

## Chapter 3 LETTERS TO CHURCHES

### SMYRNA

We will begin this chapter with Smyrna. We had the introduction to Smyrna in the last chapter, with the pastor of Smyrna being burned; that was Polycarp. Now we are going to look at the church. See Chart 3.1 for this church.

#### Revelation

2:8 And unto the angel of the church in Smyrna write; These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive;

2:9 I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and [I know] the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but [are] the synagogue of Satan.

2:10 Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast [some] of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.

2:11 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.

This passage describes the church of Smyrna. The name of the town, Smyrna, is named after its chief product, myrrh. Myrrh is the incense that gives good smell, like a perfume, that can give a good odor to something. It is also used for embalming the dead.

Here is a church's description, then, that connects specifically to Polycarp. The Jews, the synagogue of Satan, were the people so zealous in the building of the fire and bringing of Polycarp to the stake for him to burn. That happened in Smyrna. The synagogue of Satan is any synagogue that rejects Jesus.

#### *Commendations for Smyrna*

The commendations are three. These Christians are noted for their works. In the midst of all their trials and poverty, they continue doing all phases of the *Missio Dei*. God commends their tribulation and poverty. However, their poverty is only in the temporal and material realm. They are actually rich in the spiritual realm. They have laid up treasure in heaven.

God commands these Christians not to fear. Fear is volitional. It is countered by a sound, rational mind. We must use our minds to use our faith and hope to conquer fear. Fear is spontaneous, and it arises with perceived suffering, but God says to fear not what we shall suffer.

#### *Tribulation Ten Days*

There is a statement here: "ye shall have tribulation ten days." I do not think this is talking about ten 24-hour days duration. I think this is once again a signing of a truth. The people of Smyrna, and some of you are of Smyrna, are going to have tribulation throughout their lives. That ten days indicates to me that it is like the whole thing in the same way that "seven" gives a universal concept. The "seven" spirits indicates to me the Holy Spirit, which is the "whole" Spirit. The ten days is the whole thing, too, but it cuts off at the end of time. Ten days is a temporal whole. It ends with your death. Those of you, then, that are of this church are going to suffer the rest of your lives. Mark it down! Do not be surprised.

There is a commandment in here and a promise. The one who suffered, was tried, and was found faithful all the way unto death

was Polycarp. Polycarp is your model. If you are of Smyrna, Polycarp then would be a typical model for you. You can look at him and see something of what is going to happen to you as well. Now guess what Polycarp got. He got the crown of life. Guess what you are going to get if you persevere unto death? the crown of life!

### *Description of Jesus*

Make sure you have an ear to hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches because if you overcome, if you press on through, if you settle it in your heart, if you stand under the burden, if you go to the end, you, too, will have the promise: “He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.” That is a double negative that means there is absolutely no way that the second death can touch you. That is not to indicate now that the second death can apply to some other saved person. This is a double negative in Greek that does not convert to a positive. It is a confirmed negative. There is no way under the sun that the Smyrna Christian can be touched by the second death, and there is also the promise of the crown of life.

The description of Jesus to Smyrna is that He is the first and the last, and He was dead and is alive. Every one of us is responsible to interpret this work. I am not the authority in what we are talking about here in this description of Jesus. You that teach others have the same responsibility that I have. I took my best shot, and I decided that the description interpreted here is that Jesus is the total timeline and our hope. The description of Jesus in this passage will apply to this particular church.

How do you perceive Jesus? Each of us has a perception of Jesus. The way you perceive him indicates where you land in all of these churches. How you perceive Jesus indicates how you behave. You are going to make how you perceive the Lord and your

behavior consistent, because how you behave is who you are. Who you are is what you are going to do. That means then, that you can analyze yourself in these passages.

It is a lot easier for us to come in the back door and look at our behavior and our thinking and attitudes toward the Christian life, and then come to one of these churches that has similarities. We can look then, at their perception of Jesus and say, “That must be mine as well.” That is a back-door approach. But what this passage is coming in with is a front-door approach. He starts with Jesus and how the church perceives Him and how He is to be looked at, then looks at the church’s behavior and gives the commendations and the reprimands and all of that.

Tom: What does it mean that Jesus is the total timeline?

V: Because the “first and the last” means the first in the beginning and the last at the end and everything in between.

Betty: Dr. Vinson, you lost me on the ten-day thing.

V: The ten-day thing is quantitative, but yet it is a sign. Now if we dismiss the sign, then it is a promise that your suffering is only ten days long. But if we take the quantitative and the signing together, then the signing of ten means the whole thing. We are going to get to some more of that when we get to the beast and the ten horns.

Paul: When you say the whole thing, if seven is universal, means forever, or not ending so ten is that and more?

V: No, it is less. Ten is temporal. It is all of time. That is ten days. But the seven does not even begin and does not end. It is eternal, the all-in-all.

Bob: When you say the word, temporal, you are taking ten day’s and making it your lifetime?

# SMYRNA

DESCRIPTION OF JESUS	COMMENDATION	REPRIMAND	EXHORTATION & OR ELSE	PROMISE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. First and last</li> <li>2. Dead and alive</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Works and tribulation</li> <li>2. Poverty, being blasphemed by Jews.</li> </ul>	None	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Fear not future trials, tribulations, and suffering</li> <li>2. Be faithful unto death</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Crown of Life</li> <li>2. No second death</li> </ul>

Jesus is **total time line** and our **hope**

Chart 3.1

V: No, your life in the flesh is temporal. Every person’s mortal life is temporal. However we will all exist outside of time in eternity.

Bob: It is not that I am disagreeing with you, but in all of our other reading and even some of this that is not required, just recommended, other readings, about all of them thought that it indicated a short period of time.

V: I know. I am telling you my interpretation, and they are telling theirs. Pay your dollar and take your choice. Also your lifetime is a short period of time, and that idea would harmonize the two patterns.

Wanda: Compared to eternity, our lifetime would be a short period of time.

V: Yes, compared to eternity it would be, but I do not think we need to stop and haggle over these issues because it is strictly up to you. I am giving you mine. Take it and throw it out if you want.

Bob: I am just trying to understand what yours is.

V: Well, it is temporal. Mine is temporal and for all of time. If you are in this church, you are going to go the distance in suffering. Polycarp is your model.

### *Smyrna Needs Hope*

In drawing the lines on the chart, “being faithful unto death” would have a line drawn to hope from it. “Fear not future sufferings” and “tribulations” would also go to hope. “The crown of life” and “no second death” goes to hope. So, then, Smyrna needs hope.

The need that the Smyrna Christian has in my opinion is hope. Anybody going through suffering has to have hope, and that hope goes out beyond the ten days because inside the 10 days is suffering. Hope that goes beyond the veil is the anchor of our souls (Hebrews 6:18-20).

You remember how we looked at the *kenosis*? You must look across the gap and see the future resurrection. Please see that Jesus goes forever. He never ends. He is resurrected. He is the Lord, and He will bring you into that category of Christians receiving

the Crown of Life, but you have to have hope. Otherwise you cannot go to that cross. You cannot continue that suffering. You have to view Jesus as the resurrected Lord without beginning and without end. Once dead, but now alive, and you are going to follow the same model.

If you can have that kind of hope, it will carry you all the way through. Smyrna needs that hope even though there is no reprimand on Smyrna, not one reprimand. But there is the challenge: Persevere all the way unto the death. Your hope is in Jesus Christ. So look at Him in His eternity so that you can persevere. There is where your hope is. It is your perception of Jesus.

Carl: Does this play a lot with the burden?

V: Yes. Hope will hold you fast, as an anchor, under the burden.

Mary: We can look at this to see how it plays out. Therefore, we make a choice—I do not know if I want to go sacrifice. I would like to get out from under that burden.

V: Well, that is it. We need hope to enable us to stay under that burden. You will die without the hope, and your spiritual life will go to nothing. Your perseverance will go to nothing. As a matter of fact if you have no hope, you will not take another step. Why should you if you have no hope. But make sure your hope is not in the temporal realm. The ten-day part here is not good for you for hope. Focus not into the temporal. Look across the chasm. Look at Jesus who was dead in the temporal but alive in the eternal. There is your hope.

Sybil: Last week you drew the *kenosis*. That has been something that I have been studying ever since I first picked up with you. But you drew on the left that you should be living life right, you know, doing it right. You drew a line and circled the left side, but you said you could still get lost. You could

maybe not get to the goal at the bottom. You drew your lines upward if you do not see across the chasm. The way that I interpret that is that it would not be by faith? You are talking hope, but would that not be by faith?

V: Yes, being able to see the hope takes the eyes of faith.

Jerry: By faith you look across, but you can still get hung up. If you are living right but do not have the full faith to see across, you still can screw up here.

V: Yes, you can. If you start looking into the ten-day, you have already messed up. Don't do that because you will start to climb, take care of yourself, and bring your rewards into the temporal realm. Once you do that, you have your reward, then there is the fall on the other side. Look past the ten days. Look over into eternity. Look at the resurrected Lord. That is how you have that hope. You are going to be resurrected, too. If you focus on this temporal side, you have it, but if you look on the other eternal side, you do not have it now. But, OH, YEAH!! you are going to have it then.

## PERGAMOS

An interesting thing about Pergamos is that it is made up of two words. *Gamos* is marriage. I do not know what the “per” means, but I do know that *gamos* means marriage. So this church has marriage as a part of its name like Smyrna has myrrh as part of its name.

Revelation

2:12 And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write; These things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges;

2:13 I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, [even] where Satan's seat [is]: and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas [was] my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth.

2:14 But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication.

2:15 So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate.

2:16 Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.

2:17 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth [it].

**Description of Jesus**

Jesus is described as wielding a sharp sword with two edges. He means to cut something. He wants to cut this church loose from its bondage. As we will see, this church is in bondage to the world.

**Commendations for Pergamos**

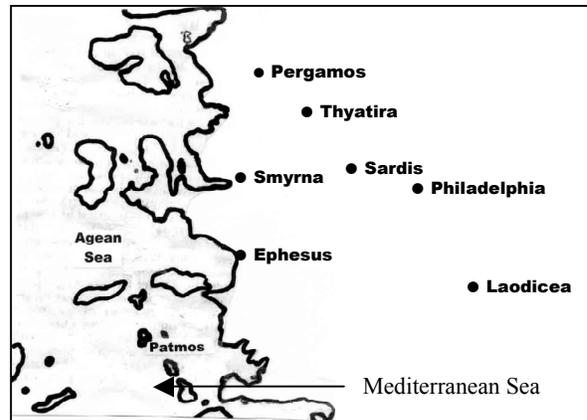
God commends these Christians for their works. They are persevering in ministry in a hostile environment. They are ministering in Satan’s seat. In other words, they are ministering where it is not politically correct to do so.

They hold fast to Jesus’ name, and they do not deny the faith. They are going all the way to the death because of their faith. Jesus mentions a specific man as an example of a faithful martyr. Antipas was that martyr.

In verse 13 is the word “dwellest.” That word does not indicate something good! “Dwellest.” Here is a church that is not pilgrim in character. It is dwelling there where Satan’s seat is. You tie that to the

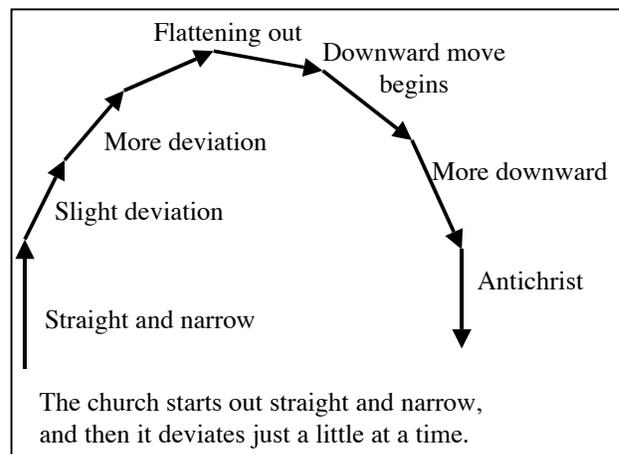
word *gamos*, marriage, and you have a marriage of this church and the world.

**Map Depicts Upside Down Kenosis**



**Chart 3.2**

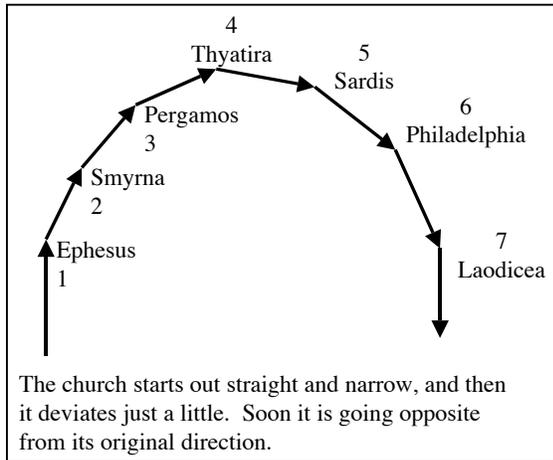
I will show you something else. On the map of Turkey (see Chart 3.2), you can see Patmos out in the Mediterranean Sea. The first church is Ephesus right on the coast. The next church is north to Smyrna and then north to Pergamos. In my Church History class we have over and over again talked about what slight little changes will do to you (see Chart 3.3). When you do these little deviations, you get into trouble. So here is the church on the



**Chart 3.3**

straight and narrow just like the Lord called it to do. Then it deviates just a little bit. It goes like that for a while. Then it deviates a little bit more. We are talking about little, tiny deviations. These are not big changes to get

excited about, just little doctrinal things. So you have another one, and then another one. And then you are antichrist.



**Chart 3.4**

Watch what the Lord does with this map (Chart 3.4). There is a straight line going from Ephesus to Smyrna, straight line up to Pergamos. Then there is a marriage with the world. There is a down turn to Thyatira, another to Sardis and to Philadelphia. There is an attempt to straighten out at Philadelphia, and then to Laodicea. You have a map of the world. This is not coincidental. When the Lord does these things, there is no, “Oh, wow,

God accidentally found a way to tell us something here.” This is God we are talking about. He knows what He is doing. It is up to us to find out what He is doing.

Jill: Nevertheless this church is married to the world.

V: Yes, this church was married to the world. The reason we can say that is because of the word “dwellest.” The church at Pergamos is not a pilgrim in the world. It dwellest in the world. In other words, it is of the world. Dwelling means that it has driven down its stakes, its roots are down deep. They are going to be right there where Satan’s seat is.

Satan’s seat is there, and that is the world. Satan’s seat is the world. Here is a church that is dwelling in the world. It is married to the world.

This church has a great commendation. They have not denied their faith, and they have had martyrs like Antipas. There are some good things going on in this church. But there are some serious reprimands for this church as well.

# PERGAMOS

DESCRIPTION OF JESUS	COMMENDATION	REPRIMAND	EXHORTATION & OR ELSE	PROMISE
Sharp, two-edged sword	Kept the faith in the face of death	1. Some hold doctrine of Balaam (trade allegiance for sustenance) 2. Some eat sacrifices to idols 3. Some hold to doctrine of Nicolaitanes	Repent or else God will war against them  Note: Violation of law creates war with God	Hidden manna, white stone with a new name.

Law and gospel

**Chart 3.5**

**Reprimands for Pergamos**

Revelation

2:14 But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, . . .

All right, Balaam is the profit prophet. The profit prophet is a person who does his prophecy for gain, a mercenary approach to ministry. The profit prophet is Balaam, and in order to bring about a curse to Israel, he taught Balac how to lead Israel into marrying Moabite women. That comes back to this word, marriage. Balaam wanted to bring about a curse to the people of Israel, and he taught Balac how to encourage Israel to marry Moabite women. That marriage, God's people unequally yoked with people outside, brought them into Satan's dwelling place. That is how things begin to happen. That is a literal marriage being promoted by Balaam. The people of Israel intermarried women from Canaan, and the women brought in Baal worship.

You and I may bypass the literal part and marry the world attitudinally. That is just as bad as this business with Israel, and it will sink you. That is a big problem that the church is having today. That is what brings it around closer to antichrist. When you are involved in the *kenosis*<sup>1</sup> you are involved in self-denial. When you are involved in the opposite of the *kenosis*<sup>2</sup> you are involved in gain.

Here is Balaam, the false prophet. He is the preview of the false prophet who will come up in the later chapters of Revelation. Whereas his ministry is for gain, the *kenosis* is for sacrifice. *Kenotic* sacrifice is the walk of a pilgrim. Dwelling is the climb, opposite the *kenosis*. We must get it into our hearts and our minds that we are dedicated all the way, that we are not going to dwell, and that

we are going to be pilgrims. We are not going to marry the world and become antichrists. We are going to go the distance.

Jill: This church is being attacked not for where they are, but because they are not making a difference. They are lukewarm and have become like the world instead of being set apart?

V: Yes, it has taken on the character of the world. He does not say it is lukewarm. It is worldly. There is not much difference between them and the world.

Jill: In this past year I have heard that there is some church pastor that wants to allow homosexuals into their church, and stuff like that. Is this the kind of stuff you are talking about in being worldly? Is that where this church is?

V: If it is an attempt to be politically correct, yes. Pergamos is a Caesar-worshiping town. To worship Caesar is to ask for his blessings. That would be striving for political correctness. If the church is trying to bring in the homosexual on the basis of political correctness, then it would fit this scenario. If it is accommodating homosexuals in the name of love, then it is a poor doctrine situation.

Jill: Because there is a lot of this going on in the churches, I am trying to understand whether or not all these people are saved because as you are saying, they look just like sinners when they do this. Are we talking about saved people or people who are lost?

V: I am going to have to say both. At this point I cannot really decide who is not and who is. But so far, for Ephesus and Smyrna and Pergamos, I would say nearly all are saved. Nearly all.

Jill: Of the seven churches, we are supposed to find out which church we are? The church we would want to . . . .

V: No, I am not talking about that. I am talking about you personally.

<sup>1</sup> Philippians 2:5-11.

<sup>2</sup> Isaiah 14:13-15.

Jill: We have all seven kinds mixed up in our congregations, and we see it all the time, right?

V: Yes, yes. What I want to happen here is for you to discern where you are as an individual, which of the spiritual churches describes you so you can know what you are supposed to do, what is the exhortation for you and all of that. Then when you are teaching your people, you want to convey that same thing to them. You have to get them to see. We cannot say everybody under this steeple and in this room belongs to Philadelphia because we are a good church. Every time I go somewhere to preach, they think they are Philadelphia. I have found a few Smyrna's but these other churches do not seem to exist. No one will confess that they are Laodicea.

Jill: That is the one across the street.

V: Yes, that other denomination over there.

Jill: Those other churches are Laodicea (laughter).

### ***The Two-Edged Sword***

Let me go back to Pergamos (see Chart 3.5). We have law and gospel. The two-edged sword is Law and Gospel in the way that I see it. An edge is on both sides. The Law and Gospel are supposed to help us. The meaning of the doctrine of Balaam has to do with mercenary ministry and marrying the world. But this business of Balaam needs to come under the edge of the sword that deals with the Law of restraint or removal, which means to cut it loose from the world.

### **Eating Sacrifices**

Eating sacrifices to idols is what the people of the world did. The church people were no different. They are to be different! The Law edge of the sword needs to be

applied to give restraint to this practice. Chop it off.

### **Doctrine of Nicolaitans**

The doctrine of the Nicolaitans has to do with the hierarchy in the church where you have the clergy above the laity, and the clergy telling the laity what to do. That is Nicolaitanism. It is defeating the laity, a top-down approach. It is power above the laity. "Nico" means fight or conquer, and "laitans" means the laity. The laity is supposed to follow Jesus, too. The laity participates in the Gospel. Therefore, the Gospel edge of the sword needs to apply to this problem by freeing the people to follow Jesus.

Homer: Like clericalism, which was studied in the Evangelism class.

V: Clericalism, right. In Church History we really get after the authority problem some more.

### ***The Promise for Pergamos***

The good part, the Gospel part, looks at the promise, the hidden manna. That is Gospel. Jesus is the Bread of Life, and He will come to you and give you strength and sustenance when you are flagging, and you cannot go another step under your burden. Then God comes to nourish you in the form of spiritual manna, and enables you to go all the way even like God did for Polycarp. He helps you to stand in there and not have to be nailed to the spire. You can just stand in there and take the heat.

The white stone with the new name is the salvation thing. A white stone in my mind is a sign that is almost like two sides of a tombstone. When you get saved, you die, and you get born again. When you get born again, you are a new person, a new creature, with a new character and new everything, and that deserves a new name. But there is going to be, I believe, something significant about this stone with your name written on it. When

you have gone the distance in this church, if you are in this church, and you come out of it and do the repentance, then there is something else beyond just having the new birth. There is going to be something between God and you that nobody else is going to know. It will be your name that He calls you by. You will know it, but I will not know it. None of us are going to know it. That is a great intimacy between you and Him, and how that transpires I do not know. But that is what I think is going to happen.

All of the part under reprimand connects with Law except the Nicolaitanism. Nicolaitanism connects with Gospel. The two promises, hidden manna and white stone connect with Gospel.

The repentance required is to be separate from the world. The saint is to be holy, not worldly. They are to keep on doing the good part for which they received commendation. They are to discontinue the things for which they received a reprimand. If you who are in this church succeed, you will receive a gravestone, manna for the trial, and a new name. These come because of your being at war with the world. However, if you do not repent, you will be at war with God. Please know that all of us are in a war with the world or with God. Some of you are on God's side. The rest are on the world's side. Which side are you on, really?

### THYATIRA

Revelation

2:18 And unto the angel of the church in Thyatira write; These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet [are] like fine brass;

2:19 I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last [to be] more than the first.

2:20 Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a

prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols.

2:21 And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not.

2:22 Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds.

2:23 And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works.

2:24 But unto you I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak; I will put upon you none other burden.

2:25 But that which ye have [already] hold fast till I come.

2:26 And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations:

2:27 And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father.

2:28 And I will give him the morning star.

2:29 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

### *Description of Jesus*

This church is loaded down with all kinds of good and all kinds of bad, and it has some strong exhortation, and it has some wonderful promises. Jesus is described as the Son of God with eyes of fire and feet of fine brass. I translate these descriptives as follows:

<i>Element</i>	<i>Translation</i>
Son of God	Purity plus a sacrificial walk.
Eyes of fire	Purity.
Feet of fine brass	Sacrificial walk.

**Commendations for Thyatira**

Now this church has many good works of love, service, faith, and patience. You remember we talked about patience, standing under the burden. Here is this church standing under the burden and growing in works. This is a fabulous church, knocking it out, but they have some serious problems.

**Reprimands for Thyatira**

The first problem is that they have this Jezebel in there who is teaching and seducing the flock. Jezebel is the one that brought Baalism into Israel. Jezebel brought it in from outside by an enticement, a seduction. It is imported through intermarriage where the king is a Jew and Jezebel is bringing in Baal worship by being married to the king, and having that inherent power from her being the king's wife to bring in heresy.

What is the power that enables Jezebel to bring in all that we have here about seducing, teaching the people to commit fornication, and eating things sacrificed to idols? Where is her power? Her power is being given to her by a passive church that is not exercising any

control over where its doctrine is coming from. That church is loopy-goopy in the name of big-tent theology and all this political correctness, and not being hurtful to these sweet little prophetesses. The church lets them come in and bring all the seduction they want to bring in, no questions asked. None.

God says, "I have a problem with that." His problem is severe. Look at the four parties: Jezebel, the fornicators, the children of that combination, and then you have the rest of the church. Jezebel brings in the false doctrine. Fornicators are the members of the church who open up their arms to Jezebel wanting her to teach them. They ask Jezebel to teach that sweet kind of doctrine: "We are tired of this *kenosis* stuff. We want some good doctrine, some ear-tickling doctrine. Make me feel good." Those are your fornicators.

Then there are the children, off-spring disciples of Jezebel and the fornicators. Jezebel does not get death. She brings in death, but she does not get death. The fornicators do not get death. They get tribulation. The Lord says to Jezebel, "Repent," and gave her a space of time, ten-day kind of time. He

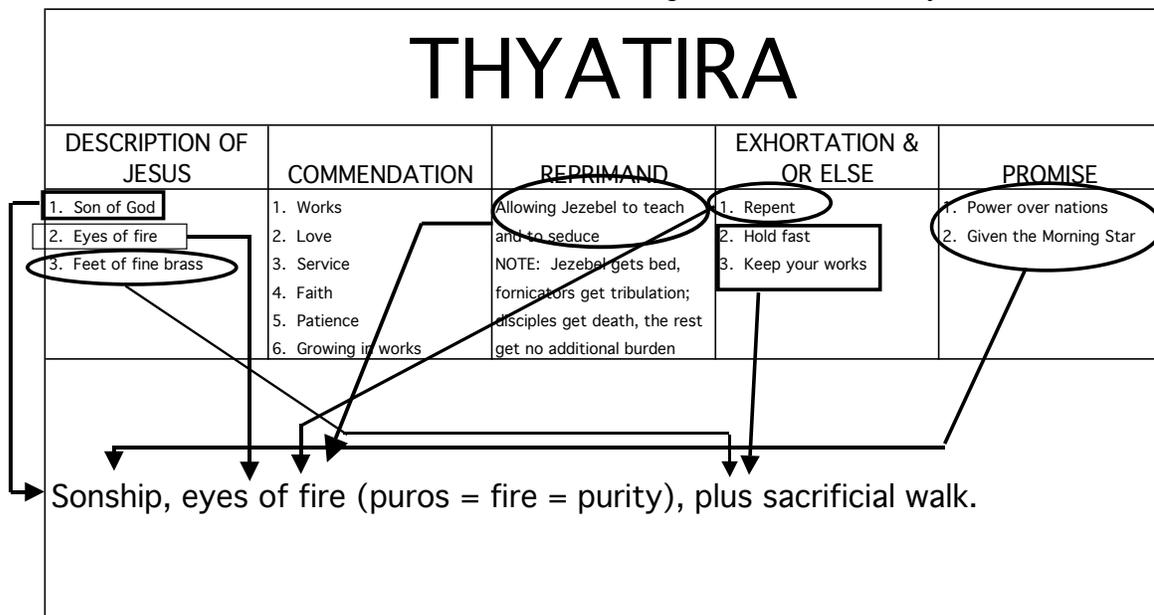


Chart 3.6

gives her a space, but she does not repent. She goes to the bed, not to the grave. The fornicators get an opportunity to check their doctrine, but they do not. They love Jezebel. The Lord gives them tribulation. He pulls out His belt and starts wearing them out: wham, wham, wham, and they get tribulation. But those poor people who are bred from that relationship of Jezebel and the fornicators get death. You people, please do not kill your offspring who are produced by your ministry by either being a fornicator or a Jezebel!

Here we have, then, the death sentence on the fruit of Jezebel and the fornicators. But the rest of the church, those who are doing these works and love and faith and patience and growing in works, what do they get? They get no additional burden. They are the saints who are doing all the good part here. In the eyes of the congregation, they do not appear to be doing the good part. It is the fornicators who appear to be doing the good part. But the fornicators, Jezebel, and their children are looking with temporal eyes, the eyes of flesh. You have to look with spiritual eyes, and then, you can perceive what is good.

### *Exhortations for Thyatira*

Then He says, "You must repent and hold fast and keep your works." That means get out of this fornicating business, get over with the group that is doing the works, hold fast to good doctrine and keep your works, hold your doctrine fast and go over and keep doing these works. If you will do these things, Jesus promises to give you power over the nations. That is reigning power. If you exercise resistance in the church and stand against Jezebel and the fornicators which are going to be most likely the majority of the church, if you stand against that evil in the church by assuming a position of leadership in the church to move it in the right path, in eternity He will give you a position of leadership to run the nations the way they are supposed to be run.

Joe: I can see how this church can apply to the Presbyterians in the situation that recently happened there in the vote they held to allow the gay and lesbians to hold church posts. The rulers of the church were going to allow it, but the people of the church stood against it.

V: I can see that.

Jerry: That would be a good example!

V: Now that is a denominational example. We really need to get down to a smaller group so that we can see where we fit into this scenario as well. It would be easy to escape by standing in self-righteousness and saying, "Thyatira is over there in that denomination."

Pete: When you commented on Jezebel gets the bed? Are you alluding to the fact that she gets to lay in the bed that she brought in?

V: No. I think that Jezebel is saved. I think Jezebel is bringing in some kind of false doctrine that is going to be wedded between her position and these fornicators that is going to create death. That means, then, that the offspring are not saved. The children that are coming out of that union do not have a chance. God will say, "Get in that bed over there, Jezebel." She will spend eternity in heaven, but she will be totally inactive.

Pete: So could it have been a false doctrine? For instance, if someone has a false doctrine, they may not believe it is true, but they are teaching it?

V: That is correct, and it can create death whether or not they believe it themselves. As teachers we have a high responsibility. We cannot allow this kind of thing to get into our minds because if we do, we become a Jezebel.

Pete: So you are saying this bed that she gets into is going to be after this life.

V: Yes.

Ted: A good example of that maybe would be the prosperity Gospel today that

says you do not have to deny yourself, you are a child of Abraham. You should receive Abraham's blessing and live like a high hog here on earth.

V: Exactly. I am not sure that would create dead children—I am not sure, but that is leaning in the right direction.

Wanda: Jezebel here is one that compromises the truth. In other words she is watering it down to fit her own agenda and the itching ears of these other people.

V: That is right, and she has fornicators that are coming with her saying, "Man, this is great; we are coming together on this." The fornicators, you see, are the massive amount of the church population. Jezebel is just one. It just takes one to bring in a false seed. It takes a lot of fornicators out there to grab that seed and say, "Yes, let us go with this." Those are the ones that create death. Jezebel gives the seed, and she goes to bed. The fornicators start sowing that seed (planting tares in the wheat field), the Lord pulls out his belt, wham, wham, wham. Then you get these children (tares) that are stillborn. That, of course, is the tragedy.

Wanda: This bed that Jezebel is going to, that is like uselessness in heaven, right?

V: That is what I am thinking. Uselessness in heaven. Set on the shelf, no use. You do not even get a chance to come into the conferences when the King calls a conference, "All my workers come in. You bed layers stay out there in your bed."

Carl: That would be outside?

V: Outside the wall. We will talk all about that when we get there. We have some exciting stuff to go through.

Joe: The watchman certainly comes into my mind here.

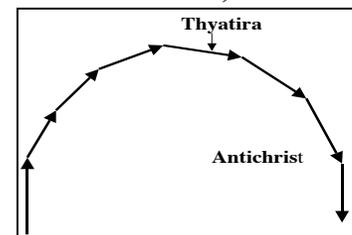
V: Man! That is good! We need watchmen.<sup>3</sup> Isaiah speaks of the watchers on the wall, watching for the enemy and sounding a sure and certain alarm when the enemy is coming in. If you have a crack in the wall, you should sound the alarm and say, "Let us get this crack shored up, filled in, make it right" so that your defenses are in place. Where are the watchmen? You are the watchmen.

Oscar: These children that we are talking about, they are the offspring. Would it be like this church you drew here where you go over and over and over to the point where people are not even getting saved through these churches. They are spiritually dead. It is the dead we are talking about. Not physical death but spiritual death.

V: Yes, Spiritual death.

Oscar: Becoming antichrist, then, you are looking at being politically correct rather than doing outreach and getting people saved.

V: Amen! That is wonderful, and we have in history this concept in which the church becomes so perverted that what they call salvation is not salvation. Perverted! Now



**Chart 3.7**

we are on this part up here where Thyatira (Chart 3.7) is the big turn, but what God is trying to show us here is that we get to this Antichrist position through all the turns. Here in these seven churches are some of the turns.

Now I think that in all of these churches there are saved people because some of these people believe enough to die for their faith. Where is our church? Are there saved people in our churches? Are you and I saved? Will we die for our faith? As bad you get in here

<sup>3</sup> Ezekiel 3:17 and 33:1-7.

in these churches, they contain people who are dying for their faith. We have to give them some credit here, but this credit is exemplary of the attitude and the status of the individual Christian alone.

You need to evaluate where you are—if you have an ear, hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches. I want to hear everything that He is saying to the churches. If I have seed of Jezebel in me, I want it rooted out. If I am a fornicator and cheering on fornication, I have to get that turned off, too. But if I am one of the rest of these, then I have to hold fast, repent, and keep those works going. That means that I am to hold that burden up, keep those works going. I may not look pretty doing it, but I am going to go on all the way. I want every one of you to go, too.

**Promise**

Part of the promise is to be given the Morning Star. Jesus is the Morning Star. To be given Jesus is to receive His heritage. This means you will share in His running of the universe. What an awesome privilege! You

will be given the authority and power to actually rule some of the nations.

“Promise” goes to Sonship, “repent” goes to purity, and “hold fast and keep works” goes to sacrificial walk (Chart 3.6).

**REVELATION 3**

**SARDIS**

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.

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.

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.

3:4 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.

3:5 He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out

**SARDIS**

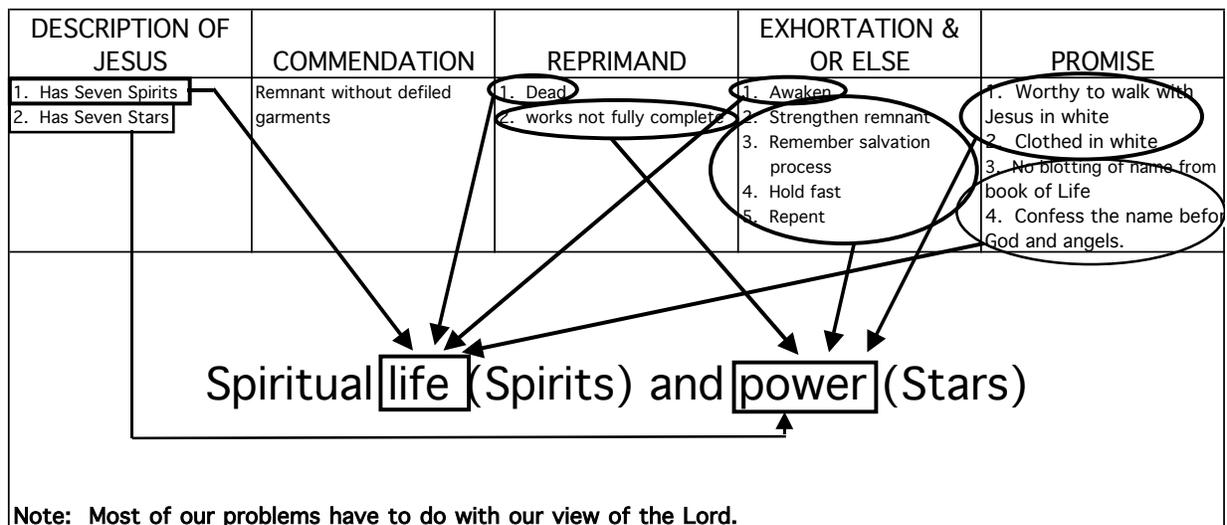


Chart 3.8

his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.  
 3:6 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

**Description of Jesus**

In Sardis' interpretation of Jesus, I put down here that it is spiritual life and power (See Chart 3.8).

Under the commendation there is a remnant who have not defiled their garments. Under the reprimand, how would you like to be seen as dead? That is a hard reprimand, and their works are not full and complete.

Wanda: You said their name means spiritual light and power?

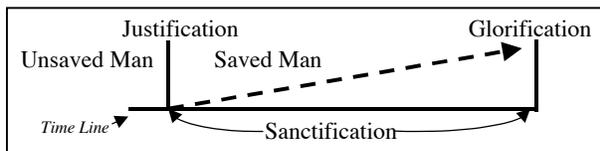
V: Not their names. My interpretation of the description of Jesus is spiritual *life* and power. I do not know what their name means.

Basically the seven means all. Thus the seven spirits means the Holy Spirit. The seven stars means then all of the angels. The function of the angel is primarily to be a messenger. Bringing these two descriptions together, I see that God gives you life through the Holy Spirit and provides messenger power through the angels.

**Exhortation for Sardis**

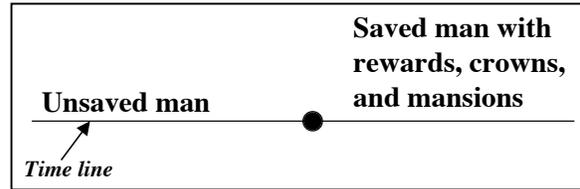
The exhortation is "awaken" (that means be watchful, get your watchman on the wall), strengthen the remnant, remember the salvation process, hold fast, and repent. There are five statements in exhortation.

Remember the salvation process. Salvation is pictured like this in Chart 3.9: Justifi-



**Chart 3.9**

cation is the new birth. You go through justification. The rest of your life process is called sanctification, and then you go to glorification. It is a larger model than is typically bantered about in our churches today. Salvation in churches today has become a punctiliar salvation, a dot salvation (see Chart 3.10).

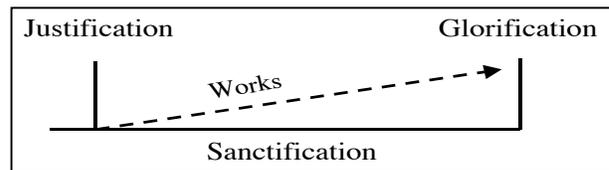


**Chart 3.10**

You go through justification and no other responsibility is expected of you. You have it, or you do not have it. If you have it, it is over with, just cool it. This punctiliar salvation describes a dead Christian.

If this dot is your sanctification, you are dead because this is an ontological picture of salvation. There is no process, there is no function, there is no ministry. The goodie that is in salvation is missing in punctiliar salvation.

God says, "Why do you not awaken?" Ephesians describes the process as awake, arise and walk?<sup>4</sup> Justification is the beginning, the door. Once you walk through the



**Chart 3.11**

door, you have your whole life to live, and it is very challenging. He is saying, wake up, get in there and do all these five things: awaken, strengthen the remnant, remember the process, hold fast to it, and repent. These are the five things that he is saying to do.

<sup>4</sup> Ephesians 5:14-15.

Sardis is a punctiliar church, very much like our churches today. You walk the aisle, and it is over with. All you have to do is just maintain “nickels and noses” from that point on. You come to church, sit down when everybody else sits, stand when everybody stands up, sing when everybody sings, sit back down, stand up, and that is it. You go home, come back and do that again. If you can stand up at the right time, sit down at the right time, and put money in the plate, how do you improve on that?

Henry: Our sanctification is like God has sanctified us to follow a certain path and do certain things?

V: Absolutely.

Henry: Does the sanctification part also sanctify us for glory?

V: Yes, sir, you bet. Sanctification is the verbal of holiness, the same thing. It means to be made holy. You are made holy at justification, but that is an ontological holiness. There follows a process of holiness. There is still a holy life that needs to be lived. Holiness means to be set aside for God’s use. How is He going to use you? You are going to walk in His path. He draws the path and says, Get on this path and follow my Son and do what He says.

Jill: Sanctification is for you to utilize your spiritual gifts.

V: Yes, and everything that you are and have in a self-denial process of living out your life in sacrifice just like Jesus did.

Jill: Will you explain to us the “I will not blot out his name”?

V: It is the same thing as the double negative that we had a while ago in one of the other churches. There is not a chance under heaven, not a prayer of blotting your name out. The question arises in my mind, does that mean that every person’s name is written

in the Lamb’s Book of Life and then blotted out when you reject Jesus?

Paul: I think it is.

V: What about your children?

Pete: I think it is saying that once your name is in the Book of Life, it cannot be blotted out.

V: What if children are born with their names in the Lamb’s Book of Life?

Steve: They have an opportunity to get saved until they breathe their last breath.

V: That is right.

Oscar: God knows what you are going to do before you are born, before you have lived your life, and before your death. But once your name is in the Book of Life, it is not coming out. So if God has put your name in the Book of Life, it is there to stay.

V: And that is a good opinion, but it is only an opinion. We all have an opinion. Where there is a multitude of Christians you are going to have a multitude of opinions. But the thing is, is the Lamb’s Book of Life equivalent to eternal life? It may not be. It may be that when Jesus died, He died for everybody. He had everybody’s name put in there. Then you reject Him, it is taken out. You want to reject Him? Then your name will be taken out. Another option could be that it comes out at the age of accountability. The third option is that the name is never in the book until you get saved. We must try and reconcile how the book works in relation with babies.

Henry: The way I teach my sons, and the way I believe is that they do come to a time of accountability. Of course you are born into sin, and everybody has to come to that time of accountability. It took me 33 years to get saved. I was saved in the Navy, and I did not know I was supposed to believe in God. So I try to teach my children to believe in God. When my youngest one started asking

questions about salvation, I knew then that it was time!

Tom: The dot that you have on the board, is that like having somebody walk the aisle, get baptized, and go out the door, and never come back?

V: Yes. However, it could also be someone who is always in church—a pew sitter.

Tom: The people of the church would be held accountable for allowing that to happen?

V: The one who came in and left or is a pew sitter also has responsibility. He has primary responsibility, but the church has responsibility, too. The primary responsibility is on the individual.

Homer: You also have responsibility to teach that individual the full scope of salvation.

V: Absolutely. We have to get this back into churches, this process, this lifelong, burden-bearing *kenosis*. All of this kind of thing, we have to get into our churches. If we do not, there is only one alternative. It is the dot salvation that is like a toggle switch. We either have it or we do not have it.

### ***Promises for Sardis***

The promise is to be worthy to walk with Jesus in white. What color do you think the clothes in heaven are going to be?

Many Students: White.

V: Okay, are there going to be any that have a different color of clothes in heaven? When we get to the end of the book, we are going to have to deal with the issue of self-indulgence. There is going to be some naked people in heaven. Ohhh, you do not want to be naked. Please do not be naked. I want all of you to be worthy to walk in heaven with Jesus in white clothes. Overcome this punctiliar salvation! Overcome this punctiliar salvation! Get your people to overcome it,

too. If you can get on God's path and follow Jesus, under the burden through self-denial, on the path of holiness, then you will be worthy to walk with Jesus in clothes of white.

The second promise is "clothed in white," and number three is "no blotting out." We have already talked about that. Number four, "He will confess your name before God and the angels." I want Him to confess my name before the Father and the angels. I want Him to call me by name, not "Hey, you!"

Sybil: I want Him to call me by that private name.

V: Yes! In front of all of you He can just call me Bill. "Hey, Bill!" "Yes, Sir; I am coming."

Mary: He is probably going to call you Old Sweetness (much laughter).

Tim: He is probably going to call you Old Sawbucks (even more robust laughter).

V: Whatever He calls me, I am saying, "Yes, Sir, I am coming."

The "dead" part should have an arrow down to life, so under "works" draw the arrow to power. For "awaken" under exhortation, draw the arrow down to life. Numbers 2, 3, 4 and 5 under exhortation draw that arrow over to power. The first two promises go to power. The last two promises go to life.

Tim: This one is complicated.

V: Sardis has a lot of stuff going on in it. There are a lot of arrows, a lot of teaching. The more arrows there are, the more teaching there is for the church. Look at the complexities, the teaching for Sardis is because of the dot salvation and lack of life. With dot salvation you either have salvation or you do not have it. Without the sanctification process there is not much there. Sanctification is the difference between life and death for Christians.

## PHILADELPHIA

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;

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.

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.

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.

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

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.

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

Even Jesus received a new name, and He is going to write that name on the Philadelphia saints.

### Description of Jesus

The interpretation of the description that I put down is transcendence plus moral integrity of life and ministry plus power (see Chart 3.12). Holy has two parts in its definition.

1. It means to be set aside or transcendent. You have been set aside for the Lord's purpose. That is what transcendent means (See chart 3.13 on the next page).

Ecclesia means the called out ones. When you are taken out of the world, He reaches into the world, gets you and puts you in His part of the Kingdom. That is to be transcendent. He pulls you away from and out of the world. You are no longer dwelling in the world. You are dwelling in His kingdom, and you are there for His purpose.

2. You are going to be moral. Morality is part two of holiness.

# PHILADELPHIA

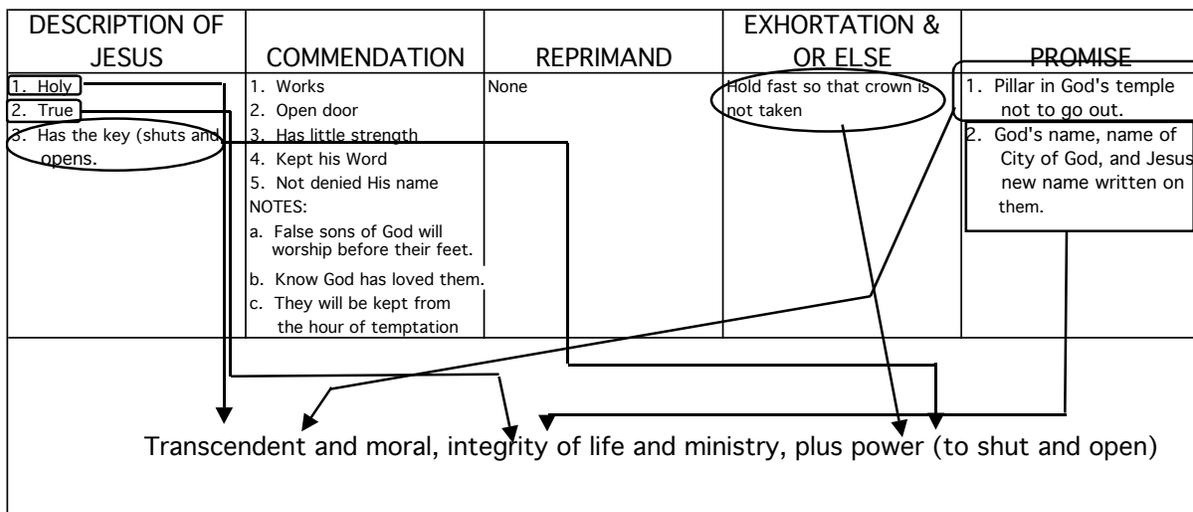
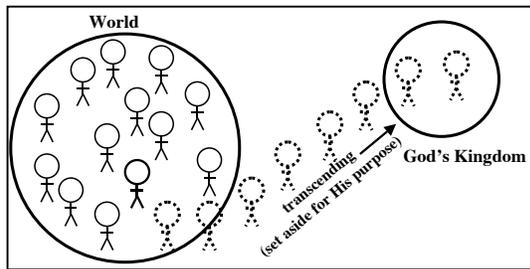


Chart 3.12



**Chart 3.13**

When we see Jesus described as holy, then it means transcendent and moral. Jesus was set aside for the Father's use, and He was absolutely moral. Since you are in God's Kingdom, you, too, are to behave morally. That means you do not do the "thou shalt nots," but you do the "thou shalt." Whatever He says, you do it. That means moral.

Being set aside for His use means that while you are being moral, you are looking at the Lord, and when He says, "Hey, you, follow me," you get up and go. You keep on being transcendent, a pilgrim, and you keep on being moral. You follow Him wherever He goes. Since He says, "Pick up that cross," you pick it up. Since He says "deny yourself," you deny yourself. You go after him because He is on the path.

He came and demonstrated His path. He is on His same path right now. The path of sacrifice keeps on going like the *kenosis* until the right number of you who have been sacrificed meets that exact number He has called for. There are many of us that have to die yet for His purposes. You must make sure that you are in line with Him, following Him, not following your own ideas.

Beth: I was wondering why there is no admonishment, you know, about the wrong they did in this church and the church at Smyrna.

V: There are only two churches that have no admonishments. Smyrna is the suffering church. Philadelphia is the powerful church.

Beth: What is the reason there is no admonishment?

V: Because they are doing it right.

### **Commendation**

He says that they had their works, they have an open door, they have a little strength. I like the way He says a "little" strength. This church has a ton of strength, but when you look at it from the Lord's perception, it is a little strength. They are keeping His Word, and they have not denied His name. These are good commendations for them. All these commendations, but no reprimand. They are not doing anything wrong.

### **Exhortation for Philadelphia**

There is, though, an exhortation. You must hang on to your crown or you are going to lose it. This class may say, "Yes, this is what I know. I am going to follow the Lord in self-denial. I am going to do it just like He did it." You take off following Him. You follow, you follow, you follow. You come to the cross, and it is a burning cross. You look at it. You do not look with the eyes of faith and look across the chasm to the exhortation and the glorification. You look within the ten days. You look at that burning cross, and you say, "Man, I do not know about this." They say, "All you have to do is recant your faith in Christ, and you will live."

If you have not settled it within your heart like we talked about last week, you may look at the cross and the fire and start thinking how much that fire is going to burn. If that should happen, you may not be able to say like Polycarp said, "I will go into the fire that burns for an hour, but I will not be in the fire that burns for eternity." You may not be able to do that if you are looking within the ten days because you cannot see eternity when you are inside the ten days (temporal). Then you could say, "Whatever it takes. Get me out of this mess. I do not want to burn."

Where is your crown? It is gone. Hold fast! Hang on to your crown. Go for the gold. Go all the way. Settle it in your heart. Deny yourself. Have it in your mind that you are going to laugh at death just like Polycarp.

Polycarp was ready when he went to the stadium. When you are ready, and it is settled

in your mind, you are going to have Polycarp’s kind of strength come upon you and hear the voice from heaven that says, “Be the man, Polycarp.” If you are going to your death, would you not like to hear a voice from heaven that says, “Be the man for me.” You can have it. Hang in there. Get tough.

Questions for Chapter 3

On separate paper draw a chart for each of the five churches discussed in this chapter. A form is given for you to follow. Be sure to include all the items in each block including the bottom block. Draw arrows from the elements to the descriptive words in the bottom block.

# CHURCH NAME

DESCRIPTION OF JESUS	COMMENDATION	REPRIMAND	EXHORTATION & OR ELSE	PROMISE