

The Messages of Jesus to the Churches

By John, Christ sent specific messages with warnings and eternal promises to “the seven churches.”

Message to the Church in Ephesus

The Words of Jesus written to the Church of Ephesus

"To the angel of the church in Ephesus write:

These are the Words of Him Who holds the seven stars in His right hand and walks among the seven golden lampstands: I know your deeds, your hard work and your perseverance. I know that you cannot tolerate wicked men, that you have tested those who claim to be apostles but are not, and have found them false. You have persevered and have endured hardships for My Name, and have not grown weary.

Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken your First Love. Remember the height from which you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first. If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place. But you have this in your favor: You hate the practices of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.

He who has an ear, let him hear what The Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of God.

Rev 2:1-7 NIV

The church of Ephesus, a famous church planted by the Apostle Paul in Acts 19. The Lord started this church with about 12 men.

While Apollos was at Corinth, Paul took the road through the interior and arrived at Ephesus. There he found some disciples and asked them, "Did you receive The Holy Spirit when you believed?"

They answered, "No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit."

So Paul asked, "Then what baptism did you receive?"

"John's baptism," they replied.

Paul said, "John's baptism was a baptism of repentance. He told the people to believe in the One coming after Him, that is, in Jesus." On hearing this, they were baptized into the Name of The Lord Jesus. When Paul placed his hands on them, The Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied. There were about twelve men in all.

Acts 19:1-7 NIV

After this church was planted by Apostle Paul, it was afterwards watered and governed by John, who had his residence very much there.

Timothy was of an excellent spirit, and naturally cared for the good state of the souls of the people, he was sole pastor and bishop, of this church at this time.

Here we have one of those titles that were given to Christ in His appearance to John in the chapter foregoing: “He that holds the seven stars in His right hand, and walks in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks, ch. 1:13,16.

This title consists of two parts :—(1.) “He that holds the stars in His right hand.” The angels of God are under His special care and protection. It is the honor of God that He knows the number of the stars, and calls them each by their names. It is the honor of The Lord Jesus Christ that His spirit-messengers, who bring His blessings to ‘the heirs of Salvation,’ are in His hand.

Ministers of the Gospel are ministered to by the stars in His right hand. His “stars” are instruments in His hand, and all the good they do is done by His hand with them.

(2.) “He walks in the midst of the golden candlesticks.” This intimates His relation to the churches. Christ is in an intimate manner present and conversant with the churches; He knows and observes their state; He takes pleasure only in His obedient servants; as a man does to walk in his garden. Though Christ is in Heaven, He walks in the midst of the churches on earth,

observing what is amiss in them and what it is that they want. This is a great encouragement to God's people, to remain steadfast with Him.

The Church of Ephesus forsook her "First Love."

Christ is our "First Love."

Anyone who once knew Him, but forsakes Him, falls from a great height.

May we all reach to the top of the mountain and behold Him!

Church of Ephesus was known as "church of the Apostles," it was 'desirable.' Was planted by the apostle Paul in the 1st Century.

Message to the Church in Smyrna

The Words of Jesus written to the Church of Smyrna

"To the angel of the church in Smyrna write:

These are the Words of Him Who is the First and the Last, Who died and came to life again. I know your afflictions and your poverty — yet you are rich! I know the slander of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test you, and you will suffer persecution for ten days. Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of Life.

He who has an ear, let him hear what The Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes will not be hurt at all by the second death.

Rev 2:8-11 NIV

A second epistle [letter] by Jesus Christ was sent to another of the Asian churches, delivered by the hand of John.

Smyrna was a place well known by the world merchants, a city of great trade and wealth.

Jesus Christ is “the First and the Last.”

He is the First, for by Him all things were made, and He was before all things with God and was God Himself.

He is the Last, for all things are made for Him, and He will be the Judge of all.

This surely is the title of God, from everlasting to everlasting, and it is the title of One that is the unchangeable Mediator between God and man, Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.

He was dead and is alive. He died for our sins; and He rose again for our justification, and He ever lives to make intercession for us.

He was dead, and by dying purchased Salvation for us; He is alive, and by His Life applies this Salvation to us.

Some who are poor outwardly are inwardly rich, rich in faith and in good works, rich in hope. Spiritual riches are usually the reward of great diligence; the diligent hand makes rich.

Where there is 'spiritual plenty,' there may be outward poverty; and when God's people are materially poor for the sake of the Gospel, He makes all up to them in spiritual riches, which are much more satisfying and enduring.

The church in Smyrna endured tribulation and poverty—the persecution they underwent, even to the spoiling of their goods, and their imprisonment. Those who will be faithful to Christ must expect to go through many tribulations; but Jesus Christ takes particular notice of all their troubles. In all their afflictions, He is afflicted, and He will recompense tribulation to those who trouble them, but those that are troubled for His sake, will rest with Him.

Church in Smyrna; “church of the martyrs,” bore great suffering, afflictions, and tribulation for the Gospel.

64-313 A.D.

Message to the Church in Pergamos

The Words of Jesus written to the Church of Pergamos

"To the angel of the church in Pergamum write:

These are the Words of Him Who has the sharp, double-edged sword. I know where you live — where Satan has his throne. Yet you remain true to My Name. You did not renounce your faith in Me, even in the days of Antipas, My faithful witness, who was put to death in your city — where Satan lives.

Nevertheless, I have a few things against you: You have people there who hold to the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to entice the Israelites to sin by eating food sacrificed to idols and by committing sexual immorality. Likewise you also have those who hold to the teaching of the Nicolaitans. Repent therefore! Otherwise, I will soon come to you and will fight against them with the sword of My mouth.

He who has an ear, let him hear what The Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, 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.

Rev 2:12-17 NIV

Jesus here describes Himself as One that has “the sharp sword with two edges” as John earlier saw Him (ch. 1:16). Out of His mouth goes ‘a sharp two-edged sword.’

The church of Pergamos was infested with men of corrupt minds, who did what they could to corrupt both the faith and manners of the church; and Christ, being resolved to fight against them by the Sword of His Word, takes the title of ‘Him that hath the sharp sword with two edges” (ref. KJV).

THE WORD OF GOD is a Sword; it is a weapon both offensive and defensive, it is, in the hand of GOD, able to slay both sin and sinners. It is a sharp Sword. No heart is so hard but it is able to cut it; it can divide asunder between the soul and the spirit, that is, between the soul and those sinful habits that by custom have become, or seem to be essential to it.

It is a Sword with two edges; it turns and cuts every way.

In the time of the Law, there was ‘the edge’ against the transgressors in each dispensation.

And today, there is ‘the edge’ of the Gospel against the despisers of the Word of Truth.

There is no escaping the edge of this Sword: if you turn aside to the right hand, it has an edge on that side; if on the left hand,

you fall upon the edge of the Sword on that side; it turns every way.

Christ takes notice of the trials and difficulties this church encountered:

“I know thy works, and where thou dwellest...” (v. 13 KJV)

Now that which added very much lustre to the good works of this church was the circumstance of the place where this church was planted, a place where satan's seat was.

This people dwelt where satan's seat was, where he kept his court. The devil's circuit is throughout the world, his headquarter is Babylon; infamous for “the teaching of the Nicolaitans”—wickedness, sin, idolatry, corruption and sexual immorality.

Christ commends the steadfastness of this church:

“...you remain true to My Name. You did not renounce your faith in Me”

What made the church of Pergamos hold on to her ‘faith’?

It was “Grace” and “the message of Faith.”

Our ‘faith’ will have a great influence upon our ‘faithfulness.’

Men who deny “the Faith of Christ” may boast very much of their sincerity and faithfulness to God; but it has been seldom known that those who let go the true Faith retained their fidelity.

Antipas was a faithful disciple of Christ, he suffered for The Lord and sealed his faith and testimony for Jesus by his martyrdom in the place where satan dwelt; and though the rest of the believers there knew this, and saw it, yet they were not discouraged nor drawn away from their steadfastness.

At a later time, many of them were drawn to idolatry and sexual immorality.

Church of Pergamos; “compromising church.” This church was married to paganism and false doctrines.

314-590 A.D.

Message to the Church in Thyatira

The Words of Jesus written to the Church of Thyatira

"To the angel of the church in Thyatira write:

These are the Words of The Son Of God, whose eyes are like blazing fire and whose feet are like burnished bronze. I know your deeds, your love and faith, your service and perseverance, and that you are now doing more than you did at first.

Nevertheless, I have this against you: You tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess. By her teaching she misleads my servants into sexual immorality and the eating of food sacrificed to idols. I have given her time to repent of her immorality, but she is unwilling. So I will cast her on a bed of suffering, and I will make those who commit adultery with her suffer intensely, unless they repent of her ways. I will strike her children dead. Then all the churches will know that I am He Who searches hearts and minds, and I will repay each of you according to your deeds. Now I say to the rest of you in Thyatira, to you who do not hold to her teaching and have not learned Satan's so-called deep secrets (I will not impose any other burden on you): Only hold on to what you have until I come.

To him who overcomes and does My Will to the end, I will give authority over the nations—

'He will rule them with an iron scepter;

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. He who has an ear, let him hear what The Spirit says to the churches.

Rev 2:18-29 NIV

The eternal and only-begotten Son Of God, Who has eyes like a flame of fire, and feet like as fine brass, has the same nature with The Father.

The description we have here of Him is in two characters:—

(1.) That His eyes are like a flame of fire, signifying His piercing, penetrating, perfect Knowledge, a thorough Insight into all persons and all things, One Who searches the hearts and tries the reins of the children of men (v. 23), and will make all the churches to know He does so.

(2.) That His feet are like fine brass; the outgoings of His providence are steady, awful, and all pure and Holy. As He judges with perfect Wisdom, so He acts with perfect Strength and Steadfastness.

Christ mentioned the charity of the church of Thyatira [they had character to do good to all men, as they likewise blessed the household of faith. He also talked of their service [ministration],

their faith, perseverance, and their growing fruitfulness [their last works were better than the first]. This is an excellent character; when others had left their ‘first love.’

Jezebel persecutes the prophets; she is a patroness of idolaters and false prophets. She seduces the servants of God into fornication, and adultery, and to offer sacrifices to idols. She and her seducers called themselves prophets, and so claimed a superior authority and regard to the ministers of the church.

Church in Thyatira—“church of paid indulgences.” Luxurious, extravagant and idolatrous.

Planted in the "Dark Ages."

Message to the Church in Sardis

The Words of Jesus written to the Church of Sardis

"To the angel of the church in Sardis write:

These are the Words of Him Who holds the Seven Spirits of God and the seven stars. I know your deeds; you have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead. Wake up! Strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have not found your deeds complete in the sight of My God. Remember, therefore, what you have received and heard; obey it, and repent. But if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what time I will come to you.

Yet you have a few people in Sardis who have not soiled their clothes. They will walk with Me, dressed in white, for they are worthy. He who overcomes will, like them, 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. He who has an ear, let him hear what The Spirit says to the churches.

Rev 3:1-6 NIV

Though this church had gained a great reputation; a name, and a very honorable one, a name for vitality and liveliness, for purity of doctrine, unity, uniformity in worship, decency, and

orderliness, yet, hypocrisy, and a lamentable decay in doctrine was found in her.

With a reproof, and a very severe one, The Lord says to her: I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead.

This church was not really what it was reputed to be. They had a name to live, but they were dead; there was a form of Godliness, but not the Power, a name to live, but not a principle of life.

If there was not a total privation of life, yet there was a great deadness in their souls and in their services, a great deadness in the spirits of their ministers, and a great deadness in their ministrations, in their praying, in their preaching, in their converse, and a great deadness in the people in hearing, in prayer, and in conversation; what little life was yet left among them was, in a manner, expiring, ready to die.

Our Lord proceeds to give this degenerate church the best advice: Be watchful, and strengthen the things that remain...v. 2. He advises them to be upon their watch. They had let down their watch. Whenever we are off our watch, we lose ground, and therefore must return to our watchfulness against sin, and against satan, and whatever is distraction to the life and power of Godliness.

Church of Sardis was “reformation church,” with a righteous remnant.”

1517-1700 A.D.

Message to the Church in Philadelphia

The Words of Jesus written to the Church of Philadelphia

"To the angel of the church in Philadelphia write:

These are the Words of Him Who is Holy and True, Who holds the key of David. What He opens no one can shut, and what he shuts no one can open. I know your deeds. See, I have placed before you an open door that no one can shut. I know that you have little strength, yet you have kept My Word and have not denied My Name. I will make those who are of the synagogue of Satan, who claim to be Jews though they are not, but are liars — I will make them come and fall down at your feet and acknowledge that I have loved you. Since you have kept My Command to endure patiently, I will also keep you from the hour of trial that is going to come upon the whole world to test those who live on the earth.

I am coming soon. Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take your crown. Him who overcomes I will make 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. He who has an ear, let him hear what The Spirit says to the churches.

Rev 3:7-13 NIV

We have now come to the sixth letter, sent to one of the Asian churches, where observe, for whom it was more immediately designed: The angel of the church of Philadelphia; this also was a city in Asia Minor, seated upon the borders of Mysia and Lydia, and had its name from that ‘brotherly love’ for which it was eminent.

“Brotherly love,” is the affection that all believers should have, one for another, as the children of one Father and the brethren of Christ. The church in Philadelphia was known in ancient time for this attribute. They had an excellent spirit, and were sanctified by Grace of the Gospel.

By Christ whom this letter to the church in Philadelphia was signed; even by the same Jesus Who is alone the universal Head of the Church; here, is represented:

He that is Holy, He that is True, He that hath the key of David (read from KJV).

He hath the key of David, He openeth, and no man shutteth; He hath the key of the house of David, the key of God’s divine Government and Authority over the Church.

He opens a door to His Church (the Philadelphian saints); that’s ‘the door of Grace’ to His people. Through this door, His saints attain triumph by His Blood. Through this door, we are able to come into His Presence and His Spirit communes with us.

Through this door the gift of Salvation reaches the Jew and the Gentiles, who will be unified in Christ.

Our Lord Jesus brings to mind what He has done for us: “I have set before thee ‘an Open Door,’ and no man can shut it...” v. 8.

He is the Author of all the liberty and privileges that we enjoy in The Lord. He preserves our spiritual liberty and heritage.

The wicked and the ungodly envy the people of God to whom this door is opened. No man can shut this door!

But, against those who are rebellious, He shuts this door. He shuts ‘the door of Grace’ against ‘the foolish virgins’ who despise ‘the day of Grace.’ He shuts ‘the door of Heaven’ against the workers of iniquity.

Church of Philadelphia was a “revival church” with ‘brotherly love.’

1700-1900 A.D.

Message to the Church in Laodicea

The Words of Jesus written to the Church of Laodicea

"To the angel of the church in Laodicea write:

These are the Words of the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Ruler of God's creation. I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! So, because you are lukewarm — neither hot nor cold — I am about to spit you out of My mouth. You say, 'I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.' But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked. I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see.

Those whom I Love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest, and repent. Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My Voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with Me.

To him who overcomes, 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. He who has an ear, let him hear what The Spirit says to the churches."

Rev 3:14-22 NIV

Laodicea was a once famous city near the river Lycus, had a wall of vast compass, and three marble theatres, and, like Rome, was built on seven hills.

The apostle Paul was very instrumental in planting the Gospel in this city, from which he wrote a letter, as he mentions in the epistle to the Colossians, the last chapter, in which he sends salutations to them, Laodicea not being above twenty miles distant from Colosse.

In this city was held a council in the fourth century, but it has been long since demolished, and lies in its ruins to this day, an awful monument of the wrath of God.

Our Lord Jesus came to this world and bore His divine Testimony; He went to the cross, and suffered the agony of death, and having been raised from the dead by The Spirit's unlimited Power, He therefore is "the Amen," "the Faithful and True Witness," "the Ruler of the creation of God."

"The Amen" is the only One Who is steady and unchangeable in all His Purposes and Promises, which are all 'yea, and amen.'

"The Faithful and True Witness, has a Testimony which ought to be fully believed and received.

"The Ruler of God's creation" rules over 'the new creation' and natural creation, and so He is the Beginning, Who is, the Creator, and the Governor over all.

“The Laodicean church” was neither cold nor hot (v. 15). They were lukewarm and indifferent.

Why halt you between two opinions?

If GOD be GOD, follow Him; if Baal (be GOD), follow him.
There is no room for neutrality.

“An open enemy shall have a fairer contest than a treacherous friend.”

Christ expects that men should declare themselves in earnest either for Him or against Him.

A severe punishment awaits lukewarm Christians: “I will spue thee out of My mouth.” As lukewarm water turns the stomach, and provokes to a vomit, lukewarm-believers turn the heart of Christ against them. He cannot long bear such.

“Laodicean saints” think they are very well already, and therefore are very indifferent whether they grew better or not: Because thou sayest, “I am rich, and increased with goods and do not need a thing” (v. 17).

Christ knows, though they know not, that they are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked. Their state is wretched in itself, and such as call for pity and compassion: though they are proud of themselves, are pitiable. They are poor, really poor, because they have no provision for their souls to live upon; their souls are starving in the midst of their material

abundance; they are ‘vastly indebted’ to the faithful Call of God, and have nothing to pay off the least part of the debt.

“The Laodicean saints” are blind; they cannot see their spiritual state, nor understand their way. They see no danger; they are blind, and yet they think they see; the very light in them is darkness, and then how great must that darkness be!

“The Laodicean saints” cannot see Jesus by faith. They are unable to look into eternity.

They are naked, without clothing—they have neither “the garment of righteousness,” nor “the garment of praise.” They have no home of rest for they are without God, and He has been the Dwelling-Place of His people in all ages; in Him alone the soul of man finds rest.

The riches of this life cannot enrich the soul; the sight of the natural eyes cannot enlighten the soul; the most convenient house for living cannot afford rest for the soul.

The soul is different from the body, and must have accommodation suitable to its nature, or else in the midst of material prosperity and bodily nourishment it will be wretched and miserable.

Church of Laodicea; “worldly church” that strives for the peoples' rights. Lukewarm. "Modern church."