

THROUGH THE BIBLE STUDY

REVELATION 2-3

There are 340,000 Christian churches in the US. And most of them have their own unique flavor. Christianity and church-life in America seems to be very diverse.

We assume churches are like ice cream - they come in multiple flavors - *but that's not how Jesus sees us!*

I believe Revelation 2 and 3 teaches there are only seven types of churches and seven sorts of members.

In Chapter 1, Jesus routed His Revelation through the Apostle John to seven of the churches in Mediterranean Asia - *what is today, Western Turkey.*

Thus, Chapters 2-3 are nicknamed, *"Talking Turkey."*

In 1:11, Jesus instructed John, *"What you see, write in a book and send it to the seven churches which are in Asia: to Ephesus, to Smyrna, to Pergamos, to Thyatira, to Sardis, to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea..."*

There were other churches in the Asian province - at least a dozen - but Jesus chose to address these seven. So, the question arises, *"Why did Jesus select these churches, and why are they listed in this order?"*

First, realize these seven cities were all connected in a horse-shoe shape by Roman roads. Historians suggest these cities were stops on the postal route.

Mail came by sea to the port of Ephesus. From there, the Pony Express followed a circuit... north along the coast to Smyrna and Pergamos - then the route swung inland, east to

Thyatira - afterward it turned south, through Sardis, and Philadelphia - arriving in Laodicea.

All seven cities were within 50 miles of each other.

These were cities with actual churches - that had real people with real hardships and real blessings... And Jesus writes to each church a customized letter.

In the Scriptures, the number “**seven**” speaks of *spiritual perfection and completion*. I believe these seven churches are a representative sample of ALL churches - *at that time, through the ages, even today*.

There are 340,000 congregations in America, but there are really only 7 types of churches and Christians.

You can find you - and me - and us - in these letters.

In fact, even the order these letters were delivered is no accident. There was more to it than making it easy on the mailman. The spiritual postage these letters carried was enough to send them far into the future.

Amos 3:7 is a provocative verse. It relays a divine principle, “**Surely the Lord GOD does nothing, unless He reveals His secret to His servants the prophets.**”

In essence, God keeps us in the loop. *He’s upfront* about what *He’s up to...* From creation to Christ, **the OT** records God’s workings and ways... **The Gospels** recount the earthly ministry of Jesus... **Acts** is the first 30 years of the church... **Revelation** is about the end times... But what about the 2000 years between Acts and now, **the Christian era?** *Has God commented?*

I've heard it said, "A good mailman always keeps you posted." And based on Amos 3:7, I believe God has recorded the Church Age in advance - *in these letters*.

As we study them, you'll see how each one bears a resemblance to a succeeding era of church history...

From **Ephesus**, the Early Church - to **Smyrna**, the Church of the 2nd and 3rd centuries - to **Pergamos**, the Byzantine Church - then **Thyatira**, the papal church of the Middle Ages - on to **Sardis**, and the churches of the Protestant Reformation - through **Philadelphia**, and the missionary zeal of the 19th century - down to **Laodecia**, and the modern Church...

You can trace church history through these seven churches. Author Joseph Seiss, sums it up, "The churches of all time are comprehended in seven..."

Chapter 2 begins, "To the angel of the church of Ephesus write, 'These things says He who holds the seven stars in His right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands...'" Chapter 1 told us this was Jesus. The risen and exalted Lord writes a letter to His Church. And it's to "*the angel*" or "*messenger*."

Whether that's a pastor or a literal angel, the point is Jesus sees, and knows, and cares about His Church...

Jesus walks among the lampstands. He hangs out in His church. *This is why if you want to be in on what Jesus is up to today, the church is where the action is!*

Jesus writes to the church at Ephesus, "I know your works, your labor, your patience, and that you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles

and are not, and have found them liars; and you have persevered and have patience, and have labored for My name's sake and have not become weary.” The Ephesians were doing a lot right: **service, sacrifice, endurance, and spiritual discernment.** They had a zero tolerance for falsehood.

Yet despite their sterling resume... “**Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love.**”

There’s a classic country song by Hank Williams. The chorus goes... **clip.** Hear those haunting words, “**Why don’t you love me like you use to do?**” *For this is what the Lord is writing to the Church at Ephesus...*

They had a furnace, but the fire had gone out.

Ephesus represents the early church of the apostles.

Christianity was just 60 years old, but already the love of many had grown cold. They lacked passion.

And note how Jesus phrases the problem. **It’s not that they “lost their first love,” but “left their first love.”**

If they’d lost it they wouldn’t know where to find it, but since they left it they can trace back and rekindle it.

And verse 5 tells us how to revive our first love. The remedy consists of **3Rs - remember, repent, repeat.**

“Remember therefore from where you have fallen...” Remember the time when you were most passionate about your faith. Recall how it felt for *the fire to burn.*

Then **“repent”** for allowing that flame to die out.

Then, “do the first works...” Repeat the activities that stoked the fire in the first place, and caused faith to grow - *Bible study, worship, prayer, fellowship, witness.*

“Or else I will come to you quickly (Jesus says) and remove your lampstand from its place - unless you repent.” Jesus warns Ephesus and us, that unless we rekindle our passion, He’ll put us on the shelf. Our Lord would rather have *no witness* than *a loveless witness.*

Verse 6, “But this you have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.” Here was another feather in their cap... They refused to tolerate bullies.

“*Nicolaitan*” is the combination of two Greek words: “nike” or “conqueror” and “laos” or “laity, common folk.”

The Nicolaitans were proud church members who acted super-spiritual - as if they were elite Christians. Jesus hated this kind of snobbery, *and so should we.*

The Lord ends this first letter, “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God.” For believers who recover their first love, God reserves the initial intimacy He intended for us in the beginning!

Verse 8, “And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write...” Today, *Smyrna* is the city of *Izmir*. The name “*Smyrna*” comes from “*myrrh*” - an embalming spice.

Thus, the church of Smyrna became synonymous for the persecuted church of the 2nd and 3rd centuries... *who's suffering became a pleasant aroma to God.*

During this period, Emperor worship was the chief religion of Rome. And Smyrna was home of the Temple of Tiberius. The town was the emperor's birthplace.

Yet this church remained true to Jesus, and refused to utter, "Caesar is Lord." One by one they were tossed to lions or burned at the stake, crying, "Jesus is Lord!"

Between 65 and 312 AD five million Christians were martyred by Rome. One of its most famous was Pastor Polycarp who told his executioners, "You threaten fire which burns for an hour and is soon quenched; for you are ignorant of the fire of... eternal punishment."

He was one of many examples of incredible faith.

Jesus writes to Smyrna, 'These things says the First and the Last, who was dead, and came to life...' Jesus reminds them of His own martyrdom. He was faithful to death, and God raised Him up. *This is Smyrna's hope.*

Verse 9, "I know your works, tribulation, and poverty (but you are rich)" Their property had been confiscated. They were deprived of inheritances and employment.

Their faith had caused an earthly poverty. But "poor" was not how God saw them. To Him they were "rich!" Their faithfulness had stored up riches in heaven.

Jesus says, "And I know the blasphemy of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan."

Just as the crucifixion of Jesus was a joint venture of Jews and Romans, likewise the persecution of the early church. Christians who taught God's grace, and faith, encountered hostility from the synagogues.

How ironic, the Jews claimed to be children of God, but in reality, they were tools in the hands of Satan.

Yet, **“Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer.”** They would suffer. Suffering was part of God's plan, but **don't fear.** Verse 10, **“Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days.”**

Some scholars take **“days”** here to mean **“periods”** and identify ten waves of persecution starting with Nero, 64-68 AD - and ending with Diocletian, 303-312.

And amazingly, whenever the Church is persecuted it only grows stronger. Persecution first purifies, then it multiplies. The church father, Tertullian, commented, **“The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church.”**

Nothing negative is said of the church at Smyrna. Persecution often knocks the straddlers off the fence.

Jesus' final word to this persecuted church is, **“Be faithful until 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 shall not be hurt by the second death.” There's a saying, **“Born once die twice. Born twice die once.”** Be born again and though you'll die physically, you'll live forever with Jesus.

Verse 12 begins a third letter, "And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write, 'These things says He who has the sharp two-edged sword...' Notice, in each letter Jesus introduces Himself in a way that's relevant to that particular church. The problem in Pergamos was compromise. Thus, the cure for this church is "*the sharp two-edged sword*" of the Bible, God's Word.

Jesus continues, "I know your works, and where you dwell, where Satan's throne is." Ancient Babylon was the seat of paganism, but when the city fell the ancient cult with its idols and priests relocated to Pergamos.

This made it a tough place to be a Christian, yet the church stood strong. Verse 13, "And you hold fast to My name, and did not deny My faith even in the days in which Antipas was My faithful martyr, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells." Who *Antipas*" was we're not sure, but his faith epitomized this Church.

So far so good for Pergamos, "But I have a few things against you, because you have there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit sexual immorality." Balaam was an "ancient Harry Potter." He was a wizard hired by the Moabites to curse Israel.

God stopped his curses, yet Balaam had other tricks up his sleeve. For a fee, he taught the Moabites how to sabotage Israel. He told them to gather up all the Hooters' girls in Moab, and beer kegs, and entice Israel with compromise. God would judge them Himself...

And this was the downfall of the Pergamos church. **They were willing to lay down their life for Christ, but they weren't willing to lay down their lusts for Christ.**

They compromised morally and spiritually, and God considered it *infidelity* to Him. Hey, purity is important!

And impurity is what plagued the Byzantine Church. **In 312 AD, Emperor Constantine saw a cross in the sky and converted. He wanted all Rome to do likewise, so he meshed pagan practices into Christian worship.** He watered down Christianity to make it more palatable to Roman tastes. And what emerged was a new brand of Christianity that violated faithfulness to the Scripture.

Pagan practices like praying for the dead, the veneration of the saints and Mary, extreme unction, purgatory, infant baptism, Lent, use of icons, celibacy of the priests, office of the pope - were Christianized.

Tragically, Constantine's strategy did far more harm than good. Church tradition overshadowed Bible truth.

And damage always occurs when Christians compromise. Thus, Satan's strategy is the same today, as in Balaam's day, **"If you can't beat them, join them."**

If the devil can't persecute and intimidate the Church he'll infiltrate and contaminate it from the inside out.

Pergamos is a testimony. **The Church will never win the world by being like the world.** We need to be pure.

Verse 15, **"Thus you also have those who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate."** Prior to Constantine,

churches met in homes, and few pastors got paid. Afterward, a professional clergy developed.

Churches gained stature. Pastors became privileged. A sense of entitlement replaced servanthood. The Nicolaitans reappeared. *And Jesus still hated them.*

Jesus says to this compromised church, “Repent, or else I will come to you quickly and will fight against them with the sword of My mouth.” There comes a time when Jesus actually fights against His own church!

Verse 17, “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 to eat.” The hunger of all true believers is the nourishment of God’s Word.

“And I will give him a white stone...” A Roman trial judge displayed a black stone to announce a person’s guilt, but a white stone marked a person’s innocence.

Thus, a white stone is an assurance of forgiveness.

“And on the stone a new name written which no one knows except him who receives it.” Believers that don’t compromise will have a special intimacy with God! He will give us a *white stone name* that only He knows.

For some of us, this will be a great blessing. Any man who has gone through this life with a girl’s name, like “Sue” or “Sandy,” will greatly appreciate a new name! In heaven, I’ll be “Rocky!” or “Bear!” - a manly name.

Verse 18, “And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write, 'These things says the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet like fine brass...’”

Thyatira was the smallest and least important of the seven cities. Perhaps the believers there thought they could slip through the cracks. *They were off the grid.*

But Jesus has eyes like a fiery flame. He sees all.

“*Brass*” is a biblical idiom for judgment. And Jesus has feet like brass. He’s not afraid to put his foot down!

“I know your works, love, service, faith, and your patience; and as for your works, the last are more than the first.” This was a church with a full slate of service.

“Nevertheless I have a few things against you, because you allow that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce My servants to commit sexual immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols.” Apparently, the compromise sown in Pergamos ripened up the road in Thyatira. It’s been said, “Tolerance is the virtue of the man who has lost his conviction.” Tolerance ruled supreme in Thyatira.

In the church at Thyatira, a wicked woman led this church into full-blown idolatry. In the OT, Queen Jezebel was the person who introduced Baal worship into Israel. Now another Jezebel is at it - *in the church.*

It seems there was a pagan temple in Thyatira run by a priestess, and dedicated to all religions. The church was also proud of its tolerance... But where all gods are worshipped; the One, true God is forsaken.

And likewise, during the Middle Ages the seeds of compromise blossomed into full-blown idolatry. Mary of Nazareth went from *noble example* to *mother of God*.

All kinds of idolatrous notions rose around Mary - her perpetual virginity, immaculate conception, ascension into heaven. Today Roman Catholicism considers Mary co-redeemer with Jesus. This idea is blasphemous.

Recall, Jezebel was the queen who falsely accused Naboth and had him stoned - so that she could take his vineyard. This is what occurred in the Middle Ages.

The Inquisitions were a tool used by the popes to kill their rivals and confiscate their wealth. During this period the doctrine of papal infallibility developed. Even the selling of indulgences (or divine pardons) occurred.

Jesus says of this church, verse 21, “And I gave her time to repent of her sexual immorality, and she did not repent.” Thyatira had exhausted the Lord’s patience!

“Indeed I will cast her into a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of their deeds.” Notice, the Thyatiran Church remains today, for Jesus threatens to throw her into Great Tribulation - judgments that are yet future.

Here’s a church that will miss the rapture unless it repents of its spineless tolerance of spiritual infidelity.

Verse 23, “I will kill her children with death, and all the churches shall know that I am He who searches the minds

and hearts. And I will give to each one of you according to your works.” Jesus puts His foot down.

Don't toy with Him, and pretend He doesn't care about how we live. What we do matters to Jesus.

“Now to you I say, and to the rest in Thyatira, as many as do not have this doctrine, who have not known the depths of Satan, as they say, I will put on you no other burden. But hold fast what you have till I come.” Though Thyatira represented a corrupt religious system, not all its members had strayed from the truth that's in Christ. A few had held fast... To me, this proves it's possible to be a true believer in a heretical church!

Though Roman Catholicism clouds and confuses the Gospel with pagan beliefs, the Gospel is still present. And if you hold fast to the essentials you'll be saved.

Verse 26, “And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations - 'He shall rule them with a rod of iron; they shall be dashed to pieces like the potter's vessels' - as I also have received from My Father; and I will give him the morning star.” The morning star appears just before the break of day. And what event occurs prior to the Day of the Lord - *His coming judgments?*
The rapture!

Here, I believe Jesus promises the faithful in Thyatira an early exit - they too will be raptured. “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”

Chapter 3, “And to the angel of the church in Sardis write, ‘These things says He who has the seven Spirits of God and

the seven stars: "I know your works, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead."

The word "Thyatira" means, "continual sacrifice." And this is how Roman Catholicism distorted communion.

The Bible teaches that Jesus was offered "once, for all" on the cross - yet Catholics believe the bread and wine are the literal body and blood of Christ, thus they sacrifice Jesus afresh every time they hold a mass.

It's no accident then, that "Sardis" means "escaping ones." For this was the church who followed and recovered biblical truth - escaping the Roman heresy.

Even today, Rome teaches that *grace is not enough*. Works are also needed to be right with God... *Christ is not enough*. You also need the mediation of a priest...

Faith is not enough. Participation in the sacraments is also required to gain God's favor... *Scripture is not enough*. For church tradition is also authoritative...

And *glory to God is not enough*. For the church, and namely the Pope, should also share in Christ's glory...

The word "protestant" means "one who protests." And Sardis, with all the rest of the Protestant church, countered these Roman heresies with **five solas**...

Sola-gratia, Sola-Christos, Sola-fide, Sola-Scriptura, and Sola-Deo Gloria. Or **grace alone, Christ alone, faith alone, Scripture alone, the glory of God alone**. This was the battle cry of the Protestant Reformation.

Reformers like Luther, Tyndale, and Wesley sparked a spiritual revival in the church... Yet once the leaders died, the churches they spawned drifted spiritually.

What's happened today to Lutherans, Episcopalians, Methodists? Jesus says to the church at Sardis, *“you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead.”*

Today, not all, but many mainline Protestant groups continue to carry the name of a great founder, but they know nothing of his zeal, and courage, and passion.

It's been said, *“God's work begins as a movement, it becomes a machine, it turns into a monument, and then it ends up a memorial.”* This happened to Sardis. It had a glorious reputation, but the church was dead.

Verse 2, *“Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die...”* The Reformation rescued key doctrines, but it didn't go far enough...

Jesus rebukes them, *“For I have not found your works perfect (i.e. “complete”) before God.”* Sardis had a stellar beginning but didn't continue and press on.

Jesus says to them, *“Remember therefore how you have received and heard; hold fast and repent. Therefore if you will not watch, I will come upon you as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you.”* One of the mistakes the Reformers made was their failure to rethink their view on the end times.

Luther and his contemporaries carried over Roman Catholic eschatology. Thus, there was little expectancy of the Lord's soon return. This is why Jesus challenges Sardis to not only *“hold fast and repent,”* but to *“watch.”*

Verse 4, “You have a few names even in Sardis who have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with Me in white, for they are worthy. He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels.” Notice, it’s possible to have your name blotted out of the Book of Life. In short, a good start isn’t enough. Paul wrote to Colosse “continue in the faith.”

Let’s not just have a name that we’re alive, but let’s walk worthy of our calling and put on righteousness!

Verse 6 wraps up the fifth letter, “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”

”And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write...” “Philadelphia” is Greek for “brotherly love.” And this is what should characterize every church.

Philadelphia was on a major highway connecting Europe and Asia. Beyond it was uncivilized places and people. The city was built by men who wanted a launching pad for the Hellenization of Asia. From this city, Greek language, Greek customs, Greek religion could be exported eastward to the uncultured masses.

And it’s interesting, that the Christians living in Philadelphia also adopted a *missionary mindset*.

What made the city a bridge for the spread of Greek culture, also made it suitable for preaching the Gospel. The church at Philadelphia was a church on mission.

Verse 7, 'These things says He who is holy, He who is true, "He who has the key of David, He who opens and no one shuts, and shuts and no one opens..."

Jesus introduces Himself as **the opener of doors.**

He has keys. He opens the door to God for us and opens doors for us to be used by God in the lives of others. Philadelphia was the church of the open door!

In Church history, Philadelphia represents the great missionary enterprises of the 18th and 19th centuries. The Great Awakenings were spurred on by men who walked through open doors to deliver the Gospel.

Even today, this church is using new technologies, and going to new places, and reaching new generations.

But that's not all. In verse 8 Jesus says, "I know your works. See, I have set before you an open door, and no one can shut it; for you have a little strength..."

Interestingly, Jesus says nothing negative of this church, yet it was a *little church* with "*little strength.*"

Apparently, it's not a church's size that impresses the Lord, *but what it does with what it has. Is it faithful?*

Here, Jesus mentions what makes this church great in His eyes, you "**have kept My word, and have not denied My name.**" Philadelphia was loyal to both God's *living Word, Jesus,* and His *written Word, the Bible.*

Jesus promises, "**Indeed I will make those of the synagogue of Satan, who say they are Jews and are not, but lie - indeed I**

will make them come and worship before your feet, and to know that I have loved you.”

Philadelphia was a little church - *on nobody's radar, but God's* - yet Jesus vows to vindicate their loyalty. Their enemies will know of the Lord's love for them.

Jesus says, “*Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.*” Later in Revelation, we learn of God's judgments on this world. But up front, He tells the faithful church they'll escape that “*hour of trial.*”

Verse 11, “*Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown.*”

He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more.” In the ancient world, you would honor a noteworthy citizen by inscribing their name on a pillar in the local temple.

Can you think of a greater honor than your name on a pillar in Heaven? It goes to him “*who overcomes.*”

And “*I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God. And I will write on him My new name.*” Not only will God write *our name* in His temple, but He writes *His name* on us.

It's a mark of ownership - that we belong to Him.

Verse 13 says to us once again, “*He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.*”

"And to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write, 'These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God...'"

Not "*beginning*" in terms of sequence, but in importance. The NIV translates it, "the ruler of God's creation." Jesus is "*the Amen*" - the final Word. "*The faithful and true Witness*" - the reliable Word. And He is and has the first Word. He is the king of all creation.

Smyrna and Philadelphia are the two churches about which Jesus had nothing bad to say... While Laodicia is the one church of which He has nothing good to say.

"*Laodicia*" means "the people rule." Rather than submit to God, they marched to their own drummer. They called Jesus "Savior," but He wasn't their Lord.

And the Lord judges them, "I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth."

Hot coffee is good. Iced coffee is a delicacy. Either *hot* or *cold* is what you want. But lukewarm, tepid, muted, in-between room temperature you'll spit it out.

Laodicia had two sister cities in the Lycus Valley. Ten miles east was Colosse, which sat by a cool mountain stream. Six miles north was Hierapolis and its hot springs. Today visitors enjoy its thermal waters.

The water supply for Laodicia came from Colosse and Hierapolis. The Roman aqueducts can still be seen today. But by the time the cold water arrived from Colossae the hot sun

had warmed it up. And over six miles from Heirapolis the hot water had cooled down.

Thus, Laodecian water was lukewarm. If you were a visitor and didn't know, you'd took a sip and spit it out.

And this was God's reaction to the spiritual temperature of the Christians in Laodecia. They were neither zealous about the things of God, nor rebellious.

They were just indifferent. They didn't care. The church was comfortable. Rather than turn up the heat for Jesus they were content with ho-hum mediocrity.

And Jesus hates lukewarm. He says, *"I wish you were cold or hot."* In other words, **go big** or **go home!**

He says in verse 17, *"Because you say, 'I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing' - and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked..."* The Laodecians thought they were rich, but in God's eyes, they were spiritually bankrupt.

Recall, Smyrna thought they were poor, but God saw them as rich. How God sees and we see are different.

And Jesus gives Laodecia advice in verse 18, *"I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed..."* This church needs to cloth itself in Christ!

"And anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see." The region was famous for a powder that treated eye infections. This church needed *spiritual* eyedrops.

Verse 19 is reassuring, “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent.” Jesus rebukes those He loves... There’s hope *if they repent*.

Verse 20, “Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.”

Here’s a verse often used to invite unbelievers to come to Jesus, but sadly, it was written to the church!

Jesus knocks on the door of this church because He’s on the outside. He’s a stranger to His own church.

It reminds me of the little girl who went home after church one Sunday. She prayed, “Dear Jesus, we had a good day at church. I just wish you had been there.”

All that’s missing from some churches is Jesus!

Sadly, this may well be the picture of the last church, the modern church - Jesus is *on the outside looking in*.

“To him who overcomes...” - who refuses to drop to room temperature, but stays on fire with the Holy Spirit.

“To him... I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also 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.” May the Lord give us spiritual ears that’ll take to heart His messages to the Church.

Love Him with a first love. Love Him in tough times. Love Him with a desire to be pure. Love Him sincerely. Love him with active faith. Love Him with sharing faith. Love Him enough to let Him be Lord.