

**Revelation: Pictures of Comfort and Hope**  
**7 Letters to Seven Churches**  
**Chapters 2-3**

**Outline of the Letters**

- Greeting
- Description of Christ (cf. chapter 1).
- Commendation and/or Condemnation
- Warning
- Exhortation to Obey
- Picture of a Promise (cf. chapters 21 & 22)

*There were seven congregations in Turkey or Asia Minor that Jesus was concerned about. Although Jesus uses some figurative language in these chapters, most of his communication refers to actual situations taking place in these congregations. In verse 19 of chapter 1 Jesus tells John to write down “what is now” and “what will take place later”. The vision to the seven churches is “what is now”. The vision of the future begins in chapter 4. Note how the seven churches are already named in the introduction of Revelation.*

*The commendations, condemnations, encouragements, and comforts are applicable to the church throughout history.*

**Read Revelation 2:1-7 Ephesus (Beginning to Decline)**

*The congregation at Ephesus was started by Paul on his 3<sup>rd</sup> missionary journey. The time period of this missionary trip was from 53-57 A.D. Paul spent 3 years here.*

*Vs. 6 – The Nicolaitans were a religious sect that taught that Christians could live however they wanted without any regard at all for the will of God. Apparently the Nicolaitans believed it was alright to live an immoral life, since we are saved by grace through faith in Christ, and not by our works.*

1. Explain what the angel, seven stars and seven golden lampstands are.

*The “angel of the church” the “pastor” or the one who shares messages with the church. The stars are angels of the churches and the lampstands are the churches. “The mystery of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand and of the seven golden lampstands is this: The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.” (Rev. 2:20 NIV)*

2. What reassurance do the words in verse one give to those in the church? (John 10:28-29)

*These words denote the certainty of salvation that Jesus has prepared for his people and the protection with which he defends them. When we gather together Jesus is right there with us.*

3. What positive things did this church do? (I John 4:1)

*They did not tolerate false teachers; men who claim to be apostles and have a spiritual commission from God. The Ephesians persevered and endured many hardships, and hung in there.*

4. What does it mean that they have forsaken their first love?

*They have taken the Gospel promises for granted, and treated the threats of the law lightly. As a result, their love decreases. People who have come to see their desperate need for a Savior, and see that need fulfilled in Jesus, will be moved to love others.*

5. How is Jesus described? (What picture is used?)

6. What words of praise does the Lord have for these Christians?

7. *What words of condemnation does the Lord have for these Christians?*

8. *What warnings are found in these verses?*

9. *What promise does Jesus make to this congregation? (What's the picture he uses?) cf. 22:2*

10. *What messages does this letter hold for us today?*

**Read Revelation 2:8-11 Smyrna** (*Strong in tribulation*)

*The second letter is addressed to the congregation in Smyrna, about 35 miles from Ephesus. Today Smyrna is still a thriving city. It is called Izmir with over 350,000 inhabitants.*

1. **Who are the poor?**

*Lower class or those who lost possessions by persecution*

2. **Who are those who say they are Jews but are not? (Galatians 3:7)**

*Vs. 9 – those who say they are Jews and are not but are a synagogue of Satan: because these Jews rejected Christ and persecuted those who believed in him their assembly (synagogue) was really being led by Satan rather than by the Lord. It may be helpful to consider that the NT speaks of “true Jews” as those who believe in Christ. (cf. John 8:33-44, Romans 9:6, Galatians 3:7)*

3. **Explain 10 days and Second Death?**

*Vs. 10 – ten days: a relatively short but fixed period of time limited by God. (don't forget numbers in Revelation are often used symbolically)*

*Vs. 11 – the second death: this is eternal death in hell. Compare 20:14 (Death equals a separation. The first death is the separation of body and soul and the separation from the physical and temporal blessings of God. The second death is separation of the body and soul from God in hell and the separation from God's eternal blessings.)*

1. *How is Jesus described? (What picture is used?)*

2. *What words of praise does the Lord have for these Christians?*

3. *What words of condemnation does the Lord have for these Christians?*

4. *What warnings are found in these verses?*

5. *What promise does Jesus make to this congregation? (What's the picture he uses?) cf. 20:6*

6. *What messages does this letter hold for us today?*

### **His Word In My Life:**

React: It is easier to become a Christian than to remain a Christian

### **Read Revelation 2:12-17 Pergamum** (*Lax in discipline*)

1. What does it mean that Satan has his throne here?

*Vs. 13 – where Satan has his throne: Pergamos was a center of Roman provincial administration as well a place where Satan exercised a great deal of influence.*

2. Explain how some in this congregation were like the Israelites in the time of Barak?

*Vs. 14 – Balaam was hired by Balaak, an OT king of Moab to curse God's people. But God would only allow him to speak blessings. So Balaam showed Balaak how to lead Israel into idolatry and adultery causing them to sin against God and to come under his wrath. (See Numbers 22:25)*

3. What is the significance of the hidden manna and the white stone?

*Vs. 17 – hidden manna: The Lord used manna to preserve the Israelites in the wilderness. In John's Gospel Jesus speaks of himself as the bread of life. John 6:35, 47-51. This is a promise of eternal life through Christ.*

*Vs. 17 – The white stone: in the judicial system of the day, a white stone was used to indicate a verdict of innocent. Those who receive the white stone are those declared innocent for the sake of Christ.*

4. *How is Jesus described? (What picture is used?)*

5. *What words of praise does the Lord have for these Christians?*

6. *What words of condemnation does the Lord have for these Christians?*

7. *What warnings are found in these verses?*

8. *What promise does Jesus make to this congregation? (What's the picture he uses?) cf. 22:4*

9. *What messages does this letter hold for us today?*

### **Read Revelation 2:18-29 Thyatira** (*The emotional church*)

*Thyatira-Home of Lydia, the seller of purple*

1. What will happen to those who follow the example of Jezebel?

*Vs. 19 – Jezebel: a wicked prophetess who was leading the members of this congregation away from the truth just as wicked Queen Jezebell of the OT led the Israelites into idolatry. (See 1 Kings 16:31)*

*They will suffer the consequences of their behavior, a bed of suffering and sickness awaits them. It is very likely that Jezebel was not her real name, but a name given to characterize her by John. In the OT Jezebel was married to King Ahab and introduced Baal worship with its sexual immorality into the Northern Kingdom.*

2. What are the “deep secrets” of Satan?

*Vs. 24 – Satan’s so-called deep secrets – perhaps the false idea that we must try our sin in order to really understand it. It’s interesting to note that much of what Satan peddles as false doctrine is regarded as “higher education” and more advanced than the simple truths of Scripture.*

3. Who is the morning star?

*Vs. 28 – the morning star: Christ is called the morning star in Rev. 22:16. Perhaps here the Lord is promising the blessing of being able to see him in all his glory.*

4. How is Jesus described? (What picture is used?)

5. What words of praise does the Lord have for these Christians?

6. What words of condemnation does the Lord have for these Christians?

7. What warnings are found in these verses?

8. What promise does Jesus make to this congregation? (What's the picture he uses?) cf. 22:5,16

9. What messages does this letter hold for us today?

### **Read Revelation 3:1-6 Sardis (About to die)**

*This congregation was going through the motions but had lost its true purpose and motivation.*

*Vs. 5 – the book of life: this book is mentioned 7 times in the book of Revelation as well as in Philipians 4:3 and Exodus 32:32. We are reminded that the Lord knows his own by name and promises to preserve them unto eternal life.*

1. How was this congregation dying out, even though it looked alive?

*Vs. 3:2 – I have not found your deeds complete in the sight of my God: their works and activity were not motivated and connected with the Gospel*

*They were trying to improve the social, economic political conditions in the world. They were suffering from inward spiritual decay. They had lost focus on preaching a message of sin and God’s grace in Christ. Works not motivated by the Gospel are hardly complete before God.*

2. How is Jesus described? (What picture is used?)

3. What words of praise does the Lord have for these Christians?

4. *What words of condemnation does the Lord have for these Christians?*
5. *What warnings are found in these verses?*
6. *What promise does Jesus make to this congregation? (What's the picture he uses?) cf. 21:27*
7. *What messages does this letter hold for us today?*

**Read Revelation 3:7-13 Philadelphia (An Open Door)**

*Vs. 7 – the key of David: the words of this verse reflect Isaiah 22:22. In that verse the key of David will be given to someone would be faithful in his use of the keys to royal treasury. Christ faithfully distributes the treasures of the Lord. (Compare the thoughts here to Jesus comments regarding giving the keys to forgive and not to forgive sin to the church. Matthew 16:19)*

1. *What is the open door that no one will be able to shut from them?*  
*Treasures of forgiveness, life, and salvation. Christ has all the treasures of heaven and power to bestow or withhold them.*
2. *What does it mean when someone writes their name on something?*  
*Ownership. We will share in the glory of the new name. We will belong to God forever.*
3. *How is Jesus described? (What picture is used?)*
4. *What words of praise does the Lord have for these Christians?*
5. *What words of condemnation does the Lord have for these Christians?*
6. *What warnings are found in these verses?*
7. *What promise does Jesus make to this congregation? (What's the picture he uses?) cf. 21:22; 22:4*
8. *What messages does this letter hold for us today?*

**Read Revelation 3:14-22 Laodicea (Sickening to the Lord)**

*Laodicea was a wealthy city. When an earthquake destroyed the city in 60 A.D., the citizens rebuilt the city without any help from Rome. It was a well known banking center, and a mint was established there. It was also the center of a thriving wool industry, and its cloth was famous throughout the Roman world. Finally, it was renowned for a type of eye salve that was invented there and prescribed by physicians who lived far away from there.*

*Vs. 14 – the Amen: the Hebrew word “amen” is related to truth – the word could be translated as the truthful one.*

*Vs. 14 – the ruler of God’s creation: John 1:3 reminds us that nothing was made without Christ. The creation was begun by him and flows from him. See also Colossians 1:15-18. Note: the word ruler could be translated as either “the beginning” or ruler. Ruler is the preferred translation because it fits in best and communicates most clearly what the rest of Scripture says about the divinity of Christ and his rule in creating all things.*

1. Why is God more upset with a lukewarm Christian than someone hotly against Christianity?

*They make a poor witness to the world. They are not concerned about heaven and hell, and in growing spiritually. At least you know the position of someone who is hotly against Christianity. Even those who actively oppose the gospel at least still demonstrate some interest in spiritual things. They still have some concern about the truth. Consider Saul before he became the apostle Paul. He was intent upon serving God, while someone like Pilate who said, “What is Truth?” was simply not interested.*

2. Why can it be dangerous to be wealthy?

*You can forget God and lack awareness for your spiritual needs.*

3. How does Jesus provide true wealth, clothing, and the eye salve we need?

*Christ provides us the salvation we need when he suffered the fires of affliction on the cross. The gold He provides us is salvation. Further, Jesus covers our nakedness with the white garments of his righteousness. Only the blood of the Lamb can wash away our sins and give us the white garments we need. Our natural spiritual condition is that we are blind to spiritual truths. This and darkness makes it impossible for us to see the real nature of our sinfulness and keeps us from recognizing Christ as our only Savior. But Jesus provides us with the eye salve of His Gospel. This Gospel has the power to heal our deteriorating spiritual eyesight.*

4. What is it that alone allows us to open the door for Jesus?

*The Gospel invitation, the Voice of Jesus.*

5. How is Jesus described? (What picture is used?)

6. What words of praise does the Lord have for these Christians?

7. What words of condemnation does the Lord have for these Christians?

8. What warnings are found in these verses?

9. What promise does Jesus make to this congregation? (What's the picture he uses?) cf. 20:4, 22:5

10. What messages does this letter hold for us today?

**His Word for My Life:** How would you define luke-warmness? Why does material prosperity so often lead to spiritual decay? Read Mark 10:25-27. How is it possible for people who live in an affluent society to be saved?

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***FOR FUN AND INCREASING YOUR UNDERSTANDING***

- If Jesus were writing to us today, what might his letter include assuming he was using a format similar to the letters in Revelation 2-3?
- Which letters address the following situations:
  1. You insist on being right according to the Bible, but you show no love for others.
  2. You wonder why you suffer ridicule for your faith.
  3. You think, speak, or act in a sinful way, and then explain, “But everyone else is doing it.”
  4. You disobey God’s law and justify your action in this way: “I did the loving thing. It’s all right to act this way as long as you act in love and don’t hurt anyone.”
  5. You are very busy doing what pleases the Lord, but you admit you only do it because it’s your duty.
  6. You remain faithful to Jesus’ Word and out of gratitude to him you share Jesus’ gospel with others.
  7. You are convinced that true happiness is dependent on the amount of money a person has.