

**Revelation- Class 3 (Revelation 3)**  
*"Letters to the Churches -Pt. 2"*

**Recap:**

Last week we dove into the letters to the first four churches

**Ephesus:** A church that was commissioned to stand strong  
And they did, but the problem was that they abandoned their first love  
They made choices that separated their love and devotion to Jesus  
Their faith became mechanical and going with the motions  
On the outside it looked strong, successful, and even attractive  
But Jesus was more concerned about their heart than their works.

The promise was that they would lose their influence  
If they continued to operate without love.

**Smyrna:** A church that was persecuted and about to endure more suffering  
Jesus didn't have any correction for them but an encouragement  
You're about face more suffering but hold on!

The promise was that they would win the crown of life... just don't quit!

**Pergamos:** Another wealthy church planted in the heart of pagan worship  
Even though there were some positives to their church  
Jesus made it perfectly clear that He desired obedience  
He wanted the church set apart and not compromise by including pagan practices

The promise is that if they didn't obey there would be repercussions  
But if they did, then they would experience provision and an intimacy with the Lord  
Given a white stone with their name on it.

**Thyatira:** A church not prominent in pagan religion or economically strong  
Even though this church started strong  
The problem was that a false teacher rose up misleading people to sin

The promise was that Jesus would judge  
Based on their own deeds... not the blood of Christ.

Before we read over the next three churches, I wanted to go over the question of the week.

**Question of the week: "Why those Churches?"**

This is a great question since there were so many other churches in that day. What made these specific churches special to receive a letter from Jesus? Why not write a letter to the churches in Israel? Here are several perspectives that may help us understand.



### #1. Mass Persecution Spread the Church Out

- It is believed that since Christians were being scattered.
- The seven churches were the most prominent churches in that day.

### #2. Location, Location, Location

- These seven churches were the central hub for commerce, trade, and communication.
  - The messages here were able to be better spread out
- These Churches were also closer to the Apostle John as he was exiled in Patmos.



### #3. THE GOD CARD: It Was God's Will and Desire to Communicate to These Specific Churches

#### *Can We Have A Devotional Moment?*

- I think this may be the hardest explanation for a lot of people
- There was nothing special **(TO US)** about these churches... why take the time?
- In history, these may be no name churches

If this is you... you may struggle with understanding an aspect of the Grace of God.  
Grace is not only useful and needed when it comes to salvation.

"I am saved by Grace!" YES!

But the Grace of God is unmerited, undeserved, unearned favor, blessing, care  
Attention, advocating, action of God to you... not because of you...

But simply because of who He is.

If you are hearing my voice, you need to not only hear me  
But put this reality into your heart... God has called and chosen you...  
You may consider yourself unworthy.... You may say, "not me!"<sup>1</sup>



#### Think about it...

- Why did God choose Israel? Even though as a people they would rebel
- Why did God choose Abraham? He was old... weren't there other old people?
- Why did God choose Moses? Didn't he have anger issues?
- Why did God choose David? Wasn't he a perv?
- Why did God choose Paul? Wasn't he a murderer?
- Why did God choose Mary Magdalene? Didn't she have a rep for sleeping around?
- Why did God choose Mary? Wasn't she young?

God chooses to use people for His glory  
When He could have easily used angels and talking donkey's.  
He continues to invite people into His Kingdom  
through the message and ministry of his disciples (believers)

**John 15:16 (LB), <sup>16</sup> "You didn't choose me! I chose you! I appointed you to go and produce lovely fruit always, so that no matter what you ask for from the Father, using my name, he will give it to you."**

**Ephesians 1:4 (AMP), <sup>4</sup> "just as [in His love] He chose us in Christ [actually selected us for Himself as His own] before the foundation of the world, so that we would be holy [that is, consecrated, set apart for Him, purpose-driven] and blameless in His sight. In love"**

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gotquestions.org/why-did-God-choose-me.html>

You may have heard this all before, but maybe it hasn't landed  
Believer, you are chosen of God to shine, grow, and go invite other  
Disqualified people and tell them "because of Jesus they are qualified  
To not only be his messengers, but His children, His conduits of grace!

**1 Corinthians 1:26-30 (MSG), "26-31 Take a good look, friends, at who you were when you got called into this life. I don't see many of "the brightest and the best" among you, not many influential, not many from high-society families. Isn't it obvious that God deliberately chose men and women that the culture overlooks and exploits and abuses, chose these "nobodies" to expose the hollow pretensions of the "somebodies"? That makes it quite clear that none of you can get by with blowing your own horn before God. Everything that we have—right thinking and right living, a clean slate and a fresh start—comes from God by way of Jesus Christ. That's why we have the saying, "If you're going to blow a horn, blow a trumpet for God."**

We continue our letters to the churches...

### **Sardis: Revelation 3:1-6**



Sardis was a wealthy city that invented the first coin system.<sup>2</sup>  
This place was known for its luxury and comfort  
It was also known for its immorality and indifference to right and wrong.  
Also, it was known as a center of philosophy and study.

The primary god of the area was Cybele (Mother of the gods)...<sup>3</sup>  
A goddess who was credited for protecting, healing, and even resurrecting the dead  
There were many ways to worship her that included blood sacrifice  
Including self-mutilation and religious orgies.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> "Doubtless minted at Sardis, the silver pieces served the as the primary coinage of the Persian administrative and military system in western Asia Minor, where the use of coinage was an established convention." (Read More [HERE](#))

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.worldhistory.org/Cybele/>

<sup>4</sup> *Strabo, Geography 10. 3. 12 (trans. Jones) (Greek geographer C1st B.C. to C1st A.D.) :*

"The Phrygians in general . . . hold Rhea [Kybele] in honor and worship her with Orgia (Orgies), calling her

The problem is that they didn't want to offend by sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ.

***Revelation 3:1 (ESV), "“And to the angel of the church in Sardis write: ‘The words of him who has the seven spirits of God and the seven stars. “I know your works. You have the reputation of being alive, but you are dead.”***

Normally when we read the gospels the Pharisee's

The legalists... the religious elite.... Are usually labeled as the bad guys

Jesus would critique them and compare them to whitewashed tombs...

And here is Jesus' bride... People who got the right theology...

People who are checking boxes, going with the motions, and have a great reputation

### **COMPARE:**

- Ephesus: You're patient... you test false teachers... you haven't grown weary...
- Smyrna: You're facing hard times and you're about to go through harder times,
- Pergamum: You're holding to false teaching and sexual immorality
- Thyatira: You guys are improving...

### **Sardis:**

- You have a great rep (you're fooling others)... **BUT YOU'RE DEAD.**

The use of the word dead can represent two things

1. There is no struggle, no fight, no persecution
  - a. They weren't losing a battle, they lost the battle.***
2. What brings about death? Sin.

***Ephesians 2:1 (ESV), "And you were dead in the trespasses and sins."***

Death from sin isn't only reserved for eternity

But could be experienced while you are here on earth.

This church allowed sin to not only creep in but welcomed it

And since there was momentum and butts in seats it justified

Their unwillingness to stand for the life-giving gospel.

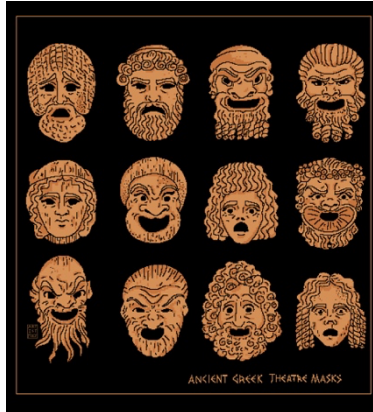
This is a strong assessment from Jesus...

If I make my own translation, "You're faking it to make it and you're fooling everyone else (including yourself), but you're rotting to death."

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Meter Theon (Mother of the Gods) . . . from the places where she is worshipped . . . [including] Sipyrene [of Mt Sipylos in Lydia]."

**MASKS - Hypokrisis (Greek actor).**



To this dead church Jesus identified Himself as the one who has the seven spirits  
As we discussed the seven spirits is a reference to the Holy Spirit....  
Commentators stressed that it's the ministry of the Holy Spirit to bring life

**Are they doomed to stay in this state?**

***Revelation 3:2 (ESV), <sup>2</sup> Wake up, and strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have not found your works complete in the sight of my God.***

Wake up= Be watchful!  
Which means continually be watchful... don't get lazy.

To strengthen- by having utter dependence upon the Holy Spirit

***Revelation 3:3 (ESV), <sup>3</sup> Remember, then, what you received and heard. Keep it, and repent. If you will not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come against you.***

**Remember:** Keep on Remembering- It's an action done by the listener.

**Received and Heard:** Go back to the basics – an action done by the listener

**Keep it:** A command to conform your actions/life (picture of a guard in prison)

**Repent:** A command to be done immediately (rethink your thinking)

Some believe vs. 4 is applied to the rapture- ***next week!***  
But for this local church, their influence, their assembly will be taken down

**Revelation 3:4-6 (ESV),** *“<sup>4</sup> Yet you have still a few names in Sardis, people who have not soiled their garments, and they will walk with me in white, for they are worthy. <sup>5</sup> The one who conquers will be clothed thus in white garments, and I will never blot his name out of the book of life. I will confess his name before my Father and before his angels. <sup>6</sup> He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.’*

Jesus recognized that though the church was known as dead  
There were still some believers who were faithful to Him.  
The prize is that they would walk with Him.

### **Philadelphia: Revelation 3:7-13**



Known for being a prosperous city... the city of brotherly love.  
The center of the Greek speaking world for language, culture, and beautiful buildings  
Also as a city prone to Earthquakes.

**Revelation 3:7 (ESV),** *<sup>7</sup> “And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: ‘The words of the holy one, the true one, who has the key of David, who opens and no one will shut, who shuts and no one opens.’”*

The phrase “the key of David” came from Isaiah 22:20-23  
Which speaks of his absolute authority  
He has complete power and authority  
To open and to close the doors in one’s life.

The context of the Greek communicates

- The One who presently has opened the doors that no one can shut
- But also the one who will shut the door that no man can open...

The picture is that He has allowed and opened the door to salvation  
And that door can’t be opened by anyone or any thing.  
But that door will be closed one day, by the One who has authority to shut it.

**Revelation 3:8 (ESV), <sup>18</sup> “I know your works. Behold, I have set before you an open door, which no one is able to shut. I know that you have but little power, and yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name.”**

Commentators believe that the door opened here  
Is a door to evangelize...

Paul used the same terminology

- 1 Corinthians 16:9, <sup>9</sup> “for a wide door for effective work has opened to me, and there are many adversaries.”
- 2 Corinthians 2:12, <sup>12</sup> “When I came to Troas to preach the gospel of Christ, even though a door was opened for me in the Lord,”
- Colossians 4:3, <sup>3</sup> “At the same time, pray also for us, that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ, on account of which I am in prison—”

Rather than act like Sardis and allow culture to influence them and silence the Gospel  
The church of Philadelphia had an open door by Jesus  
To influence the culture about the Kingdom of God.

Keep this in mind, he is talking to the church of Philadelphia...  
It was **ALL HANDS-ON DECK** to participate in the mission of God.  
Each person was an ambassador in their homes, work, public settings.

**And the same is true of you today...**

Jesus still opens doors of opportunity for you to present the Gospel.  
Where do you start?  
One step at a time.  
One person at a time  
One conversation at a time

**Let me push on some presuppositions (common held excuses)**

**I don't know all of the Bible...**

You're not there to win an argument, you're there to win the soul

**What if I fail (what if they don't pray for salvation)?**

- You're not there to sell them the Gospel
  - But to testify of the power of Christ
  - It doesn't need your help to make it more enticing
- You're not responsible for the results, people rejected Jesus too

**What if they reject me?**

- You have to make a friend before you make a follower- **Discipleship**



### One more note...

Jesus opened doors for them – The opportunities were given  
They had little strength- They needed reliance on God  
They kept His word- simplicity in obedience

There wasn't anything spectacular about this Church  
And Jesus was completely pleased with this church  
And the simplicity to obey.

Even when they were right in the eyes of the Lord, they still faced challenges.

***Revelation 3:9-10 (ESV), “<sup>9</sup> Behold, I will make those of the synagogue of Satan who say that they are Jews and are not, but lie—behold, I will make them come and bow down before your feet, and they will learn that I have loved you. <sup>10</sup> Because you have kept my word about patient endurance, I will keep you from the hour of trial that is coming on the whole world, to try those who dwell on the earth.***

There were still certain Jews who would persecute the Christians in Philadelphia.  
But Jesus would bring about vindication.  
He will rescue, redeem, reconcile, and they will learn of Jesus' love for them.

Jesus stated that he would keep them from the hour or trial,  
Which many people believe that this is a reference to the rapture.  
The pushback is that this church didn't experience the rapture since 2000 years has passed.  
So it may mean that future events and calamities  
Jesus would still keep them and protect them  
Allowing them to continue their influence.

***Revelation 3:11-13 (ESV), “<sup>11</sup> I am coming soon. Hold fast what you have, so that no one may seize your crown. <sup>12</sup> The one who conquers, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God. Never shall he go out of it, 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 from my God out of heaven, and my own new name. <sup>13</sup> He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”***

It's interesting that Jesus would call them pillars  
Since this area was prone to earthquakes.  
They were promised to remain strong, stable, and beautiful  
Pillars support the building... staying connected to the foundation

A new name... ownership

## Laodicea: Revelation 3:14-22



Known as a wealthy city that produced wool cloth  
It was self-sufficient not needing Rome's help after a devastating earthquake.  
To the north of this region were snowcapped mountains  
And south of them were hot springs.

This would prove as a problem as their city was on top of a plateau  
And since it didn't have modern plumbing, it had an aqueduct system

- The closest water source was six-miles away
  - Providing lukewarm water
  - Rather than ice cold water or hot water
- The aqueduct could easily be blocked by invading armies
  - Leaders would always be accommodating to any invading army.

***Revelation 3:14-16 (ESV) <sup>14</sup> "And to the angel of the church in Laodicea write: 'The words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of God's creation.'<sup>15</sup> "I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were either cold or hot!<sup>16</sup> So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth."***

In a spiritual sense the concept of being lukewarm means  
To compromise, be indifferent, playing the middle ground

### **But How?**

Did Jesus mean to say that these Christians were intrinsically cold,  
but warmed up by pagan religions  
Or, that they were hot, but cooled down by their apathy and self-reliance?

### **Worth Noting....**

*John MacArthur wrote, "some churches make Jesus weep, others make Him angry, The Laodicean church made him sick."*

## Two views of being lukewarm:

1. It's a metaphor for the **CHURCH' WITNESS**.  
Jesus identified himself as the true witness....

### The climate of the water had it's benefits

Hot = healing and cooking benefits.

Cold= refreshing benefits

Lukewarm= doctors used this temp of water to induce vomiting.

2. To be hot meant to be spiritually alive.
  - To possess the fervency of a transformed life.

To be cold means

- To reject Jesus
- The gospel leaves a person unmoved

To be lukewarm means to not be saved.

- They don't openly reject the gospel
- Self-righteous

## HOW TO KNOW IF YOU ARE LUKEWARM



### Lukewarm people...<sup>5</sup>

- Attend church regularly. It is what is expected of them, what they believe "Good Christians" do, so they go.
- tend to choose what is popular over what is right when they are in conflict.
- they desire to fit in both at church and outside of church;
- they care more about what people think of their actions than what God thinks of their hearts and lives.
- don't really want to be saved from their sin, but from the penalty of sin.
- they genuinely don't hate sin and aren't truly sorry for it.

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<sup>5</sup> Crazy Love, Francis Chan

**Romans 6:1-2, "What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?"**

- rarely share their faith with their neighbors, coworkers, or friends.
- they don't want to be rejected, nor do they want people to be uncomfortable by talking about private issues like religion.

**Matthew 10:32-33, "Whoever acknowledges me before men, I will also acknowledge him for my Father in heaven. But whoever disowns me before men, I will disown him before my Father in Heaven."**

**Lukewarm people...**

- Say that they love Jesus, and He is, indeed a part of their lives. But only a part.
- Loving God passionately is only done by pastors or missionaries.
- think about life on Earth more than eternity in heaven.
- Their minds are on to do lists, weekly schedules, and rarely on the life to come.

**Lukewarm people...**

- are continually concerned with play it safe:
- they are slaves to the God of control.
- This focus on safe living keeps them from sacrificing and risking for God.
- probably drink and swear less than the average, but besides that
- They aren't really different from an unbeliever.

**Matthew 7:21, "Not everyone who says to me, "Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. "**

**I will vomit you, spit you, spew you**

not settle, not excuse, but there are dire consequences for

The life we choose to make and the way we approach our relationship with God.

**Revelation 3:17-22, " For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked." <sup>18</sup> I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire, so that you may be rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself and the shame of your nakedness may not be seen, and salve to anoint your eyes, so that you may see. <sup>19</sup> Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent. <sup>20</sup> Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me. <sup>21</sup> The one who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, as I also conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne. <sup>22</sup> He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."**

It's difficult to read this letter from Jesus

And remain a casual Christian.

When He talked about discipleship, it wasn't an option  
It's not another stage to reach in your spiritual life

But a command and point of entry

***Matthew 16:24-25, "24 Then Jesus told his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. 25 For whoever would save his life<sup>[a]</sup> will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it."***

"If you're looking for a recipe for the greatest life you can live, Jesus' words to His disciples give it. The deceiver says, "think of what you will be giving up." Think of the sacrifice. Don't you have that bucket list you want to get to? What he doesn't tell you is that the life of discipleship is what we were created for. It is a perfect fit for us. It provides everything needed to give us joy and peace and purpose. There is no loss in denial; there is only gain. If you are trapped in the Laodicean meh it's time to get got, turn it on for Jesus, and live the life you were made for."<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Amir Tsarfati, *Revealing Revelation*, Pg. 67