

Week 2

– What Is –

the 7 churches

Revelation 2-3

Identifying the Seven Churches



Interpretive Options

1. The churches are historic Churches
2. The churches are qualities of the universal church
3. The churches are epics in the church age

Ephesus – The Apostolic Church

Smyrna – The Persecuted Church

Pergamum – The Constantine (State) Church

Thyatira – The Middle Ages

Sardis – The Reformation Church

Philadelphia – The Missions Church¹

Laodicea – The waning (Apostate) Church

Ephesus

"To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: These are the words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand and walks among the seven golden lampstands: I know your deeds, your hard work and your perseverance. I know that you cannot tolerate wicked men, that you have tested those who claim to be apostles but are not, and have found them false. You have persevered and have endured hardships for my name, and have not grown weary. Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken your first love. Remember the height from which you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first. If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place. But you have this in your favor: You hate the practices of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God." (Revelation 2:1-7, NIV)¹

SIGNIFICANCE

Christ is... Intimately involved and firmly sustaining His Church

Their Praise – vv. 2-3

Zealous Worship

Diligence to Truth

Perseverance in the Right.

Their Warning

A loss of feeling

A loss of leadership

Their Promise

Eternal Life

¹ *The Holy Bible : New International Version*. 1996, c1984. Zondervan: Grand Rapids

Heaven

What is Paradise? The ancient Persians maintained beautiful gardens and oriented them in large squares with and intersecting path from the four major compass points. It is said these *Paradises* represented the Garden of Eden and the four paths the rivers that flowed through it. From this we derive the common word for heaven, the perfect garden or **Paradise**.

Smyrna

" *To the angel of the church in Smyrna write: These are the words of him who is the First and the Last, who died and came to life again. I know your afflictions and your poverty—yet you are rich! I know the slander of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test you, and you will suffer persecution for ten days. Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes will not be hurt at all by the second death.* " (Revelation 2:8-11, NIV)

SIGNIFICANCE

Christ is... The eternal Savior

Their Praise – vv. 9-10

Spiritual wealth in a hostile environment

Emperor Worship – the first city to do so

Jewish hatred – Jews pillaged and tortured Christians knowing they were outlaws

Their Warning – One of the two churches with no warnings

Their Promise – v. 11

Eternal life is certain

Pergamum

"To the angel of the church in Pergamum write: These are the words of him who has the sharp, double-edged sword. I know where you live—where Satan has his throne. Yet you remain true to my name. You did not renounce your faith in me, even in the days of Antipas, my faithful witness, who was put to death in your city—where Satan lives. Nevertheless, I have a few things against you: You have people there who hold to the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to entice the Israelites to sin by eating food sacrificed to idols and by committing sexual immorality. Likewise you also have those who hold to the teaching of the Nicolaitans. Repent therefore! Otherwise, I will soon come to you and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will give some of the hidden manna. I will also give him a white stone with a new name written on it, known only to him who receives it." (Revelation 2:12-17, NIV)

SIGNIFICANCE

Christ is... The true judge

Their Praise – v. 13

Faithfulness in a pagan society

The throne of Satan is probably the temple built to Zeus

Faithfulness in light of martyrdom

Antipas was the first martyr of Asia said to have been slowly roasted in a copper kettle by agents of Domitian

Their Warning – v. 14-16

The worship of fertility – the teaching of Balaam

Moral laxness – Nicolaitan-ism

Their Promise – v.17

Justification

Thyatira

" *To the angel of the church in Thyatira write: These are the words of the Son of God, whose eyes are like blazing fire and whose feet are like burnished bronze. I know your deeds, your love and faith, your service and perseverance, and that you are now doing more than you did at first. Nevertheless, I have this against you: You tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess. By her teaching she misleads my servants into sexual immorality and the eating of food sacrificed to idols. I have given her time to repent of her immorality, but she is unwilling. So I will cast her on a bed of suffering, and I will make those who commit adultery with her suffer intensely, unless they repent of her ways. I will strike her children dead. Then all the churches will know that I am he who searches hearts and minds, and I will repay each of you according to your deeds. Now I say to the rest of you in Thyatira, to you who do not hold to her teaching and have not learned Satan's so-called deep secrets (I will not impose any other burden on you): Only hold on to what you have until I come. To him who overcomes and does my will to the end, I will give authority over the nations— 'He will rule them with an iron scepter; he will dash them to pieces like pottery'— just as I have received authority from my Father. I will also give him the morning star. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. "*
(Revelation 2:18-29, NIV)

SIGNIFICANCE

Christ is...The GOD who crushes evil

Their Praise – v.19

Fruitful work (Thyatira produced goods and services for the entire empire)

Diligence of that work

Their Warning – vv.20-28

Reject mysticism

Repent of immorality

Hold on to what is good

Their Promise v.29 – Authority to do good

Sardis

"To the angel of the church in Sardis write: These are the words of him who holds the seven spirits of God and the seven stars. I know your deeds; you have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead. Wake up! Strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have not found your deeds complete in the sight of my God. Remember, therefore, what you have received and heard; obey it, and repent. But if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what time I will come to you. Yet you have a few people in Sardis who have not soiled their clothes. They will walk with me, dressed in white, for they are worthy. He who overcomes will, like them, be dressed in white. I will never blot out his name from the book of life, but will acknowledge his name before my Father and his angels. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches." (Revelation 3:1-6, NIV)

SIGNIFICANCE

Christ is...The preserver and animator of the church

Their Praise - none

Their Warning – vv.2-5

Live up to your reputation

Build up what little health you have

Listen up to what you know and change

Wake up or you will miss all of the blessing God has

Their Promise – God will preserve those who are His

Philadelphia

"To the angel of the church in Philadelphia write:

These are the words of him who is holy and true, who holds the key of David. What he opens no one can shut and what he shuts no one can open. I know your deeds. See, I have placed before you an open door that no one can shut. I know that you have little strength, yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name. I will make those who are of the synagogue of Satan, who claim to be Jews though they are not, but are liars—I will make them come and fall down at your feet and acknowledge that I have loved you. Since you have kept my command to endure patiently, I will also keep you from the hour of trial that is going to come upon the whole world to test those who live on the earth. I am coming soon. Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take your crown. Him who overcomes I will make a pillar in the temple of my God. Never again will he leave it. I will write on him the name of my God and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which is coming down out of heaven from my God; and I will also write on him my new name. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. (Revelation 3:7-13, NIV)

SIGNIFICANCE

Christ is... The decisive and perfect worker

Their Praise – vv. 9-13

The promotion of opportunity

Philadelphia connected three provinces of Turkey

In the face of persecution they were using their position to further the gospel

This opportunity is more important because they are a small church

God promises relief

Their Warning - none

Their Promise – vv.11-13

Prominence

Permanence

Protection

Laodicea

" *To the angel of the church in Laodicea write: These are the words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God's creation. I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! So, because you are lukewarm—neither hot nor cold—I am about to spit you out of my mouth. You say, 'I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.' But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked. I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see. Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest, and repent. Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me. To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.*" (Revelation 3:14-22, NIV)

SIGNIFICANCE

Christ is... The final word

Their Praise - none

Their Warning – vv.15-21

Uncommitted

Unconcerned

Laodicea was a wealthy town that had built its position on banking and medicine insulating them from all of the economic hardships of the world. Among its trade were gold and a special eye salve.

Undisciplined

Their Promise - Completeness