

The Study of the Book of Revelation

The Seven Churches

Chapter 3

Revelation 3:1-6 **Church #5 - SARDIS** Represents the Sleeping Church of the Post Reformation Period. 1565 to 1798 A.D.

Revelation 3:1-6

*“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.** 2 Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for **I have not found thy works perfect before God.** 3 Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. **If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.** 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. 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.** 6 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.”*

The Testimony of Jesus to Sardis

Praise: A few in Sardis have not spoiled their garments. Rev. 3:4

Rebuke: Sardis has the name of being alive, but she is dead. Her works are unfinished before God.

Sardis's works are not perfect before God.

Revelation 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.**”*

The Word "Perfect" in Verse 2 is *PEPLEROMENA* in the Greek. It means "not having been completed."

Key Point:

The Church of Sardis is the post-Reformation church that failed to advance in new truth and light. *“The Protestant churches of America—and those of Europe as well—so highly favored in receiving the blessings of the Reformation, failed to press forward in the path of reform. Though a few faithful men arose, from time to time, to proclaim new truth, and expose long-cherished error, the majority, like the Jews in Christ's day, or the papists in the time of Luther, were content to believe as their fathers had believed, and to live as they had lived. Therefore religion again degenerated into formalism; and errors and superstitions which would have been cast aside had the church continued to walk in the light of God's Word, were retained and cherished. Thus the spirit inspired by the Reformation gradually died out, until there was almost as great need of reform in the Protestant churches as in the Roman Church in the time of Luther. There was the same worldliness and spiritual stupor, a similar reverence for the opinions of men, and substitution of human theories for the teachings of God's Word.”*

Great Controversy, p. 297

Today, evangelicals embrace apostate Romanism in the Ecumenical Movement.

Revelation 3:7-13

*“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; 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.** 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.** 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. 11 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. 13 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.”*

On the heels of the Protestant Reformation came the period of brotherly love with the church of Philadelphia. A great revival among the Protestants during that time brought close bonds between the different bodies of believers. At this time, members adhered more closely to the dictates of Scripture than ever before or since. Taylor G. Bunch describes it this way, in his book, *The Seven Epistles of Christ*. p. 198 *“The arrested Reformation was started again. Dead Christendom was mightily stirred by great spiritual revivals bringing renewed life and love and unity. The church entered upon a program of world evangelism to fulfill the great commission. May 31, 1792, William Carey preached his memorable sermon on foreign missions from Isaiah 54:2, 3. This date is reckoned as the birth of modern missions, and if an exact date can be chosen it may also mark the beginning of the Philadelphian period of the universal church. The revival movement spread through all denominations and broke down many of the barriers that had hitherto separated the different religious sects. The Wesley’s and Whitefield had an important part in this great movement that ushered in the era of brotherly love.”*

The Testimony of Jesus to Philadelphia

Praise: They have kept his word and refuse to deny his name even though they are weak.
Rev. 3:8

Rebuke: No Rebuke is Given.

Observation #1

The open door for the Philadelphians is the door to the Most Holy Place in heaven that Jesus opened at the Judgment in 1844.

Revelation 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.**”*

Revelation 11:18, 19

*“And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and **the time of the dead, that they should be judged**, and that thou shouldst give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great; and shouldst destroy them which destroy the earth. **And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament:** and there were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail.”*

Observation #2

The Philadelphian Church depends upon God’s power and salvation, not upon their own efforts. They have **“little strength”** of their own

Revelation 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.**”*

Observation #3

The Philadelphian Church is told to hold on to their faith.

Revelation 3:10, 11

*“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. **11 Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.**”*

Observation #4

The Philadelphians are pillars in God's Temple.

Revelation 3:12

*“**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.**”*

Key Point:

The Ancients believed that the roof of a temple represented Heaven, and the floor represented the earth. So a pillar connected Heaven and earth. Therefore, **the Philadelphians have a direct relationship with God.**

Observation #5

The Philadelphians have the *“Name of the New Jerusalem”* written on their foreheads. That *“Name”* is identified in **Ezekiel 48:35**

Ezekiel 48:35

*“It was round about eighteen thousand measures: and the name of the city from that day shall be, **The LORD is there.**”*

Observation #6

The Name Philadelphia in Greek means "*brotherly love.*" The Philadelphians love Jesus, and because of his love, they love each other.

Note: The following verses are just some of the ones that teach that true followers of Christ should demonstrate Love One for Another.

John 13:34-35 [Christ Speaking]

*"A new commandment I give unto you, That ye **love one another**; as I have loved you, that ye **also love one another.** By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye **have love one to another.**"*

John 15:12, 17 [Christ Speaking]

*Vs. 12 "This is my commandment, That ye **love one another**, as I have loved you."*

*Vs. 17 "These things I command you, that ye **love one another.**"*

1 Thessalonians 4:9.

*"But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to **love one another.**"*

1 John 3:11, 23

*Vs. 11 "For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that **we should love one another.***

*Vs. 23 "And this is his commandment, That **we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another**, as he gave us commandment."*

1 John 4:11-12

*"Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also **to love one another.** No man hath seen God at any time. **If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us.**"*

The ground was prepared during this period for all churches to participate in the Great Advent Awakening. Just before 1798, events in the sun, moon, and stars aroused saints and sinners alike with a sense of urgency and a desire to prepare for the end of the world. The study of the Bible prophecies gave momentum to this revival, according to Bunch: "*Church leaders around the world began the study of the prophetic word, and almost simultaneously came to the unanimous conclusion that the end of the reign of sin was near and that Jesus would soon return in fulfillment of His promise. In fact, no other conclusion is possible from the study of Bible prophecy. This prophetic investigation centered on the books of Daniel and the Revelation, and the great sermon of Christ in answer to the question of the disciples, 'When shall these things be? And what shall be the sign of Thy coming, and of the end of the world' as recorded in Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21*" Bunch goes on to list the fulfilled end-time prophecies that startled even the ungodly. "*On May 19, 1780, the sun was supernaturally darkened in fulfillment of prophecy, and the predicted shower of falling meteors followed on the night of November 13, 1833. Thousands of ministers of many denominations began to proclaim the message of the Second Advent, and all Christendom was stirred. Based on the 2300-year time prophecy of Daniel 8, and 9, many came to the conclusion that Christ would return in 1843, and later, in 1844. There swept over the Christian world the greatest revival since Pentecost and early apostolic times. The believers in the Advent hope were brought into a state of brotherly love and unity and godliness such as had not been known since the beginning of the Christian Era. It has been suggested that the Philadelphian*

period began in 1798 with the close of the 1260 years of papal domination, and reached to the close of the 2300-year time prophecy in 1844, when the investigative judgment began in heaven and the Laodicean state of the church was ushered in by the disappointment.”

Revelation 3:14-22 Church #7 – LAODECIA The self-righteous church – 1844 A.D.-End

The Church of Laodicea represents a self-righteous group of Adventist believers who no longer walk with Jesus. 1844 to the End. They have knowledge of the truth, but become “prideful” in the “light they have”, and no longer walk humbly with Jesus, in Love for one another - instead, walking in “self-righteousness”.

Revelation 3:14-22

*“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; **15** I know thy works, that **thou art neither cold nor hot**: I would thou wert cold or hot. **16** So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. **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: **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. 19** As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent. **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. 21** 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.”*

Laodicea was known for its rich farms and extensive banking system. When the city was destroyed by an earthquake in 60 A.D. the citizens refused help from the Roman government because they rebuild it with their own money. Laodicea is world famous for its thermal springs, attracting thousands to bathe in its lukewarm water. It began the trade center for glossy black wool and for black garments, both of which were exported to many countries. The city was also known for the famous Phrygian eye powder, and as a strong financial center, with several great banking houses that attracted much wealth. All of this shows the self-sufficiency of the people of Laodicea. The difficulty with self-sufficiency is that one feels no need for Christ. How can Christians depend upon God when they think they are capable of handling everything by themselves? This is the problem with Laodicea. It is tragic that the Philadelphian church of brotherly love was followed by Laodicea, the lukewarm church. Prosperous people don't feel the need for supernatural intervention. Riches give one a sense of self-righteousness; they must be doing well because God is blessing them. Laodicea is divided between the world and Christ. Bunch puts it this way, “*It is too religious to entirely cast off the name of Christ, and too worldly to take a firm and united stand for Him. There is much pretension but little genuine Christianity. Works are plentiful, but faith is scarce; profession is abundant, but there is but little spiritual life to correspond.*”

The Seven Epistles, p. 200, Taylor Bunch

The Testimony of Jesus to Laodicea

Praise: No Praise is Given

Rebuke: They think they are strong and rich, but they are really poor, blind, and naked. He threatens to vomit these lukewarm Christians out of his mouth. Rev. 3:15-17

Key Point 1: “*buy of me gold tried in the fire*”

Job 23:10

*“But he knoweth the way that I take: when **he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.**”*

Psalms 66:10

*“For thou, O God, hast proved us: **thou hast tried us, as silver is tried.**”*

Daniel 12:10

*“**Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried...**”*

1 Peter 1:7

“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.”

Key Thought:

Just as gold and silver are heated up over a fire to purify it, by removing the impurities, so the Lord allows the trials of our lives to purify our faith and trust in Him. He promises that He *“will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.”* Just as He stood in the fire with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, He will be with you through the trial and temptation. He will help you to be an overcomer!

Key Point 2: *“buy of me...**white raiment**, that thou mayest be clothed”*

Christ admonishes these believers to obtain from Him *“white raiment.”* This represents *“Christ’s Robe of righteousness.”* He shed His blood on Calvary to make this possible for us. We can only obtain this *“Robe”* THROUGH CHRIST. He wants to put His character in all of His followers, so they will have His love, compassion, and mission. He says, *“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.”*

Revelation 7:9,13-15

*Vs. 9 “After this I beheld, and, lo, **a great multitude**, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands;*

*Vs. 13-15 “And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and **have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.** Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them.”*

1 John 1:9

*“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to **cleanse us from all unrighteousness.**”*

Psalms 51:7, 9-10.

*Vs. 7 “Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: **wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.**”*

Vs. 9-10 "Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me."

When we confess our sins, Jesus promises to forgive us and cleanse us from all unrighteousness! Once again, we see His plan to clean our lives up and give us His purity and righteousness. God's people will surrender to Him and allow Him to transform their lives, giving them His robe of righteousness. He says of them, "*And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God.*" (Rev. 14:5) and "*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 the saints.*"

Key Point 3: "*anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see.*"

The anointing of our eyes with "eyesalve" is the work of the Holy Spirit opening our eyes to see, understand and love the Truth.

John 16:13

"Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, [the Holy Spirit] is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come."

Key Point 4: "*Behold, I stand at the door, and knock:*"

*"The message to the Laodicean church is applicable to all who have had great light and many opportunities, and yet have not appreciated them. There are a large number of professing Christians who do not really follow Jesus. They do not bear the cross by proper self-denial and self-sacrifice. Although making a great profession of being earnest Christians, they weave into the fabric of their character so many of the threads of their own imperfections that the beautiful pattern is spoiled. Of them Christ says: "You boast of being rich and increased with supposed spiritual attainments. In reality you are neither cold nor hot, but are filled with vain conceit. Unless converted, you cannot be saved; for you would mar heaven with your unsanctified wisdom. I cannot endorse your spirit and your work. You do not act according to the divine Example. You are following a pattern merely of your own invention. Because you are lukewarm, I must spue you out of My mouth." The True Witness has said, "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." Jesus is going from door to door, standing in front of every soul temple, proclaiming, "I stand at the door, and knock." As a heavenly merchantman, He opens His treasures. . . "Open your doors," says the great Merchantman, the possessor of spiritual riches, "and transact your business with Me. It is I, your Redeemer, who counsels you to buy of Me." The counsel of the True Witness is full of encouragement and comfort. **The churches may yet obtain the gold of truth, faith, and love, and be rich in heavenly treasure.**" Faith I Live By, p. 306*

In the Laodicean church era, which leads us up to the second coming of Jesus, we find Jesus standing on the outside looking in. He is standing at the door of our heart and knocking! He is knocking, because He will not force His way into your life. But, He does stand at the door pleading for you to open the door and let Him in. He wants to come in, forgive your sins and cleanse you from all unrighteousness, thus giving you His robe of righteousness.

Key Thought:

Without the understanding of the truth of the prophetic message, we may not see the clear signs of His soon return that are happening all around us, and thus not be ready for Christ’s return. However, if we see and understand the prophetic message, and yet become prideful or self-righteous, “because of the ‘greater light’ that we feel we possess, if we lose the humble, servant-style Love for One Another, and for others, that Jesus taught, we also become unfit - neither cold nor hot, but “lukewarm”.

The Challenge: Will we answer Jesus’ call and open the door of our heart to Him?

The names of the seven churches are symbolic of the church in different periods of the Christian Era. The number 7 indicates completeness, and is symbolic of the fact that the messages extend to the end of time, while the symbols used reveal the condition of the church at different periods in the history of the world. AA 585

SUMMARY of THE SEVEN CHURCHES

<u>Church</u>	<u>Time Period</u>	<u>Represents</u>	<u>Key Feature</u>
1. Ephesus	31-100 AD	Apostolic Church	Lost First Love
2. Smyrna	100-323 AD	Persecuted Church	Persecution & Apostasy
3. Pergamous	323-538 AD	Apostasy Church	Apostasy from within
4. Thyatira	538-1565 AD	Papal Church Time	Dark Ages
5. Sardis	1565-1798 AD	Sleeping Church	Post Reformation
6. Philadelphia	1798-1844 AD	Missionary Church	Loving Church
7. Laodicea	1844 AD-End	Self-Righteous Church	Self-Righteous