

# THE MESSAGES TO THE CHURCHES

**BIBLE TEXT** : Revelation 2:1-29; 3:1-22.

LESSON 460 Senior Course

**MEMORY VERSE:** "Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown" (Revelation 3:11)..

## **BIBLE TEXT in King James Version**

### **Revelation 2:1-29**

1 Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks;

2 I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars:

3 And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted.

4 Nevertheless I have *somewhat* against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.

5 Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.

6 But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.

7 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.

8 And unto the angel of the church in Smyrna write; These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive;

9 I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and *I know* the blasphemy of them which say they

## **Bible References:**

### **I First Message, to the Church at Ephesus**

1. The Ephesian church had much to her credit, Revelation 2:2, 3, 6;

#### **Psalm 139:1-5**

1 O LORD, thou hast searched me, and known *me*.  
2 Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off.  
3 Thou compassest my path and my lying down, and art acquainted *with* all my ways.  
4 For *there is* not a word in my tongue, *but*, lo, O LORD, thou knowest it altogether.  
5 Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me.

#### **Galatians 6:9**

9 And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.

2. The church at Ephesus was in a backslidden state, Revelation 2:4, 5

#### **Ezekiel 18:24**

24 But when the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, *and* doeth according to all the abominations that the wicked *man* doeth, shall he live? All his righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned: in his trespass that he hath trespassed, and in his sin that he hath sinned, in them shall he die.

#### **Ezekiel 33:12-13**

12 Therefore, thou son of man, say unto the children of thy people, The righteousness of the righteous shall not deliver him in the day of his transgression: as for the wickedness of the wicked, he shall not fall thereby in the day that he turneth from his wickedness; neither shall the righteous be able to live for his *righteousness* in the day that he sinneth.

13 When I shall say to the righteous, *that* he shall surely live; if he trust to his own righteousness, and commit iniquity, all his righteousnesses shall not be remembered; but for his iniquity that he hath committed, he shall die for it.

#### **Ezekiel 33:18**

18 When the righteous turneth from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, he shall even die thereby.

#### **Matthew 26:75**

75 And Peter remembered the word of Jesus, which said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And he went out, and wept bitterly.

#### **Matthew 24:12**

12 And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.

#### **Luke 9:62**

62 And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.

#### **2 Corinthians 11:13**

13 For such *are* false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ.

#### **2 Corinthians 11:15**

15 Therefore *it is* no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works.

are Jews, and are not, but *are* the synagogue of Satan.

10 Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast *some* of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.

11 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.

12 And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write; These things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges;

13 I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, *even* where Satan's seat *is*: and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas *was* my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth.

14 But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication.

15 So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate.

16 Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.

17 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth *it*.

18 And unto the angel of the

## **2 Peter 2:1**

1 But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction.

## **2 Peter 2:10**

10 But chiefly them that walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness, and despise government. Presumptuous *are they*, selfwilled, they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities.

## **2 Peter 2:20**

20 For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning.

## **II The Second Message, to the Church in Smyrna**

1. This church was poor in this world's goods but rich toward God Revelation 2:8, 9; 3:9;

### **James 2:5**

5 Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?

### **Romans 2:28**

28 For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither *is that* circumcision, which is outward in the flesh:

### **Romans 2:29**

29 But he *is* a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision *is that* of the heart, in the spirit, *and not* in the letter; whose praise *is* not of men, but of God.

2. This church was promised a crown of life if faithful unto death Revelation 2:10, 11;

### **James 1:12**

<sup>12</sup> Blessed *is* the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.

## **III The Third Message, to the Church in Pergamos**

1. This church is commended by Christ, Revelation 2:13;

### **Matthew 15:28**

<sup>28</sup> Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great *is* thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour.

2. The church is rebuked for fellowshiping false teachers, Revelation 2:14-17;

### **Numbers 25:2-5**

2 And they called the people unto the sacrifices of their gods: and the people did eat, and bowed down to their gods.

3 And Israel joined himself unto Baalpeor: and the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel.

4 And the LORD said unto Moses, Take all the heads of the people, and hang them up before the LORD against the sun, that the fierce anger of the LORD may be turned away from Israel.

5 And Moses said unto the judges of Israel, Slay ye every one his men that were joined unto Baalpeor.

### **2 Peter 2:15-16**

15 Which have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray, following the way of Balaam *the son* of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness;

16 But was rebuked for his iniquity: the dumb ass speaking with man's voice forbad the madness of the prophet.

### **Jude 1:11**

11 Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gainsaying of Core.

## **IV The Fourth Message, to the Church in Thyatira**

church in Thyatira write; These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet *are* like fine brass;

19 I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last *to be* more than the first.

20 Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols.

21 And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not.

22 Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds.

23 And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works.

24 But unto you I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak; I will put upon you none other burden.

25 But that which ye have *already* hold fast till I come.

26 And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations:

27 And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father.

28 And I will give him the morning star.

29 He that hath an ear, let him

1. They have many things to commend them, Revelation 2:19, 24-29.

2. The church is indicted for suffering Jezebel to teach and seduce some to commit fornication and eat things sacrificed to idols, Revelation 2:20-23.

### V The Fifth Message, to the Church of Sardis

1. It had a name that it lived, but was dead, Revelation 3:1, **Matthew 7:21**

<sup>21</sup> Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.

#### **Mark 7:6**

<sup>6</sup> He answered and said unto them, Well hath Esaias prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written, This people honoureth me with *their* lips, but their heart is far from me.

#### **Ezekiel 33:1-33**

<sup>1</sup> Again the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

<sup>2</sup> Son of man, speak to the children of thy people, and say unto them, When I bring the sword upon a land, if the people of the land take a man of their coasts, and set him for their watchman:

<sup>3</sup> If when he seeth the sword come upon the land, he blow the trumpet, and warn the people;

<sup>4</sup> Then whosoever heareth the sound of the trumpet, and taketh not warning; if the sword come, and take him away, his blood shall be upon his own head.

<sup>5</sup> He heard the sound of the trumpet, and took not warning; his blood shall be upon him. But he that taketh warning shall deliver his soul.

<sup>6</sup> But if the watchman see the sword come, and blow not the trumpet, and the people be not warned; if the sword come, and take *any* person from among them, he is taken away in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at the watchman's hand.

<sup>7</sup> So thou, O son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth, and warn them from me.

<sup>8</sup> When I say unto the wicked, O wicked *man*, thou shalt surely die; if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked *man* shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand.

<sup>9</sup> Nevertheless, if thou warn the wicked of his way to turn from it; if he do not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul.

<sup>10</sup> Therefore, O thou son of man, speak unto the house of Israel; Thus ye speak, saying, If our transgressions and our sins *be* upon us, and we pine away in them, how should we then live?

<sup>11</sup> Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?

<sup>12</sup> Therefore, thou son of man, say unto the children of thy people, The righteousness of the righteous shall not deliver him in the day of his transgression: as for the wickedness of the wicked, he shall not fall thereby in the day that he turneth from his wickedness; neither shall the righteous be able to live for his *righteousness* in the day that he sinneth.

<sup>13</sup> When I shall say to the righteous, *that* he shall surely live; if he trust to his own righteousness, and commit iniquity, all his righteousnesses shall not be remembered; but for his iniquity that he hath committed, he shall die for it.

<sup>14</sup> Again, when I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; if he turn from his sin, and do that which is lawful and right;

<sup>15</sup> *If* the wicked restore the pledge, give again that he had robbed, walk in the statutes of life, without committing iniquity; he shall surely live, he shall not die.



hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

### **Revelation 3:1-22**

1 And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write; These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead.

2 Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God.

3 Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.

4 Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy.

5 He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.

6 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

7 And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write; These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth;

8 I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name.

9 Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to

<sup>16</sup> None of his sins that he hath committed shall be mentioned unto him: he hath done that which is lawful and right; he shall surely live.

<sup>17</sup> Yet the children of thy people say, The way of the Lord is not equal: but as for them, their way is not equal.

<sup>18</sup> When the righteous turneth from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, he shall even die thereby.

<sup>19</sup> But if the wicked turn from his wickedness, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall live thereby.

<sup>20</sup> Yet ye say, The way of the Lord is not equal. O ye house of Israel, I will judge you every one after his ways.

<sup>21</sup> And it came to pass in the twelfth year of our captivity, in the tenth *month*, in the fifth *day* of the month, *that* one that had escaped out of Jerusalem came unto me, saying, The city is smitten.

<sup>22</sup> Now the hand of the LORD was upon me in the evening, afore he that was escaped came; and had opened my mouth, until he came to me in the morning; and my mouth was opened, and I was no more dumb.

<sup>23</sup> Then the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

<sup>24</sup> Son of man, they that inhabit those wastes of the land of Israel speak, saying, Abraham was one, and he inherited the land: but we *are* many; the land is given us for inheritance.

<sup>25</sup> Wherefore say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Ye eat with the blood, and lift up your eyes toward your idols, and shed blood: and shall ye possess the land?

<sup>26</sup> Ye stand upon your sword, ye work abomination, and ye defile every one his neighbour's wife: and shall ye possess the land?

<sup>27</sup> Say thou thus unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; As I live, surely they that *are* in the wastes shall fall by the sword, and him that *is* in the open field will I give to the beasts to be devoured, and they that *be* in the forts and in the caves shall die of the pestilence.

<sup>28</sup> For I will lay the land most desolate, and the pomp of her strength shall cease; and the mountains of Israel shall be desolate, that none shall pass through.

<sup>29</sup> Then shall they know that I *am* the LORD, when I have laid the land most desolate because of all their abominations which they have committed.

<sup>30</sup> Also, thou son of man, the children of thy people still are talking against thee by the walls and in the doors of the houses, and speak one to another, every one to his brother, saying, Come, I pray you, and hear what is the word that cometh forth from the LORD.

<sup>31</sup> And they come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee *as* my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them: for with their mouth they shew much love, *but* their heart goeth after their covetousness.

<sup>32</sup> And, lo, thou *art* unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument: for they hear thy words, but they do them not.

<sup>33</sup> And when this cometh to pass, (lo, it will come,) then shall they know that a prophet hath been among them.

## **2. It is exhorted to repent. There were some who had not defiled their garments, Revelation 3:2-6;**

### **Matthew 24:42-43**

<sup>42</sup> Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.

<sup>43</sup> But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up.

### **1 Thessalonians 5:2-6**

<sup>2</sup> For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night.

<sup>3</sup> For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.

come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee.

10 Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.

11 Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.

12 Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, *which is* new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and *I will write upon him* my new name.

13 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

14 And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God;

15 I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot.

16 So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.

17 Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked:

18 I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and *that* the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see.

19 As many as I love, I rebuke

<sup>4</sup> But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief.

<sup>5</sup> Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness.

<sup>6</sup> Therefore let us not sleep, as *do* others; but let us watch and be sober.

#### **2 Peter 3:10**

<sup>10</sup> But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.

### **VI The Sixth Message, to the Church of Philadelphia**

1. They were commended and an open door was set before them  
Revelation 3:7-9;

#### **1 Corinthians 16:9**

<sup>9</sup> For a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and *there are* many adversaries.

2. Many promises are given to them, Revelation 3:10-13;

#### **Revelation 21:2-7**

<sup>2</sup> And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

<sup>3</sup> And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God *is* with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, *and be* their God.

<sup>4</sup> And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.

<sup>5</sup> And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful.

<sup>6</sup> And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely.

<sup>7</sup> He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.

### **VII The Seventh Message, to the Church of Laodicea**

1. This church was lukewarm and ready to be spued out of the mouth of God, Revelation 3:14-17;

#### **2 Kings 10:31**

<sup>31</sup> But Jehu took no heed to walk in the law of the LORD God of Israel with all his heart: for he departed not from the sins of Jeroboam, which made Israel to sin.

#### **Hosea 10:2**

<sup>2</sup> Their heart is divided; now shall they be found faulty: he shall break down their altars, he shall spoil their images.

2. They are rebuked and counselled to buy gold tried in the fire, Revelation 3:18, 22;

#### **Proverbs 30:12**

<sup>12</sup> *There is* a generation *that are* pure in their own eyes, and *yet* is not washed from their filthiness.

#### **1 Corinthians 4:8**

<sup>8</sup> Now ye are full, now ye are rich, ye have reigned as kings without us: and I would to God ye did reign, that we also might reign with you.

#### **Luke 18:9-14**

<sup>9</sup> And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others:

<sup>10</sup> Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican.

<sup>11</sup> The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men *are*, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican.

<sup>12</sup> I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess.

<sup>13</sup> And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so

and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.

20 Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.

21 To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.

22 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

much as *his* eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.

<sup>14</sup> I tell you, this man went down to his house justified *rather* than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

### **Notes:**

#### **The Seven Churches**

In this lesson we have the messages that were sent to the seven different churches in Asia.

Each of the seven epistles commences with, "I know thy works." Each contains a promise from Christ: "To him that overcometh." Each ends with: "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches."

Some have thought that the seven churches are symbolical of the different church ages from the time of John until the coming of the Lord. Others think that they represent the whole Christian church, dispersed throughout the whole world as it exists in every age. These seven churches, however, were literal, historical churches existing at the time John wrote.

In these messages any pastor, church or individual can find suitable instructions for every occasion.

It is the characteristic of our Lord to put forth first that which He approves, and then to note the shortcomings.

#### **The Church of Ephesus**

Ephesus was famed for the temple of Diana, one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. Paul spent over two years in Ephesus preaching the Gospel. A strong church was established. It was noted for its love and fervency and was the leading church in all Asia. Here John spent his declining years. He who holds the seven stars and walks among the candlesticks found in Ephesus good works, labour, endurance, steadfast oppositions to evil, faithfulness and firmness in discipline, cheerfulness in bearing any burden for Christ's sake, and a hatred for deeds and practices which Christ hates.

There is such a thing as being able to discern between the true and the false, having a correctness of judgment in sacred things, a zeal and self sacrificing devotion to the right and true, and a severance from false apostles and all evildoers, and yet to be without that warmth and purity of love that filled the heart when one was first born again. We can become so much absorbed in our work for the church that we let that first love slip out of our heart. This is what the Lord had against the church at Ephesus. They were exhorted to repent and do their first works over, or else He would remove their candlestick out of its place.

To the overcomer He would give to eat of the Tree of Life, which was in the Paradise of God. Here we find the Tree of Life that God placed in the Garden of Eden, growing in the Paradise of God -- Paradise regained. What was lost through the fall of Adam will be gained back through Christ.

#### **The Church in Smyrna**

Smyrna was a poor church financially, but the Lord said they were rich: rich in faith, rich in love. They had gone through much tribulation. They were persecuted by the unbelieving Jews. Paul said he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, but who is one inwardly. The Lord tells them that more persecutions await them, but they would be of short duration. The devil would cast some of them into prison. They were told to be faithful unto death and they would receive a crown of life.

Sometimes the Lord turns the tactics of the devil upside down

and accomplishes His own purpose to bring one out victorious. ``God sifts and winnows the man to separate his chaff from his wheat," comments one writer, "and the devil sifts him in hopes that nothing but chaff will be found in him."

It was in Smyrna that the saintly Polycarp was burned at the stake. Before they lit the fagots his judges asked that he recant. His noble words are handed down to us: "Fourscore and six years have I served the Lord and He never wronged me, how then can I blaspheme my King and Saviour?"

### **The Church at Pergamos**

At the time the Apocalypse was written Pergamos was the home of rich chiefs who had it adorned with magnificent residences, temples and groves. It had a library rivalling that of Alexandria. Parchment was here discovered for book purposes. It was a city of heathen temples and religious sensuality, hence the throne of Satan.

Although in the midst of idolatry some people had kept the faith. But they had failed to cast out of their fold those who held the "doctrine of Balaam." When the Lord would not let Balaam curse Israel, he still wanted to remain in good favour with Balak, so he taught Balak how to lay a stumbling-block before the Children of Israel. The Lord used the drawn sword to slay Balaam.

"To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written." In the courts they used to give a white stone for acquittal and a black stone when condemned.

### **The Church at Thyatira**

The church at Thyatira had kept its love and faith and had increased in its service for the Master. Its works were greater now than at the beginning. It was just the opposite of the church at Ephesus, where the congregation had left their first love but hated sin and false doctrine.

The church at Thyatira was tolerating a woman who claimed to be a prophetess to seduce the saints into idolatry and sin. Jezebel of old led Israel into idolatry and domineered over Israel. She was given space to repent but refused. "He, that being often reproveth hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy" (Proverbs 29:1). God promised that His hand of judgment would work swiftly and all the churches would recognise that the Lord had done it.

Those who had not received this false doctrine were exhorted to "hold fast till I come," and He would give them power over the nations.

### **The Church at Sardis**

Sardis had a name that it was a live church, but the Lord said that it was dead. It possibly had a godly outside appearance but the Lord looks on the heart. They did not seem to have any false doctrine to contend with inside the church or out. They were so dead spiritually that the devil did not concern himself with them. There were a few in the church who had not defiled their garments, and the Lord said they would walk with Him in white.

### **The Church of Philadelphia**

Philadelphia means "brotherly love." When the Quakers came to America to find a home of religious freedom, they founded a city and called it Philadelphia. They tried to put brotherly love into practice by showing kindness and love to the Indians and telling them about the true God.

A few years ago when the United Nations celebrated its 10th anniversary, the Protestant, the Jew, the Buddhist, and others joined hands while each prayed a separate prayer to his god. Was that brotherly love? No! That was compromise. In these days they

call it religious tolerance. The Lord plainly says in His Word, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me."

The great commission Jesus gave was, "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature." He told the church of Philadelphia that He had set before them an open door and no man could shut it. The Gospel light in these days has shone around the world. "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto an nations; and then shall the end come" (Matthew 24:14).

As long as the love of God burns on the altar of the heart there will be a fervency and zeal to see other souls born into the Kingdom of God. Because they had kept the word of the Lord's patience, He promised to keep them from the hour of temptation, which will come upon all the world to try them that dwell upon the earth. We wonder if that hour is not upon us. The Lord follows with, "Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown." Many precious promises await the over-comers.

### **The Church of Laodicea**

This was a church that was neither cold nor hot. It was so nearly sunk into slumber that it was in a drowsy state. A message to a cold church will oftentimes arouse it back to a state of fervency, but it is hard to arouse a drowsy person. Tepid water produces vomiting. A church that is lukewarm is nauseating in the sight of God.

This was a self satisfied church. They had plenty of this world's goods; they felt they had need of nothing, not even more religion. Oh, the mercy of God! He still stands and knocks at the heart's door of those who are on the verge of being spued out of His mouth. If they will be aroused from their slumber the Lord will still clothe them in white raiment and grant them the privilege of sitting with Him on His Throne in His Kingdom.

### **God's Promises**

God's promises are sure. In these messages to the churches we find every state existing that it is possible to get into, from a life of holiness to a life of sin, degradation and compromise. God's smile of approval rests on the clean, sanctified life. His mercies are extended to the sinful and disobedient, giving them an opportunity to repent. It is left with us to decide among which group we will be found when the Lord comes.

### **QUESTIONS**

1. Were these real churches, and where were they?
2. Which was the largest church?
3. Against which churches was there nothing said?
4. Which one had left their first love?
5. Which one was lukewarm?
6. Explain why the Lord would rather have it cold or hot.
7. Quote the different promises to the overcomers.