

## ***The Church of the Servant King***

[www.cotsk.org](http://www.cotsk.org)

### **Prophecy Series**

(Proph21C\_Revelation\_chps2&3 – Part 5)

### **The Seven Churches Continued (Rev 2:1-3:22)**

#### **REVIEW OF 1<sup>ST</sup> FOUR CHURCHES**

Characteristics	Ephesus (2:1-7)	Smyrna (2:8-11)	Pergamos (2:12-17)	Thyatira (2:18-29)
Commendation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Jesus knew their works, labor &amp; patience</li> <li>- They could not bear false apostles</li> <li>- Hate deeds of Nicolaitans</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Jesus understood their tribulation &amp; poverty</li> <li>- Believers were being persecuted by unbelieving Jews (Judaizer types) called the “synagogue of Satan”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Held fast to Jesus’ name</li> <li>- Did not deny Him</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Works, love, service, faith, patience</li> </ul>
Condemnation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Left their first love</li> <li>- Urged to repent</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- None</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Some had embraced the “teaching of Balaam (religious syncretism)</li> <li>- Some embraced the teaching of the Nicolaitans (licentious compromise)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Allowed false “prophetess” Jezebel who taught the “depths of Satan”</li> </ul>
Promise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- “To him who overcomes, I will give to eat from the tree of life”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Promise of the “crown of life” to those faithful unto death</li> <li>- Some would be thrown into prison to be tested “ten days”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Promise to “overcomers” – will be given “hidden manna” and a “white stone” with a new name</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- “He who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations”</li> <li>- “I will give him the morning star”</li> </ul>
Historical Points of Note	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Center of Paul’s Gentile ministry</li> <li>- Temple to Artemis – major source of income</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Loyal to Rome (vs. Seleucids)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Home to a great library</li> <li>- Not much Jewish influence</li> <li>- Capital city under the Pergamum kings &amp; Rome</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Home of many craftsman guilds – each with their own deity</li> </ul>
Negative Influences Highlighted	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Nicolaitans</li> <li>- False Apostles</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Synagogue of Satan</li> <li>- Many pagan temples</li> <li>- Large unbelieving Jewish community</li> <li>- Emperor worship</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Emperor worship</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Much idolatry &amp; pagan ritual</li> </ul>

#### SARDIS (3:1-5)

#### *Historical Facts*

The city Sardis was located about thirty-six miles south of Thyatira which was situated on an elevated plateau about 1,500 feet above the valley and Hermus plain below.<sup>1</sup> Three sides of the city were made up of cliffs of smooth rock walls that were almost perpendicular. Actually, Sardis occupied one of a series of alluvial hills that formed a transition from the lower elevation of the Hermus plain to the higher elevation of Mount Tmolus.<sup>2</sup> This series of hills terminated in the north in a sharp point and on the south in a neck of land that connected them to Mount Tmolus. The only feasible access to the city was provided by this small neck of land so that Sardis was virtually impregnable as a fortress.<sup>3</sup> However, these geographic features limited the size to which the city could grow. This resulted in the development of a lower city on the western and northern sides of the original city and the old city became an acropolis.

The city served as the capital of the Lydian empire as early as circa 1200 BC.<sup>4</sup> As the capital of Lydia, Sardis had a history of frequent wars, but its walls were virtually impregnable making victory practically impossible. However, after Croesus, the king of Lydia, had retreated to Sardis to recoup from a defeat in the open field at the hands of Cyrus, king of Persia, Cyrus laid siege against Sardis in 549 BC. Deluded into a false sense of security by the geography surrounding Sardis, Croesus did not even order one man to stand post near the cliffs. Cyrus' climbers ascended one by one and overtook the city.<sup>5</sup> Cyrus then made Sardis the seat of the governor of Asia Minor.<sup>6</sup> During the reign of Darius over the Medo-Persian empire, the city was accidentally burned by the Ionians. This so angered the Persians that it led to the invasion of Greece, first by Darius and then by Xerxes, who made Sardis his headquarters before his disastrous march on Greece.<sup>7</sup> Sardis regained some of its independence and became aligned with Greece until about three and a half centuries later (195 BC) when Antiochus the Great conquered the city in the same manner.<sup>8</sup> In AD 17 the city suffered extensive damage from an earthquake and Tiberius, the Roman emperor provided much assistance in the rebuilding of the city.<sup>9</sup>

The primary source of wealth in the city was derived from trade and agriculture. The main industry was the production of woolen goods and Sardis is thought to be the first city to

---

<sup>1</sup> E. M. Blaiklock, *The Seven Churches, an Exposition of Revelation, Chapters Two and Three* (Wheaton, Illinois: Van Kampen Press), 52.

<sup>2</sup> Robert L. Thomas, *Revelation 1 - 7, an Exegetical Commentary* (Chicago, Illinois: Moody Press, 1992), 240.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 241.

<sup>6</sup> Andrew Tait, *The Messages to the Seven Churches of Asia Minor: An Exposition of the First Three Chapters of the Book of the Revelation* (London, England: Hodder and Stoughton, 1884), 296.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 297.

<sup>8</sup> Tait, *The Messages*, 297 and Thomas, *Revelation 1-7*, 241.

<sup>9</sup> Thomas, *Revelation 1-7*, 242.

perfect the art of dyeing wool.<sup>10</sup> Archaeological evidence and the writings of Josephus indicate that there was a wealthy and influential Jewish community in Sardis.<sup>11</sup>

The evidence for the acceptance of a Jewish community in a pagan society seems to be unique, and contrasts sharply with the indications of racial and religious tensions in Rome, Alexandria or Ephesus. Another feature of the synagogue is the reuse of sculptured Lydian religious reliefs in the structure. Numerous details tend to confirm and illustrate an impression that Jews and Christians in this city had long sought a *modus vivendi* by accommodation to their pagan surroundings. This is the most natural explanation of the acceptance and affluence of the synagogue community, and the relationship may have been established very early. A further relationship, that of the church and synagogue, is an important question on which it is difficult to pronounce confident judgment. We cannot tell how far the earliest Christians of Sardis were converts from Judaism, but we infer from Rev. 3.4 that the majority had 'soiled their garments', apparently by some accommodation to their environment.<sup>12</sup>

Such acceptance of Jews (and possibly Christian converts from Judaism) into the citizenry of a Greek city was very unusual, but not without precedent. Occasionally, a body of Jews would be incorporated into a city's citizenry when a constitution was forcibly imposed on the city. Sardis was one of the handful of cities where this arrangement took place under the Seleucids.<sup>13</sup> Therefore, if many of the Christian converts came from the Jewish community as was common in the early days of the Church, it is likely that the pressures of the world to maintain a certain standard of living exerted the greatest adverse influence upon the church at Sardis.<sup>14</sup>

The religious life of the community was dominated by pagan forms which involved the forces of nature that were subject to death and had the power of self-reproduction.<sup>15</sup> Sardians appeared to be preoccupied with the problems of death and immortality. Special restorative powers were associated with a hot springs about two miles from the city and were attributed to the god of the underworld.<sup>16</sup> The patron deity of the city was known as Cybele (a.k.a. Artemis) and a temple was dedicated to her worship.<sup>17</sup> Emperor worship and the imperial cult was prominent in Sardis, especially after the earthquake of AD 17 when a temple was erected in honor of the emperor.<sup>18</sup>

#### *New Testament Background Involving Sardis*

---

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 242.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 243.

<sup>12</sup> Colin J. Hemer, *The Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia in Their Local Setting* (Trowbridge, Wiltshire, Great Britain: JSOT Press, 1986), 137.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 136.

<sup>14</sup> Tait, *The Messages*, 299.

<sup>15</sup> Thomas, *Revelation 1-7*, 243.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

The founding of the Christian community is not mentioned in the New Testament, but it is speculated that representatives of Paul perhaps founded it during his three year stay in Ephesus which was located only fifty miles to the southwest.<sup>19</sup>

*The Relationship Between the Historical and New Testament Background and Revelation 3:1-6*

3:1 "AND 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. 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. 3 'Remember therefore what you have received and heard; and keep *it*, and repent. If therefore you will not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come upon you. 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. 5 'He who overcomes shall 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. 6 'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'** (Rev 3:1-6)

The fact that the church in Sardis had a reputation indicates that it had passed its prime and that its effectiveness was in the past. No mention is made of the pressures faced by this church from paganism, the Jewish community, the Nicolaitans, or other adverse influences. Their reputation from their past indicated they were still alive; however, Christ viewed them as dead (Rev. 3:1).

The Sardinian believers were in a state of peaceful coexistence with their fellow citizens because of compromise. They were spiritually ineffective or dead, but Christ could restore them to life (Rev. 3:2). This statement no doubt drew heavily from the pagan influence in Sardis that was preoccupied with death and immortality. Jesus states that if the church does not change its mind, he will come as a thief in the night. The readers of this letter would have most likely recalled the history of Sardis and remembered how the city's lack of vigilance on two separate occasions had led to its fall, i.e. the Persians in 549 BC and Antiochus the Great in 195 BC.

Christ's reference to His Coming to Sardis was not a reference to His Second Advent as much as it was a reference to the concept of judgment as a result of unfaithfulness.<sup>20</sup> There were a few Christians who had not compromised their spiritual lives to the pursuit of material wealth in the world.

I believe that Jesus is using one of the primary occupations and sources of wealth in Sardis in Revelation 3:4-5 to distinguish between those who had compromised their spiritual lives in the pursuit of worldly gain and those who had not compromised. The predominance of the garment industry in Sardis would have made this analogy especially poignant to the church at Sardis. "Because of the earlier contrast between the soiled garments of sinful church members and unsoiled garments of faithful Christians, it seems evident that the whiteness of these new garments stands for holiness and purity."<sup>21</sup>

PHILADELPHIA

---

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 244.

<sup>20</sup> Tait, *The Messages*, 308.

<sup>21</sup> Thomas, *Revelation 1-7*, 257.

## Historical Facts

Philadelphia was located in Lydia about twenty-five miles southeast of Sardis in the valley of the Cogamis River. The low hill (about 500 feet) that served as the acropolis of Philadelphia formed the outermost spur of the long range of hills associated with Mt. Tmolus.<sup>22</sup> The city lay along the best path for ascending from the Hermus Valley to the main plateau that was about 1,500 feet higher. This path conducted the majority of the trade and communication from the harbor at Smyrna and Lydia and other northwest regions to Phrygia, Sardis, Laodicea and other regions to the east.<sup>23</sup> As such, it served as the imperial postal road during the first century AD and Philadelphia was a main stage on this route.<sup>24</sup>

Volcanoes and earthquakes were very prevalent in the region that surrounded Mt. Tmolus. The earthquake which occurred in AD 17 was of such a magnitude that twelve cities in the Lydian Valley were destroyed, including Sardis and Philadelphia.<sup>25</sup> Aftershocks continued for some time with one severe enough to destroy Laodicea in AD 60.<sup>26</sup>

Philadelphia joined the other cities that accepted help from Rome and Philadelphia responded, by among other things, erecting a monument in Rome and accepting another name, Neo-caesarea, that disappeared after twenty-five to thirty years.<sup>27</sup> During the reign of Vespasian (AD 70-79), the city took another name, Flavia, and both Philadelphia and Flavia remained in use throughout the second and third centuries.<sup>28</sup>

The city was established sometime in the second century BC by a Pergamenian king with the purpose of consolidating, regulating, and educating the central regions that were subject to the Pergamenian kings.<sup>29</sup> These rulers wanted Philadelphia to be a hub to spread Greek language and culture to the east, thus serving as an apostle of Hellenism in an Asiatic land.<sup>30</sup> It was successful in this effort and fostered a spirit of unity, customs, and loyalty within the area.<sup>31</sup>

The city's name was chosen in recognition of the loyalty of Attalus II to his brother Eumenes II, who resisted constant Roman efforts to turn him against his brother.<sup>32</sup> The shift in the city's allegiance to and alliance with Rome probably coincided with Rome's extensive assistance after the earthquake of AD 17.

---

<sup>22</sup> Hemer, *The Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia*, 153.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Thomas, *Revelation 1-7*, 270.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 271.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 272.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Hemer, *The Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia*, 154.

<sup>30</sup> Thomas, *Revelation 1-7*, 271.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Hemer, *The Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia*, 155.

The volcanic ash in the soil surrounding the city made the land extremely fertile. Many people had turned to farming after the earthquake, specifically cultivating vineyards.<sup>33</sup> Asia Minor was subject to shortages of corn that was needed to supply the eastern armies of Rome.<sup>34</sup> In AD 92, Domitian issued an edict that at least half of the vineyards in the province be destroyed and no replacements made in the hopes of increasing corn production. This edict affected Philadelphia more than other cities of Asia because Philadelphia depended so heavily upon the vine for its prosperity. This event resulted in no small amount of disillusionment with Rome.<sup>35</sup>

Very little is known about the religious inclinations of Philadelphia, although Dionysius, the god of wine, was principal deity.<sup>36</sup> There must have been a Jewish synagogue there based upon Revelation 3:9; however, archaeology has provided no evidence of one.<sup>37</sup>

#### *The Relationship Between the Historical Background of Philadelphia and Revelation 3:7-13*

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: 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. 9 '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. 10 '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. 11 'I am coming quickly; hold fast what you have, so that no one will take your crown. 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. 13'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'

In Revelation 3:7, Jesus identifies Himself as the keeper of the key of David which was obviously designed to identify Him as the fulfillment of Hebrew prophecies with which the Jewish population (i.e. the "synagogue of Satan" – unbelieving Jews) would relate. The key of David was a reference to the Messianic kingdom and Jesus determined who could enter (Rev. 3:8). The reference draws from Isaiah 22:22 where the same privilege was assigned to Eliakim as steward over the house of King Hezekiah.

The key of the house of David I will lay on his shoulder; so he shall open, and no one shall shut; and he shall shut, and no one shall open. (Isa 22:22)<sup>38</sup>

---

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 158.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Thomas, *Revelation 1-7*, 272.

<sup>36</sup> Hemer, *The Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia*, 158.

<sup>37</sup> Thomas, *Revelation 1-7*, 272.

<sup>38</sup> The passage is set within a context in which Isaiah is pronouncing oracles of judgment associated with the day of the Lord to all of the nations surrounding Judah and Israel. In chapter 22, Isaiah turns to Jerusalem and specifically highlights the arrogance of Shebna, a high government official. Verse 22 is a reference to Eliakim – an official who God was to honor in place of the arrogant Shebna.

The claims of the hostile Jewish contingent in Philadelphia were evidently to the contrary and they claimed that they alone, not followers of Jesus, had access to the kingdom of David. "The strong Jewish emphasis in Jesus' self-description makes this the most distinctly eschatological of the seven epistles."<sup>39</sup> This promise came from one who is holy and true in contrast to the self-serving imperial god who would betray a loyal city in the interest of his empire.<sup>40</sup> Not only were the Jews incorrect, but in a reversal of Isaiah 60:14, the predominantly Gentile church would be the recipients of homage from the Jewish element as the result of a future repentance.<sup>41</sup>

Also, the sons of those who afflicted you shall come bowing to you, and all those who despised you shall fall prostrate at the soles of your feet; and they shall call you The City of the Lord, Zion of the Holy One of Israel. (Isa 60:14)

In Revelation 3:10, Jesus promises to keep the believers safe in a place away from where "the hour of trial" occurs. If one accepts the **historical** interpretation of Revelation 2 &3, no sense can be made out of this passage other than to understand it as a reference to the Rapture and the Tribulation from which believers will be exempt by virtue of having been relocated to a safe place, i.e. heaven.<sup>42</sup> (We will examine this passage in greater depth in a separate study).

This must have been a great comfort to the Philadelphian believers due to the constant threat of earthquakes and volcanic action, both of which are later revealed to be a part of the Tribulation "hour of trial", e.g. Revelation 8:5 and 16:18. It is also possible that this passage refers to a more immediate deliverance in addition to the more futuristic deliverance (i.e. consistent with the **historico-prophetic** interpretation of Revelation 2 &3); however, history does not record such a deliverance.

As pillars (Rev. 3:12), these overcomers would be earthquake proof. They would not have to dwell outside the city as did many in Philadelphia.<sup>43</sup> These believers would receive a new name that would identify them as forever belonging to God and to His city. This would have had special meaning to the Philadelphian believers who had seen their city's name change on several occasions. The new name they would receive would be permanent.

## LAODICEA

### *Historical Background*

Laodicea was situated about 40 miles southeast of Philadelphia and almost due west of Ephesus. It was located in the Lycus Valley at a crucial point on a major highway.<sup>44</sup> At Laodicea, the Lycus Valley opened into the Maeander Valley so that Laodicea served as a

---

<sup>39</sup> Thomas, *Revelation 1-7*, 275.

<sup>40</sup> Hemer, *The Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia*, 160.

<sup>41</sup> Thomas, *Revelation 1-7*, 282.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Gregg, Steve, *Revelation, Four Views, A Parallel Commentary* (Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1997), 76.

<sup>44</sup> Thomas, *Revelation 1-7*, 296.

guardian over the road. The Lycus Valley was one of the most frequent routes of travel to the west.<sup>45</sup>

Even though its geography made it almost impregnable because of the 8,000 foot cliffs on its southern side, its water supply made it vulnerable.<sup>46</sup> By the time that John wrote, the city had outgrown its water supply from local streams and the city depended upon aqueducts for its water.<sup>47</sup> The city's water supply originated at the hot springs six miles away at Hierapolis with temperatures near boiling; however, in the process of traveling through the aqueduct to Laodicea, the water became tepid.<sup>48</sup>

Little is known of the early history of the city. It is speculated that the probable founder of the city was Antiochus II (261-246 BC) who named it after his wife, Laodice.<sup>49</sup> The purpose of the city was most likely related to a desire to strengthen Seleucid hold on the land, so its original population would have probably been a mixture of Syrians, Macedonians, and possibly some Jews loyal to the king.<sup>50</sup>

Laodicea was an especially prosperous commercial and financial center after Rome took control of the area and brought peace to the land. Its prosperity was in no small part attributable to its manufacture of a black wool that had a peculiar soft texture.<sup>51</sup> In addition, the seat of a famous school of medicine was located in Laodicea and its students followed the teachings of Hierophilus (350 - 250 BC), who advocated the treatment of disease with compound medicine.<sup>52</sup> Of particular note was the compound developed to treat eye ailments.<sup>53</sup> The wealth of the city is perhaps best illustrated by the fact that it received no aid from Rome following the earthquake of AD 60; however, its citizens contributed heavily in helping to rebuild some of the other cities.<sup>54</sup>

Different accounts regarding the size of the Jewish population exist; however, references in the Talmud and other records reflect that a significant and influential Jewish population lived there.<sup>55</sup> In Hierapolis, the Jews were organized into trade guilds and the same situation may have existed at Laodicea.<sup>56</sup> The reference in the Talmud indicates that the Jews were at the apex of "ease and laxity."<sup>57</sup> Pagan religion centered around the Phrygian god Men Karou who

---

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 297.

<sup>46</sup> Hemer, *The Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia*, 178.

<sup>47</sup> Thomas, *Revelation 1-7*, 297.

<sup>48</sup> Gregg, *Four Views*, 78.

<sup>49</sup> Thomas, *Revelation 1-7*, 297.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 298.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Gregg, *Four Views*, 78.

<sup>54</sup> Thomas, *Revelation 1-7*, 298.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 299.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

began to take on more qualities characteristic of the Hellenistic god Zeus as the city became Hellenized.<sup>58</sup> The Laodicean god was sometimes called Aseis, a Syrian word which meant powerful.<sup>59</sup>

### *New Testament Background Involving Laodicea*

While Paul ministered in Ephesus, Epaphras evangelized in the Lycus Valley, primarily Laodicea (Col. 1:6-7). Through Epaphras, Paul had learned that false teachers had been propagating erroneous doctrines at Laodicea and Colossae, so to counter their efforts, Paul wrote Colossians and desired that it be sent on to the Laodiceans (Col. 4:15-16).<sup>60</sup> The Holy Spirit had prohibited Paul from traveling into Asia per Acts 16:6. In Colossians 4:16, Paul mentions a letter from Laodicea; however, this is most likely the circular Ephesians letter since Paul had not traveled into the Lycus Valley to found any churches. It is possible that Archippus (Col. 4:17), a son of Philemon (Philem. 1:2) may have founded the church in Laodicea.<sup>61</sup>

### *The Relationship Between the Historical and New Testament Background and Revelation 3:14-22*

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: 15 'I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot; I wish that you were cold or hot. 16 'So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth. 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, 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. 19 'Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline; therefore be zealous and repent. 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. 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. 22 'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'"

Along with Smyrna, Laodicea received no commendation from the Lord. This is most likely the reason Jesus began his message in Revelation 3:14 to the church at Laodicea with such solemn titles for Himself. His reference in verses 15 and 16 to the unpleasant nature of lukewarm water were obviously related to the water supply of Laodicea. The hot water full of calcium carbonate and other minerals had medicinal value and the cool water of Colossae had refreshing qualities; however, lukewarm water served no useful purpose.<sup>62</sup> The lukewarm status of the church at Laodicea was evidently related in some fashion to the material wealth that its citizens enjoyed based upon verse 17. Evidently, the church could not distinguish between material and spiritual prosperity because they lacked spiritual eyesight. This lack of spiritual

---

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Tait, *The Messages*, 391.

<sup>61</sup> Thomas, *Revelation 1-7*, 299.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 305.

perspicacity combined with the city's reputation for medicinal solutions for eye problems gave rise to the exhortations in verse 18.

<b>Characteristics</b>	<b>Sardis (3:1-6)</b>	<b>Philadelphia (3:7-13)</b>	<b>Laodicea (3:14-22)</b>
Commendation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- There were some who had not "soiled their garments"</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Believers had kept the word of "His perseverance"</li> <li>- Had not denied the name of Jesus</li> <li>-</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- None</li> </ul>
Condemnation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- They were "dead"</li> <li>- Instructed to repent</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- None</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Lukewarm</li> <li>- Needed to repent</li> <li>- They were wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked</li> </ul>
Promise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- "You have a few names even in Sardis who have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with Me in white, for they are worthy. He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels."</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- "I will make those of the synagogue of Satan...bow down at your feet"</li> <li>- "I will also keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth."</li> <li>- "He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God"</li> <li>- "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"</li> <li>- "I will write on Him my new name."</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- "To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne."</li> </ul>
Historical Points of Note	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Strategic geography – located on a hill surrounded by cliffs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Accepted help from Rome after devastating earthquake in AD17</li> <li>- Located as one of the hills in a range of hills associated with Mt. Tmolus</li> <li>- Served as the imperial postal road during the 1<sup>st</sup> Century AD</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The city depended upon aqueducts for its water supply</li> <li>- Water came from hot springs, but were tepid by the time they reached the city.</li> <li>- 8000 foot cliff on one side of city</li> <li>- Located along one of the most frequent routes of travel to the west</li> <li>- Very prosperous</li> <li>- Seat of a medical school</li> <li>- Manufactured a black wool</li> </ul>
Negative Influences Highlighted	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Emperor worship</li> <li>- Temple to Artemis (like Ephesus)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Synagogue of Satan (unbelieving Jews)</li> <li>- Dionysius, the god of wine, was principal deity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Large Jewish population</li> <li>- Trade guilds were prevalent</li> </ul>