

THROUGH THE BIBLE STUDY

REVELATION 2-3

There are approximately 350,000 Christian churches in the US, and they're very diverse. Like ice cream they come in multiple flavors... *but that's not how Jesus sees us!* Revelation 2 and 3 teach us that there're only *seven types of churches and seven sorts of members.*

In Chapter 1 Jesus routs His Revelation by the Apostle John to seven churches in Mediterranean Asia, or today's Western 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..."* He's talking turkey!

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

Realize these seven cities were all connected by a horse-shoe-shape of Roman roads. They were stops on the postal route. Mail came by sea to the port of Ephesus. From there it was delivered by a mailman following a circuit... *north along the coast to Smyrna and Pergamos - then inland, east to Thyatira - turning south, through Sardis, and Philadelphia - finally arriving in Laodicea.* All seven cities were within 50 miles.

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 350,000 congregations in America, but there're really only 7 types of churches and Christians. *You can find you - and me - and us - in these letters.*

Even the order of these letters is no accident! There was more to it, than a mail route. These letters had enough spiritual postage to be sent 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 His people 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** samples the first 30 years of the church...

Revelation speaks of end times... But what of the 2000 years from Acts until 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 revealed 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 is writing. And His addressee is "the angel" or "messenger." Whether that's a pastor, or a literal angel, the point is Jesus sees, and cares, and communicates with His Church...

Jesus walks among the lampstands, which are the seven churches. The Lord hangs out in His Church! *This is why if you want to be in on what Jesus is up to in the world 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 the haunting lyrics, "Why don't you love me like you use to do?" *My hair is still curly and my eyes are sill blue. I haven't changed!*

And this is what Jesus says to the Church at Ephesus. Their heart is a furnace, but the fire was out.

Ephesus represents the early church of the apostles. Christianity was just 60 years old, but already the love of many had grown cold. Christians 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 a first love. The remedy consists of **3Rs - remember, repent, repeat.**

"Remember therefore from where you have fallen..." Recall the time when you were most passionate about your faith. How it felt for *the fire to burn...* Then "**repent**" for allowing that flame to ever die out... Lastly, "**do the first works...**" Repeat the activities that stoked the fire in the first place, and caused your faith to grow: *Bible study, worship, prayer, fellowship, witness...* How do you revive a first love? **Remember, Repent, Repeat!**

"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 spiritual bullies. "*Nicolaitan*" combines two Greek words: "*nike*" or "*conqueror*" and "*laos*" or "*laity, common folk.*" The Nicolaitans were church members who craved power and acted super-spiritual, as if they were elite Christians. Jesus hated this snobbery. *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 from 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 bow to Rome by confessing, "**Caesar is Lord.**" One by one the Christians were tossed to lions or burned at the

stake, crying, “Jesus is Lord!” Between 65 and 312 AD five million believers were martyred by Rome...

And one of the most famous was the Smyrna pastor. Polycarp was a disciple of the Apostle John. Before he was burned, he told his executioner, “You threaten fire which burns for an hour and is soon quenched; for you are ignorant of the fire of... eternal punishment.” Polycarp was one of many who had courageous 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 Jesus they were “rich!” Their faithfulness was storing up treasure 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.” Like the crucifixion of Jesus the persecution of this era came not just from Rome, but from the Jews. Ironically, folks claiming to be children of God became tools of Satan. The assault on the early church came from both Roman forums and Jewish synagogues.

Yet, “Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer.” At times suffering is part of God’s plan, but Jesus insists, **never 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 these “days” to mean “periods” and identify ten waves of persecution starting with Nero, 64-68 AD - and ending with Diocletian, 303-312.

Yet amazingly, whenever the Church is persecuted it only grows stronger. Persecution first purifies, then it multiplies. It was the church father, Tertullian who said, “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 an adage, “Born once die twice. Born twice die once.” Be born again and though you’ll die

physically, spiritually you'll never die or be separated from Jesus. You'll live forever with Him.

Verse 12, "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 relevant to that church. The problem in Pergamos was *compromise*. Thus, the cure is "*the sharp two-edged sword*" of 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 Pergamum, making this Greek city a tough place to be a Christian.

Yet, "You hold fast to My name, and did not deny My faith..." The Pergamos believers stayed strong. "Even in the days in which Antipas was My faithful martyr, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells." We're not sure of the identity of "*Antipas*," 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 "OT Harry Potter" - 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 Moab how to sabotage God's people. Just gather up all the Hooters' girls in Moab, add the beer kegs, and entice Israel with sexual 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 God considered it *infidelity* to Him. In other words, purity matters to God!

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

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

And He 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 was 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 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.

Then the fourth church, 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 its church thought they could slip through the cracks. *They were off the grid...* Yet Jesus' eyes are like a piercing flame. He sees all... And "*brass*" is idiomatic for judgment. His feet are 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 up the road in Pergamos had ripened 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 city of Thyatira a wicked woman led the church into full blown idolatry... In the OT, Queen Jezebel was the person who introduced Baal worship into Israel. Now another Jezebel was at it again - *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 even consider Mary **co-redeemer** with Jesus. That’s blasphemous.

Remember, Jezebel was the queen who falsely accused Naboth, and had him stoned - so she could take his vineyard. This 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 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.**” Apparently, the Thyatiran Church remains today, for Jesus threatens to throw her into Great Tribulation - *judgments that are still 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 promises judgment. Don’t toy with Him, and pretend He doesn’t care. What we believe and how we live matters greatly 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 held fast... And 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 I’ve known Roman Catholics who have held fast to those essentials of the faith, and thus will 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 Catholicism distorts communion. The Bible teaches that Jesus was offered “**once, for all**” on the cross - yet Catholicism teaches the bread and wine become the literal body and blood of Christ, and His physical body is sacrificed afresh each Catholic mass.

It’s no accident then, that “**Sardis**” means “**escaping ones.**” For this was the church who recovered the biblical truth - escaping the Roman Catholic heresy.

Even today, Rome teaches that **grace is not enough.** Works are also needed to be right with God... **Christ is not enough.** You need the mediation of a priest... **Faith is not enough.** Participation in the sacraments are 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, the priests, and namely the Pope, should also share in Christ’s glory...

Thus, “**protestant**” means “**one who protests.**” And Sardis, with all the rest of the Protestant church, countered these five 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 Martin Luther, William Tyndale, and John Wesley sparked spiritual revival and restored to the Church a more orthodox faith... Yet once the leaders died, the churches they spawned drifted...

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 they 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, they had 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."** Apparently though, it's possible to have your name blotted from the Book of Life. In essence, **a good start isn't enough!** Paul wrote to Colosse' **"continue in the faith."** Don't just have a name that you're alive, but keep walking worthy of your calling and put on Christ!

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 were 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 this 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 two 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 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 evil 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 honored a noteworthy citizen by inscribing their name on a pillar in the local temple. *Can you think of a greater honor than your name carved into a pillar in Heaven?* It’ll be awarded 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’ll write *His name* on us.

As kids before we went to camp Mom would write our name in our underwear, in case it was lost. It was proof it belonged to us. This is why God writes His name on us... **we belong to Him!**... “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 terms of importance. The NIV translates it, *“the ruler of God’s creation.”* Jesus is *“the Amen”* - the emphatic Word. *“The faithful and true Witness”* - the reliable Word. And He is and has the first Word. He’s 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 *“people rule.”* Rather than submit to God, these folks marched to their own drummer. They called Jesus *“Savior,”* but He wasn’t their **Lord**.

And Jesus 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 desirable. But lukewarm, tepid, muted, in-between, room temperature coffee... you’ll spit it out.

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

The water supply for Laodecia came from Colosse and Hierapolis. The aqueducts remain even to this day. By the time the cold water arrived from Colossae the hot sun had warmed it up. And over the six miles from Heirapolis the hot water had cooled down. Thus, Laodecian water was lukewarm. If you were visiting, and didn't know, you might take 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 a ho-hum mediocrity.

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

Jesus 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..."* Recall, Smyrna thought they were poor, but God saw them as rich. While the Laodecians thought they were rich, but in God's eyes they were spiritually bankrupt. *How God sees and we see differ.*

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* eye salve.

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 that's often used to invite unbelievers to come to Jesus, but tragically it was actually written to a 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." *Hey, 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 Jesus give us spiritual ears to hear His messages to the Church...

Love Him **with a first love.**

Love Him **in tough times.**

Love Him **with a pure heart.**

Love Him **supremely.**

Love him **with an active faith.**

Love Him **with a sharing faith.**

Love Him enough **to exalt Him as Lord.**