

Revelation Chapter 2 & 3 - The Seven Churches

Rev 1:4 NIV John, To the seven churches in the province of Asia: Grace and peace to you from him who is, and who was, and who is to come, and from the seven spirits before his throne

Who are the letters written to?

To the angel of the church in _____

Angel - Greek 'angelos

- While 'angelos' can mean a literal heavenly angel -- Luk 1:19 NIV The **angel** ['angelos'] said to him, "I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to tell you this good news.
- It can also refer to men, for example John the Baptist is called the **messenger** ['angelos'] who prepared the way of the LORD -- Luk 7:27 NIV This is the one about whom it is written: "I will send my **messenger** ['angelos'] ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you.'
- The content of the communication "**to the angel of the church in _____**" makes it clear He is speaking to men, not literal angels.

Ephesus

Rev 2:1 NIV "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. 2 **I know your deeds**, your hard work and your perseverance. **I know that you cannot tolerate wicked people**, that you have tested those who claim to be apostles but are not, and have found them false. 3 You have persevered and have endured hardships for my name, and have not grown weary. 4 Yet I hold this against you: **You have forsaken the love you had at first**. 5 Consider **how far 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. 6 But you have this in your favor: You hate the practices of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. 7 Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who is victorious, I will give the right to eat from **the tree of life**, which is in the paradise of God.

Forsaken the love you had at FIRST

- **Forsaken / left** - Same word that is used for DIVORCE (1 Cor 7:11-12) -- Or in Matt 4:20 when the disciples LEFT their nets to follow Jesus
- **How far you have fallen** - to be driven off course

Do what you did at FIRST - I imagine this to be speaking of how drastically their lives changed when they first came to know Jesus - and how love was a motivation for much of it

Love must be protected - it will be perverted in the last days

- Mat 24:12 NIV Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold,
- 2Ti 3:1-4 NIV But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. 2 People will be **lovers of themselves**, **lovers of money**, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, 3 **without love**, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, **not**

lovers of the good, 4 treacherous, rash, conceited, **lovers of pleasure** rather than lovers of God--

Tree of life

- **Mankind was barred from this tree after Adam sinned** - Gen 3:22 NIV And the LORD God said, "The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever."
- **The LORD is restoring what was lost as the result of sin**

Lesson -- Jesus who holds the stars and walks among the churches is able to restore our ability to partake again of the tree of life...He also has the power to restore a heart where love has been lost

Smyrna

8 "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. 9 **I know your afflictions** and your **poverty--yet you are rich!** I know about the slander of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. 10 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 life as your victor's crown. 11 Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches. The one who is victorious will not be hurt at all by the second death.

Lesson -- Jesus who died and came to life can help us see beyond the struggles of this life to that which is eternal

- Jesus died - AND CAME TO LIFE AGAIN (death was not the final story)
- They have afflictions and are in poverty - YET THEY ARE RICH
- They are being slandered and are about to suffer even to the point of death - HE WILL GIVE LIFE AS THEIR VICTOR'S CROWN
- The one who is victorious will not be hurt at all **by the second death.**

The second death

- Rev 20:6 Blessed and holy are those who share in the first resurrection. **The second death has no power over them**, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years.
- Rev 20:14 Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. **The lake of fire is the second death.**
- Rev 21:8 But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars--**they will be consigned to the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death.**"

Pergamum

12 "To the angel of the church in Pergamum write: These are the words of him who has the sharp, double-edged sword. 13 **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, not even in the days of Antipas, my faithful witness, who was put to death in your city--where Satan lives. 14 Nevertheless, I have a few things against you: There are some among you who hold to the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to entice the Israelites to sin so that they ate food sacrificed to idols and committed sexual immorality. 15 Likewise, you also have those who hold to the teaching of the Nicolaitans. 16 Repent therefore! Otherwise, I will soon come to you and **will fight against them with the sword of my mouth**. 17 Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who is victorious, I will give some of the hidden manna. I will also give that person a white stone with a new name written on it, known only to the one who receives it.

Lesson -- Jesus who IS the word of God stresses the importance of the word of God in combatting false teaching

- **This sword represents the word of God** -- Eph 6:17
- **They have stood against the teaching of Balaam and the Nicolaitans**
- **By His word He will judge the nations** -- Rev 19:15 NIV Coming out of his mouth is a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. "He will rule them with an iron scepter." He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty.
- Joh 12:47-48 NIV "If anyone hears my words but does not keep them, I do not judge that person. For I did not come to judge the world, but to save the world. 48 There is a judge for the one who rejects me and does not accept my words; **the very words I have spoken will condemn them at the last day.**

Thyatira

18 "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. 19 **I know your deeds, your love and faith, your service and perseverance**, and that you are now **doing more than you did at first**. 20 Nevertheless, I have this against you: You **tolerate** that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophet. By her teaching she misleads my servants into sexual immorality and the eating of food sacrificed to idols. 21 I have given her time to repent of her immorality, but she is unwilling. 22 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. 23 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**. 24 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, 25 except to hold on to what you have until I come.' 26 To the one who is victorious and does my will to the end, I will give authority over the nations-- 27 that one 'will rule them with an iron scepter and will dash them to pieces like pottery'--just as I have received authority from my Father. 28 I will also give that one the morning star. 29 Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

Lesson -- Jesus who He sees all, repays each according to his deeds

- 2Co 5:9-11 NIV So we make it our goal to please him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it. 10 **For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body, whether good or**

bad. 11 Since, then, we know what it is to fear the Lord, we try to persuade others. What we are is plain to God, and I hope it is also plain to your conscience.

Each is repaid according to his deeds

- Jer 17:9-10 NIV The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it? 10 "I the LORD search the heart and examine the mind, to **reward each person according to their conduct, according to what their deeds deserve.**"
- Jer 32:19 NIV great are your purposes and mighty are your deeds. Your eyes are open to the ways of all mankind; **you reward each person according to their conduct and as their deeds deserve.**
- Rom 2:6 NIV God "will repay **each person according to what they have done.**"
- Mat 16:27 NIV For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels, and then he will **reward each person according to what they have done.**
- 2Co 11:15 NIV It is not surprising, then, if his servants also masquerade as servants of righteousness. **Their end will be what their actions deserve.**
- Rev 20:12-15 NIV And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. **The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books.** 13 The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what they had done. 14 Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. 15 Anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire.

Sardis

Rev 3:1-22 NIV "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. 2 Wake up! Strengthen what remains and is about to die, for **I have found your deeds unfinished** in the sight of my God. 3 Remember, therefore, what you have **received and heard; hold it fast, 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. 4 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. 5 The one who is victorious will, like them, be dressed in white. **I will never blot out the name of that person from the book of life,** but will acknowledge that name before my Father and his angels. 6 Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

Lesson -- He who holds the seven spirits of God and the seven [angelos]. My true reputation is what God sees. Their reputation [being alive] did not reflect reality [you are dead].

The Book of Life

Exo 32:32-33 NIV But now, please forgive their sin--but if not, then **blot me out of the book you have written.**" 33 The LORD replied to Moses, "**Whoever has sinned against me I will blot out of my book.**

Psa 69:28 **May they be blotted out of the book of life** and not be listed with the righteous.

Php 4:3 Yes, and I ask you, my true companion, help these women since they have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel, along with Clement and the rest of my co-workers, **whose names are in the book of life.**

Rev 3:5 The one who is victorious will, like them, be dressed in white. **I will never blot out the name of that person from the book of life**, but will acknowledge that name before my Father and his angels.

Rev 13:8 All inhabitants of the earth will worship the beast--all **whose names have not been written in the Lamb's book of life**, the Lamb who was slain from the creation of the world.

Rev 17:8 The beast, which you saw, once was, now is not, and yet will come up out of the Abyss and go to its destruction. The inhabitants of the earth **whose names have not been written in the book of life** from the creation of the world will be astonished when they see the beast, because it once was, now is not, and yet will come.

Rev 20:12 And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and **books** were opened. **Another book was opened, which is the book of life.** The dead were judged **according to what they had done as recorded in the books.**

Rev 20:15 Anyone whose **name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire.**

Rev 21:27 Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but **only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.**

Philadelphia

7 "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. 8 **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.** 9 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. 10 Since **you have kept my command to endure patiently, I will also keep you from the hour of trial that is going to come on the whole world to test the inhabitants of the earth.** 11 I am coming soon. **Hold on to what you have**, so that no one will take your crown. 12 The one who is victorious I will make a **pillar in the temple** of my God. Never again will they leave it. I will write on them **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 them my new name**. 13 Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

Lesson - there are doors that only HE can open -- Yet we still are responsible to HOLD ON..Even with little strength we can hold on - The promise of patient endurance -- Those who are weak can become pillars

Endure Patiently

- Rev 2:2-3 NIV I know your deeds, your hard work and your perseverance. I know that you cannot tolerate wicked people, that you have tested those who claim to be apostles but are not, and have found them false. 3 You have persevered and have endured hardships for my name, and have not grown weary.
- Rev 2:19 NIV I know your deeds, your love and faith, your service and perseverance, and that you are now doing more than you did at first.
- Rev 3:10 NIV Since you have kept my command to endure patiently, I will also keep you from the hour of trial that is going to come on the whole world to test the inhabitants of the earth.
- Rev 1:9 I, John, your brother and companion in the suffering and kingdom and patient endurance that are ours in Jesus, was on the island of Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.
- Rev 13:10 "If anyone is to go into captivity, into captivity they will go. If anyone is to be killed with the sword, with the sword they will be killed." This calls for patient endurance and faithfulness on the part of God's people.
- Rev 14:12 This calls for patient endurance on the part of the people of God who keep his commands and remain faithful to Jesus.

Laodicea

14 "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. 15 **I know your deeds**, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! 16 So, because you are lukewarm--neither hot nor cold--I am about to spit you out of my mouth. 17 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. 18 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. 19 **Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest and repent.** 20 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 that person, and they with me. 21 To the one who is victorious, **I will give the right to sit with me on my throne**, just as I was victorious and sat down with my Father on his throne. 22 Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches."

Lesson -- From lukewarm to the throne

Worksheet Chap 2-3

Take a moment to review this summary

In each of these letters, we see some attribute of Jesus that is portrayed. In each of the letters, the LORD states something that He SEES - He is omnipresent, and knows all things. Each **angel** ['angelos'] being spoken to is accountable to the Lord Jesus Christ regarding his respective local church...he is given commendation, rebuke and wisdom toward repentance and the mention of a reward to those who overcome.

Think about the message to each of these churches. Is there one that you identify with? Is there one that you feel the LORD may want to deal with you about?

Ephesus -- To restore a heart where love has been lost

Smyrna -- To see beyond the struggles of this life to that which is eternal

Pergamum -- To embrace the importance of the word of God in combatting false teaching

Thyatira -- 2Co 5:9-11 So we make it our goal to please him...He repays each according to his deeds

Sardis -- My true reputation is what God sees

Philadelphia -- I am weak, but can become a pillar

Laodicea -- The lukewarm can repent, overcome and sit with him on the throne
