

Many of the books of the New Testament are letters to various churches or individuals. Christians accept these letters as God's authoritative word to the church today. In Revelation 2 and 3 there are seven specific letters from Jesus Christ to the members of seven churches in Asia Minor, in what is now Turkey. These were not the only churches in that region. However, the experiences and character of these seven has been that of the whole Christian church.



**Q1 At what times have the things John saw in vision been significant to the followers of Jesus Christ? Revelation 1:19**

- A 1.  
2.

Revelation focuses upon Jesus Christ and the experience of His people from the time of writing to the events after His return. We will learn from messages that were relevant to the first readers almost 2,000 years ago. In particular we will note how our Lord Jesus introduced Himself so as to reveal that He can meet the needs of believers.■

## THE FOCUS OF THE SEVEN LETTERS



**Q2 What three statements were made to all seven churches?**

- A 1. Revelation 2:2,9,13,19; 3:1,8,15  
I know ...
2. Revelation 2:7,11,17,29; 3:6,13,22  
He who has an ear, let him ...
3. Revelation 2:7,11,17,26; 3:5,12,21  
The person who will be rewarded.

These seven letters reveal that Jesus Christ knows all about His people. He is aware of their deeds, beliefs and needs. He is therefore in a position to offer commendation, condemnation, practical counsel and warning. Because He has provided salvation for us, by His own sacrifice, He is intensely interested in us. Jesus Christ urges us to always heed the voice of the Holy Spirit speaking through the written Word of God. Because He is not only our Saviour but also our Judge and King, Jesus Christ promises special rewards to those who remain faithful, overcome and resist evil.■

## THE SEVEN LETTERS FROM JESUS CHRIST...

### 1 EPHESUS — Church of TRUTH

"These are the words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand and walks among the seven golden lampstands." Revelation 2:1.



**Q3 The faithful church at Ephesus was commended for making a clear distinction between truth and error in doctrinal teachings. Who did they not tolerate? Revelation 2:2,3**

- A 1.  
2.



Q4 **Who were specifically named as deceivers?** Revelation 2:6

A

The Nicolaitans were almost certainly Gnostics who believed that because matter was evil, sinful desires could be dealt with either by severe denial or open indulgence. Their teachings reduced, and even disregarded, the importance of the moral commandments of God. (See 1 John 2:3-6.)

Q5 **Knowing the members as well as He did, why did Jesus rebuke this church?** Revelation 2:4,5

A

## 2 SMYRNA — *The Persecuted Church*

"These are the words of him who is the First and the Last, who died and came to life again." Revelation 2:8.



Q6 **The members of the church at Smyrna had suffered for their faith, and they were yet to suffer. Read Revelation 2:9,10. In what way would Jesus' introduction of Himself have brought encouragement to them?** Revelation 2:8

A

Although living in abject poverty they were rich in faith in Jesus. Because of this faith they suffered the slander of those who claimed to be God's people but who did not believe in Jesus. (Compare Romans 2:28,29; Galatians 3:7,28,29.) They were yet to suffer intensely.■

Q7 **To whom was the crown that is life promised?** Revelation 2:10

A

## 3 PERGAMUM — *Church of Compromise*

"These are the words of him who has the sharp, double-edged sword." Revelation 2:12.

John was shown the "sharp double-edged sword" coming from the mouth of Jesus Christ. This is the word of God which "judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart." Hebrews 4:12. (Compare Isaiah 55:11.) Jesus Christ was able to discern the true state of their city, experience and spirituality.



Q8 **Who had established his throne in their city?** Revelation 2:13

A

As a consequence it is not surprising that they had suffered for their commitment to the name of Jesus Christ. They were commended for refusing to renounce their faith when faced with death. However, the church was rebuked for permitting false teachings to flourish.



Q9 **The church at Pergamum had compromised with the false doctrines of a man and a group. What were their names?** Revelation 2:14,15

A 1. Man:

Balaam had been a prophet in Old Testament times. (Numbers 22-25.) However, to advance his own interests through nearby pagan nations, he led the people of Israel into immorality and idolatry. The church at Pergamum was disregarding God's ten commandments and compromising with paganism.

## 2. Group:

The church members in Pergamum accepted the Nicolaitan teachings, detested by Jesus Christ and the Christians in Ephesus. Again, they were compromising.■



Q10 **What urgent plea did Jesus make to the church at Pergamum?** Revelation 2:16

A

## 4 THYATIRA — Church of Apostasy

"These are the words of the Son of God, whose eyes are like blazing fire and whose feet are like burnished bronze." Revelation 2:18.



Q11 **Although Jesus Christ could commend them for their "faith and love . . . service and perseverance" (Revelation 2:19 NIV), not all was well with the church at Thyatira. What was "Jezebel" doing to the church?** Revelation 2:20

A

In Old Testament times Jezebel introduced pagan beliefs and practices to God's people. (1 Kings 16:31; 21:25,26.) She blatantly led the people to

disobey God's ten commandments and opposed Elijah the prophet whom God sent to call His people to obedience.



Q12 **What solemn warning did Jesus, the Judge "who searches hearts and minds," give this symbolic Jezebel and her followers?** Revelation 2:21-23

A

Q13 **What had the faithful at Thyatira not done? What were they told to do?** Revelation 2:24,25

- A
1. They had not
  2. They were to

## 5 SARDIS — Neglected Opportunities

"These are the words of him who holds the 'sevenfold Spirit' of God and the seven stars." Revelation 3:1. (See NIV footnote.)



Q14 **What reputation did the Sardis church have? Why was it not true?** Revelation 3:1

A

Q15 **Because of the danger facing this church, what were they encouraged to do?** Revelation 3:2,3

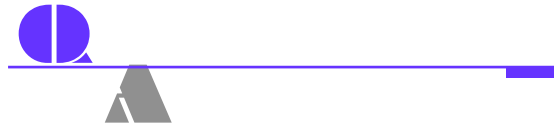
A

Jesus Christ introduced Himself as the One holding the gift of the Holy Spirit and Spirit-filled messengers. Most were not availing themselves of these blessings. There were only a "few people" who had taken hold of the opportunities and had the assurance of salvation. (Revelation 3:4.)

## 6 PHILADELPHIA — Church of the Bible

"These are the words of him who is holy and true, who hold the key of David. What he opens no-one can shut, and what he shuts no-one can open." Revelation 3:7.

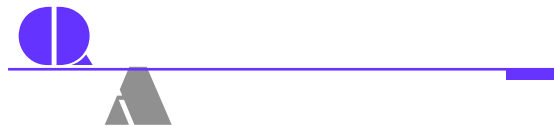
Jesus Christ, the King and Judge (Revelation 3:7), had nothing but commendation and encouragement for the Christians at Philadelphia. They were assured that the One they served (Revelation 3:8) and obeyed (Revelation 3:10) would honour them. He was their King and Judge.



Q16 **What did Jesus set before the church at Philadelphia?** Revelation 3:8

A

This open door is referred to further in Revelation 4:1. It is the way to the most holy presence of God.



Q 17 **What was the attitude of the Philadelphian church to God's Word and commandments?** Revelation 3:8-10

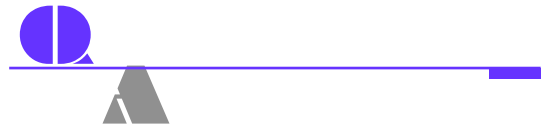
A

Because of the faithfulness of the believers at Philadelphia even "those who are of the

synagogue of Satan" would acknowledge God's love for them. (Revelation 3:9.) Because of their loyalty to God, the Philadelphians were promised protection during "the hour of trial that is going to come upon the whole world to test those who live on the earth." Revelation 3:10. To "keep" means to sustain and provide for them during the trial. (See Revelation 7:14.) Jesus Christ promised, "I am coming soon. Hold on to what you have, so that no-one will take your crown." Revelation 3:11.■

## 7 LAODICEA — Church of the Self-Satisfied

"These are the words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God's creation." Revelation 3:14.



Q18 **How did Jesus Christ as "the faithful and true witness" describe the spiritual condition of the Laodicean church?** Revelation 3:15,16

A

Q19 **How did Jesus respond to the Laodicean's self-evaluation?** Revelation 3:17,18

A

Q20 **What must I do to receive the promise made to Laodicean members?** Revelation 3:18-20

A



## PROMISES TO THE OVERCOMER...

Through Jesus Christ our Saviour and the power of the Holy Spirit, believers are to follow the counsel of the written Word of God. In this way we become overcomers. The promises made to overcomers in these seven messages relate to the trials and pressures the believers in each church were facing. These promises are still true for you today!

To overcomers in **EPHESUS**, Jesus gave the promise: *"I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God."* **Revelation 2:7.** Those who shun wicked distortions of the gospel and its teachings, and turn from their indifference to Jesus Christ, will be given access to the tree of life. They will be rewarded with a home in God's kingdom, which will be far better than even a home in the "desirable" city of Ephesus.

To overcomers in **SMYRNA**, Jesus gave the promise: *"Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life . . . He who overcomes will not be hurt at all by the second death."* **Revelation 2:10,11.** Although they were struggling with the attacks of evil and being crowned with death, Jesus Christ promised the faithful at Smyrna that they would receive the reward of eternal life. They would not be hurt by the "second death" which is the final punishment of sin and sinners from which there is no resurrection. (See Revelation 20:14,15.)

To overcomers in **PERGAMUM**, Jesus gave the promise: *"I will give some of the hidden manna. I will also give him a white stone with a new name written on it, known only to him who receives it."* **Revelation 2:17.** Three gifts were promised to those who, in the face of opposition and even death, resist the inroads of evil and remain faithful to the gospel of Jesus Christ:

**1.** Hidden manna: Manna was bread from heaven. God supplied this to Israel during their Exodus from Egypt to the land of promise. It sustained their lives during those forty years in the wilderness. (Exodus 16:11-36.) Eternal life is not found in the food, things or the gods of this world. Eternal life is found in Jesus Christ who is the "bread of life." John 6:35.

**2.** A white stone: Purity and righteousness, of which white is a symbol (Revelation 1:14;3:4; Psalm 51:7), are not the gifts of the world. Apparently, in New Testament times, a white stone was given to those acquitted during a trial. It was a gift of honour. In Old Testament times the stones on the clothes of the high priest represented the people of God. (Exodus 28:15-21,29,30.) It was also a symbol of belonging to God for a stone was sometimes split with a half being held by each party as a token of friendship.

**3.** A new name: God acknowledges the faithfulness and the character of the saved person with a new name. A new name was symbolic of a new allegiance and new character.

To overcomers in **THYATIRA**, Jesus gave the promise: *"I will give authority over the nations - 'He will rule them with an iron sceptre; he will dash them to pieces like pottery' - just as I have received authority from my Father. I will also give him the morning star."* **Revelation 2:26-28.** Inasmuch as the redeemed will live and reign with Jesus Christ they are pictured as ruling and judging with Him. (Also see Revelation 20:4.) He is the "morning star." (Revelation 22:16.) Those who are abused and downtrodden by "Jezebel" now, will, if they resist evil, be exalted to be with the Lord Jesus.

To the overcomers in **SARDIS**, Jesus gave the promise: *"He... will... be dressed in white. I will never blot out his name from the book of life, but will acknowledge his name before my Father and his angels."* **Revelation 3:5.** All who confess their spiritual neglect and reach out by faith to receive the gifts of life, the Holy Spirit and guidance from God, will receive those blessings. That person has salvation and Christ declares it in the judgement.

To the overcomers in **PHILADELPHIA**, Jesus gave the promise: *"I will make (him) a pillar in the temple of my God. Never again will he leave it. I will write on him the name of my God and the name of the city of my God, the New Jerusalem, which is coming down out of heaven from my God; and I will also write on him my new name."* **Revelation 3:12.** Jesus Christ claims the faithful as His. They are promised the rewards of dwelling with God as His children for all eternity. (Also see Revelation 21:3.)

To the overcomers in **LAODICEA**, Jesus gave the promise: *"I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne."* **Revelation 3:21.** Our Saviour offers the riches of His love, the covering of His perfection and spiritual healing. Jesus Christ is the victorious King and overcomers will share in His victory. ◻

# my response...

## **The Good News . . .**

The good news in these letters is Jesus knows all. He knows every detail of our lives and knows that we need to be saved from sin, corruption and death. By His death, burial and resurrection He has provided salvation for all. The gift is ours to accept. Jesus Christ promises special rewards and blessings to you if you trust your life to Him and remain faithful to Him.

## **The Offers of Support . . .**

Because Jesus knows all, He is well aware that believers will suffer. He knows that Satan will slander and ridicule you when you are true to Him. He suffered and died. He encourages His people to be faithful even if faced with death. He does not desert His true followers. He is with His church.

## **The Warnings . . .**

Prominent in these seven letters are warnings from Jesus, who knows all, against distortions of the gospel and Bible truth. The Holy Spirit has spoken through the written Word of God. If we disregard the Bible, reject the salvation Jesus Christ has provided, or disobey the clear commandments of God we will be condemned.

## **The Promises . . .**

The promised blessings are for all faithful believers. They are for you.



**How do you think it may be possible to introduce Jesus Christ to a friend of yours so that person may also choose to follow Jesus, accept His counsel and direction, and receive His promised blessings?**

