

Zephaniah 3:1-13 – God communicates through language (Babel) (restore a pure language)
why: Jeremiah 29:13 – You will seek me and find me when you seek for me with ALL your heart
Paul's epistles versus Jesus epistles

7 equals fullness, completeness

Churches thus far . . .

Ephesus: good on doctrine, good on works BUT lost their “first love”, city was a great political center

Smyrna: 'myrrh' (death) – The suffering church is closest to Jesus, city was a great commercial center

Pergamum: Satan's Throne, city was a great religious center

Thyatira: Tolerated Jezebel – false doctrine and worldliness, Satan infiltrated from within

Sardis: Thought they were alive but are dead – only a faithful remnant.

No Satanic attacks because they made no difference against Satan's kingdom

Philadelpia: Obeyed, Didn't compromise Jesus name

Philadelpia: *Promised to be kept from the Great Tribulation (3:10)*

Thyatira: *promised to be cast into the Great Tribulation (2:22)*

Sardis: *caught unawares by His coming (3:3)*

The churches of Smyrna (the persecuted/suffering church) and Philadelphia run parallel with each other – these are the two cities Jesus had nothing bad to say. Jesus told Smyrna, “you will have tribulation 10 days, be thou faithful unto death and I will give you the crown of life” (Rev. 2:10). Both churches are warned of suffering but that time of testing is specifically limited by God. One time of testing is initiated by Satan against God's church, the other is God sent and comes against the whole world.

Colossians 4:16 -- And when this letter has been read among you, have it also read in the church of the Laodiceans; and see that you also read the letter from Laodicea. (letter to Laodiceans probably the letter to the Ephesians – a circular letter).

Laodicea was founded 250 B.C. as a Hellenistic city (Greek culture) by the ruler from the Seleucid dynasty, Antiochus II . The name Laodicea was given by Antiochus to honour his wife, Laodice

The city was renowned for **three main industries**:

A **banking center** for the province of Asia Minor, including a gold exchange; Laodicea minted its coins that bore the images of Zeus, Asclepius, Apollo

The **textile center** where glossy, black wool was woven into garments called trimata that were prized in the Roman world;

Since the 1st century AD, Laodicea functioned as a leading centre of medicine and a medical school. Known worldwide and where an eye salve called Phrygian powder was made from a local stone containing zinc and alum. Its most famous graduate was Demosthenes, the author of the most influential work in the field of ophthalmology of the ancient period. His work, *Ophthalmicus*, which discussed the diseases of the eyes, was even used as late as the middle ages.

Wealthy: Antiochus III the Great brought to the area of Phrygia two thousand Jewish families from Babylon. From this moment, Laodicea had a significant Jewish community. The wealth of this community was legendary as it sent 20 pounds of gold to the Temple in Jerusalem every year (350,000 dollars).

Since the city was located in the region often suffered from earthquakes, its buildings were repeatedly destroyed and rebuilt. One of the most powerful earthquakes struck in 27 BC, during the reign of Emperor Augustus. In 60 AD, another earthquake completely destroyed Laodicea. The Roman Emperor Nero offered financial assistance in the reconstruction but the proud citizens of Laodicea rejected the offer and paid their own money for this purpose. According to Roman writer Tacitus, Rome offered to pay for the city to be rebuilt, but the people declined, saying that they were wealthy enough to restore their own city.

Local deity: the god 'ascelpius', the god of healing.

Hot springs: Hierapolis had healthy hot springs, and to the south, Colossae had cold springs that were clean and refreshing to drink from. But Laodicea had perpetual problems with its water supply, which was brought by aqueduct six miles from the south. By the time the water reached Laodicea, it had become lukewarm. It was tepid, unclean, and undrinkable, the kind of water that makes you sick, that you might spit or vomit out of your mouth, as Jesus is said to do, metaphorically speaking, with the entire Laodicean church. Archaeological discovery in 2015 on marble block contained the engraved inscription of the water law.

Laodicea was founded on an important trade route, leading to this city from Sardis through Philadelphia. In its neighborhood, there are many important ancient cities. Just 6 miles to the north of Laodicea, there is the famous Roman spa of Hierapolis (Col. 4:13). Colossae is 9 miles to the east (Paul mentioned them 4 times in his letter to the Colossians).

Colossians 4:7-9 – Tychicus sent there with letter and with Onesimus, former slave of Philemon. He was one of their number (from the city of Colossae). The name *Onesimus* means “helpful,” “useful,” or “profitable.” It was a common name for slaves in that day.

Paul uses a play on words when he refers to Onesimus in his letter to Philemon verse 11: “Formerly he was useless to you, but now he has become useful both to you and to me.” Before salvation, Onesimus had been useless or unprofitable to Philemon, but now he had become immensely beneficial to both his master and to Paul. As a believer in Jesus Christ, Onesimus lived up to his name.

Church in Laodicea began in the house on Nympha {male or female – meaning, the Bride}
It was, by worldly standards, a successful, wealthy fellowship.

350 AD a 25,000 sq ft church existed, uncovered in 2010. The mega-church of it's day.

3:14 -- “To the angel of the church in Laodicea write:

The Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God, says this:

Jesus title of Himself

The Amen: “So be it!”

In Isaiah 65:16 – God is twice called the “God of truth”.

In Hebrew it means the “God of the Amen”

In gospels, when Jesus says Verily, verily He is saying Amen and Amen – it is true.

By using this title, Jesus is declaring Himself to be the 'God of all truth' who has come to confound the faithless church who has played spiritual harlotry with the nations.

When Jesus pronounces things you can be sure they will come to pass ...

2 Corinthians 1:20 - “for all the promises of God in Him are yes and Amen.”

faithful and true Witness

title used in Rev. 1:5 – the “faithful witness --- As John 18:37 records it, “Then Pilate said to him, “So you are a king?” Jesus answered, “You say that I am a king. For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world—to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice.”

Jesus Christ, God come in human flesh, not only came to die for our sins on the cross but also came to reveal the eternal God to us. As John 14:9 states, “if you've seen me (Jesus said) you've seen the Father.

The English word we translate as “witness” is 'martyr' in the Greek. Jesus was faithful unto death but unlike others who have and will die for their faith, Jesus alone had the power to lay down His life as well as raise it up again (John 10:18).

without truth there can be no justice (tribulation, Bema Seat, Millennium, Great White Throne)

Beginning of the creation of God

back in Isaiah 65 where He called Himself the 'Amen' He describes His creative nature in the next

two verses **verses 17-18** – ““For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth, and the former things shall not be remembered or come into mind. But be glad and rejoice forever in that which I create; for behold, I create Jerusalem to be a joy, and her people to be a gladness.

Jehovah's Witnesses believe and teach Jesus was an angel and the very first creation of Eternal God. There was a well-known false teacher in John's day from Ephesus named Cerenthus who taught the same thing concerning Christ. It is a mark of all the cults to deny the deity of Christ.

When Jesus says He is the beginning of the creation of God in this verse He is stating that He is the source - the prime mover regarding all creation. In John's gospel he begins by declaring Jesus to be “The Word” – 'logos' in the original language. The word 'logos' carries a specific idea with it. It means “the reason” why!

Paul wrote a letter addressing this very issue to the Colossian Christians who were then to share it with the Laodicean Christians.

Colossians 1:16 – for by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones, or dominions, or rulers, or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him.

Word of commendation (good News):

- no good news for Laodicea nor **Sardis: name you are alive but are dead**
- no persecution, worldly focus
- Two churches Jesus threatens to close (**Ephesus**/Laodicea) furthest from Satan's throne in **Pergamum** (Satan didn't have to bother with them (unloving and lukewarm))

3:15 – **I know** your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot; **I wish** that you were cold or hot.

3:16 – ‘So because **you are** lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, **I will** spit you out of My mouth.

- Be zealous (hot): hot welcome toward outsiders, hot gospel from pulpit

Word of Rebuke

- #1: **Lukewarm**: neither boiling hot, nor ice cold
 - can't do anything with them
 - they were smug, complacent, satisfied
 - Rather have you cold: realize your need of Christ
 - lukewarmness deceives people

3:17 – ‘Because **you say**, “I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have **need of nothing**,” and you **do not know** that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked,

- #2: **Proud** due to financial prosperity: Need nothing:
 - needed the stirring of the Holy Spirit
 - needed humbling – wealthy don't need anyone's help

Trap: financial resources of a church aren't *necessarily* the measure of *God's* hand of blessing
Words of Agur: **Proverbs 30:8-9** – give me neither poverty nor riches

#3: They were ignorant of their true condition (self-satisfied, self-sufficient, self-deceived):
Jesus tells them they don't see themselves accurately but He does

wretched: afflicted but didn't even realize it

miserable: missing out on the abundant life in Christ

poor: bankrupt – no treasure in heaven

blind: no spiritual sight/discernment – (eye-salve) (**John 9:39-41**)

naked: robes of righteousness (black shiny garments of Laodicea) (Sardis: dressed in white)

3:18 – I advise you to buy from Me gold refined by fire so that you may become rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself, and that the shame of your nakedness will not be revealed; and eye salve to anoint your eyes so that you may see.

“come and buy” – you must do business with the Savior (but on His terms)

Isaiah 55:1,3 – “Come, everyone who is thirsty, come to the waters! Also, you that have no money, come, buy, and eat! Come! Buy wine and milk without money and without price.

We don't possess the kind of currency needed to redeem (purchase) ourselves

Isaiah 52:3 – For thus says the LORD: “You were sold for nothing, and you shall be redeemed without money.”

Ephesians 2:4-9 – But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, *even when we were dead* in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

Become rich

1 Cor. 3:11-15 – For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw — each one's work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, *he will receive a reward*. If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire.

White garments

According to **Revelation 19:8**, we should be clothed in “fine linen, clean and white,” and this

symbolizes “the righteous acts of the saints” (NASB). Salvation means that Christ’s righteousness is imputed to us, put to our account, but sanctification means that His righteousness is imparted to us, made a part of our character and conduct.

The Shekinah glory

Psalm 104:2 – “the Lord clothes Himself with light as with a garment”

Matthew 17:2 – Transfiguration his face shone *like the sun*, and his clothes became *white as light*.
'luchos' = brilliant, dazzling, clear

Adam and Eve unclothed after sinning – clothed with Shekinah glory before sin entered?

cloth yourselves

Ephesians 2:10 – For we are his workmanship, *created in Christ Jesus for* good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

Titus 2:11-15 – For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession *who are zealous for good works*. Declare these things; exhort and rebuke with all authority. Let no one disregard you.

Titus 3:8 – The saying is trustworthy, and I want you to insist on these things, so that those who have believed in God may be careful to *devote themselves to good works*. These things are excellent and profitable for people.

Anoint with eye salve that you might see

2 Peter 1:5-11 – Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in *your* moral excellence, knowledge, **6** and in *your* knowledge, self-control, and in *your* self-control, perseverance, and in *your* perseverance, godliness, **7** and in *your* godliness, brotherly kindness, and in *your* brotherly kindness, love. **8** For if these *qualities* are yours and are increasing, they do not make you useless nor unproductive in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. **9** For the one who lacks these *qualities* is *blind or short-sighted*, having forgotten *his* purification from his former sins. **10** Therefore, brothers *and sisters*, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choice of you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble **11** for in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you.

3:19 – ‘Those whom I **love**, I **reprove and discipline**; therefore be **zealous and repent**.

The word for **love** in **as many as I love** is not *agape*, but *phileo*. Jesus’ heart to this church is, “Even though I **rebuke** you and **chasten** you, I am still your friend. I love you deeply as My friend.

Like Church at Philadelphia – the church of friendliness.

Jesus: disciples (John 15:15) – No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you.

The ancient Greek word **zealous** comes from the same word as *hot* in Rev. 3:16. Though Jesus detested their lukewarmness, He would really rather them be *hot* with zeal rather than cold.

Christ personally takes up what the assembly has ceased to be. He is the Amen, the faithful and true witness. He is also a loving and gracious God.

Hebrews 12:5-11 – And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons? “My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him. **For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives.**” It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

20 ‘Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me.

This verse is taken out of context more than almost any other in the Bible. You will often hear people use it in terms of evangelism but this is a picture of Jesus trying to gain entrance into His own church. You see, God will never force His way in. He reveals Himself but then you have to yield to him.

Actually the church has put Christ on the outside. We settle today for rock star preachers, flashy worship leaders, smoke machines and coffee bars in the sanctuaries. It's astounding how many ministers do not really believe in the deity of Jesus Christ, do not believe in the virgin birth, do not believe that there is an actual heaven or hell, nor in the authority of the Word of God.

Remember, scripture interprets scripture. **In John 10:9-11**, Jesus tells us that ***He is the door*** of the sheepfold. This is not a tiny little Jesus trying to get into the tiny door of your heart. It is Jesus seeking entrance into His own church.

This invitation is the narrowest of all the letters to His churches. In Thyatira there was a remnant (2:24), in Sardis there was a few names (3:4), but in Laodicea Jesus is looking for **anyone!**

This verse also reveals that membership in any particular church cannot save you. You must come

to Jesus individually (“if **anyone** hears my voice”). You must (1) confess, (2) repent, and (3) believe – but what?

This is the call to the wedding feast ...

Revelation 19:9 – And the angel said to me, “Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.” And he said to me, “These are the true words of God.”

The Marriage Supper to which the parables pointed,

Luke 12:35-38, ““Stay dressed for action and keep your lamps burning, and be like men who are waiting for their master to come home from the wedding feast, so that they may open the door to him at once when he comes and knocks.”

Eating supper is a very significant act from a Biblical standpoint, from a cultural standpoint at the time of Christ. It signified becoming one with the other person. And Jesus is always wanting to eat supper with people. What does it mean? It means that He wants to become one with you.

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

Who are the *overcomers*? Jesus: Rev. 5:5

1 John 5:4-5 states it thus, “For everyone who has been born *of God* overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—*our faith*. Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who *believes that Jesus is the Son of God*?”

If you noticed, there are also two different thrones mentioned in this verse.

This verse gives us a hint, a shadow of the Millennial Kingdom in this verse. Jesus differentiates between His throne and His Father's throne.

Jesus Christ today is still seated on His Father's throne. When He comes back to Earth in His Second Coming He will be seated on His own throne (the throne of David) in the city of Jerusalem to rule and reign for a thousand years.

There are millions in mainline denominations who teach and believe that the church has replaced Israel and the church is the “spiritual kingdom of God” today.

In Matthew 19:29 – Jesus told them, “I tell you with certainty, when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne in the renewed creation, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, governing the twelve tribes of Israel.

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

Personal: have you heard His voice today? What are you going to do about it?

The churches:

Haggai 2:6-9 – For thus says the LORD of hosts: Yet once more, in a little while, I will shake the heavens and the earth and the sea and the dry land. And I will shake *all nations*, so that the *treasures* of all nations shall come in, and I will fill this house with glory, says the LORD of hosts. The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, declares the LORD of hosts. The *latter glory* of this house shall be greater than the former, says the LORD of hosts. And in this place I will give peace, declares the LORD of hosts.” (Jerusalem = city of peace)

Until recent times 2005 onward, Laodicea was undiscovered. If you walked outside the confines of the old city . . . off in the distance . . . there was a lone stone archway with a door . . .

Jesus is standing at the very door as we meet here today

but when the Son of Man returns, will He find faith on the Earth?