Is there really a place for such things in Christ's true church? We only have the Scriptures to discern the answer to that. There certainly is no shortage of religion in the world today or no shortage of those who believe they abound with riches. These words to the Laodiceans should be heeded:

*“Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see.”*

In each letter Christ has a criticism and the current day Laodicean church braces itself against godly correction by declaring that loving Christians do not criticize one another. To point out indiscretions, worldly behavior, false doctrines and lack of faith is to be condemnatory and unchristian-like. But the spirit and essence of the seven letters is patently different. Christ is critical of His church and anyone who takes on His name. He is jealous of His father's name and reputation and will protect His father's house from corruption and infiltration of faithless and sinful deceivers who are only hearers of the word and not doers.

Yes, there are many who call themselves Christians who think they are rich but the Lord admonishes them to buy from Him, as we saw in the above Scripture, three things: The first is gold tried



in the fire that they may be rich. Rich in HIS glory for to be tried in the fire IS to be purified. I Peter 1:7 explains why we need to be tried in the fire: *“That the trial of your faith being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ”*

The second is white raiment, that we may be clothed in the righteousness of Christ. There are several references in the Scriptures referring to putting on something as if it were a piece of clothing and we are wise if we seek to put these things on (or in) our spiritual bodies. Paul so aptly writes concerning this “putting on” in the Epistles: *“Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering”* (Col. 3:12) *“And that ye put on the new man, which after God IS created in righteousness and true holiness.”* (Eph. 4:24)

The third item the Lord tells us to buy from Him is eyesalve that we might see. Again Paul writes to the Ephesians: *“That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints.”* (Eph. 1:18)

For us to purchase or acquire something we must first admit we lack something. This is the first step for the modern church to take, this is the first step in repentance. It is also the first step in overcoming. Until the modern Christian realizes he is poor in

spirit and in need of these things he will remain blinded, poor, naked, miserable and spiritually wretched. And make no mistake about it, Christ will spew them out like a poisonous brew.

Alas, God's mercy is all-encompassing and endures forever; for as many as he loves he also rebukes and warns them that they are to be zealous and repent. He stands at the door waiting to be invited in to sup with those who truly have repented and opened their hearts up to him. Not just in lip service, but in deeds and actions. The unshakable honor of sitting with Him and His father in His throne awaits those who overcome – even as He overcame. The disciples, John and James, came to Jesus and asked to sit With Him, one on the left and one on His right side in heaven. But Jesus told them that honor was prepared for the worthy ones by the Father. Here the promise is revealed. Those who come out of Laodicea and overcome their arrogance of worldly power and wealth “*to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God*” (Micah 6:8) will be enthroned with Christ.

Yes, Jesus had to overcome and we must overcome just as he did.

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This is where you can add appendices or other back matter.