

# Revelation 03 - Letters to the Churches of Sardis, Philadelphia, Laodicea

## II. Things Which Are (Rev 2:1—3:22)

### (5) Letter to the Church at Sardis (Rev 3:1-6)

- (A) Destination (3:1a)
- (B) Description of Christ (3:1b)
  - (a) Has the seven spirits of God
  - (b) Has the seven stars
- (C) Commendation (3:1c)
- (D) Rebuke (3:1d)
- (E) Exhortation to change (3:2a-3c)
- (F) Consequence (3:3d-4)
- (G) Promise to overcomers (3:5)
  - (a) Clothed in white (3:5a)
  - (b) Name not erased from the Book of Life (3:5b)
  - (c) Confession of name before Father and angels (3:5c)
- (H) Exhortation to listen (3:6)

### (6) Letter to the Church at Philadelphia (Rev 3:7-13)

- (1) Destination (3:7a)
- (2) Description of Christ (3:7b)
  - (a) Holy
  - (b) True
  - (c) Holds the Key of David
  - (d) Authoritatively opens and closes doors
- (3) Commendation (3:8-9)
- (4) Rebuke
- (5) Consequence
- (6) Exhortation to change (3:10-11)
- (7) Promise to overcomers (3:12)
- (8) Exhortation to listen (3:13)

### (7) Letter to the Church at Laodicea (Rev 3:14-17)

- (1) Destination (3:14a)
- (2) Description of Christ (3:14b)
  - (a) Amen

- (b) Faithful
  - (c) True witness
  - (d) The Originator or Source of Creation
- (3) Commendation
- (4) Rebuke (3:15-17)
- (5) Exhortation to change (3:18-20)
  - (a) Buy from Me (3:18a):
    - (i) Gold (3:18b) - trials
    - (ii) White garments (3:18c) - the righteousness of Christ
    - (iii) Eye salve (3:18d) - the ministry of the Holy Spirit
- (6) Consequence (3:19a)
- (7) Promise to overcomers (3:21)
- (8) Exhortation to listen (3:22)

### Revelation 3

- (5) Letter to the Church at Sardis (Rev 3:1-6)
  - (A) Destination (3:1a)
  - (B) Description of Christ (3:1b-c)
    - (a) Has the seven spirits of God (3:1b)
    - (b) Has the seven stars (3:1c)
  - (C) Commendation (3:1c)
  - (D) Rebuke (3:1d)

**1** "To the angel of the church in **Sardis** write: He who has the **seven spirits of God** and the **seven stars**, says this: '**I know your deeds**, that you have a **name** that you are alive, and yet **you are dead**."

**1** "To the angel of the church in Sardis write: He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars, says this: 'I know your deeds, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead."

**1** "To the messenger of the church in Sardis, write: 'The one who has the seven spirits of God and the seven stars says this: 'I know what you've been doing. You are known for being alive, but you are dead."

**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."

- "...Sardis" - means "those escaping"; it was the capital of the province of Lydia, 30 miles south of Thyatira

- "...seven spirits of God" - Is 11:2 uses seven "genitive expressions" to express the seven spirits of the Lord

- "seven" is the number for perfection or completion, so the seven spirits of God represent the fullness of the Holy Spirit
- Jesus uses this to describe Himself because this church is spiritually dead. They are saved, but somehow the life, strength, fullness and power of the Spirit had been stripped from their daily lives (Cf. Judges 16:20).
- There are things we do as Christians that can empty us of the Spirit's power. Most notable is unconfessed sin, which hinders and cripples our moment-by-moment fellowship with God.
- "...seven stars" - the seven messengers/angels (pastors) of the seven churches (Cf. 1:16,20)
- "...I know your deeds" - Jesus is watching; He knows what is going on; He's involved
- "...name" - *onoma*, reputation; the word appears 3x in six verses in this letter; Sardis had a name (or label, reputation), yet *they were dead!*
- Those around Sardis didn't know this was a spiritually dead church because their reputation was that they were spiritually alive; their reputation has preceded them; same was true for the church of Thessalonica, but in a good way (1 Thess 1:7-8).
- Sardis had a reputation for being alive, but it was not backed up by reality
- The only thing this church had going for it was the past, what God had once done there. They were living off the godly seeds that were sown by a prior generation.
- This church didn't have revivals, they had reunions...looking back at what God once did, but doesn't do any more, because of their spiritually dead state. Things on the outside looked fine, but God looks at the inside (Cf. 1 Sam 16:7; Matt 23:27).
- Have you ever attended a church or other organization (college, etc.) because of what you thought God was doing there, only to discover that it was completely different. The name was one thing, but the philosophy of the church had changed and they were living off their reputation from the past.
- "...you are dead" - if you're in a church like Sardis, or worse if your life as a Christian has deteriorated to that level, what should you do? Luckily Jesus gives us instruction here in v2-3...

[Note: there is no "Commendation" in this letter]

(E) Exhortation to Change (3:2-3c)

(F) Consequence (3:3d-4)

2 **Be constantly alert, and strengthen the things that remain, which were about to die; for I have not found your deeds completed in the sight of My God.**

2 **Wake up, and strengthen the things that remain, which were about to die; for I have not found your deeds completed in the sight of My God.**

2 Be alert, and strengthen the things that are left, which are about to die. I note that your actions are incomplete before my God.

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

- "Be constantly alert" - Wake Up! This church needed to wake up because they were dead, but they hadn't realized it yet. They needed to wake up to the fact that their perception was not reality.

— It's an encouragement to be self-aware of their walk with the Lord, to look at their situation realistically

— Sin will eventually lull us to sleep, a compromise here and there, and you don't see any immediately ramification to it, so you and sin become roommates. What you used to consider an offense is no longer an offense, and you get used to living with it.

- "...strengthen the things that remain" - Sardis was dying, but there were a few people there who had not yet "soiled their garments" (v4); they continued to live for God

— So not everything at this church was dead, some things were dead, and everything else was in the process of dying. Jesus tells them to identify those things dying but not yet dead, and rescue them. Figure out what good is left, and pour your energy and resources into those things so they don't die.

— This is how revivals begin...you identify the faithful remnant who have not defiled their garments, and pour into them

— Their seeming impregnable city had fallen into enemy hands more than once due to carelessness of the guards who relied too much on natural fortifications

— The Sardinian Christians also needed to strengthen their areas of weakness in their church, which was about to die. They needed to go back to spiritual life as well as good doctrinal creeds. Spiritual life is impossible without good doctrine, and good doctrine is dead without spiritual life.

- "...I have not found your deeds completed" - an interesting statement: the deeds that God wanted to fulfill and manifest in this church were incomplete because of their fallen spiritual condition

— "completed" - *phēroō*, to make full or to fill to full

— We speak so much to the fact that we are not saved *by* good works, which is true, that we miss the fact that we're saved *to* good works

— When God saved each person, He didn't just have that person in mind...He had in mind all of the people that your life would bless (Eph 2:10). Sardis, for whatever reason, lost sight of this fact.

- The Galatians were trying to go out and crank out good works with human power, but that's not God's design. God's design was given by Christ to the disciples in the Upper Room Discourse (John 15).



— John 15:5: I am the vine, you are the branches; the one who remains in Me, and I in him bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.

— Jesus is saying that without walking in the Spirit, we cannot *bear* fruit. We can certainly *produce* fruit in the flesh, but that will equate to "nothing" at the Judgment Seat of Christ

— God's design is so simple: the branch of an orange tree doesn't try its best to produce oranges...it simply stays connected to the tree, and the oranges are produced. In the same way, Jesus instructs us in John 15 that we're not to try to produce fruit through our own effort, but rather simply abide in Christ and the fruit will be produced "automatically."

— It takes years for many Christians to understand this because it's so contrary to a type A personality. Our instructions are not to *produce* fruit, but to *abide* in Christ so that the fruit *He* wants to produce in my life will come secondarily, without us even thinking about it.

— Genesis tells us in the creation account that each living thing "produced after its own kind"; so, how can I, as a mortal, produce eternal fruit if all I can do is produce after my own kind? All I can do is produce out of my own effort an ingenuity, but that won't last. I have to abide in Him so that He will produce the fruit in me, after His own kind, which is eternal.

That "fruit" comes through me, produced by the Holy Spirit, to others.

— Sardis evidently lost sight of this, one way or the other, because of their reputation. Maybe they were a church of good deeds done in the flesh instead of the Spirit. Maybe they were doing good deeds for their own glorification rather than by abiding in Christ, bearing fruit that He produces in them.



## Grant R. Jeffrey

*Apocalypse: The Coming Judgment of the Nations*, p. 84-85.

“In a practical way, Christ encouraged them to ‘strengthen the things that remain.’ If there is to be a revival in a spiritually dying church, we must start with the small remnant and build upon their faithful prayers and devotion to Jesus Christ. Just as in Gideon's army, God delights to accomplish His great victories with a small remnant. Then it will be obvious to all that it is God who has won the victory, not man. The message to the church at Sardis reminds us that no matter how dead a church or denomination may be, God still has ‘a few names...who have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white, for they are worthy.’ The prayer of every believer should be that they shall join that faithful remnant and walk with Him.”

- 3 So **remember** what you have received and heard; and **keep it**, and **repent**. Then if you are not alert, I will **come like a thief**, and you will not know at what hour I will **come** to you.
- 3 So remember what you have received and heard; and keep *it*, and repent. Therefore if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come to you.
- 3 So remember what you received and heard. Obey it, and repent. If you are not alert, I will come like a thief, and you won't know the time when I will come to you.
- 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.
- "...remember" - Jesus is urging these believers to remember what things were like when they were first saved
- Jesus also instructed Ephesus to "remember from where you have fallen" (2:5)
- Their sin would not affect their justification, but it would affect their daily lives and their walk with Christ, as well as their rewarding in heaven (1 Cor 3:14-15; 9:27; 2 John 8; Rev 3:11)

— This church was around for some time, but never really advanced all that far because they didn't pay attention to the Vine & Branches Discourse of Jesus in John 15...they didn't know how to walk with Christ. They never got a glimpse of what God wanted to do at this church.

- "...keep *it*" - the blessing in the Christian life doesn't come from knowing it, it comes from doing it. You can't do it if you don't know it, but knowledge not applied is useless (John 13:17).

— Every Christian has one thing they know to do, that they are not doing or they have neglected (James 1:22). But when you obey God in that one area, He'll start to bless you and show you more, because when we're faithful with something small, God will trust us with greater things.

— Our knowledge must flow into wisdom (the application of knowledge)

- "...repent" - God loves us as we are, but loves us too much to leave us as we are, so God moves us from justification to sanctification

— Now it's a matter of fruit bearing, discipleship, and rewards, which fosters a mindset of repentance because there are many things we do or don't do in our daily life

— A person progressing in their sanctification begins to develop a mindset or lifestyle of repentance, where they become sensitive to the conviction of the Holy Spirit and turns away sin and fills it with something better, not through human power but through the vast resources of the Holy Spirit.

— Zacchaeus is a good example of repentance (Luke 19:1-10); he stole from many people and desired to make restitution. He gave back 4x as much as he had stolen.

- "...come" [2x] - *hēkō*, partial rapturism believes the "coming" of Christ here is at the Rapture, and if your life isn't right, He will come "like a thief" and you won't know when He's coming.

- "...like a thief" - *kleptēs*, failure to heed these warnings would result in Jesus sending severe and sudden discipline on the believers *that would surprise them*

— Jesus is coming to Sardis, and if there isn't repentance, *everything* will die; Jesus similarly told Ephesus that He'd come and take their lampstand (Cf. 2:5)

— "thief" is used 7x in relation to a coming of Christ, all in the NT (Matt 24:43; Luke 12:39; 1 Thess 5:2,4; 2 Peter 3:10; Rev 16:15)

— "thief" is always descriptive of unbelievers and God's wrath or judgment related to the Tribulation or Second Coming. It is never used in relation to the Rapture.

— Paul, as he develops the doctrine of the Rapture, never refers to Jesus' coming "like a thief"; this description doesn't fit anything we know from previous revelation about the Rapture

— Although the "thief" motif is never used of the Rapture, partial rapturism believes it applies here. However, this violates one of the main points of teaching about the Rapture in

Scripture: the Rapture is a comfort for believers (John 14:1; 1 Thess 4:18; Titus 2:13, et al). Jesus coming back "like a thief" is not a comfort to anyone.

— So if Jesus is not referring to the Rapture, what coming is He referring to? Likely a separate, independent coming specifically to the church at Sardis to do something, likely divine discipline.

— What He's going to do to this church is going to catch them off-guard, because He's going to carry it out "like a thief" in the night

— Jesus is the Head of the Church, so He's certainly able to do something if something needs to be done

— The Church is not a candidate for divine wrath, but this refers to divine discipline. Wrath is punitive; discipline is based in love, to correct bad behavior.

— He will *not* come "as a thief" for those who are diligent (Cf. 1 Thess 5)

4 But you have **a few people** in Sardis who have not soiled their garments; and they will walk with Me in white, for they are worthy.

4 But you have a few people in Sardis who have not soiled their garments; and they will walk with Me in white, for they are worthy.

4 But you have a few people in Sardis who have not soiled their clothes. They will walk with me in white clothes because they are worthy.

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.

- "...a few people" - a faithful remnant

— There are people today who believe that Rev 2-3 represent the kingdom of God on the earth, and that Jesus is reigning from David's Throne over the church

— The church at Sardis is a decaying, lifeless church...it's the *opposite* of the kingdom of God, which is a time when the knowledge of Christ will permeate the entire globe

[OT reference: Eccl 9:8]

(G) Promise to overcomers (3:5)

(a) Clothed in white (3:5a)

(b) Name not erased from the Book of Life (3:5b)

(c) Confession of name before Father and angels (3:5c)

5 The one who **overcomes** will be clothed the same way, in **white garments**; and I **will not erase his name** from the **book of life**, and I **will confess his name before My Father and before His angels**.

5 He who overcomes will thus be clothed in white garments; and I will not erase his name from the book of life, and I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels.

5 The person who conquers in this way will wear white clothes, and I will never erase his name from the Book of Life. I will acknowledge his name in the presence of my Father and his angels.

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.

- "...overcomes" - *nikaō*, victor; Jesus is saying that this is a positional fact, already made about all believers, based on what Jesus Christ has already done for the believer rather than what the believer has done for himself.

— There is only one Overcomer: Jesus Christ (Cf. 5:5; John 16:33; 1 John 4:4) Because He alone is the only One who has ever overcome, He alone is worthy to open the scroll.

— Every Christian is an overcomer, it's a positional reality, because we are connected to the One who has already overcome (Rom 8:37; 1 John 5:4-5; Rev 21:6-8)

— Many people interpret an "overcomer" as being a "victor" over sin in my life. This creates question marks in their minds about whether or not they are saved if they aren't always victorious over sin in their life.

— The lack of specificity in these teachings about who an overcomer is, and what characterizes an overcomer, leads to additional questions and lack of confidence in the security of salvation.

— Christians can be overcome by sin (Rom 12:21); if we're honest with ourselves, every Christian has seasons where they are overcome with sin

- "...white garments" - moral and spiritual perfection before God; being just as righteous as Jesus Himself (Cf. Is 1:18; 64:6)

— Religion and the world will tell you that you get this through good deeds; you make yourself righteous through your good works. You clean yourself up and come to Jesus (Rom 3:20).

— We don't get these white garments through self-righteousness, but through transferred righteousness ("alien" righteousness); imputed righteousness (Cf. Phil 3:9)

— See chart: **"Overcomer" in Revelation 3:5?** below.

- "...will not" - *ou mē*, never, no not ever; a double negative in Greek, the strongest negation possible

— It literally reads: "I will not, not ever, no not ever, erase his name from the book of life" (Cf. John 10:27-29)

— Contrary to the way many Christians read and interpret this verse, rather than being a strong verse on the insecurity of salvation, if understood correctly, it is an extremely strong verse on the security of the believer.

- "...erase his name" - one of the verses that strikes fear into the lives of Christians:

— Many Christians (and pastors) read this interpret this verse as follows: To the one who overcomes (I have to do something: overcome); if I don't "overcome" my name will be erased out of the Book of Life and I'll go to hell. Last week, I struggled with sin and gave in, so now my name is removed from the Book of Life and I need to get saved again or I'm going to hell.

- "...book of life" - a record of those exempt from the Lake of Fire because they have trusted in the One who absorbed the wrath of a Holy God (Cf. 20:12,15)

— When Euodia and Syntyche were arguing, Paul said their names were in the book of life (Phil 4:2-3); when Jesus sent out the 70 (Luke 10:17,20) and they were amazed that the demons were subject to them, Jesus told them (v20) to not rejoice in this, but that their names were recorded in heaven.

— The Bible mentions a "book of life" and a "Lamb's book of life." They are two different books (20:12,15)

— Since God is omniscient, He does not need to record things in books. People keep books for later recollection, so the figure of a "book" is an example of *contextualization*: giving revelation in terms the recipients can easily understand.

— In Ex 32:32 Moses offered to let God take his name out of the "book of life" if God would forgive the sins of the people. But in the next verse God replied, *"Whoever has sinned against me, I will blot out of my book."* This implies that in OT times sinners could have their names blotted out of the book.

— The "Lamb's book of life" is mentioned in Rev 13:8; 21:27. It contains the names of those who choose to accept the Lord as their Savior during the Church Age. You won't find a reference to anyone being written out of this book because our salvation is guaranteed from the moment we believe (Eph 1:13-14).

— Some translations of Rev 13:8 indicate the "Lamb's book of life" was written from the creation of the world. If so, it means the name of every member of the Church was known to God and inscribed there at that time. God could do this because He knows the end from the beginning (Rom 8:29). If it was possible to blot anyone's name out of the "Lamb's book of life," it would mean that God had made a mistake in putting it there in the first place. Such a thing would be impossible for God to do.

— The only time Jesus mentioned the "book of life" was to promise those in Sardis that whoever walked with Him (became a believer) would be dressed in white (declared righteous) and would never have their names blotted out of the book of life.

- "...I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels" - Jesus will publicly stand up for me before the Father and the angels, and declare that I belong to Him

— If I'm going to be spoken for like that, by Jesus, why do I get so bent out of shape because of what some people may say about me?

- “name” - *onoma*, has more than one meaning: can mean a person’s name, reputation, or as a synonym for the person himself
  - In view of the previous use in this letter (v1), where it means “reputation,” that is likely what it means here as well
  - Jesus will acknowledge all overcomers as His own to the Father (Cf. Matt 10:32; Mark 8:38; Luke 9:26; 12:8)
  - The believer has a good reputation in heaven, that results in his receiving an honorable eternal identity. His “good name” is associated with his rewards.
- [OT reference: Ex 32:32-33]

There appear to be several “books” (records) that God keeps in heaven (Cf. 20:12). There is the “Book of the Living,” namely, those who are presently alive on the earth, including the unsaved (Ex 32:32-33; Deut 29:20; Ps 69:28; Is 4:3). There is also a “Book of the Lost” containing the names of the lost and their deeds (Rev 20:12). There is a “Book of the Elect” with the names of *all* the saved in it (Dan 12:1; Rev 13:8; 17:8; 20:15; 21:27). A fourth book, the “Book of the Faithful” also called the “Book of Life” in v5, evidently contains the names of faithful followers of the Lord (Mal 3:16; Phil 4:3; Heb 12:23; Rev 3:5).

## “Overcomer” in Revelation 3:5?

INCORRECT VIEW	CORRECT VIEW
Imperative verb	Articular participle
Command	Modifies pronoun “he”
Prescriptive	Descriptive
The believer must overcome	The believer is an overcoming one
What the believer ought to do	Who the believer already is
Conditions	Statements of fact
Possible benefit	Inevitable benefit
Motivation in the present through potential loss	Motivation in the present through what’s inevitably theirs
Keep performing to maintain your position	Let your practice catch up to your position
Position kept through human works	Position maintained through divine grace

### Imperative verb (command) / Articular participle

Incorrect: people think you have to overcome to keep your name in the Book of Life, but it is not a command.

Correct: articular participle is describing something.

**Conditions / Statements of fact** - Incorrect: if you don't meet the conditions, you don't get the benefits



Two Books		
<b>TITLE?</b>	<b>Book of Life</b>	<b>Lamb's Book of life</b>
<b>KIND OF LIFE RECORDED?</b>	<b>Physical life</b>	<b>Spiritual life</b>
<b>WHEN RECORDED?</b>	<b>Conception</b>	<b>Regeneration</b>
<b>WHICH TESTAMENT?</b>	<b>Old Testament</b>	<b>New Testament</b>
<b>SCRIPTURE?</b>	<b>Ex 32:32; Ps 69:28</b>	<b>Luke 10:20; Phil 4:3; Rev 3:5; 20:12,15</b>

(H) Exhortation to listen (3:6)

- 6 The one who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'
- 6 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'
- 6 'Let everyone listen to what the Spirit says to the churches.'"
- 6 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

(6) Letter to the Church at Philadelphia (3:7-13)

(1) Destination (3:7a)

(2) Description of Christ (3:7b)

- (a) Holy
- (b) True
- (c) Holds the Key of David
- (d) Authoritatively opens and closes doors

7 "And to the angel of the church in **Philadelphia** write: He who is **holy**, who is **true**, who **has the key of David**, who **opens** and no one will shut, and who **shuts** and no one opens, says this:

7 "And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: He who is holy, who is true, who has the key of David, who opens and no one will shut, and who shuts and no one opens, says this:

7 "To the messenger of the church in Philadelphia, write: 'The one who is holy, who is true, who has the key of David, who opens a door that no one can shut, and who shuts a door that no one can open, 'says this:

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 opens, and no man shuts; and shuts, and no man opens;

- "...Philadelphia" - "brotherly love"; located 38 miles southeast of Sardis; the city's modern name is Alasehir. Their primary deity was Dionysus, the "god of wine."

- Philadelphia was loyal to the Scriptures and to the deity of Christ

- The Description of Christ used for this church differs from the other 6 churches in that it is not a name taken explicitly from Rev 1. There is only a minor reference (1:18), picturing the Messiah as the One with authority to open and close doors.

- "...holy" - He is separate and apart from His creation (Cf. 1:14); this is the dominant attribute of God (Cf. 4:8; Is 6:3)

- "...true" - *alethinós*, truth, veracity, 100% reliability, genuine; Jesus is "the truth" (John 14:6; 18:37)

- This truth is in contrast to falsehood (John 17:3; 1 John 5:20). This attribute perfectly describes His character.

- His kingship rests upon the bedrock/foundation of His character (Ps 2; 24). This is exactly the opposite of the Allah of the Quran. In the Quran, Allah is portrayed as capricious; he can do anything and you're never sure what he will do. Read that as: untrustworthy.

- On the other hand, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob of the OT, and Jesus Christ in the NT, delights in making and keeping His promises. Character is what He is about; He is trustworthy.

- "...who has" - a present tense participle; many take this to mean that Jesus is currently holding Davidic authority

- "...key of David" - the key of David is the authority to grant citizenship into the future kingdom (Is 22:22)

- Jesus is not saying that He has the key and therefore He started the kingdom. He is saying that He has the authority and power to grant entrance to the kingdom, when it comes, based on what He did on the cross.

- Until the kingdom comes, believers are "heirs" and "citizens" of that kingdom

- Progressive Dispensationalism loves this verse. They believe that Jesus is already ruling, from heaven, over a spiritual form of the kingdom.

- They interpret the present tense participle "the one who has" as Jesus is currently reigning on David's Throne from heaven. However, this misses the role and purpose of a "key."

- A key merely grants the right of future admission, not necessarily present entrance. Just because I have the keys to my car or house doesn't mean I'm in them at any given moment.

It doesn't mean I'm in my home or car right now, just because I'm holding the key. The key simply means I can access them any time I please.

— There are other Scriptural examples of keys: Jesus gave Peter the "keys of the kingdom of heaven" (Matt 16:19), which he used to unlock the door for the first Jews to become believers at Pentecost. The 3,000 who were saved that day did not immediately have access to heaven. Peter did the same thing in Acts 8 for the Samaritans, and in Acts 10 for Cornelius.

- "...opens...shuts" - Jesus authoritatively opens and closes doors

— Jesus has given this church an opportunity (v8)

[OT reference: Is 22:22]

## Kingdom Now Theology?

Darrell L. Bock, "The Reign of the Lord Christ," in *Dispensationalism, Israel and the Church*, ed. Craig A. Blaising and Darrell L. Bock (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 51, 62..



"The rule is extended from the Father to the disciple through the Son, the one who in Revelation 3:7 says he has 'the key of David.' . . . Here Jesus refers to himself as 'the one who has the key of David,' a phrase that contains a present participle . . . 'the one who has.' This is currently held Davidic authority."

### Jesus Holds the Key of David?

1. Authority to enter a reality is not the same thing as the presence of that reality (Is 22:22; Matt 16:19; Phil 3:20)



## Rev. 3:7

Robert L. Thomas, *Revelation 1–7: An Exegetical Commentary*,  
ed. Kenneth Barker (Chicago: Moody, 1992), 275.

"As the root and offspring of David (cf. Rev. 5:5; 22:16), Christ in the fullest sense controls the entrance to David's house, which *ultimately* refers to the Messianic kingdom. . . . He is the genuine Messiah, and in the *coming* reign of glory His power to open the door to His own and close it to the self-styled 'children of the kingdom' is established."

2. Jesus is in heaven (Rev 4:1; 5:6) while God's Kingdom is on the earth (Zech 14:9)
3. Christ's unsubdued enemies (Ps 110:1-2,5-6; Rev 3:9)
  - How could today be the kingdom when this little church is being harassed by the synagogue of Satan (v9)? In that same verse, Jesus says "I will" (future tense) make them come bow down at your feet (subdue them).

### (C) Commendation (3:8-9)

8 'I know your deeds. Behold, I have put before you **an open door** which no one can shut, **because** you have a **little power**, and **have followed My word**, and **have not denied My name**.

8 'I know your deeds. Behold, I have put before you an open door which no one can shut, because you have a little power, and have kept My word, and have not denied My name.

8 'I know what you've been doing. Look! I have put in front of you an open door that no one can shut. You have only a little strength, but you have obeyed my word and have not denied my name.

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.

- "...an open door" - evangelistic opportunities; Paul repeatedly spoke of his evangelistic opportunities as an "open door" (Cf. 1 Cor 16:9; 2 Cor 2:12; Col 4:3). The opportunity to be

a spiritual blessing.

— Just because Philadelphia had an open door doesn't mean that they didn't have struggles or adversities (Cf. v9; 1 Cor 16:9)

— Jesus has the keys (v7), and just like Peter, He's giving you (the church at Philadelphia) the keys. You're going to be able to lead people into a relationship with Me that gives them access to the kingdom and eventually heaven, some day.

— So God gave the church at Philadelphia "an open door" to evangelize and win converts for the kingdom. He didn't give the open door to *establish* the kingdom on the earth, but to *win converts* for the coming kingdom. When you allow the Bible to interpret the Bible, you get this interpretation.

- "...because" - *hoti*, used to show three reasons why Philadelphia had a door open for them that the other churches did not

— We often wonder why one Christian gets an open door when another does not, or why one Christian gets a certain door opened for them that is not opened for others

— Here, Jesus tells us that Philadelphia had a door opened for them because they had three things

- "...little power" - Jesus opened the door for the church that had "little" power...they didn't have the big budget, the big numbers, the big reputation

— They had lack of influence, evidently because they were small in number; the Lord's commendation is that, although the church has a lack of influence in a sinful world, they nevertheless remained faithful, and used what power they had to accomplish great things

— Jesus is saying that they are qualified based on their lack of qualifications

— God always calls the least qualified person (Moses, Ex 4:10; Gideon, Judges 6:11-12; Jeremiah, Jer 1:6; the 12 disciples, Acts 4:13; Why? 1 Cor 1:26-28)

— The problem with those who are, or think they are, qualified is that they have a serious tendency to not rely upon the Lord. They have their own plans and ambitions. You want to make God laugh, tell Him *your* plans.

— This doesn't make much sense...God opens a door, but He does so for a church that has "little power." Wouldn't it make more sense to open a door for a church that had a lot of power?

— Why would God give the greatest opportunity to those with the smallest amount of power? Because those with the smallest amount of power are more likely to give God the greatest amount of glory once they walk through the door.

— Over and over throughout the Bible, God doesn't use the brightest, smartest, most gifted or powerful people to accomplish great things. He often uses the weakest, least qualified because He knows that person is going to have to depend on Him in the opportunity that God gives.

— Just as in Gideon's army, God delights to accomplish His great victories with a small remnant, so it would be obvious to all that it is God who has won the victory, not man.  
- "...followed My word" - they were faithful with the little things (Luke 16:10)  
— If doors are not opening for you like you would like, are you being faithful in the little things that God is giving you to do *today*?  
- "...have not denied My name" - if you compromise on God's name, how can God trust you with anything else? (Acts 4:12)

9 [NASB20] Behold, **I will make those of the synagogue of Satan, who say that they are Jews and are not, but lie—I will make them come and bow down before your feet, and make them know that I have loved you.**

9 [NASB95] Behold, I will cause *those* of the synagogue of Satan, who say that they are Jews and are not, but lie—I will make them come and bow down at your feet, and *make them know that I have loved you.*

9 [ISV] I will make those who belong to the synagogue of Satan—those who claim to be Jews and aren't, but are lying—come and bow down at your feet. Then they will realize that I have loved you.

9. [KJV] 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 come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee.

9 [MIT] I would put at your disposal those from the synagogue of Satan who call themselves Jews but are not; they are lying. See: I will make them come and bow down before your feet, and they will know that I loved you

- "...I will make" - a time in history is coming when those who are persecuting Christians, those who appear to have the upper hand, will come and bow down at the feet of God's people

— This is obviously not happening today because we are not in the kingdom, but one day when Jesus comes back, this prophecy will be fulfilled

— Theologians call this the "doctrine of reversal" — those who look like they are winning against God's people will see everything reversed in the next life (Cf. Luke 16:19-31)

— Ps 73 speaks to this very well...in this psalm, Asaph is saddened, irritated and confused by the prosperity and arrogance of the wicked...until (v17) he sees a glimpse of eternity and understands how fleeting the prosperity of today really is. In some sense, Asaph felt sorry for them because once the "reversal" happens, we're all heading off into eternity.

- "...synagogue of Satan" - most scholars believe this is referring to Legalists (Cf. 2:9); it's an odd reference to associate Satan with a religious building or institution

— Satan wants to get us involved in religion rather than in a relationship with the Lord; could also refer to those who wanted to get Christians back under the Law (legalists)

- "...who say they are Jews and are not" - these foes claimed to be the true followers of God, but they were not, having rejected Christ (Cf. John 8:31-59)
  - National identity, race or ethnicity does not please God; not circumcision of the skin, but circumcision of the heart (Cf. 2:9; Matt 3:9; Rom 2:28-29; 9:6)
  - God is not in the business of working with those who do not believe, who are not born again
  - They will eventually have to admit their error, at the Great White Throne judgment, if not before (Is 45:23; 60:14; Rom 14:11; Phil 2:10-11)
  - "...I will make them...come...bow down" - future tense; because of these future tenses, the "synagogue of Satan" was not subdued at that time, but will be subdued someday future
  - Thus, Rev 3:7 in no way, shape or form could be describing the Davidic reign, because if the Davidic reign was in place, the enemies of God would be subdued, and obviously this wasn't the case in Philadelphia
  - "...*make them* know that I have loved you" - today, the world doesn't understand that God is on our side
  - If you tell an unbeliever that God is on your side, you are laughed at and ridiculed; they look at Christianity as wickedness (Cf. John 16:2)
  - After the "reversal" these unbelievers will acknowledge that God actually was on the side of Christians
- [OT reference: Is 43:4; 49:23; 60:14]

(D) Rebuke

(E) Consequence

Philadelphia and Smyrna are the only two churches that Jesus does not offer a Rebuke or a Consequence for sin. What these two churches have in common is that they were both being persecuted by the "synagogue of Satan" (unbelieving Jews). The point is that a persecuted church is a purified church. When you're under persecution and dependent upon God moment-by-moment, the opportunity for sin becomes less and less.

(F) Exhortation to change (3:10-11)

10 [NASB20] **Because you have kept My word of perseverance, I also will keep you from the hour of the testing, that *hour* which is about to come upon the whole world, to test those who live on the earth.**

10 [NASB95] **Because you have kept the word of My perseverance, I also will keep you from the hour of testing, that *hour* which is about to come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.**



10 [ISV] **Because you have obeyed my command to endure, I will keep you from the hour of testing that is coming to the whole world to test those living on the earth.**

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

10 [MIT] **because you kept my enduring word. I also will keep you from the time of trial that is about to come** because you have kept the word of My perseverance, I also will keep you from the hour of testing, that hour which is about to come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.

- "Because" - *hoti*, conditional, however the condition is not for participation in the rapture (v10), but rather a condition for whether their enemies will bow down at their feet (v9)

— Because this church will keep the condition, their enemies will indeed some day bow down at their feet

— Most English translations separate the two verses (3:9 and 3:10) with a period, but this is not in the original manuscripts (see MIT translation and copy of original Greek manuscript below)

— This is an interpretive problem because when "Because" starts the sentence of v10, it appears that there is a new thought that lays out some type of condition in order to participate in the Rapture and avoid the Tribulation.

— If you remove the period from the end of v9, you get an entirely different meaning of the passage

— The period should be placed after "perseverance" in the middle of v10, thus, it becomes *not* a cause for participating in the Rapture, but a cause for the enemies of Philadelphia to worship before their feet. Basically, the Lord is saying that He is going to make the enemies of Philadelphia come and bow down before them. Why? Because they (the church at Philadelphia) "kept the word of His perseverance." They met the condition of persevering, thus their enemies will bow down before them.

— Once the period is moved from after v9 to after "perseverance" in v10, Rev 3:10b becomes an additional unconditional promise of Rapture participation beyond the promises of Rev 2:9b.

— It is rare to begin a sentence with "because" (*hoti*) in a causative sense, both in the Greek language and in John's writings. It essentially makes the cause/condition of the promise precede the promise itself. Instead, *hoti* ("because"), when causal in function (the cause for qualifying for a blessing), usually follows a statement or promise in providing a reason for what preceded it in the sentence.

- "...kept My word of perseverance" - since the whole Philadelphian church was faithful (v8), this is not an inducement to remain faithful. It seems instead to refer to a *blessing* the whole church could anticipate.



- The verse as it is worded seems intended to *comfort* the whole church (Cf. 1 Thess. 4:18), rather than to challenge unfaithful or potentially unfaithful Christians
- "...keep you from" - *tērēo ek*, the promise to "keep" guarantees being kept from the *trials* of the Tribulation period and from the *time period* of the Tribulation. The promise is not simply I will keep you from the trials, it is I will keep you from the hour of the trials.
- This is not just from any persecution, but from the coming "time" that will affect the entire earth. The only way to escape the time when the events take place is to be in a place where time doesn't tick on: heaven.
- Post-tribulationists say that "from" (*ek*) refers to protection of the church during the Tribulation; pre-tribulationists understand it to mean preservation by being absent from the time of tribulation. Which meaning does *ek* support?
- Either, if the preposition is considered alone, but *ek* does denote a position outside something. The pre-tribulationist understanding of *ek* is supported by a number of verses that have nothing to do with the rapture (Matt 7:5)
- In addition, the combination *tērēoek* ("keep you from") occurs a number of times in Scripture (John 12:27; 17:15; Acts 15:29; Col 1:13; 1 John 5:18). Every time it is used, it's never a promise to be sustained *through* something, but rather to be to be *kept out of it* entirely.
- NT usage of *tērēo ek* is broken into 3 categories:
  1. To retain in custody, keep watch over, guard
  2. To cause a state, condition, or activity to continue, keep, hold, reserve, preserve
  3. To persist in obedience, keep, observe, fulfill, pay attention to
- Rev 3:10 falls into #2...keeping or preserving one from entering into something else. In this context, something else is "the hour of testing."
- "from" - *ek*, out of, indicating removal from both the hour (time) and the temptation (trial)
- *ek* denotes a position outside something without implying a prior position inside and then emergence from (Cf. Matt 7:5; John 12:27; 17:15; Acts 15:29; Col 1:13; 1 John 5:18)
- Believers are saved *out of* the time of trial means saved *from* it, not *through* it. Nothing in this verse or the surrounding context refers directly to the Rapture. It simply guarantees protection for believers away from the scene or the "hour of trial" while that "hour" is in progress.
- The pre-Tribulation view understands *ek* to mean preservation by being absent from the time and place of the Tribulation; external protection
- The post-Tribulation view understands *ek* to mean preservation while living through the Tribulation; internal protection. However, this view falls flat when trying to harmonize it with the remainder of the Book of Revelation, which teaches a massive, wide-scale martyring of believers (6:9-11; 11:7; 12:11; 13:7,15; 14:13; 17:6; 18:24).

- If Jesus, who spoke these words, wanted to communicate that believers would be “shielded” from the testing while living within and through this time period, He could have expressed this more clearly with *en* (“in”) or *dia* (“through”), rather than *ek* (“from”).
- “...the hour” - *hōra*, not a literal 60 minutes; John uses the word to refer to an “age” or extended period of time (Cf. John 12:27)
- “the” - there is a definite article “the” present in the Greek before “hour” (present in English) and before “temptation” (“the” temptation); these are emphatic in the Greek, and they refer to a *specific* hour and a *specific* temptation
- Notice it doesn’t say “I will keep you from the tribulation” - it says “I will keep you from the hour [season, time period] of the Tribulation” It doesn’t say God will preserve you “through” the time of Tribulation—it says “from” the time of Tribulation
- Refers to the same time mentioned in Dan 12:1: “Now at that time...”, referring to the Tribulation; Dan 12:10 describes “that time” as a testing period
- “...the testing” - *peirasmós*, to demonstrate the quality of something rather than to purify its contents; God will demonstrate who people (the earth dwellers) really are during the Tribulation
- A test for the purpose of exposing someone's true character typically with the negative intent to demonstrate a failure; God is setting up the earth dwellers for failure to expose their hearts (Rev 2:2)
- God does not test believers in this manner...He does not give us trials in order to expose us as failures; He instead brings trials into our lives to make us better, to rely on Him more (James 1:13-14)
- This is another argument in favor of the pre-Tribulational rapture...God doesn't test believers in this manner (to demonstrate our failure); He sends us trials to build our faith in Him
- Jesus based His promise in this verse on the fact that Church Age believers had already passed their test. Because of this, Christ promised that He would not put them into the period that has the purpose of testing a very different group (unbelievers).
- Many view the belief in a pre-Tribulational rapture as “escapism”: while it is a good thing to escape the coming Tribulation, Christians in the Church Age are promised trials (John 16:33), man's wrath (2 Tim 3:12), Satan's wrath (Eph 6:11-12), and the world's wrath (John 15:18-19). However, we are exempt from God's wrath because Jesus bore that in our place.
- “...is about to come” - *mellō erchomai*, the idea of imminency (Cf. 1 Peter 5:1)
- So the judgment of God is literally hanging over the earth right now; those who don’t know Christ are about to be overtaken by this event at any moment
- “...whole world” - *holos oikouménē*, sometimes used in the NT to refer to the “known world” or “inhabited world” (Cf. Luke 2:1; Acts 11:28); elsewhere used in the NT to refer to the entire world (Cf. Luke 4:5; Acts 17:31; Rev 12:9)

- The interpretation here must be according to context, which favors a global definition (the entire world)
- *epi teo oikoumenes holes*, in the Greek it is very clear: upon all mankind; geographically comprehensive
- "...to test" - *peirázo*, "temptation" above
- This is one of the main purposes of the Tribulation: to punish (or test) the "earth dwellers" (see below; Cf. Is 26:20-21)
- The other main purpose is to lead to Israel's conversion and acceptance of Jesus as Messiah (Is 26:11-20; Jer 30:1-24; Ezek 20:33-44; 22:17-22; Dan 12:1-3; Zech 12:10—13:1)
- The pre-Tribulation Rapture is escapism from *the* Trial and *the* Test, but is not an escape from trials and testings
- Christ based His promise on the fact that the Church saints had already passed their test. In light of that, it appears that because they had already passed their test, Christ promised that He would not put them into the period that is designed to "test" the earth dwellers, a very different group of people.
- The unbeliever is basically living at ease...they have not really lived through any type of testing in their lives. The tiny Church has. That will all turn around at the moment of the Rapture when believers are taken to heaven, and only unbelievers populate the earth. God then turns up the heat on the unsaved world for the purpose of exposing their wicked character for what it is.
- "...those who live on the earth" - *katoikeō epi gē*, the "earth dwellers"; these are obviously unbelievers because the Bible tells us many times that our citizenship is in heaven, not on earth
- Throughout Revelation, there is a class/group of people called "earth dwellers"; these are set in contrast with the "heaven dwellers." Once you define who the earth dwellers are, then you know who the Tribulation period is designed to test. You'll also understand why the Lord promised that we (believers) would be kept out of the hour, or time, of this test.
- Term is used 11x in Rev in 9 verses: 3:10; 6:10; 8:13; 11:10 [2x]; 13:8,12,14 [2x]; 14:6; 17:8. In each of the 11x "earth dweller" is mentioned in Revelation, it describes unbelievers (Rev 13:8; 17:8). Not once does it every describe a believer, or a mixed group of believers and unbelievers.
- They are adversaries, as we'll see later on; they are persistent, unrepentant unbelievers during the Tribulation. They are the mass of humanity that endures the Tribulation and ultimately dies and/or ends up in hell.
- So when Rev 3:10 speaks of a time of testing coming to the earth dwellers, it's speaking specifically of unbelievers, who have hardened themselves in rebellion and hatred of God. The testing that these earth dwellers will go through is a completely different word than the trials that Jesus puts us through as believers.

— The purpose of our trials is growth of our faith, our maturity, to depend on Christ. Not to grow *bitter*, but to grow *better*. However the testing for these unbelievers is to confirm them in their unbelief. It will reveal the content of their wicked hearts.

[Rapture 15 Rev 3:10 - Part 1](#)

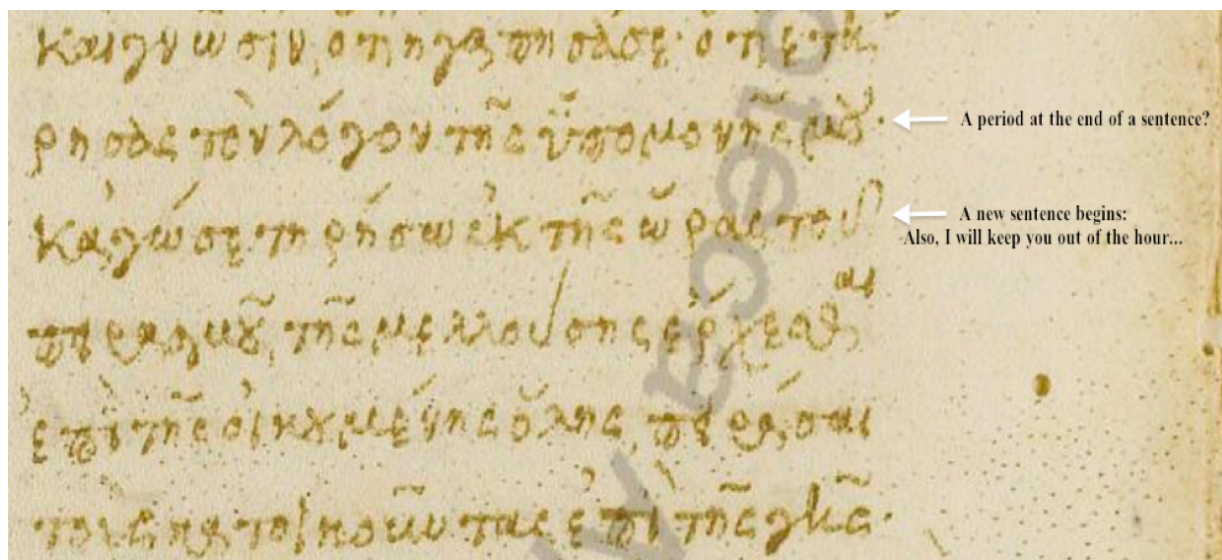
[Rapture 16 Rev 3:10 - Part 2](#)

Rev 3:9-10 [MacDonald's Idiomatic Translation (MIT)]:

9 I would put at your disposal those from the synagogue of Satan who call themselves Jews but are not; they are lying. See: I will make them come and bow down before your feet, and they will know that I loved you

10 because you kept my enduring word. I also will keep you from the time of trial that is about to come because you have kept the word of My perseverance, I also will keep you from the hour of testing, that hour which is about to come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.

Here's a copy of the original manuscript for Rev 3:9-10:



Looking at the original Greek construction of Rev 3:9-10, it appears that most English translations include punctuation in the wrong spots, forcing the verse to say something it's not saying. This punctuation is not present in the original manuscripts, which unfortunately leads readers to believe that Jesus Himself is putting a condition on believers being taken in the Rapture.

The English mistranslation of v9-10 in most Bible versions makes it easy to argue that they create a condition for participation in the Rapture. Partial Rapturism is a growing belief system today, and they use Rev 3:10 to argue in favor of this belief.

## Problems with Partial Rapturism

1. Every divine blessing is given on the basis of His grace, not human effort (Eph 2:8-9; Rom 12:6)
2. Symbolic parallels mandate that carnal as well as sanctified Christians will be taken up in the rapture (i.e. Lot, Gen 19:22)
3. The promise of the rapture is mentioned by Paul's letter to the carnal Corinthian church (1 Cor 15:51)
4. A partial rapture would sever (divide) Christ's body, the church (1 Cor 12:12-14)
5. The partial rapture view subjects believers to God's wrath (1 Thess 1:10)
6. Partial rapturism makes the Bema Seat judgment unnecessary (1 Cor 3:10-15)
7. Partial rapturists never objectively quantify the exact degree of faithfulness or spiritual maturity required to participate in the rapture.
8. Partial rapturists appear individually biased (never met one who didn't believe they were going to be included in rapture)
9. Partial rapturists dispensationally misapply Bible passages (Matt 25:1-13)
10. Partial rapturists misapply passages promising a reward to faithful believers (Rev 3:11)

See [Revelation 15 Kept from the Hour \(Rev 3:10\)](#) for additional information about the punctuation and interpretive problems with 3:10, as well as additional arguments against a Partial Rapture and arguments in favor of Rev 3:10 teaching a pre-Tribulational Rapture.

11 I am coming **quickly; hold firmly to what you have**, so that no one will **take your crown**.

11 I am coming quickly; hold fast what you have, so that no one will take your crown.

11 I am coming soon! Hold on to what you have so that no one takes your victor's crown.

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

- "...quickly" - *tachos*, soon, quickly; can be used chronologically (Cf. 1 Tim 3:14) or as an adverb (modifying a verb, Cf. Acts 22:18)

— This verse describes the Rapture...it is an event that will happen in a "moment" or in the "twinkling of the eye" (1 Cor 15:52). We know this because there are numerous other examples in the NT where the Rapture and Bema Seat judgment of believers (crowns) are connected.

— It also describes the imminency in which the Rapture will occur...there is no prior prophetic event that must take place prior to the Rapture

— The Holy Spirit has setup the doctrine of the Rapture and the doctrine of imminency so that every generation since the ascension should expect the Rapture to occur imminently.

See [Doctrine of Imminency](#).

— See note: **Timing Texts** and notes on 1:1

- "...hold firmly to what you have" - Jesus is telling the church at Philadelphia to continue doing what they already know is right. He doesn't put an additional burden on them, He just reminds them of what they have. He gave a similar exhortation to Thyatira (2:24-25).
- What most Christians need today is not more truth dumped on to them, but to be reminded of the truth that they already know. 2 Peter is a book of remembrance (see note below).
- Christians today also want something new...new is always better. But the Lord tells Jeremiah different (Jer 6:16). But the "old way" is just too simple for most people...they feel like they need "more." People today want their ear "tickled."
- "...take" - this "taking" of a crown is not a loss of a previously earned crown, but rather the loss of acquiring additional crowns should they go back to the sin nature. Every moment we spend walking in the flesh instead of walking in the Spirit is a moment that we are out of fellowship with Christ and do not have the opportunity to earn rewards. See quote from Woodrow Kroll below.
- "...your crown" - since Jesus' return is imminent, the believers should remain faithful to Him so that their detractors would not rob them of the reward ("take thy crown")
- "crown" is a subject of great importance in the following chapter!
- Cf. Rev 2:10 - a crown was also promised Smyrna (a church that was also without "concerns")



## Woodrow Kroll

Woodrow Kroll, *Facing Your Final Job Review: The Judgment Seat of Christ, Salvation, and Eternal Rewards* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2008), 123-124.

“We should never conceive of the loss of rewards as a repossession. God does not take back something he has already awarded to us. At the heavenly bema, we do not suddenly have a quantity of rewards ripped from our hands by the righteous Judge. We are not stripped of rewards as an erring soldier is stripped of his stripes. Not at all... Loss or reward is not like handing back a trophy that was mistakenly given to you. It’s not returning something you earned. It’s forfeiting a reward that you could have earned but failed to do so.”

## Scripture's Five Crowns

(Rev 4:10: 3:11; 2 John 8)

SCRIPTURE	CROWN	PURPOSE
1 Cor 9:24-27	<b>Incorruptible</b>	Gaining mastery over the flesh
1 Thess 2:19-20	<b>Rejoicing</b>	Soul winning
James 1:12; Rev 2:10	<b>Life</b>	Enduring trials
1 Peter 5:2-4	<b>Glory</b>	Shepherding God's people
2 Tim 4:8	<b>Righteousness</b>	Longing for His appearing





## Grant R. Jeffrey

*Apocalypse: The Coming Judgment of the Nations*, p. 85, 87.

“Someday every Christian will stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ to receive rewards for faithful service. Some believers will receive no rewards at all because they lived their lives of service to self rather than service to the Lord...Christians are promised a number of golden crowns for us faithful service to the Lord. Jesus warned that we are to ‘hold fast’ lest we lose our crowns. This indicates that it is possible to lose eternal rewards and blessings that God prepared for those who love Him. While our salvation is assured today by our accepting Christ as our savior...our future reward will be determined at the Judgment Seat of Christ after the Rapture. We are encouraged to hold on to these rewards through continued faithful service.”

### Local Application: Holding Fast

During the 14th century, the city of Philadelphia stood alone against the entire Turkish empire as a free, self-governing Christian city in the midst of a Turkish land. Twice besieged by great Turkish armies, its people were reduced to the verge of starvation, they had learned to defend themselves, and resisted to the end. By 1379-1390, it finally succumbed to a combined Turkish and Byzantine army. Until then, Philadelphia had held fast. Today, the few remaining Christians remain underground, as they generally must in an Islamic country.

(G) Promise to overcomers (3:12)

12 **The one who overcomes**, I will make him a **pillar** in the temple of My God, and he will **not go out** from it anymore; 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 **My new name**.

12 He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he will not go out from it anymore; 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 My new name.

12 I will make the one who conquers to become a pillar in the sanctuary of my God, and he will never go out of it again. I will write on him the name of my God, the name of the city of my God (the new Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God), and my own new name.

12 Him that overcomes 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.

- "The one who overcomes" - see note on 3:5

- "...pillar" - security, established, immovable

- When Solomon built the temple, he had a worker of brass from Tyre construct two massive pillars for the porch. Solomon named one of these pillars "Jachin" meaning *establish*, and he named the other pillar "Boaz" meaning *strength* (1 Kings 7:13-21)

- The overcomers in Philadelphia were promised future positions with Christ which appear to be described by the meanings of the names given to these two pillars

- "...not go out" - this promise to the overcomers refers to their fixed position as pillars in the temple; and with the two massive pillars in Solomon's temple in view, saying that overcoming Christians will be placed in the position of pillars in the temple is the same as saying that these Christians will occupy *sure, secure, firmly established* positions of *strength* and *power*, positions which will be realized when they rule and reign as co-heirs with Christ in the millennial kingdom.

- "...write on him the name of My God" - the name of the Father; writing one's name on something indicates ownership

- "name" (*onoma*) - appears 3x in this verse amounts to a threefold assurance of the overcomer's identity with God

- Sardis had a name, but they were dead; Philadelphia in contrast will receive a new name

- A name written which no one knows but He Himself (Rev 19:12)

- "...new Jerusalem" - the city where our citizenship resides (heaven, Phil 3:20)

- In Gal 4:24, Paul uses the present tense verb to describe the New Jerusalem, indicating that it currently exists

- "...My [Jesus'] new name" - Jesus will have a new name, and this name will be written on us

- We will have both the name of the Father and the name of the Son written on us when we get to heaven

[OT reference: Is 62:2; Ezek 48:35]

(H) Exhortation to Listen (3:13)

13 The one who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'

13 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'

13 'Let everyone listen to what the Spirit says to the churches.'"

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

- This is the third letter where the Promise to the Overcomer is in the body of the letter, followed by the common invitation ("He that hath an ear...")

— The last four letters (Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, Laodicea) all have this structure, while in the first three (Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum), the common invitation precedes the promise to the overcomer

(7) Letter to the Church of Laodicea (3:14-22)

(A) Destination (3:14a)

(B) Description of Christ (3:14b)

(a) Amen

(b) Faithful

(c) True witness

(d) The Originator or Source of Creation

14 "To the angel of the church in Laodicea write: The Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the Origin of the creation of God, says this:

14 "To the angel of the church in Laodicea write: The Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God, says this:

14 "To the messenger of the church in Laodicea, write: 'The Amen, the witness who is faithful and true, the originator of God's creation, says this:

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;

- "...church" - contrary to the inclination of many commentators, the fact that Jesus calls this a "church" means they are saved, by definition

— Besides Jesus naming these people as part of the church, we know they in fact attended the local "church" in Laodicea; in the first century, there would be little reason for someone who wasn't a believer to attend a local church gathering

- "...Laodicea" - *Lao*, people; *Diceans*, rulers = "Rule of/by the People," i.e. the "self-satisfied" church; this is in contrast to Jesus ruling the church

— Located 45 miles southeast of Philadelphia, 40 miles east of Ephesus. It was the last stop of that ancient postal route that included all seven of the cities mentioned in these seven letters in Rev 2-3.

— Laodicea was founded by Antiochus II, the great-grandfather of Antiochus Epiphanes. He named the city after his wife, Laodice.

- It was located on a plateau in the Lycus River valley, close to two other NT cities, Colossae and Hierapolis. Laodicea is specifically mentioned in Colossians 5x (2:1; 4:13,15,16 [2x]).
- It was one of the wealthiest cities in the world; it specialized in banking, producing black woven cloth, and health care. The church had affluence without influence.
- It suffered an earthquake that destroyed the city, but it's prosperous citizens had subsequently rebuilt it, by themselves (without Roman help)
- Jesus sent this letter to shake them out of their self-sufficient complacency and to exhort them to self-sacrifice for higher spiritual goals (Cf. Col 2:1-2; 4:16)
- Jesus describes Himself here in ways that are everything that Laodicea was not...Laodicea was faithful to no one except themselves
- Jesus holds Himself out here in terms of His character by way of contrast
- "...Amen" - "it is certain or true"; in describing Himself as "The Amen" Jesus is saying the He is the One who guarantees confirmation and certainty of all that He says. What He says is absolutely true.
- "...faithful and true Witness" - His testimony to the situation in Laodicea was trustworthy; it doesn't need to be changed or corrected because He is not only the "Amen" but also the "faithful and true" witness
- He tells the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, because He is the God of truth (John 14:6; 18:37)
- It presents the trustworthiness of Christ in sharp contrast to the unfaithfulness of the Laodicean church
- When Jesus speaks, there is never any distortion, dilution, exaggeration, or deviation from the truth. He tells the whole truth without addition or omission. What He is about to say cannot be changed and it does not need to be corrected. Furthermore, it should not be challenged.
- "...Origin of the creation of God" - an allusion to the Creator, who began the Creation of God; it sets forth His authority to pass judgment (Cf. 1:4,8)
- "beginning" - *arche*, first origin, first cause; the Person who commences; the leader; the active cause (Cf. Rev 1:8, a quote from Is 41:4)
- This verse is used by Jehovah's Witnesses to argue that Jesus was created and thus not God; see notes on Col 1:15; Cf. Prov 8:22
- [OT reference: Gen 49:3; Deut 21:17]

### (C) Commendation

All six of the previous churches had at least one word of commendation. This church has none. There is nothing commendable in this church.

(D) Rebuke (3:15-17)

15 'I know your deeds, that **you are neither cold nor hot**; I wish that you were cold or hot.

15 'I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot; I wish that you were cold or hot.

15 'I know your actions, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were cold or hot.

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

- "...you are neither" - they were not useful due to their worldliness

— Jesus is lamenting the fact that they had lost their usefulness due to the fact that they weren't in a relationship with Him

- "...cold nor hot" - both cold water and hot water serve specific, beneficial purposes

— Cold water is refreshing, thirst quenching, cooling; hot water kills germs, it is sanitizing and good for cleaning; warming

16 So because you are **lukewarm**, and neither hot nor cold, **I will vomit you out of My mouth.**

16 So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth.

16 Since you are lukewarm and neither hot nor cold, I am going to spit you out of my mouth.

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

- "...lukewarm" - contrary to what most pastors will teach, does not mean that these were professing believers who were not actually saved

— It refers to believers who have one foot in the church and one foot in the world; they are neither hot nor cold

- "...I will vomit you out of My mouth" - Jesus says something similar in Matt 5:13, speaking of believers as the "salt of the earth"; if the salt loses it's saltiness, it is no longer good for anything other than to be thrown out and trampled under foot

— If salt loses its flavor, what is it good for? Nothing. It loses it's ability to season food or preserve food; it's useless for anything

— This is what was happening in Laodicea...they had no utility to Christ in the realm of using their lives to move His purposes forward

— Jesus is commenting at the nauseous feeling He has when He looks at the man-centered church at Laodicea

17 Because you say, "I am rich, and have become wealthy, and **have no need of anything,**" and **you do not know** that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked,

17 Because you say, "I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing," and you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked,

17 You say, "I am rich. I have become wealthy. I don't need anything." Yet you don't realize that you are miserable, pitiful, poor, blind, and naked.

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:

- "...have no need of anything" - Laodicea's problem was that they were under "the curse of prosperity"—they had too much of the world's power, possessions and influence

— They were so blessed materially that they forgot God and their need for Him; "it's hard to pray for your daily bread if you own your own bakery"

— Laodicea was the opposite of Smyrna, the struggling little church under persecution.

Jesus said He knew their "poverty (but you are rich)" (Cf. 2:9).

— Many people today see Laodicea as the height of spirituality...in fact, there's an entire movement called the "Prosperity Gospel" which equates material prosperity with spiritual prosperity

— However, Jesus uses Laodicea as an exact opposite example from today's Prosperity Gospel...they had material wealth in abundance, but they were spiritually wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked.

- The curse of prosperity is spoken of numerous times in Scripture:

— Deut 8:11-14: Israel was about to enter Canaan and was warned about the prosperity they would have while in the Land, but also the detrimental impact it could have on their spiritual lives. The Lord is saying that it was more advantageous for Israel to go out each morning to pickup the manna, because they had to depend on Him every day.

— Matt 19:20-23: Jesus told His disciples it was easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God. The problem with having the world's good is that we get used to buying our way out of problems. If we're used to doing that, it's easy to ignore God.

— 1 Tim 6:17: Paul commands Timothy to tell the rich in Ephesus not to be conceited or fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy.

— Prov 30:8-9: Agur says to keep deception and lies far from me; give me neither poverty nor riches. Give me my portion, that I may not be full and deny God, or that I may not be poor and steal, profaning the name of God.

- "...you do not know" - one of the amazing things about Jesus' words here is that He is calling out Laodicea for their spiritual blindness: the people of this church were in this condition, but they weren't even aware of it. The perception the church had of itself was WRONG!

— If you would've surveyed them at the time Jesus said these words, they would've reported that everything was hunky-dory, but they were blind to their spiritual condition before the Lord.



— In v15, Jesus says, "I know"; in v17, Jesus says that the church at Laodicea did not know, because of their own spiritual blindness

- This church was worse off than any of the previous! It is spiritually poverty-stricken:

- They felt capable and confident...Jesus said they were wretched and pitiful
- They looked at their gold and felt secure...Jesus called them poor
- They medically healed blinding eye conditions...Jesus called them blind
- They produced highly prized fabric...Jesus called them naked

(E) Exhortation to change (3:18-20)

(a) Buy from Me (3:18a):

(i) Gold (3:18b) - trials

(ii) White garments (3:18c) - the righteousness of Christ

(iii) Eye salve (3:18d) - the ministry of the Holy Spirit

18 I advise you to **buy from Me gold refined by fire** so that you may become **rich**, and **white garments** so that you may clothe yourself and the shame of your nakedness will not be revealed; and **eye salve** to apply to your eyes so that you may see.

18 I advise you to buy from Me gold refined by fire so that you may become rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself, and *that* the shame of your nakedness will not be revealed; and eye salve to anoint your eyes so that you may see.

18 Therefore, I advise you to buy from me gold purified in fire so you may be rich, white clothes to wear so your shameful nakedness won't show, and ointment to put on your eyes so you may see.

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.

- Rather than write off this church, Jesus graciously counseled them in what to do to rectify their situation

- "...buy from Me" - Jesus is saying, You think your rich and materially wealthy, then you need to use your resources to buy a few things from Me

— Once you buy these things and put them into your life and your church, you will come back into right fellowship with Me

— The three things Jesus asks Laodicea to purchase from Him refer to the city's main sources of wealth: banking (gold), production of wool or cloth (white garments), and medicine (eye salve)

— Christ is simply pointing out that, primarily due to the influence of their society, and the affluence which they enjoyed, they had adopted twisted values

— They were much more concerned with how much money they could get than they were with how much money they could give. They cared more about things fiscal than they did

with things eternal.

— Their twisted values as a church had driven them to the brink of spiritual bankruptcy  
- "...gold refined by fire" - Jesus is saying that Laodicea needed a trial; they needed a trial, an adversity, a frustration, a setback (Cf. 1 Peter 1:6-7); it will only be after this trial comes into their life that they come to the end of themselves and turn to the Lord

— When you compare this with the church at Smyrna, self-sufficiency makes you poor; when you believe and live your life as if you don't need God, it puts you into a position of spiritual poverty

— The rich man (Luke 12:19) had plenty, so much that he had to tear down his barns and build newer, bigger ones. But Jesus called him a fool because he was so focused on the things of this world, he wasn't aware that he was going to die today. Once he died, who would own all his material goods after his death? (Cf. James 1:10-11)

- "...rich" - not monetary wealth (they already had that), but rather spiritual wealth (Cf. James 1:9-11)

- "...white garments" - the righteousness of Christ, supplied to us by grace, received at the point of faith (positionally righteous) (Cf. Phil 3:9)

— Symbolizes righteous conduct and purity, as opposed to the black wool the city was famous for (Cf. 3:4-5; 6:11; 7:9,13-14)

— The church had already received this (they were saved), but they forgot all about it (they forgot about their purification from their former sins, Cf. 2 Peter 1:9)

— They have the Holy Spirit, but they were attempting to be perfected by the flesh (Cf. Gal 3:3); they were trying to work out the Christian life the energy of human power because they had become so self-sufficient in their own eyes.

— They had convinced themselves that what they were doing was worthwhile and good, when, in essence, instead of furthering the gospel of Christ, they were fashioning a human monument, made of wood, hay, and stubble—destined eventually for destruction by fire.

- "...eye salve" - they were in a state of blindness of their own condition; Jesus urges them to "buy" eye salve from Him so they could have a proper view of their relationship with Him

— How ironic: the physicians at the medical school of Asclepius were world renown for their miracle-cure eye salve that could restore one's physical sight. Yet, the church at Laodicea had gone blind spiritually.

— If this church was blind to their current spiritual condition, how could they see clearly once again? They needed the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the only One who can help you see spiritual things. You want to see where you are spiritually, ask the Lord to have the Holy Spirit reveal it to you (Cf. 1 Cor 2:14).

[OT reference: Is 55:1]

(F) Consequence (3:19a)



19 Those whom I love, I rebuke and discipline; therefore be zealous and repent.

19 Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline; therefore be zealous and repent.

19 I correct and discipline those whom I love, so be serious and repent!

19 As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.

- Unfortunately, 98% of commentaries call the church at Laodicea unsaved; it's difficult to find a single commentator who believes that this church is saved

— The problem is that many of these commentators come from a Calvinistic background.

The "P" of TULIP (perseverance of the saints) means that if you don't have ever-increasing fruit as a Christian, maybe you were never saved to begin with (never one of the "elect").

— Because people have bought into the Calvinistic system, they take wayward believers in the Bible and convert them into unbelievers

— But notice that Jesus never tells this church that they need to trust in Him for salvation; there's no mention of belief in this letter. The reason is because they are saved believers, out of fellowship with Christ.

— So this Calvinistic belief basically divides people into two categories: saved and unsaved. However Paul, in 1 Cor 3:1-3, divides believers and unbelievers, but then divides believers into three additional categories: infant (new) believers, carnal (backslidden) believers, and spiritual (mature, growing) believers.

- "...love" - *phileō*, not *agapaō*; *phileō* is a love of less depth than *agapaō*. *Phileō* is never used in the NT to describe the love of God/Jesus toward unbelievers. In fact, it would be impossible for God to have this kind of love for an unbeliever because it speaks of enjoyment and fellowship, things which unbelievers do not have with God.

— *Agapaō* is the verb used of God's love toward unbelievers (Cf. John 3:16). The Lord reminded this church that the reason for His (rather harsh) letter is because He loved [*agapaō*] them and desired for them to repent

- "...rebuke and discipline" - the Laodicean church richly deserved God's rebuke and chastening, but God's discipline they were about to receive is motivated by compassion (Cf. Job 5:17; Ps 94:12; Prov 3:11-12)

— This phrase shows that Jesus is talking to a church of saved (but backslidden) people, because God does not discipline non-believers (Heb 12:5-11). The concept of discipline does not apply to an unsaved person; God doesn't go around disciplining unbelievers. Unbelievers are under God's *wrath*, not His *discipline*.

— Believers, on the other hand, are not under God's wrath, but they are at times under God's (divine) discipline (Cf. Prov 13:24)

— What is divine discipline? The introduction of pain into the life of the believer, by God (Heb 12:5-11). It's a sign of God's love and ownership over us.

— A parent does not discipline their child's friends...because those children do not belong to them. In the same way, God does not discipline those who do not belong to Him.

However, it's a sign that one does belong to Him if they encounter divine discipline.

— Sometimes, after discipline from God does not have the intended outcome (repentance, restored fellowship, spiritual growth, etc.), God will administer maximum divine discipline (the taking of a believer's life) as was the case in Thyatira (2:22-23; Cf. Acts 5:1-11; 1 Cor 11:30; 1 John 5:16)

— God doesn't enjoy disciplining His children, and especially does not want to instill maximum divine discipline. It is for this reason that often He will give a warning (or many warnings). This verse is such a warning to Laodicea.

- "...be zealous" - to be motivated concerning the things of God

— Zeal is a tricky thing: In Rom 10:2 Paul talks about those who have a "zeal for God" but it is not in accordance with knowledge (Cf. John 16:2)

— There are other people who have knowledge, but no zeal; people who sit around and say, I've studied that before so I don't need to study it again. They have knowledge, but no zeal.

— So there are zealous people with no knowledge, and knowledgeable people with no zeal. Funny thing is, Laodicea had neither knowledge nor zeal. They needed to acquire knowledge, a proper perspective on their walk with the Lord, and secondly they needed to be zealous for what they learned.

— Acquiring knowledge with no zeal for application in daily life is a very harmful thing as it increases our level of judgment at the Bema Seat. To whom much is given, much is expected.

- "...repent" - *metanoēō*, to change one's mind

— Jesus tells five of the seven churches that they need to repent (excludes Smyrna and Philadelphia)

[OT reference: Prov 3:12]

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 will **dine** with him, and he with Me.

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 will dine with him, and he with Me.

20 Look! I am standing at the door and knocking. If anyone listens to my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he will eat with me.

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.

- One of the most misinterpreted and misquoted verses in the Bible...99% of the time you hear this verse quoted, it is by an evangelist, including some of the greatest evangelists in the world.

— Many people come to belief in Christ and are saved because of this verse, in spite of the fact that it is misquoted out of context. God is so powerful and sovereign that He can take

a lousy presentation of the gospel and use it for His glory.

— This is not an evangelistic verse at all...it addresses the broken fellowship that this church was experiencing because of their many issues

— It is a misinterpretation of this verse to say that to be saved you must invite Jesus into your heart...that's not what this verse says, nor what it means. Ironically, the words "ask," "Jesus," and "your heart" are not even found in this verse.

— The Bible never says a single time that we must "invite Jesus into our heart" in order to be saved. It does, however, say upwards of 150x that salvation is conditioned upon belief/trust in Jesus Christ alone for the eternal salvation of our soul (Cf. John 3:16; Acts 16:31).

— Some want to make Laodicea a church of unbelievers after reading from this verse, but Cf. v19, which says those Jesus loves, He disciplines (see notes there). Scripture teaches that the disciplinary hand of God is for believers, not unbelievers. The world is not under the disciplinary hand of God, they are under the judgment/wrath/condemnation of God. Unbelievers don't experience God's discipline, they experience His wrath and judgment, which is completely different.

— If Jesus is standing outside of His church (Laodicea), knocking in order to be allowed entrance, does it sound like Jesus is reigning in His kingdom through this church? This sounds like the complete opposite of kingdom conditions.

- So if this verse is not talking about salvation, what is it talking about? It's talking about a church who is doing "Christianity" without Christ. A church that is going through the motions of Christianity, but it is empty.

— It's about Jesus wanting fellowship and re-admittance into this man-centered church, which kicked Him out a long time ago because they had everything figured out (they thought they didn't need Him).

- "...the door" - often misinterpreted as the door to your "heart" but this interpretation is completely foreign to the passage. This is the door of the church (room/home/building) where they were meeting.

- "...if" - third class condition, which presents the condition as *uncertain of fulfillment, but still likely*

— The third class condition states what results will happen if at any time in the future the condition is met. The writer or speaker knows that at the present time the condition has not been fulfilled, but it is possible and even probable that the condition will be met at some time in the future.

- "...anyone" - singular; in context, any believer in this church

- "...hears My voice" - what Jesus said earlier in v14-19

- "...opens the door" - the door where the church gathered (not the door to your heart, see note above)

- "...come in" - *eiserchomai*, "come in with," "come in among" or "come toward"; used 8x in the NT and never means to "come into somebody" or "enter someone" (Cf. Mark 15:43). This is not Jesus "coming in to" a person's heart.

- "...to" - *pros*, Christ will come "in to" (two different words), not come "into" (one word). The verse is saying that Christ will come in the church to the person, not that Christ will come into the person. This is not a hair-splitting of the English text, but an accurate reflection of the Greek.

— In Greek, "come in" (*eiserchomai*) is one word. It is followed by the preposition "to" (*pros*). That construction occurs 8x in the NT (Mark 6:25, 15:43; Luke 1:28; Acts 10:3, 11:3, 17:2, 28:8; Rev 3:20). In each instance it means to enter into a building and stand before a person.

— When He gets in the church with the person, He will dine (have fellowship) with him.

- "...dine" - *deipnēsō*, in Greek there are different words for the morning, noon, and evening meals. The word translated here [*deipnēsō*] refers to the evening meal (dinner), which consisted of leisurely, relaxed conversation and fellowship around food.

— In the first century, dining with someone was a sign of very intimate fellowship (i.e. the Last Supper in the Upper Room). This word is not used in a salvation context, rather Jesus wants intimacy with this church restored.

The first thing which a person *must* get fixed in his mind when studying the message to the Church in Laodicea is the fact that **the Spirit of God is addressing Christians**. Too many people deal with certain acute problems which arise in the Christian life in a rather loose manner. When sin manifests itself in the life of an individual claiming to be a Christian, a common way to deal with the matter is to begin questioning the person's salvation. The thought usually centers around the premise that if a person is saved he will follow a certain course of action; and if he doesn't follow this course of action, his conduct reveals that he was never really saved in the first place. Such a thought, however, is completely contrary to any Scriptural teaching on salvation by grace through faith. It is a corruption of the pure gospel of the grace of God, for works have been introduced into a realm where works cannot exist (Cf. Eph 2:8-9; Rom 11:6).

(G) Promise to overcomers (3:21)

21 **The one who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat with My Father on His throne.**

21 **He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.**

21 **To the one who conquers I will give a place to sit with me on my throne, just as I have conquered and have sat down with my Father on his throne.**

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.

- "The one who overcomes" - refers to a believer (Cf. 1 John 5:4-5)

- This promise is the climax of all the promises held out to overcomers in Rev 2-3; fulfilled in 20:4. The promise here is that when Jesus returns (Second Coming) to the earth, evicts Satan, and sets up His Davidic Throne in Jerusalem to reign over the earth for 1000 years, believers will be there with Him.

— A similar promise was given to Thyatira: "I will give authority over the nations; and he shall rule then with a rod of iron" (Cf. 2:26-27)

— The application here is that if believers will rule and reign with Christ, from His throne, over the nations for 1000 years, why can't we get along with each other today (Cf. 1 Cor 6:2-3)? Christians should be maturing into their identity as a future kingdom ruler. Every trial we endure today is preparing us for our future kingdom reign ("today is training time for reigning time").

- "...I will grant" - *didōmi*, future tense, referring to His offer as King, when He sits down on David's throne (which is on the earth); the Davidic Throne was not in existence when Jesus made this statement, but one of these days, there will be a Davidic Throne, and Jesus will sit on it, in Jerusalem, to rule the earth with a rod of iron for 1000 years.

— Jesus will both sit on, and grant believers to also sit on, His throne (Davidic throne)

- "...My throne" - a reference to David's throne, on the earth, in the future

— The throne Jesus is seated on now is not "His throne," it's His Father's throne in heaven

- "...I also overcame" - past tense

- "...sat" - *kathizō*, aorist tense meaning something that took place in the past and continues until now

— Jesus began sitting on the Father's throne after the ascension (Cf. 12:5); He will one day future sit down on His throne, and at that time will grant believers (overcomers) to sit with Him on that throne.

— This refers to the Father's throne, in heaven; Jesus is consistently portrayed as sitting at the right hand of the Father in heaven, on the Father's throne (John 17:5; Acts 7:55-56; Rom 8:34; Col 3:1; Heb 1:3; 8:1; 10:12; 12:2; 1 Peter 3:22; Rev 3:7; 5:5; 12:5)

— So the Father's throne is occupied currently, two seats, by the Father and by Jesus Christ. It remains as such even to today. In John 17:5, Jesus prayed to the Father to have His (Jesus) former glory back with the Father, on the Father's throne.

— After Jesus reigns (and us with Him) on the Davidic Throne for 1000 years, Jesus' throne and the Father's throne will be merged during the Eternal State (Rev 22:1). Until this time, there are two thrones...the Father's throne, which both Jesus and the Father are sitting on today, and the Davidic Throne, which is earthly, and which Jesus will occupy once He returns and inaugurates the millennial kingdom.

- This verse clearly distinguishes two thrones:
  1. Jesus' (Davidic) Throne, which will be on the earth
  2. Father's throne, which is in heaven, where Jesus is seated now, with the Father
- These two thrones will merge in the Eternal State (22:1,3)
- The Father's throne is always depicted as in heaven, and the Davidic Throne is always depicted on the earth (2 Sam 3:10; 7:12-16; Jer 13:13; 22:2,4)
- Jesus has never sat on David's Throne during His ministry; He will, however, during the messianic kingdom
- Jesus will reign...over Israel (Luke 22:30) and over the angels (1 Cor 6:3); we will reign with Him, and the timing of this reigning is future (1 Cor 4:8; 2 Tim 2:12)

Christ is here saying that, those who are spiritually victorious, will be rewarded (future tense of *didomi*) by joining Him in His earthly Messianic reign, just as He overcame (aorist tense) and sat down (aorist tense) with His Father on His Throne. [Couch]

Progressive Dispensationalism does not teach the idea of two thrones...they believe the kingdom is in its "already" state here and now on earth, and that Jesus is sitting on David's Throne in heaven today. The physical manifestation of the kingdom on earth (the "not yet") phase will occur after the Second Coming, when Jesus will bring that throne to Jerusalem. They get this from Rev 22:1, when the two thrones are merged, however this occurs during the Eternal State and is not a present reality. There are many things present in the Eternal State that are not a present reality (see Eternal State below), so how can PD's take an event (the merging of the thrones) in Rev 22:1 and say that this is a present reality? If that was true, wouldn't everything else pertaining to the Eternal State (Rev 21-22) also be true today?

### **Eternal State**

- No Satan (Rev 20:10)
- No sea (Rev 21:1)
- No death, crying, pain (Rev 21:4)
- No sun (Rev 22:5)
- No moon (Rev 21:23)
- No night (Rev 21:25)
- No evil (Rev 21:27)
- No curse (Rev 22:23)

## Revelation 3:21 in Progressive Dispensationalism

“One may object that the throne at the right hand of God is not the Davidic throne, which is earthly. The objection might be raised by appealing to a text like Revelation 3:21, where Jesus distinguishes between ‘my throne,’ in which the overcomer will sit, and the Father’s throne, on which Jesus currently sits. The argument is made that the throne on which Jesus sits in Acts is the Father’s throne, not David’s...this throne of the lamb, set next to the Father, is alluded to again in Revelation 22:1. This is the same throne that Jesus occupies in the consummation! He exercises Davidic rule now even as he will exercise it then.”

Darrell Bock, “The Reign of the Lord Christ,” in *Dispensationalism, Israel and the Church*, ed. Craig Blaising and Darrell Bock (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 50, 62.

### Jesus' Three Offices

1. Prophet - 1st Coming (Matt 4:17)
  - At His first coming, Jesus did what prophets generally do...called Israel to repentance. Must like the prophets of the OT, He was mostly unsuccessful.
2. Priest - Present Session (Heb 4:15)
  - On the Father's throne, at the Father's right hand, engaged in His office of High Priest, after the order of Melchizedek
3. King - 2nd Coming (Is 9:6-7; Matt 25:31)
  - Jesus will rule the earth from His throne, the Davidic Throne, in Jerusalem





## Lewis Sperry Chafer

vol. 5, Systematic Theology (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1993), 315.

“Similarly, the earthly kingdom that according to the Scriptures had its origin in the covenant made to David, which is mundane and literal in its original form and equally as mundane and literal in uncounted references to it in all subsequent Scriptures which trace it on to its consummation, is by theological legerdemain (trickery, deception) metamorphosed into a spiritual monstrosity in which an absent King seated on His Father’s throne in heaven is accepted in lieu of the theocratic monarch of David’s line seated on David’s throne in Jerusalem.”

### Christ's High Priestly Activities in His Present Session

1. Sustains creation (Col 1:16-17)
2. Head over the Church (Eph 1:22-23)
3. Groom of the Church (Eph 5:22-33)
4. Building the Church (Matt 16:18; Acts 2:41; 4:4)
5. Bestowal of Spiritual Gifts (Eph 4:7-12)
6. Intercedes for the Saints (Rom 8:24; Heb 7:25)
7. Advocate for the Saints (Heb 9:24; 1 John 2:1; Rev 12:10)
8. Forgives the Saints (1 John 1:9)



## Lewis Sperry Chafer

vol. 5, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1993), 273-74.

“The present ministry of Christ in heaven, known as His session, is far-reaching both in consequence and import. It, too, has not been treated even with a passing consideration by Covenant theologians, doubtless due to their inability—because of being confronted with their one covenant theory—to introduce features and ministries which indicate a new divine purpose in the Church and by so much tend to disrupt the unity of a supposed immutable purpose and covenant of God’s. Since, as will be seen, certain vital ministries of Christ in heaven provide completely for the believer’s security, the present session of Christ has been eschewed by Arminians in a manner equally unpardonable.”



## Lewis Sperry Chafer

vol. 5, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1993), 273-74.

“This neglect accounts very well for the emphasis of their pulpit ministrations. The Christian public, because deprived of the knowledge of Christ’s present ministry, are unaware of its vast realities, though they are able from childhood itself to relate the mere historical facts and activities of Christ during His three and one-half years of service on earth. That Christ is doing anything now is not recognized by Christians generally and for this part-truth kind of preaching is wholly responsible. It yet remains true, whether neglected by one or the other kind of theologian, that Christ is now engaged in ministry which determines the service and destiny of all those who have put their trust in Him.”

(H) Exhortation to listen (3:22)

22 The one who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”

22 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”

22 ‘Let everyone listen to what the Spirit says to the churches.’”

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

- This is the fourth letter where the Promise to the Overcomer is in the body of the letter, followed by the common invitation (“He that hath an ear...”)

— The last four letters (Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, Laodicea) all have this structure, while in the first three (Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum), the common invitation precedes the promise to the overcomer