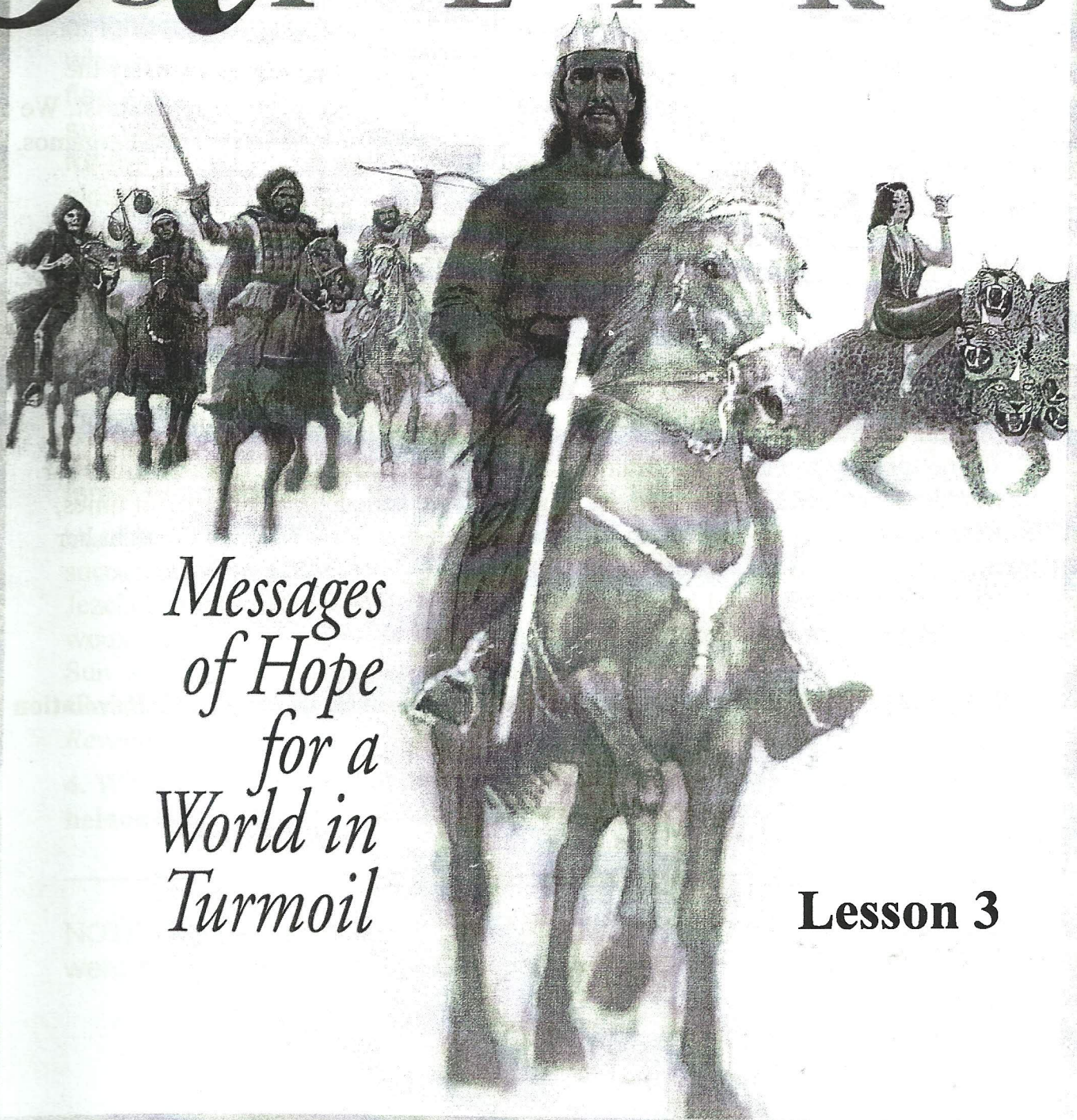


Revelation

S P E A K S



*Messages
of Hope
for a
World in
Turmoil*

Lesson 3

The Seven Churches Part 2

[This chapter is based on Revelation, Chapters 2 and 3]

In the previous chapter, we learned that the span of prophetic time covered by the seven churches began with John's day and ends with the second coming of Christ. We also focused on the first three of the seven churches: Ephesus, Smyrna, and Pergamos.

In this chapter, we will explore the remaining four churches: Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea. A detailed chart on the seven churches will be found at the conclusion of this lesson.

Thyatira

(The Church in the Wilderness) A.D. 538 -1500s

The fourth church was Thyatira. This city was on the highway leading north from Sardis on the way to Pergamos. It lay inland between two valleys. It was famous for its Madder Roots, which provided the bright red dye called purple in ancient times, which was used for royal attire around the world. It was here that Lydia bought her dyes (Acts 16:11-15).

READ: Revelation 2:18-29.

1. For what five things did Jesus commend the church of Thyatira? Revelation 2:18,19.

a. _____

d. _____

b. _____

e. _____

c. _____

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2. At what time in their history were they most active in their good works? Revelation 2:19 (last part).

NOTE: The "good works" of this church grew better, but they increasingly embraced tradition, substituting the human for the divine.

Thyatira was the church of the wilderness. The church at that time accepted so many of the pagan practices that the truths of God's Word were forgotten or ignored. The Roman Church now influenced the state to persecute those who remained loyal to God and His teachings. Many of God's true followers fled into the wilderness. In order to escape this terrible persecution, groups such as the Waldenses, the Huguenots, and the Albigenses left their homes for the mountain retreats of Southern France and Northern Italy. Near the close of the Dark Ages, the Reformation brought a renewed interest in the Bible. Truths forgotten for centuries were brought to light.

3. Whom did God say had corrupted the church of Thyatira? Revelation 2:20.

NOTE: The text says that Jezebel "calleth herself a prophetess." But she was not speaking for God! Jezebel was a heathen Phoenician princess whom King Ahab of Israel married.

'As a priestess of Baal, Jezebel set herself to introduce sun worship to Israel, and she succeeded. Almost the whole nation went into idolatry. . . . This marriage of Ahab to Jezebel, and the subsequent apostasy of Israel, was a type of the time when paganism would come into the church and the head of the church became the head of the state. Sun worship, the foundation of pagan worship, came with all its trappings into the Christian church and is still perpetuated among certain groups." -*Unfolding the Revelation*, p. 31.

4. What were the sins that Jezebel brought into Israel which God felt were so heinous? Revelation 2:20; 1 Kings 21:25, 26; 1 Kings 16:31-33.

NOTE: The pagan practices of the Nicolaitans and the Balaamites and Jezebel were being brought into the Christian church to please the pagan converts and

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disassociate Christians from the Jews. The basic concept of some of these pagan groups was the abandonment of all laws, thus allowing complete self-expression. They viewed the law as restrictions limiting freedom. Idol worship, eating meat offered to idols, immorality of the most degrading kind, sun worship, and obeying man-made traditions instead of obeying God were often practiced. Mixing religion and paganism brought spiritual corruption into the church.

5. What will happen to those who are guilty of these crimes against God if they do not repent? Revelation 2:22, 23.

NOTE: God does not say that everyone in the Thyatira church will be punished. He says that He will search the mind and heart of each person and "give to each of you as your works deserve." There was a group in Thyatira who remained faithful to God. But those who refused to repent were to be punished.

6. What comforting message did God give to those in Thyatira who had remained faithful to Him? Revelation 2:24-28.

- a. I will put upon you none _____
- b. Hold _____
- c. To the overcomer He will give _____
- d. 'And I will give him' _____ (verse 28)

NOTE: To those who refuse at any cost to compromise their obedience to God with worldly culture, Jesus gives the promise that they will reign with Him, "the Morning Star." Here we find the King of kings and Lord of lords inviting us to be His friend and companion and to rule with Him throughout all eternity! What an invitation!

Sardis

(The Church of Reformation) A.D. 1500s - 1790s

The fifth church is Sardis, meaning "that which remains." The city of Sardis lay halfway between Philadelphia and Thyatira on the main highway. It rose sharply 1,000 feet from the valley below and seemed impregnable. But Cyrus the Great in 547 B.C. conquered the city by sending a volunteer to scale the high rock walls of the mountain and open the gates from inside, while everyone was sound asleep! Then, in 218 B.C, Antiochus the Great conquered the city again, in the same way! The inhabitants---again---were sleeping!

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7. In what interesting way did Jesus describe the church at Sardis? Revelation 3:1

NOTE: What a succinct illustration for the church of this era! Sardis had been a dynamic congregation when the disciples were alive, but as time passed, things became "mundane," and finally Jesus said, "You have the reputation that you are alive, but you're dead, and you don't know it. You are like the people in Sardis; you are all sleeping and no guard is on duty, and no one is working."

8. What advice did Jesus give to this sleeping congregation? Revelation 3:2, 3.

NOTE: Their condition was serious, but correctable. Jesus said, "Come alive! Get to work! Be alert!" It was while Sardis slept that the enemy came and overthrew them. Don't be like that, Jesus warned-be watchful! Hold fast what you know to be right and repent of your sinful, sleepy, do-nothing condition! In today's vernacular, we might say, "Get with it!"

9. What were they to remember? Revelation 3:3.

NOTE: The Reformation was an act of the Lord. It is doubtful that biblical Christianity could have survived without it. However, like Israel of old, the people quickly forgot God's leadings and settled for the forms of truth without the power of it. Hence, later reformers found many reformation churches in almost as great a condition of apostasy as the medieval church from which it had been reformed.

10. What word describes those who refuse to defile their garments? Revelation 3:4.

11. What do you think "the garments" represent? Revelation 3:18.

NOTE: "Being clothed with white raiment is explained in other scriptures to be a symbol of exchanging iniquity for righteousness. (See Zechariah 3:4, 5). 'Take away

the filthy garments from him,' is explained by the language that follows, "Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from." 'Thine fine linen,' or the white raiment, 'is the righteousness of the saints.'" - *Daniel and the Revelation*, pp. 384,385.

12. Whose name will remain in the Book of Life? Revelation 3:5.

NOTE: There is only one Being who can keep us from falling, and that person is Jesus Christ. We can't do it on our own! Read Jude verses 24, 25.

Philadelphia

(The Missionary Church of the Judgment Hour)

A.D. 1790s - 1840s

The sixth church we will study is Philadelphia. Philadelphia lay due north of Antioch and on the Roman highway between Laodicea and Sardis. It was built on a hill overlooking two valleys. Its name means, "Brotherly Love" -a name given to it by King Attalus II of Pergamos in memory of his older brother, King Eumenes II. The city remains to this day on the same spot. This church received commendations from Jesus, but surprisingly, no rebukes!

13. What key is Jesus holding when He speaks to the Philadelphia church? Revelation 3:7.

NOTE: The Son of Man is the rightful heir of David's throne; since He is about to take great power and reign, He is represented as having the key of David.

14. How does Jesus use this key of David? Revelation 3:7.

NOTE: The heavenly sanctuary has two compartments called the "Holy" and "Most Holy." The key is a symbol of access. As the living, divine Christ, Jesus has access to both the Holy place of the sanctuary and the inner apartment-the Most Holy place. The last work of Jesus before He returns to Earth is a work of judgment before the "mercy seat," which sits above the ark of the covenant in the Most Holy Place.

15. What did Jesus say He had set before the Philadelphia church? Revelation 3:8.

NOTE: Remembering that this is taking place in the heavenly sanctuary leads to only one conclusion. The door opened by Christ's kingly keys is the door to the last compartment of the heavenly sanctuary. The Philadelphia church is the church that discovers the great truth about Christ's final ministry in the heavenly sanctuary-the church that begins announcing to the world, "God's judgment hour has arrived!" We will study much more about this heavenly judgment in future studies.

16. Even with "little strength," what two things had the Philadelphia church done? Revelation 3:8.

17. Because they followed Christ's command to persevere, what was the church spared.? Revelation 3:10-12.

Laodicea

(The Lukewarm End-time Church)
A.D. 1840s - second coming of Christ

The seventh and final church is Laodicea. The city of Laodicea was a business person's paradise! The true witness declares, "They were rich, and they were proud of it!" But their wealth didn't include spiritual richness! It came from commercial and banking interests. Laodicea had a medical school which was famous for its eye ointment. It was a resort town with bubbling hot springs located a few miles from the city. The water piped to the city was lukewarm by the time it got there! Sickening to drink!

18. How does the faithful and true witness describe the Laodicean church? Revelation 3:14-16.

19. How did this church feel about itself? Revelation 3:17.

NOTE: Well, that's what *they* thought! But God looks on the hearts and minds of His people, remember? They were in a wretched condition, and they didn't even know it! They were poor, blind, naked, and a miserable people. What a stinging rebuke that was! God couldn't find a thing about them that He could commend! They were deceived about themselves, and Jesus wanted them to know that

He was a faithful and true witness, that He was actually telling it like it really was- and is! Because that's us! Laodicea is our era! God is talking about conditions in the Christian church today.

20. What prescription does God give this church to correct its ills? Revelation 3:18.

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____

NOTE: "To people who thought they were rich, He presented Himself as the source of true riches. To people who thought they had the remedy for all sorts of eye trouble, He offered the only effective eye ointment. To people who thought they made some of the finest garments in the world, He offered the white, not black, robes of His own righteousness." -*God Cares*, Vol.

2, p. 114.

21. What precious promise is made to the last church? Revelation 3:20-22.

NOTE: Yes, even this "lukewarm, insipid" church can come alive! It can overcome! It will "shine. . .like the stars forever" (Daniel 12:3). There is good news! It will become totally committed. It will catch on fire for the Lord! Don't you want to be a part of this church that comes alive?

My Response

___ I want Jesus to come into my heart so I can become a radiant, loving Christian who's on fire for the Lord.

___ I choose to be a true, vibrant Christian spending time each day studying about Jesus and witnessing for Him.

[NOTE: See chart of the seven churches on the following page.]

The Seven Churches of Revelation						
	CHURCH	DATE (APPROX.)	MEANING OF NAME	COMPLAINT	COMPLIMENT	PROMISED REWARD
1	Ephesus	A.D. 31-100	Desirable, Lovely	Lost first love	Hate deeds of Nicolaitans	Tree of Life
2	Smyrna	A.D. 100-313	Sweet Fragrance, Myrrh	None	Rich in good works	Crown of Life, Escape second death
3	Pergamos	A.D. 313-538	Height, Elevation, "by Marriage"	Tolerance of Balaamism, Idolatry and Immorality	Not denied Christ's name or faith	Hidden manna, White stone, New name
4	Thyatira	A.D. 538-1500s	Perfume of labor, Sweet savor of sacrifice	Tolerance of "Jezebel," Idolatry and Immorality	Good works, love, faith, and patience	Power over the nations
5	Sardis	A.D. 1500s-1790s	Those escaping or remaining	Dead works	A few are not defiled	White raiment, Book of Life
6	Philadelphia	A.D. 1790s-1840s	Brotherly love	Little strength	Kept Christ's Word; Not denied Him	Kept from the hour of trial, Pillar in temple, Name of God
7	Laodicea	A.D. 1840s- Second Coming	Judging of the people, or, A just people	Lukewarm experience, Spiritually poor, blind, and naked	None	Sit with Christ on His throne, Sup with Christ