

CHAPTER 3

3:1 And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write; These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead.

The ruins of Sardis are located in and near Modern Sart, in the Turkish province of Manisa. Ancient Sardis had the slope of Mount Tmolus to its south, and the city's acropolis was built up the side of the mountain with a wall around it and the city. To its north and west were the plains of the fertile valley of the Hermus (modern Gediz) river and to its east was the Pactolus river, which formed a natural wet moat and flowed into the Hermus river. This gave the city natural defenses from attackers and made its residents feel very safe.

The wealth and status of Sardis come from its proximity to the fertile agricultural fields surrounding it, its magnificent temple of Cybele, and its location on a main Roman thoroughfare. In addition to agriculture, the industry there was famous for its dyed wool and the gold extracted from the river Pactolus. It was seemingly a prosperous and safe place to live and work. Thus it appeared to be a flourishing metropolis yet had many problems not readily evident.

Its surrounding landscape, with its mountain, rivers, and plains gave its people a misleading sense of security. Yet it was invaded and conquered several times in its history. Apparently the safety and prosperity took its toll on the church since Jesus referred to it as dead.

Sardis was the capital of the Roman province of Lydia. Again, the Seven Spirits of God represent the omnipresence of the Holy Spirit. They are the "seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth" (Rev 5:6). See the more in-depth comments about the Seven Spirits of God at Rev 1:4. The seven stars are the angels or messengers at the seven churches (Rev 1:6)

Ephesus was the home of Diana or Artemis. Unlike Roman Diana, the goddess of the hunt, Artemis of Ephesus was identified with Cybele the Anatolian mother goddess who was also worshipped at Sardis. She had a consort named Attis, who, according to the myth, was resurrected from the dead. Artemis was considered to be the mother of all living, which comes from a corruption of Eve in the Canon of Scripture (Gen 3:20). In fact, Encyclopedia Britannica refers to her as the Great Mother of Gods. Compare this with the "Mother of God," which is a Roman Catholic title for the Virgin Mary. Artemis was uncreated or eternal, according to the myth. There is only one eternal, uncreated being and that is Yahweh God, Who is the head of the Trinity, or Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

The church had the reputation of being a true Christian assembly. But that was mostly in name only. We know that there were a few true Christians at Sardis from verse 3, but the majority were Christians in name only. Those members professed Christ but were not really in Christ; they were spiritually dead. Thus the church had a reputation for being alive, but was really dead.

This fits many churches in this post-modern age we live in in the West. The Cross is an offense and is offensive to the world (Rom 9:33; 1 Cor 1:18; Gal 5:11). It is a stumbling block for those that are not saved (Isa 8:14; Rom 9:33; 1 Pet 1:8). Since the cross is offensive to the multitudes, a church that is vibrant and alive will be offensive to the world. You may note that there are plenty of inoffensive churches on TV, on radio, and on preaching circuits that propound a gospel message that is open to all comers and presents a feel-good Christianity that is appealing to the world—a message that never mentions sin, repentance, or even the cross.

The idea of these teachers and preachers is to get more and more people to attend their "church" on the basis of a powerless gospel that has little to do with salvation, discipleship, spiritual growth, being a witness for Christ, etc. Such a philosophy has a broad appeal to the masses encouraging them to join a feel-good society. That is a society that makes no demands of piety, self-sacrifice, or unconditional, Godly love for others, nor does it condemn sin. That type of church has a broad appeal, and usually has thousands of members in attendance, yet it is a Christ-less assembly that is attractive to the world, but is a dead church. Sardis was just this type of church; inoffensive to the society around it; seemingly alive but dead.

True churches in the West today that preach Christ and Him crucified, that disdain worldliness and embrace true Christian piety, are not those churches with the mega-crowds. Their congregations usually small to medium, but the fact that they preach the true Gospel of taking up one's cross daily and following the Lord Jesus is offensive to many and keeps the crowds away. We in the West are in that era where "the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables" (2 Tim 4:3-4).

Churches in third world countries that are under constant threat of persecution, especially those in totalitarian societies that outlaw Christianity, are vibrant, living, and growing exponentially. They are truly living Christian lives and experiencing Christian joy even in the most horrid living conditions. Unfortunately when people living in prosperous societies are comfortable they can become complacent about Christ. That seems to be the case in the West where God has overwhelmingly blessed us. We take those blessings for granted. However, in third world countries where life is greatly more difficult, people are truly turning to Christ in large numbers.

(Rev 3:2) Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God.

In fairness, Jesus is giving this church a chance to repent and to confirm their remaining good works and turn away from their bad works. They are to watch that they stay attuned to the things of God. The word rendered strengthen is *στηριζον*, *steridzon*, from *στηρίζω*, *steridzo*, meaning to confirm, strengthen, make firm, or turn resolutely. Christ encourages them to turn resolutely to the good works they once had. They are to turn resolutely toward their good works and stick to them.

(Rev 3:3a) Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent.

They had received the true word and had gotten away from it. Jesus tells them to hold fast to those things and to repent of their turning away from them. What is the truth? It is The Word of God.

(Rev 3:3b) 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.

This warning is to those who do not remain faithful. If you are not ready, that is remaining faithful, you run the risk of Jesus coming when you are not ready—unexpected like a thief in the night. The remainder of this Revelation (through Rev 22:21) from Jesus Christ Himself, gives us the understanding of what it means to be ready for His Parousia (His return or second advent).

(Rev 3:4) Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy.

God has a remnant. Their good works are the white raiment they will wear (v. 5). White is the symbol of purity. Their purity, or righteousness, came to them from Christ. They had His righteousness in them (Php 3:9). These true believers in Christ were the true Christians in the church at Sardis.

(Rev 3:5) He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.

He who overcomes is the person who places his faith and trust in Christ for his salvation. It is not we that overcome, but Christ that has already overcome our sins by His work at Calvary and by the righteousness He credits to the accounts of the saved. We overcome because He is in us; His righteousness is in us; it is not of ourselves. This is a clear statement that our salvation is eternally secure. We who have overcome by placing our trust in Christ will never be blotted out of the Book of Life. Christ will confess us before the Father and the angels of Heaven. He will say, "Well done thy good and faithful servant" (Mat 25:21,23).

(Rev 3:6) He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

See the comments on Revelation 2:7. Those whose spiritual eyes and ears are open are those whose understanding has been opened by the Holy Spirit.

(Rev 3:7) And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write; These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth;

Philadelphia means fraternal brotherly love. It is a combination of two root words; the first is φίλος, *fee'lōs*, which means the love of a friend as opposed to ερως, *er'ōs*, sexual love, and αγαπη, *a-ga'pay*, unconditional love, like a father has for a son and like God has for us. The second is αδελφος, *a-del'phōs*, brother, from δελφους, *del'phus*, meaning womb. The deeper meaning to Philadelphia, is city of brothers of the same womb or mother (sisters are implied), or fraternal, familial brotherly love. The city, modern Alaşehir in Turkey, is still occupied to this day and in it there are ruins of ancient church buildings.

Ancient Philadelphia lay on the main road connecting Pergamum with Laodicea near the Cogamus River in the Manisa province. It sits on the site of ancient Decapolis. It was founded by Eumenes, king of Pergamum and reportedly named "Brotherly Love" for the brother of Eumenes because the King loved his brother. It is one of the two churches Jesus spoke nothing against. The other is Smyrna.

Jesus quotes what Isaiah wrote about Him in Isa 22:22: "And the key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder; so he shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open."

What is a key? It is basically something that opens or closes. It may be a physical instrument that is carried on a key chain, or it may be the piece of information that solves a puzzle or opens the understanding of an abstract concept. It can also be a list or a table containing information to interpret symbols in a document on a map, etc. There are several other definitions we do not need to consider, e.g. a music key.

Put simply a key is something that opens, closes, or discloses. How does that definition fit in with the Key of David?

David was a king, the king of all twelve tribes of Israel. God anointed him king (1 Sam 16:12). He was a man after God's own heart (1 Samuel 13:14) and he was the apple of God's eye (Psalm 17:8). He was the most prominent type (Appendix 3) of the Messiah. Many messianic prophecies were written about and by David. These two are important about him: (1) He was king, and (2) He was a type of Messiah.

In ancient times, the leader or ruler of a city or his appointed gatekeeper kept the key to its gate. Such keys were very large and were curved like a sickle and were not easily transported. They either had a shoulder strap attached to them or were carried over the shoulder in an ornamented sling known as a baldric. Most of the large gate keys were of wood and were heavy. The key to Ulysses storeroom, which Penelope took, was large and made of bronze with an ivory handle (Homer's *Odyssey*, Book XXI), and is an indication of keys in Homer's time (traditionally c. 1100 BC but perhaps as much as 300 years later). It opened a wooden door with wooden bolts.

Joseph Bondoni, a famous draftsman, traveler, archaeologist, and Egyptologist, described a key from Nineveh. He said that it was made of wood with iron pegs at one end to work the tumblers. It was very heavy, weighing just about as much as a man could carry by himself. He said that such keys ranged in size from fourteen inches to more than two feet. Such a key would have been more easily carried slung over the shoulder.

The person who carried the gate key to the gate and opened or closed it, either the ruler or his representative, carried it over his shoulder because of its size and weight. Of course locks and keys grew smaller as time passed. Since the person who carried the key was a powerful individual, the key became a mark of high office. Eventually the key was embroidered on the sash of individuals in high office. The sash with the emblem of the key was worn over the shoulder just as the key had originally been carried over the shoulder. The embroidered key emblem itself became the mark of high office. According to Adam Clarke, Aeschylus wrote (in Supplement 299) that the Priestess of Juno was the key-bearer of the goddess. This was the priestess' mark of office.

In fact, the key is sometimes an element in heraldry. One can see this in the military heraldry of Britain. The Castle and Key emblem are used in several coats of arms.

As we can see, a key was an emblem of authority and power. The key of David refers to the power and authority of David to rule over the complete kingdom, that is all twelve tribes. He was the king who unified the kingdom, drove out the enemies of Israel, and established a lasting peace through his strength and power. That is exactly the province of Messiah. He will unite and rule over all of God's kingdom in power, drive out His enemies, and establish everlasting peace and justice.

Jesus has the keys to the kingdom, the keys to the abyss, and the keys of death and hell. Let us consider this messianic prophecy from Isaiah:

And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will call my servant Eliakim the son of Hilkiyah: {21} And I will clothe him with thy robe, and strengthen him with thy girdle, and I will commit thy government into his hand: and he shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and to the house of Judah. {22} And the key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder; so he shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open. {23} And I will fasten him as a nail in a sure place; and he shall be for a glorious throne to his father's house. {24} And they shall hang upon him all the glory of his father's house, the offspring and the issue, all vessels of small quantity, from the vessels of cups, even to all the vessels of flagons. {25} In that day, saith the LORD of hosts, shall the nail that is fastened in the sure place be removed, and be cut down, and fall; and the burden that was upon it shall be cut off: for the LORD hath spoken it. (Isaiah 22:20-25)

Eliakim means "God will raise." Hilkiyah means "portion of Yehovah." Together they say "God will raise His portion." This literal reference to Eliakim the priest symbolically applies to the Messiah. The nail, Eliakim (Messiah), would be in place and then be removed. This applies to Messiah being cut off. Matthew Henry says that Christ is this nail and that he is permanent. When Messiah was cut off, His power actually increased, and His resurrection established his permanency.

The key of the house of David is David's power, authority, and permanency. God said that the House of David would have a king on the throne forever. This will culminate with Messiah's return in power and great glory. Messiah will ultimately rule on David's throne over the House of Jacob forever. The house of Jacob includes all of God's people. God's people are those who believe on His Son, the Messiah.

The key of David will be laid upon Christ's shoulder, indicating that He has been given the mantle and scepter of David. That is He is King of kings and Lord of lords. He will rule forever. Whatever he opens can never be closed and what He closes can never be opened. He will close the lake of fire after casting everything and everyone evil into it. He will close death and the place of the dead forever, meaning all who are not in the lake of fire will live forever because death is locked up and can never be loosed. He will open the Kingdom. He will open eternal life. He has opened the Most Holy place to all of his people so that they might have direct access to the Father. He will open the seven seals of the scroll and usher in the end of the old age and the beginning of the new, the Heaven age.

The key of David is the seal and symbol that all authority in heaven and in earth is given to the Son. The key of David is the symbol that God's power is vested in the Son. He is all powerful and no one and no thing can prevail against him. Not even death.

The key of David, given to the Christ, is our assurance "that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose", and "that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 8:28 & 38-39)

(Rev 3:8) I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name.

What does an open door indicate? Access. They have access to the Father through Jesus Christ. We all have that access if we believe on Him. Here is what Paul said about opened doors:

In 1 Cor 16:0, God opened a door and provided fertile ground for Paul's evangelism.

In 2 Cor 2:12, God provided an open door to spread the knowledge of Christ everywhere, like a sweet perfume.

In Col 4:4, God opened a door to give many opportunities to speak about His mysterious plan concerning Christ. Paul was imprisoned for that very reason.

Luke, In Acts 14:27, recorded that God opened the door of faith to the Gentiles.

If we ask Him, God will open similar doors to us as we tell others about the Good News. Though we have little political strength, little authority, and little influence, we have a Big God, who can open doors for us to minister to others. Our strength may be little by the world's standards, yet our inner strength comes from God.

During Roman persecutions, Christians were required to stand before counsels and renounce the name of Christ. The true believers stood firmly and did not renounce Him. Many died, were tortured, stripped of their rights, had their property taken, had their children taken, or some other dreadful circumstance, yet they took a stand for Christ. The church at Philadelphia was complimented because that stood firm and did not deny His Name.

(Rev 3:9) Behold, 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.

There were false teachers going from church to church claiming that to be saved, a Gentile Christian had to believe in Christ, but also had to participate in the Jewish ritual of circumcision, and thus had to follow the 613 Jewish laws. If not, they were not saved (Gal 2:4; Gal 4:29; Tit 1:10). These were known as Judaizers in Gal 2:14. The KJV phrase "live as do the Jews" in Gal 2:14, is the rendering of one Greek word, Ἰουδαΐζειν, Ioudaizein, those who Judaize or Judaizers (verb infinitive present active form of Strong's G2450).

Those Judaizers were the Synagogue of Satan. They were false teachers who crept in unawares and who claimed to be Christians but were not, were associated with the churches at Smyrna and Philadelphia. In what way they were associated is not stated. They may have become regular attenders of those churches or they may have been roaming teachers like the Paul and Barnabas. They claimed to be Christians (saved Jews) but were not. They taught a false teaching that claimed Jesus' work at Calvary was insufficient and that certain works, i.e. the 613 Jewish laws, were required to make Jesus' sacrifice to be sufficient. That is a damnable heresy that is still with us today. There are many churches that add works to belief in Christ in order to be saved. Any church that says you must believe in Christ and do something else in addition to that to be saved, like attending church only on Saturday, by wearing certain garments, eating or not eating certain foods, saying liturgies, giving alms, etc., etc. is a false church. Christ and Christ alone is sufficient for salvation without any works. [Excerpted from the Study, "The Synagogue of Satan," <http://www.bibleword.org/wp/synagogue-of-satan/4418>, © 2001 by Mark Oaks]

(Rev 3:10) 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.

What is the hour of temptation, which shall come "upon all the world?" I am afraid my answer may be less than satisfying to many. However, I will attempt to answer this question.

The word temptation actually means proving. This is the hour of proving that comes on all the world—including the church. Many teach this verse proves the pre-trib rapture theory. They say that Jesus will keep us from this hour of proving by rapturing us out before the period begins. Actually, He will keep us from this hour of proving just as He kept Shadrach, Meschach, and Abednego from harm in the fiery furnace. They were in the furnace, but Jesus kept them from harm there.

The word rendered 'whole world' in the KJV, οἰκουμένης, *oikoumenēs* is a singular feminine noun in the genitive case. The genitive case is a functional equivalent of a prepositional phrase in English. Here the preposition is 'upon' and the object of that preposition is 'the whole world.' In order to be in the genitive case, the prepositional phrase must modify another noun, in this case, the hour of temptation, or trial, or proving. The root word for the whole world, οἰκουμένη, *oikoumenē*, is the combination of two Greek words, one meaning 'to occupy' the other meaning 'the earth, world, or land area,' thus, the inhabited areas of the earth. It may also mean the world as administrative unit, like the Roman Empire.

This statement is further modified by the phrase, "to try them that dwell upon the earth," but what does this mean? Again, the word rendered earth is in the genitive case, on this occasion prepositional phrase 'upon the earth,' modifying 'them.' Who are they (them) that dwell upon the earth? They are the same people upon whom the hour of temptation will fall. Again, the word rendered earth can mean the globe, the world, or a land area. It can also mean the people inhabiting the earth. This leaves us in a predicament.

This indicates the people in the inhabited parts of the earth known to the Hellenist culture of Rome at the time of the writing of this letter to the churches. It also indicates those people living at the time of the trouble Jesus spoke about. It also refers to an event that was in the future at that time. The verse explicitly states that they will be kept through the hour of temptation, trial, testing, or proving, and not removing them from it. Who are they? The saints; those that overcome.

May we say that the church has been through many persecutions, testing and proving during its existence? Even today, many local churches in the world are going through these things. Some expositors cite the Roman persecutions, others persecution from the Roman Church, still others, the final time of tribulation on the earth at the end of the age. There is no real consensus among commentators.

The next verse suggests that this is the final troubles at the end of the age. Some believe that the church will be raptured before the Great Tribulation. Perhaps, but even the Great Tribulation is open to conjecture. Is it the time of the pouring out the vials of the wrath of God, or the tribulation of the saints seen throughout the Revelation? If it is the wrath of God being poured out on the earth, then yes, the church will be gone. If it is the tribulation of the saints that John speaks about in Revelation 12:17 where the dragon (Satan) makes war against the saints, then the saints are necessarily the church and the church will endure that hour of temptation.

The context of the Scriptures and of the eschatological teaching in the Old and the New Testaments, tell us that this is Satan's tribulation against the Saints, God's people, those that believe on Jesus Christ as Savior, both Jew and Gentile. It is not the Great Tribulation when God pours out the bowls or vials of His wrath on the world. At that time, the church will be in Heaven with Christ. This is the time spoken of in Revelation 12:7, when the beast out of the sea, which gets its power from Satan himself (Rev 13:4), is allowed to make war against the saints. Who are these saints? They are those that are saved by the blood of Jesus from every tribe, people, language, and nation. In other words all the inhabitants of the whole world. This includes the church (Rev 14:6).

Many local churches have times of testing and proving and Christ is with His people in each case. This has occurred throughout the history of the church and is still occurring today. If any of us who are believers in Christ go through such testing, Our Lord and Savior will see us through it. In fact, the church is living in a time of disbelief and Christians are targeted as intolerant, hateful, and worthy of disrespect, even exile from the community or even death. This type of thing is happening in all the continents in the world and this may be that hour of temptation Jesus spoke of. Here in the West it started with verbal harassment and now has become physical persecution—several Christians have been jailed by courts for sticking to their Christian beliefs. Others have been physically attacked by crowds opposed to Christian beliefs. In other parts of the world, Christians are tortured and killed because of their faith in Christ. Additionally, the rise of Islam is causing ever increasing persecution against Christianity.

The upshot of these last paragraphs is that the church is under tribulation at the very moment in most of the world. Jesus Christ is seeing us through these tribulations, just as He will in the end times.

(Rev 3:11-12) Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown. {12} Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, *which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name.*

What did Jesus mean when He said He would come quickly? It is time for us to take up that question. We have seen similar statements in chapter two verses five and sixteen. There Jesus was telling two of the churches that he would come and quickly take action against their false practices of losing their first love and following the doctrine of the Nicolaitians.

The Greek word used here is *ταχύ*, (*tak-oo'*) the adverb form of *ταχύς*, (*tak-oos'*), fleet, quick, speedy, etc. Thus *ταχύ* means quickly, speedily, or suddenly. In our chrrent verse, in Rev 2:5, "I will come unto thee quickly," and in Rev 2:16, "I will come unto thee quickly," are similar in that they all three translate the Greek word *ταχύ*. The context in all of these verses is that Jesus had reprovved the churches for some practices He had against them. He told them, in essence, correct those things or He will correct them Himself and very quickly. The context in these verses has nothing to do with His Return at the end of the age. They are specifically in the context of these churches in Roman Asia.

For example, Jesus told the church at Ephesus to repent of their offenses or He would come quickly at remove their candlestick or lampstand. We know from Rev 1:20 that the candlesticks of lampstands are the seven churches of Asia. Jesus was telling them that he would take away their church if they did not repent. Since the church is the assembly of Christians, Jesus would disband their assembly in a hurry.

In Rev 2:16 Jesus said if they did not repent He would fight against them, meaning the ones holding doctrine of the Nicolaitans, with the sword of His mouth, which is the word of God. That amounts to telling them He would chastise them for their false doctrines. The means He would use to chastise them are not listed, but they would come upon them hastily.

Here at the church in Philadelphia Jesus had nothing to reprove them of. In fact, He commended them for their good works and faithfulness. In this context He is encouraging them to remain faithful and keep up the good works until the end of the age because his return to earth at the Second Advent would be sudden and least expected like a thief in the night.

Philadelphia was situated in a plain between two mountains. The ancient ruins have two pillars standing in a gateway. Is it possible that Jesus' mention of a pillar in the verse refers either to pillars standing in the ancient city or to the mountains standing like pillars near the city? For an idea of what the pillars represent, compare Boaz and Jachin, which were pillars in Solomon's temple (1 Kin 7:21; 2 Chr 3:17). These pillars were literally simple columns to support the weight of the portico roof. Yet they also have spiritual meanings. Boaz means to be strong or lively, and Jachin means Yah will establish. Jachin was on the right and Boaz on the left and Hebrew reads left to right; from left to right, taken together, they mean Yah will establish strength. This was taken to mean that as long as the people revered Yehovah and followed His statutes and precepts, He would establish the strength of Israel. This He did until the people stopped following His will. A pillar is a major supporting structure in a building. Men wrote their names on pillars to commemorate their participation in the erection of that important structure.

Pillars are also used metaphorically of support and strength. For example, a pillar of the community is a person that supports his community in positive and uplifting ways. This person also adds strength to the community. As pillars, Christians will give support and strength to the eternal temple in heaven because of their works they did after salvation. Good works will add metaphorical pillars to Heaven while lack of good works will not. Though a saved person with no good works to his name will still enter heaven, he will not be one of the pillars there and those with good works will. If we do good works as believers in Christ, He will make us pillars in Heaven.

(Rev 3:13) He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

See the comments on Revelation 2:7. A spiritual ear, that is. A spiritual ear is an ear of discernment. The things that caused failures in those First Century churches are meant to us as examples and warnings of the things that can happen in modern churches. Let us take heed of those things and ask God to help us to discern such the failings in our present-day churches.

(Rev 3:14) And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God;

Laodicea was an important city of the Roman Empire. It had a great banking industry. It made black wool garments for export, and it had a medical school that manufactured an eye balm. Its water supply was delivered through aqueducts from miles away and the water was not cold in the warm months like it would have been had it come straight from a well or spring; it was rather lukewarm.

Some commentaries say the water was piped via aqueduct from Colossae where it was cold. Some archaeologists however, maintain that there is no physical evidence that the water came from Colossae. Instead, some assert that the water came from hot springs about five miles away. Either way, it was tepid by the time it reached Laodicea.

It is obvious that this was a prosperous city with many wealthy people there. The prosperity of the city apparently was felt in all classes. Therefore the people who comprised the church there had evidently taken their eyes off of Jesus and set them upon the prosperity of Laodicea.

Amen (אָמֵן) is a Hebrew word meaning truth. When you say amen, you are really saying "it is truth," not "the end" as some feel. Jesus Christ is the Truth (the Way, the Truth, and the Life—John 14:6). In the KJV, when Jesus says, "Verily, verily," He is literally saying "amen amen," which is "truly, truly." Thus Christ, being the Truth (Joh 14:6), is also the Amen.

(Rev 3:15) I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot.

There may be nothing worse than an equivocator. A middle of the road approach to Christ is spiritual suicide. Because Jesus said: (Mat 12:30) "He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad" (also in Luke 11:23). You must make up your mind to either accept Him or reject Him. There is no other choice for if you don't accept Him, you reject Him by default. Sitting on the fence is rejecting Him.

This is a reference to the fact that Laodicea's water supply was lukewarm, not cold like fresh drinking water from a well or spring and not hot like a hot spring of water. Jesus wants us hot or cold and not in between. Either serve Him or get out of the way; don't equivocate. Why? Next verse . . .

(Rev 3:16) So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.

If you take a mouthful of water and are expecting cool drinking water and get lukewarm water instead, your reaction is to spew it out. The same goes for hot. If you take a drink of coffee and are expecting hot coffee and you get lukewarm coffee, your first instinct it to spew it out. Need I say more? Jesus is saying, in effect, "Because you are neither hot nor cold, I will have no part in you, nor you in Me."

(Rev 3:17) 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:

In c. 60 AD, Laodicea was seriously damaged by an earthquake. Because they were so prosperous and self-sufficient, they refused Rome's monetary help and rebuilt their own city. In this verse, Jesus is referencing this fact with the words 'rich,' 'increased in goods,' and 'have need of nothing.' They were so self-sufficient that they did not even realize they were wretched.

Jesus is making an allusion to the fact that the Laodiceans had successful textile, banking and eye balm industries. In worldly goods they were doing well, but they were failing miserably at spiritual things. Jesus said in Mat 6:19-21, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: {20} But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: {21} For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." This was the mistake of the Laodiceans. They were laying up treasures upon earth, but not in Heaven. Unfortunately, this is the condition of the contemporary church in the West today. For the most part, we in the West assume that we are rich, increased with goods (or materialism) and have need of nothing. Yet we are wretched, poor, blind, and naked. As I wrote above, "for the most part," for not everyone in the West is like that.

God always has a remnant, and He does in the West as well. There are churches that preach the word; are instant in season and out of season; they reprove, rebuke, and exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine (1 Tim 4:2). They understand that our security and prosperity is temporal, and mostly illusory. Those assemblies are depending on God for their prosperity and security. They have no misconceptions about the way things actually are in the West. They get that we are just like the Laodiceans.

(Rev 3:18) 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.

Gold refers to their banking industry; white raiment refers to their textile industry, anointing their eyes refers to their pharmaceutical industry. This verse is targeted toward righteous acts, tried in the fire, and woven into fine linen to be worn by the bride of Christ.

They were admonished to rid themselves of their worldliness and do those spiritual works that would be refined in the fire at the Judgment Seat of Christ (2 Cor 5:10): "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire." (1Cor 3:12-15).

The Greek word for Christ, Χριστός, *Christos*, comes from the word χρίω, *chriō*, which means to anoint. Christ is the Anointed One and the idea here is that the Laodiceans should focus and keep their eyes upon Christ, whom they should serve. They need to get their eyes off of the world and onto Christ and the truth. That is the import of this verse.

(Rev 3:19) As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.

If Jesus does not chastise you when you are wrong, then you better get right with Him. He rebukes and chastises those he loves; are you one of those? Church, get your eyes off the world, and focus your spiritual sight on Jesus Christ.

(Rev 3:20) Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.

When Jesus stands at the door and knocks, who must take action? Jesus does not plead for people to come to Him. He knocks, but we must open the door. If we open the door, we will sup with Him on spiritual food, the Word of God. This is not a license for us to beg people to receive Christ, nor a license to twist arms. We don't need to beg or twist arms; those things push people away from Christ. This is a call for righteousness and good works in the name of Christ. We need to allow Christ to be among us, not just in Sunday Morning church service, but every day of our lives.

(Rev 3:21-22) To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne. {22} He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

See the comments on Revelation 2:7. Overcome by remaining faithful to Christ. If your spiritual eyes and ears are open, you will understand. This is the last letter written to the churches. Some feel that each of these letters applies to a specific historical period of the church. Some say they refer to specific churches or denominations throughout the ages. I believe these letters apply to every age and that in every age, you could find churches fitting these descriptions. The Laodicean church seems to fit most churches in the West today as I write.

Many commentators assign these "church ages" to the seven churches, with minor differences. These are listed as a convenience to those who wish to know the identities of the supposed church ages:

Ephesus:	The Apostolic Church
Smyrna:	The Church of the Roman Persecution
Pergamum:	The Church of the Age of Constantine
Thyatira:	The Church of the Dark Ages
Sardis:	The Church of the Reformation
Philadelphia:	The Church of the Great Missionary Movement
Laodicea:	The Church of the Apostasy

As Christians, we should heed the admonitions Christ gave to all seven churches. The faithfulness of the churches and their weaknesses are an excellent way to assess our own faithfulness and our own weaknesses. They were written in God's Word for a purpose. That purpose is defined in 2 Tim 3:16-17, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works." This applies to all Christians, men, women, youth, and children.