The REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST

CHAPTER 3

Revelation 3:1 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.

1 The character of the Son of man is first revealed to Sardis as the one who has the seven spirits of God. The seven spirits have already been referred to in 1:4. There the seven spirits are shown as being before the throne of God. The number “seven” has already begun its spiritual significance. In the King James Version, we find the number “seven” fifty four times and “seventh” five times in the book of Revelation.

We have already had fourteen uses of “seven” in chapters 1 and 2: seven churches (4 times); seven Spirits (1 time); seven golden candlesticks (5 times); seven stars (4 times). An extremely interesting point about “seven” is never is it used as “seven years.” We do not find a seven year tribulation in the Revelation.

According to Bullinger seven is “…the great number of spiritual perfection… As a number the actual word and number ‘seven’ is used as no other number is.”

Seven is the number of spiritual perfection. The Son of man said, These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God. The seven spirits are associated with the total power of God (Zec 4:6) which can bring about change in humanity. That power is in the possession of the Son of man. The Son of man said His character is he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars.

The Son of man also has the seven stars. We know the mystery of the seven stars. They are the angels to the seven churches. Church leadership, as we have seen, is in the hand of the Lord. Exactly as the Lord has the seven Spirits of God He also has the leadership of a church. Their existence are in His control.

Concerning commendation, the Son of man gives no commendation to Sardis. This has not been a successful church. The only possible commendation found in the letter is there were a few things that were not dead. Also a few had not defiled their garments. The Lord moves directly into the condemnation by saying, I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead.

The church may have had a reputation of being active. Perhaps it did some nice things in the community, but the Sardis church was dead. Ephesus had cooled, but its condition was correctable. The church at Sardis was dead. What could be done?

How can that be? How can a church appear to be alive, but in reality, be dead? The answer is the church was not dethroning the seat of Satan in its area. The church obviously was accepted by the community and was popular. It must have been adding new members, for it had an appearance of being alive.

Death in the Scriptures is separation from God. Adam died the day he ate of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, not because he stopped breathing. It was because Adam was separated from God and God’s presence. In the New Testament, what we call death (stop breathing) is spoken of as sleep. Jesus said that Lazarus was sleeping (John 11:11) though in the tomb four days. David is said to now be sleeping (Acts 13:36). Those who did not properly discern the Lord’s body had become weak, sick, and went to sleep (1 Cor 11:30). Paul said to the Thessalonians “we will not all sleep” (1 Cor 15:51). Jesus will bring those who sleep with Him (1 Thess 4:14). Sleeping is one thing, but death is being out of relationship with God. Sardis was not asleep. Sardis was dead. The church was no different from the lost. It only called itself a church (Col 2:12).

Revelation 3:2 Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God.

1 Ethelbert W. Bullinger, Number In Scripture, page 158

2 The hope was only in the “living” remnant at Sardis, who were even ready to die. Live people
can be in a dead church! But if something is not done, they will also die. It is important to see what will happen if they stay. Rather than bringing life to the dead church, they will themselves die. Here is Scriptural proof that simply going to church does not bring life.

Sardis was not found in a good evaluation of the Son of man. The works of the dead church were addressed. The church did not accomplish what the church was set to accomplish. As we have seen, works are related to labor (2:2). The works of a church are under the category of dethroning the seat of Satan where the church is set (2:13). Obviously, Sardis had done a poor job and the Lord was displeased. A strong condemnation followed: I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead . . . I have not found thy works perfect before God. The word perfect means “to make replete” (abundant, full). What Sardis was doing was not abundant and not complete or fulfilled. The grace given by God was in vain. The Lord said to strengthen the things which remain. Whatever good was remaining, they were told to sure it up – or else!

There is a constant fault in the heart of man. We all, at some point, for some reason, promise the Lord we will serve Him and labor for Him all the days of our lives. However, there is a vast difference between the promise and the performance. We promise we will work and serve. The performance often dies on the vine. At first, the performance is high, but then degenerates to sometimes nothing. The first display is always superior to the final result. It is this that both the church at Ephesus and the church at Sardis suffered.

Revelation 3:3 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.

3 Sardis had received and heard much. The Lord admonished the church to remember! It is amazing how much a church can forget. The Lord said remember how thou hast received and heard and repent. Repent, as previously stated, is not crying, but adjusting the thinking to receive spiritual truth.

The word repent has only to do with the exercise of our minds. Thus, remember! When we know to do good, and do it not, it is sin (James 4:17)! This church knew what to do, but was not doing it. The Lord issues a promise if the church will not do what it knew to do. He said, “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.”

The Lord is coming, but not to rapture this church. Rather He is coming to judge this church. As we have seen in 1:7; 2:5, 16, these comings are not with rewards, but rather His wrath.

"... the threat of Christ’s coming against a local church, or even against a nation or group of nations, is not the same as the Second Coming, i.e., the end of the world.... The words upon you indicate a local coming.”

Revelation 3:4 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. 4 Now the commendation the Lord gave to Sardis is stated. This specific word for garments is found seven times in the book of Revelation (3:4, 5, 18; 4:4; 16:15; 19:13, 16). In 3:5, 18, and 4:4 it is “white raiment.” In 19:13, 16 it is referring to the vesture of Christ. Of course, this reference is not pertaining to natural clothing. The Lord is not telling people at Sardis that their clothes are dirty. Yet, when the Lord observed the church, the church was dirty. Lives were not clean. Rather, the lives were defiled. However, the angel has a few names which have not defiled their garments.

All would be wise to note the promise to these few. The Lord said they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy.

Revelation 3:5 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.

Revelation 3:6 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.
5, 6 The Lord ends the letter as He does in all seven – with a challenge. He that overcometh is again the target.

A most unique and eye-opening challenge is here given. The Lord said, “I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before the Father, and before his angels.” This passage has been the topic of discussion for millennium. The verse plays havoc with those of the “eternal security” doctrine. On the other hand, it places an unnecessary horror in others. A person fears if he stumbles, the Lord will blot his or her name out of the book of life. The “eternal security” and the “elect” camps avoid this verse, where those of the Armenian position (those who believe that though once saved, one can be again lost) quote it with vigor. No matter what our doctrinal position, this verse must be dealt with.

Please note this is written to a first century church that was obviously not alive in the Spirit. In fact, they were dead. This was a “church.” That means they were water baptized, participated in communion, spoke in tongues, etc. They did what churches do. They had an appearance of being alive. Yet, if they did not repent, they would experience His coming as a thief upon them. A thief takes valuables. The Lord, not by the Devil, would take whatever was left.

Thus this fact: believers must remain faithful, avoid heresy, immorality, and overcome the seat of Satan. They must do the works they are set to do. If they refuse and repent not, they will be erased from the book of life. However, by simply doing what a believer is expected and graced to do, there is no fear or danger of having one’s name blotted out.

We honestly should not have a problem with the passage. All one needs to do is what he or she knows already to do. It seems that those having problems here have no intentions of doing what they know they should do. Thus they attempt to change or ignore the meaning of the verse and the context. Those who work and utilize the grace given them by God have no problems with this verse and passage.

“‘The Book of Life’ is here evidently understood as an official list of the citizens of the heavenly city, the true Jerusalem, the Elect City, the true Christians from all cities and provinces and nations. As in all Greek and Roman cities of that time there was kept a list of citizens, according to their class or tribe, in which new citizens were entered and from which degraded citizens were expunged, so the writer of this letter figuratively mentions the Book of Life. There is a remnant in Sardis whose names shall never be deleted from the Book, from which most Sardians have been expunged already.”

Ramsey speaks of the Roman ceremonial garments. He explains how all Roman citizens wore a pure white toga on holidays and at religious ceremonies. After a victory at war, a parade was given for the victors. The toga was worn to the parade. This gives insight as Jesus, the Son of man said, “He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment.”

The Lord spoke of confessing to the Father and the angels those who confess Him (Luke 12:8, 9). Here the Lord said, “I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.” The word confess means “to acknowledge.” The Lord will make the Father and His angels aware of us and have knowledge about us. The promise is to those who overcome (Luk 12:8-9).

The Lord ended the letter as He ends all the letters. All churches should realize that if He wrote a letter to a church today, it would also end this way. He said, “He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.” Every church had best hear! That church, as a whole, was dead. There are a few people that were exceptions, and only those exceptions would live as citizens of the New Jerusalem. Th

“Sardis today is a wilderness of ruins and thorns, pastures and wild flowers, where the only habitations are a few huts of Yuruk nomads beside the temple of Cybele...”

Revelation 3:7 And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write; These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth;

7 Before entering into the study of this letter, it should be pointed out that particular church is the

3 Sir William Ramsey, The Letters to the Seven Churches, page 307
4 Sir William Ramsey, The Letters to the Seven Churches, page 311
only church that hears the Lord say, “I have loved thee.” He told the Laodiceans that whom He loves He chastens. This Philadelphian church had earned the Lord’s love. Isn’t it interesting that every church doesn’t earn his love?

That statement was followed by a reason for this love, if not the reason for this special love. The Lord said, “I have loved thee because thou didst keep the word of my patience.” In 3:8 the Lord also said to this church, “... and hast not denied my name.” He encouraged Smyrna, but he loved Philadelphia. Is this to say that He loved one church more than another? That might be stretching the meaning somewhat. But if so, the reason would be that the more-loved church kept His word.

The Son of man now instructed John to address the angel of the church in Philadelphia. The angel was the leader or leadership for the assembly. To the angel, the character of the Lord was described. The character given was He that is holy, He that is true, He that hath the key of David, He that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth.

There is no need in developing the thought of He that is holy and true. These are the characteristics of God. He is the holy one of Israel (2 Kings 19:22; Job 6:10; Ps 16:10; 71:22; 78:41; 89:18). His sayings are faithful and true (2 Sam 7:28; Psalms 19:9; Psalms 119:160).

The Son of man also has the key of David. This was an allusion link to Isaiah 22:22.

In the Isaiah passage, the Lord is removing leadership from one and placing leadership upon another. The Lord said, “And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will call my servant Eliakim the son of Hilkiah” (Is 22:20). This servant was given the key of David.

In like manner, the Lord was removing the Jewish stewardship of the city of Philadelphia and said because the Son of man hath the key of David. The Jewish nationality did not have the key, nor does the Jewish religion possess the key.

David, though a spiritual person, was a political and governmental leader. David was king of Israel, not a priest of Israel. The key of David assumes the role of the political realm. The Son of man has that key and will open or shut the door.

Pilate said to Jesus, “Speakest thou not unto me? knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee?” The Lord Jesus replied, “Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above” (John 19:10,11). Political authority is from above. We read in Acts 4:27-28 “For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, for to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done.” The Lord sets people to do what His hand and His counsel determined.

The Lord Jesus, the Son of man, has the key. He will openeth and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth. The opening of a door is a Biblical term showing that passage is provided by the Lord and by His Spirit (Acts 14:27; 1Co 16:9; 2Co 2:12; Col 4:3).

Revelation 3:8 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.

8 The Lord continued as in all the letters, “I know thy works” (see 2:2, 9, 13). The works at Philadelphia were good works.

The angel and the church had kept His word. The Lord will always reward those who keep His word with a special opened door.

The church was not strong in itself. In fact, the Lord said it has only a little strength. This could mean the church was not a “wealthy” church or a “popular” church or large in numbers. However, the Lord said the church, “... hast kept my word and not denied my name.” Because of the faithfulness of the church to the word and to the name, the Lord would vindicate them over the synagogue of Satan.

Revelation 3:9 Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee.
9 When the Lord said synagogue, He meant the “Jewish” synagogue or synagogue where Judaism was the religion. Jewish worship denied that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. Therefore, it is anti-Christ and is a synagogue of Satan (1Jo 2:18; 2:22; 4:3; 2Jo 1:7).

1Jo 2:22 Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son.
1Jo 4:3 And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world.
2Jo 1:7 For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist.

The biblical definition of anti-Christ is that which denies that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. Synagogues that taught that doctrine were / are unquestionably synagogues of Satan. There were, of course, many. The Son of man has already referred to this in 2:9.

There is no doubt that this synagogue of Satan is a reference to the Judaism religion. Referring to the Jews, the Son of man goes on to say those Jews say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie. A Jew of truth would recognize the Messiah as taught. They say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie. They lived in denial. How can they say they are Jews who are awaiting the Messiah, the seed of Abraham, and Son of David, yet not follow Jesus who is that One? They do lie. It would be like a Christian saying he wanted to be a Christian, but not believe in Jesus. He lied.

The Jews of the days of Jesus knew that it was time for the Messiah’s arrival. They knew the exact year of His anointing (see 70 weeks of Daniel). There was no excuse for those Jews. The nation had eyes to see, but could not see. Those Jews had ears to hear, but could not hear. They rejected the Messiah. They say they were Jews, and are not, but do lie.

If there are Jews who are not, but do lie, then there are Jews who are, and lie not. Those truthful Jews would be Jews who believe. There would be Jews from the area of Philadelphia, but also about this time there would be some Jews fleeing Jerusalem and coming into that area of the world. Between the Roman attack of Cestius and Titus upon Jerusalem, there was a massive exodus from the Jerusalem area.

The door that the Son of man opened for this church would be one that will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee.

Revelation 3:10 Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.

10 Also because Philadelphia hast kept the word, the Son of man will keep the church from the hour of temptation. The Lord did not promise to rapture the church from the temptation which shall come. It was a promise to keep them from the hour.

The NASV Bible translation says that hour which is about to come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell upon the Land. This verse has nothing to do with the end of history, but has everything to do with what was about to come upon the land of Israel.

A word study will help and is necessary, for this is a primary dispensational verse used to prove the rapture of the church. The verse says:

Rev 3:10 Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world [oikoumene], to try them that dwell upon the earth [ge].

King James translates the Greek word oikoumene as “world.” It translates the Greek word ge as “earth.” The Greek word oikoumene means “land.” The Greek word ge means “soil; region.”

This study will be done again when we begin investigating the seals, trumpets, and vials. These words become extremely important in the study of the book of Revelation.

The following verse uses oikoumene translated “world.”

Act 11:28 And there stood up one of them named Agabus, and signified by the Spirit that there should be great dearth throughout all the world [oikoumene]: which came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar.

Act 11:29 Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judaea:

This famine was only upon the area of Israel, specifically Judaea and the city of Jerusalem. It was for this area the Apostle Paul received a collection from the churches in Asia to give to the church in
Jerusalem. The rest of the world, including Asia, was not in famine. They had plenty. They had enough to send to the people in Judah.

Another verse using *oikoumene*, which obviously does not mean “world” as in globe, is Acts 19:27.

Act 19:27 So that not only this our craft is in danger to be set at nought; but also that the temple of the great goddess Diana should be despised, and her magnificence should be destroyed, whom all Asia and the world [*oikoumene*] worshippeth.

The entire globe “world” was not worshiping Diana. Basically, she was the goddess of the Ephesian area and land.

*Does oikoumene* ever mean “globe” or “world” in the Scriptures? It is the word that is closest to being able to mean globe. It must be remembered that the earth was not thought of as a globe. Actually the world was seen as flat with four corners (Rev 7:1). Nations is a far better Scriptural word than is the word globe. The *oikoumene* world seems to scripturally mean, in its largest meaning, the Roman Empire. The context will show *oikoumene* expanding to mean the nations in some instances. For example:

Mat 24:14 And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world [*oikoumene*] for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.

There is no doubt that we are not only speaking of Israel in Matthew 24:14. This verse (above) is giving the one and only requirement of the Lord that must happen before the temple is destroyed and Jerusalem is laid desolate. The Lord said the gospel of the kingdom must be preached in all the world before the Romans would come upon Israel. Often when *oikoumene* also means the nations, it includes Israel. By the year 63 AD., Paul writes:

Col 1:23 ...the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister (see also Rom 1:5; 16:26)

The word *oikoumene* is also used in Acts 17:6 (following). We see here it also carries the meaning of nations. Hebrews 1:6 uses the word *oikoumene* as “world” in describing the Lord’s coming as a babe worshipped by angels.

It seems the best way to use *oikoumene* is to begin at Israel and then allow the context to determine the size of the *oikoumene* world of which it is actually speaking.

It is seen that the word can mean the area of Israel, or, in some instances, nations. *Strong’s Concordance* says,

“*oikoumene*... of 3611 (as noun, by impl. of 1093); land, i.e. the (terrene part of the) globe; spec. the Roman empire: - earth, world.” The number reference “3611” is *oikeo* meaning “to occupy a house, i.e. reside (fig. inhabit, remain, inhere ); by impl. to cohabit “ The number reference “1093” is *ge* meaning “soil; by extens. a region.”

Just as stated prior, *oikoumene* begins with the “land” and then expands to mean (what Strong’s calls) “globe.” Realize also that the word’s root are in the local “house” and a place to “reside, inhabit, remain, etc.” Actually, there is not much about this word that suggests the globe. Remember that the earth was not thought of as a “globe” yet.

How does a person know if it refers to the “land” or the nations? One answer is context. What is the context suggesting? Who did the famine which Agabus prophesied about in Acts 11:28, 29 affect? Another answer is history. What happened in history to show the meaning? For example, investigate the famine about which Agabus prophesied. Did that come upon the whole earth or upon the land of Israel? Who worshipped Diana? Had the apostles actually turned the world *oikoumene* upside down? The Eskimos were in existence. Had they heard the gospel. The Aztec Indians were in existence in the western Hemisphere. Had they heard the gospel? The native American Indians were in existence in North America. Had they heard the gospel? If not then the “world” as we think “globe” had not been actually turned upside down.

We also have the Greek word *ge* used in Revelation 3:10 and translated “earth.” This is a very misleading translation of the word. This word *ge* is a much smaller area of land than *oikoumene*.

(The *Strong’s Concordance* uses the word “globe” in its definition, but it is not an italicized word which means it is not a word of definition.)

The word means land or region. This thought is easily seen in the verse we now study.

Rev 3:10 Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world
[oikoumene], to try them that dwell upon the earth [ge].

If the hour of temptation was to be for the entire Roman Empire, then the purpose was to try them that dwell in Israel or Jerusalem. An understanding of ge becomes important when studying the Revelation. The Greek word ge is used 82 times (translated 81 times earth; 1 time world). The Greek word oikoumene is used only 3 times, all translated as “world.”

The point is by allowing oikoumene to be the “globe” is misleading. The Revelation is not concerned with the globe or earth as we know it. It is, however, greatly concerned with the ge. The ge is the land and region. It will be upon the ge the events of Revelation will happen.

The thought of ge is not the thought of oikoumene. A rule of thumb is when oikoumene is used, it is speaking of a larger area. One can begin with thinking of the land of Judaea and then expand the area of which you are thinking. When the word ge is used, begin thinking of the nation of Israel and reduce the area of which you are thinking to mean cities or even communities. Use context, word helps, and history to acquire the most accurate interpretation.

Rev 3:10 Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.

Back to our study of 3:10, we note that something is coming upon the larger area that will try the smaller area.

The dispensational teaching is that this is the beginning of tribulation and the end of history as we know it. It seems out of context to be speaking of the end of history. Why would the Lord here warn a first-century church of the cataclysmic catastrophe that would happen two thousand years later? Would the Lord say, “Don’t worry Philadelphia. I will protect you from the atomic bomb and nuclear missiles that will come upon the earth in the year 2000 (or whenever)”?

From what hour is the Lord then protecting those people? The Son of man will come in great glory and destroy Jerusalem and Judaism. This ge will be tried. It will be tried as by fire. Yet, from that hour, this Philadelphian church was promised protection. Because this church has kept His word with patience, the synagogue of Satan will come down, and they will know that the Son of man loves His church.

Revelation 3:11 Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.

11 To verify even more what was just said, notice the Son of man said, “Behold, I come quickly.” The Lord is either very confused and is confusing this church and the churches, or the dispensationalists who teach us that this is speaking of a coming at the end of history are confused. In the spring of A.D. 66, Jerusalem went under the siege of the army of Rome. In A.D. 70, the city was destroyed and the temple was burned and left desolate, just as Jesus said (Mat 23:37-38). No matter how one states it, two thousand years is not quickly. No other book uses this Greek word to mean anything other than rapidly. Surely this church would not consider two thousand years as being quick. The word quickly is tachu meaning “shortly.” Quickly, shortly, soon, none of these words mean two thousand years, or in the slightest way lend themselves in that direction.

Both the angel and the church were being successful. Their works were good. The Lord said, “...hold that fast which thou hast.” Keep doing what you are doing. Allow no man to take thy crown. This would indicate that a person’s crown could be taken.

Revelation 3:12 Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name.

12 The Lord has followed His normal flow through the letter. He opened with His personal character. He assured the church that He knew their works. He commended them. There was no condemnation, only a warning not to let any man change them. Now He will come to his challenge as He said to him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God.

This is an allusion to the temple and the tabernacle. Both were constructed using pillars.
When Solomon built the temple that David designed, he placed two pillars at the entrance and named them.

1Ki 7:21 And he set up the pillars in the porch of the temple: and he set up the right pillar, and called the name thereof Jachin: and he set up the left pillar, and called the name thereof Boaz.

These were magnificent pillars made of polished brass with lily work. They declared the magnificence of that temple and stood as massive pictures of strength and beauty to all who entered or viewed the temple close or from afar.

The temple of the Jews would quickly be destroyed. All the brass, gold, silver, precious stones, etc. would be taken. The Lord said to those who overcometh that He will make a pillar in the true temple of God. The Jewish temple in Jerusalem was already constructed. Obviously, it was not the temple of God. This would be a new temple now being constructed using people, not stone and brass. We are the temple of God (1Co 3:16). The Lord God and the Lamb are the temple of God (Rev 21:22).

The pillar (overcomer) and the preciousness of the pillar will be safe and will go no more out. This temple will never be destroyed. It will not be as the gold and silver and brass of Solomon’s temple. Nor will it be as the temple that Herod built the Jews. Nor is this a reference to the one we are told will be built before the tribulation to reinstitute animal sacrifice. Nor is this referring to the one we are told will be built during the millennium.

The pillar (overcomer) will have the name of God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from God. The Lord also said that He will write upon him (pillar / overcomer) My new name. This poses a problem for the teaching that the New Jerusalem (Rev 21, 22) is a satellite orbiting the planet earth.

One historic fact that needs to be known about Philadelphia is the tremendous number of earthquakes this city suffered. In A.D. 17, an earthquake struck with such magnitude that the majority of the city was leveled. The trembling continued for months, and the people were afraid to rebuild. Actually, most moved outside the city where falling walls or ceilings would not injure or kill them. Finally, the city was rebuilt and exists today and actually is a door to Christianity in a Muslim populace. The thought of the pillar adds stability and strength to a shaking world. These at this church were pillars for the New Jerusalem that could not be shaken.

The old Jerusalem will pass away. A new Jerusalem comes from the realm of the Spirit. The overcomer will have the name of God. The last chapter of the Revelation describes the New Jerusalem. It records of those within and says, “And they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads” (22:4). This is the mark of the true priest, those who keep His word (Exo 28:36-38).

The overcomer will also have the name of the city of God. That name and city is new Jerusalem. We cannot explore this in depth at this point, however the reason we have the name of the city is because the city is the bride of the Lamb, and the bride takes the name of her husband (Rev 21:9-10).

Therefore, the overcomer takes the name which the Lord Himself said is My new name. A son has the same “last” name, or family name, as his father. When the son marries, the bride takes the family name, or name of the husband, or name of the husband’s father. This can all be seen in this verse. The overcomer is given the name of God, the Father, and the name of Jesus, the Son. The overcomer is the new Jerusalem, the bride of the Lamb. She wears His name.

Revelation 3:13 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

13 The church, even though loved and doing well, was instructed to hear what the Spirit saith. They were on track, and there was no condemnation. The Lord said He loved them because they kept His word. He would open special doors for them. Their works were commended, and they were to be part of the New Jerusalem.

Revelation 3:14 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;

14 We now come to the seventh church which is the Laodicean church. It is this church that dispensationalists always say refer to our present times. Recall that dispensationalists say that each church speaks of a specific time beginning with the first century and leading up to the last-generation church. Of course that is a fanciful interpretation and one not taught by the apostles.

According to that doctrine, when the last generation church arrives, the rapture will happen and for seven years, the church is in heaven (air) as the 144,000 chosen Jews evangelize the world. The wrath of God is poured out, which drives the nation of Israel to their Messiah.

However, every generation that has bitten the dispensationalists’ hook believes that it is the Laodicean generation. Every generation believes it is the last generation (see Dispensational belief).

As six times prior to this time, John is instructed to write to the angel of the church of... Here it is to the Laodiceans. The angel, as we are learning, is the leader or leaders of the church. The angel would be the person primarily responsible for any corrections the Lord has instructed to be made. The angel would read the letter aloud to the people, and they would hear it (1:3). Each letter will close with “He that hath an ear let him hear what the Spirit saith.” Hopefully, they would adjust to the instructions.

The Lord begins His own personal character description. The Laodiceans are to see Him as the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God.

Amen is another word or phrase that we actually do not understand from a Biblical perspective. We say it at the end of our prayers and sometime hymns and sometime liturgies. We read it at the end of epistles, and even at the end of this Revelation the amen will be read. But what does it actually mean?

It may be best to first give its meaning and then establish it by the Scripture. Amen primarily means to call down or release upon oneself, family, generation, nation, etc. the curses of the covenant. We hear that it means “so be it” and that is true, except we don’t realize it means so be the curse on me. That is its seed (first use) meaning. The definition for Amen means “sure and truly” or “to let it be.” Now to develop this statement.

The first use of “amen” is found in Numbers 5:22. First use or first mention is a primary rule for Biblical interpretation. It is the seed planted, and from it will come every other use. The word may take on some other “hybrid” attributes as it progresses through the Word, but its seed use remains in the word. Here is the very first use of Amen.

Num 5:22 And this water that causeth the curse shall go into thy bowels, to make thy belly to swell, and thy thigh to rot: And the woman shall say, Amen, amen.

The law of Moses provided a test that would prove the unfaithfulness or the faithfulness of a wife. It was called the law of jealousies. Dust from the tabernacle floor was placed into a clay vessel (bowl) and mixed with holy water. The woman was brought before the Lord with her head uncovered. The priest spoke an oath over the woman saying, “If no man have lain with thee, and if thou hast not gone aside to uncleanness with another instead of thy husband, be thou free from this bitter water that causeth the curse: But if thou hast gone aside to another instead of thy husband, and if thou be defiled, and some man have lain with thee beside thine husband: the LORD make thee a curse and an oath among thy people, when the LORD doth make thy thigh to rot, and thy belly to swell; and this water that causeth the curse shall go into thy bowels, to make thy belly to swell, and thy thigh to rot.” After this curse was said, the woman was then to say, “Amen, amen.”

The priest would then write the curses in a book (scroll usually tanned leather) with ink. Then with a cloth dipped into the holy water and dust mixture, blot or wipe the words from the parchment and then wash the ink from the cloth back into the bowl. The woman was then required to drink the “bitter water.” If she had been unfaithful, her belly would swell and her thigh would rot. She would then be a curse among her people. If she was pure, then she would conceive seed.

This, strangely, is the first use of amen. The word is pure Hebrew amen and means “sure and truly.” She brought the curse of the marriage
covenant upon herself with the amen.

The next time we find amen is in Deuteronomy 27. Here Moses is giving instructions on what the people were to do when they cross the Jordan. He tells them to position themselves upon two mounts, Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebal (Deu 27:12, 13). From these two mounts the blessings and cursing of the law were to be declared. The priests and the people were to respond. Upon investigation of Deuteronomy 27 and 28, we learn they were instructed to say amen to the cursing, but not to the blessings (Deu 27:11-28:14).

The people of Israel came to understand the word amen in association with the judgments of God. It is an agreement with the curses of a covenant coming upon the person saying Amen. It was more than simply the way they were taught to end their prayers. It was a word meaning that the covenant of God should come upon them in judgment if they broke that covenant. The Amen was directly associated with covenant disobedience. To the Laodicean, Jesus calls Himself the Amen. The church had not been a faithful wife and was about to be spewed out.

Continuing our study, we find amen used in Nehemiah chapter 5 and chapter 8. Nehemiah is primarily a book about rebuilding the walls around Jerusalem after the Babylonian captivity. However, Nehemiah accomplished far more than rebuilding the walls. He reestablished the covenant in the hearts of the people. A new generation was in existence after the exile. They did not know the law of God. They did not understand why terrible things were happening to them.

In chapter 5 of Nehemiah, some of the wealthier people were abusing their brothers with excessive interest. There were some other problems as well. It is to address these problems that Nehemiah 5:13 is written.

Nehemiah addressed the problems. He then required the people to take an oath, and then say amen. Notice the amen is associated with the curse of the oath. If a man would not do righteously to his brother, that man would be shaken like shaking the wrinkles out of a piece of cloth. He would be shaken from his house and from his business or occupation. He would be shaken out and emptied. This was the amen part. It was declaring from the individual that if they did not obey their own promise that God would judge them.

Another amen is found in Nehemiah chapter 8. The people came out to hear the reading of the law of God with understanding. Ezra, the priest, read the book of the law from morning until midday. We need to make sure we understand what the “book of the law” is. We might think it would be the entire Old Testament. Actually, it is the curses of the covenant written in Deuteronomy (Deu 29:21; 30:10; 31:26; Gal 3:10). The book of the law was to be a witness against Israel. If they broke the covenant, then this book of the law witnessed against them. The book of the law was Deuteronomy and, specifically, the curses of the covenant. Ezra read this to the people – men and women. They heard with understanding! They said, “Amen, amen.”

When Jesus Christ would use “Verily” or “Verily, verily,” it was the word amen. The uses of “verily” by Jesus are usually with a covenantal judgment (see Mat 5:18, 26: 6:2, 5; 10:15, 23; 16:28; 18:3; 24:2, 34; Joh 3:3, 5; 6:53). Many of these were used in speaking to or about the scribes, Pharisees, and Sadducees.

There are many “amens” at the end of books in the Bible. The book of Revelation will end with amen. If we understand what the amen really means, we are enlightened that it is more than a “sweet” way to say good-bye. It is more than saying, “I agree with you preacher.” Amen is a covenantal word saying “Yes! Let the covenant happen.”

The desire here is not to make the amen only sound negative. To the faithful believer, it is not negative and actually positive. It is an invoking of the kingdom of God to come, even if it must come in judgment, and even if that judgment is upon me. It would be better to enter the kingdom with one eye than enter hell with two. Amen. The judgments of God have been given a negative connotation today. Many times we do not know we are missing the kingdom until the covenant, the Amen, comes to correct us. Many times we know we are missing
the covenant and will not change until the Amen comes to correct us. Either way “Thy kingdom come. Amen.”

The very first statement that Jesus said to the Laodiceans is that He, the Son of man, is the Amen. That statement should mean something different to us now. He is telling the church at Laodicea that He is about to invoke covenantal judgment upon it.

To go along with the Amen warning, the Lord adds that He is the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God. Remember that the book of the law and accompanying amen was a witness against the people (Deu 31:26). John’s readers understood Amen, and they understood the association of the Amen and true witness. They were not being agreed with and complimented. They were being covenantally corrected by the beginning of the creation of God (Col 1:15-18).

Interestingly, Paul had earlier written the book of Colossians and instructed that it be taken to Laodicea and read (Col 4:16). This church knew who the beginning of the creation of God was. This same one was the “head of the body, the church” of which they were a part. Now it was not Paul addressing them. Now it was the Son of man Himself addressing them, the Amen. There will be no commendation to Laodecia. The Lord will move directly into His condemnation of the angel and the church.

Revelation 3:15 I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot.

Revelation 3:16 So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.

16 The Lord begins with the, by now familiar, I know thy works. As we will see, their works were worthless. This was a half-hearted bunch full of compromise.

Kevin Conner commenting on works says, “This phrase is used eight times, and especially as the Lord speaks to the seven churches in Asia. Read Revelation 2:2, 9, 13, 19, 23; 3:1, 8, 15. The New Testament shows that believers are not saved by works, but are saved unto good works. Works before salvation are ‘dead works,’ which need to be repented of (Hebrews 6:1-2; 9:14). But after salvation, Jesus told His disciples to let their light shine before men, so that others would see their good works and glorify their Father which is in heaven (Matthew 5:16). Paul also tells the believers to maintain good works (2 Timothy 3:17; Titus 2:7, 14).

At the judgment seat of Christ, all our works will be tried by the fire and believers will be rewarded accordingly, whether their works be wood, hay, stubble, or gold, silver and precious stones (1 Corinthians 3:12-13). Ultimately, all mankind will be judged out of the books according to their works (Revelation 20:12-15). So churches are to maintain good works, works of the Spirit, works according to the Word of God, and works done out of a pure heart of love--only these will stand the test in ‘that day.’”

We need an understanding about the hot and cold statements. There are a couple of possible interpretations. One, of course, is hot could be relating to being on fire for the things of the Lord. Cold could be cold toward the things of the Lord. But, of course, lukewarm would be better in that interpretation than cold. There is a historic and geographical explanation also. A neighboring city to Laodicea, Hieropolis, had a hot spring where people would go and obtain relief from ailments by swimming in the spring. Colossae, another neighboring city, had a spring of wonderful, cold water for drinking. Laodicea had neither, and by the time these two springs ran together and came to Laodicea, the water was lukewarm and good for nothing or so the story goes.

Whatever is actually meant by the Lord, one thing is clear. The church at Laodicea was nauseating to the Lord. The Son of man, the Amen, the faithful witness said I will spue thee out of my mouth. There is not doubt about the church being nauseating to the Lord. The word spue is emeo and means “to vomit.” It is interesting that a church can actually make the Lord sick. He is divine health, but can be made sick by a church. Amazing!

The Lord said that He would like the church to be either hot or cold. Here the spring interpretation of verses 15 and 16 fits best. The Lord would want a church that people could drink from like they could drink of the good, cold water at Colossae. He would want a hot church where

people would come from far and wide to lay in and obtain healing and relief from pain and discomfort. The Lord is saying that He would like for them to be an influence upon their area, but they were useless—lukewarm—good for nothing. What a terrible indictment for a church.

One cannot read this with serious desire and not ask the question about the church he or she attends. Are people drinking of it? Is it healing anything? What good is it? Amen?

Revelation 3:17 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:

17 “The city of Laodicea was proud of its three outstanding characteristics: its great wealth and financial independence as an important banking center; its textile industry, which produced ‘a very fine quality of world-famous black, glossy wool’ (Wycliff Historical Geography of Bible Lands, page 377); and its scientific community, renowned not only for its prestigious medical school, but also for an eyesalve, called ‘Phrygian Powder,’ which had been well-known since the days of Aristotle. Using these facts to illustrate the problems in the church, Christ cites the general attitude of the Laodicean Christians.”

Obviously the Laodicean church was wealthy—rich—and its wealth increased. It appears that this prosperity was interpreted as a blessing of God. The church’s summation of itself was that it had need of nothing. We learn here that a wealthy church is not necessarily a church being blessed by the Lord. To the Lord this church was wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind!

The church did not recognize the condition it was in. The Lord said that it knowest not that it was wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked. Unquestionably, the church misinterpreted its wealth and well-being as satisfying to the Lord. The church did not know it was naked. What a condemnation! This church was wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked!

Revelation 3:18 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.

18 The Lord uses symbolism to express His condemnation. Buy from me... These Laodiceans were buying up gold and, surely, other precious items from the world. Nevertheless, they were not obtaining the Lord’s precious items—gold tried in the fire. If they desired to be truly rich, they were obtaining the wrong gold. They were also obtaining from the wrong source. Buy from me... white raiment. These had no clothes, though they thought they had the finest name brand clothes. Actually, they were exposing their nakedness. They needed to obtain the Lord’s clothing. It is white—righteousness of the saints (Rev 19:8).

Also the Lord said, “…buy of me... eyesalve.” Their eyes needed to be anointed. They could not see. They were blind. Their wealthy physicians could do nothing about it. The famous medical school at Laodicea could not heal them. They must have the touch of the Son of man.

Revelation 3:19 As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.

19 This is a wonderful verse, and a verse that gives all churches hope. The Lord expresses His love. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Though the church was wretched, and naked, and blind, and poor, the Lord mentions how He would express love to them. As we stated earlier, judgment has a bad connotation. No one wants the judgment of the Lord. However, without that loving act that will chasten this church, how will they know to repent? They are convinced they are doing well. They are interpreting their wealth as a blessing from God. In actuality, they were blind. They did not even know they were naked. We need to adjust our attitudes and desire that the Lord rebuke and chasten us, not others. It is proof of His love. We need to be zealous concerning the dealings of the Lord with us. His rebuke is a good thing. Those He takes time to chasten are the ones He loves (Psa 19:9-10).

The Laodicean church’s true blessing will be the
Lord’s rebuke and chastening. It would be a good thing for this sickening church.

A comment here concerning the dispensational doctrine is necessary. If this was the church of the last day, the one that will bring about the rapture, would the Lord express His desire to love it? Would he care and ask it to repent if it was a throw-away. The dispensational doctrine says that the Laodicean church will not go in the rapture (see Dispensational Belief). The Laodicean church is connected with the Philadelphian church in the dispensational time frame. Both churches are in the earth the last day, they say. Philadelphia will go in the rapture. Laodicea will not. If this is the truth, then why does the Lord express a desire that this church repent? Why does the Lord (next verse) stand at the door and knock?

Revelation 3:20 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.

This verse may well be one of the most abused verses in all the Scripture. All have heard preachers pull it completely out of its context and make it sound like Jesus is begging man – any man – to please let Him in. It is used for extended altar calls, as people are begged to allow Jesus into their hearts. For example, J. Vernon McGee says,

“This is a picture of the Lord Jesus at the heart’s door of the sinner. It is a glorious picture...This is the picture of Christ we have in Revelation. He stands at the door and knocks. He will not crash the door. Regardless of what some extremists say on this matter of election, the Lord Jesus has moved heaven and hell to get to the door of your heart, but when He gets there, He will stop and knock.”

The truth is Jesus is speaking to a sickening church to which He has given a most severe rebuke. In actuality and contextually, the Amen – the Son of man in the midst of His churches – is speaking. He needs to beg no one. He will beg no one. What He is here doing is giving this church a “last chance” to repent and renew their covenant with Him. The Lord loves His church and people. The emphasis of the Amen is if any man hear my voice and open the door. There is an IF. It is not a beg. We make the covenantal decision. His knocking was done in the previous verses with thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked. Verse 21 is a picture of what had just been said. What He had already said was the knock. He had knocked. Now it is up to the church to respond.

“The Laodicean Church is the only one which is absolutely and wholly condemned. Not even a faithful remnant is left, such as in Sardis, the dead Church, which kept itself pure and white. No exception is allowed in Laodicea: advice is given, but there is no appearance that it will be taken.”

Revelation 3:21 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.

With the condemnation ended, the Lord gives the challenge to overcome. He has done this consistently. He always makes the overcoming personal. He said, “...to him that overcometh...” The Lord said to the Laodiceans if they would overcome they would sit with Him in His throne. Overcoming and sitting with Him in His throne is similar to His overcoming and His sitting with His Father in His throne. Note that His throne and the Father’s throne are the same.

It is necessary to say that the throne is not a large chair. It is a position of dominion. The Lord said to him that overcometh will I grant to sit. Sitting in a position of dominion and authority is not for all believers. It is for him that overcometh.

Is this only a promise for a future millennium? Only if the kingdom is future. However, if He now is set down and has His own position in what He calls my throne, then the promise for the overcomer’s position must be now, for the kingdom must be now. The promises to him that overcometh are not for a distant day. The Scriptures clearly teach that the redeemed overcomer now sits with Him in the heavens. The Scriptures teach that the believers have already been translated into a present kingdom that belongs to the Son (Eph 2:6; Col 1:13).

The objective of the church is to conquer the world – all nations – with the gospel. It is in the midst of the church that the Son of man walks. It

7 J. Vernon McGee; The Prophecy Revelation Chapter 1-5, page 120

8 Sir William Ramsey, The Letters to the Seven Churches, page 342
will be because of that church that the gates of hell will not prevail. If a church is not conquering, but rather compromising, it is only wretched, naked, blind, and poor. If we share the Lord’s throne, then we must share in the battles. He will only grant us to sit when we agree to overcome.

Revelation 3:22 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

Contemporary Theological View(s)

1. Revelation 3:10 Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.

Revelation 3:16 So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.

The dispensational doctrine uses the seven churches to work its time zones (see Dispensational Belief). Each church is a specific point in time, beginning with the first century. Each is a specific time zone until the last two, i.e. Philadelphia and Laodicea. These two are grouped together. Philadelphia represents the church raptured and kept from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth. Laodicea becomes the part of the church not raptured and left upon the earth to endure the seven years of tribulation with the wicked.

After the rapture and the removal of the Holy Spirit, worship will be by animal sacrifice as the temple has been rebuilt in Jerusalem. Those of Laodicea who repented would be required to do animal sacrifices. Thus if some of our, say, children or grandchildren did not go in the “first” rapture but repented, they would need to do animal sacrifices according to this doctrine. Your grandson would need to be circumcised to prove his salvation.

A most interesting and necessary truth is that not one New Testament apostle or writer ever mentioned anything like this happening. No New Testament writer speaks of a “rebuilt temple.” In fact, doctrines like this were called heresies by the first century apostles. Can a person imagine telling the apostle Paul that his nephew must offer animal sacrifices and be circumcised to be a Christian believer? I cannot!