

Small Group Study Guide for Revelation Chapters 3



OVERVIEW OF FIRST 5 CHAPTERS OF THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST

Revelation starts with a large, holy vision of Jesus in chapter 1. He is clothed with such glory and splendor that the apostle John falls down as though dead. It would be easy to skip chapters 2 and 3 and go directly from the vision of Jesus to the vision of the throne room in heaven in chapters 4 and 5. Right in between these two overwhelming visions John records *seven letters to seven churches*. Throughout the entire book of Revelation John is pushing language to its breaking point. He is trying his best to describe the indescribable. But the letters are the exception. They are practical and include encouragement and correction. These churches needed to hear from Jesus. So do we.

PURPOSE OF THE LETTERS: To show the spiritual needs of these first century churches, and by analogy, all churches (the number seven of perfection and completion). John's ministry in his old age was in Asia Minor, especially in Ephesus. John is obviously well acquainted with these churches and cities. These letters show the ethical aspect of Christianity. They are a call to faithfulness and godliness. The church will also be judged one day. A different kind of judgment than the wicked, but a judgement still. **2 Corinthians 5:9-10** So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.



CHURCH #5 SARDIS 3:1-6

OPEN WITH PRAYER & CATCH UP A BIT.

3:1 "And to the angel of the church in Sardis write: 'The words of him who has the seven spirits of God and the seven stars.' " 'I know your works. You have the reputation of being alive, but you are dead. 2 Wake up, and strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have not found your works complete in the sight of my

God. 3 Remember, then, what you received and heard. Keep it, and repent. If you will not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come against you. 4 Yet you have still a few names in Sardis, people who have not soiled their garments, and they will walk with me in white, for they are worthy. 5 The one who conquers will be clothed thus in white garments, and I will never blot his name out of the book of life. I will confess his name before my Father and before his angels. 6 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'

Sardis was a large, wealthy ancient city. For years it was the opulent capital of the Lydian Empire because of its superb military position, 1500' up on a mountain spur. It is mentioned in Persian records because Cyrus the Great captured the city. It is also mentioned in Obadiah v. 20. It had greatly declined by John's day.

It was noted for its dyed wool products. The process was invented there, so they claimed. It was the center of the worship of Cybele, the mother goddess. The ruins of the temple are still visible on the acropolis. The excesses of this worship were known and deplored throughout the Roman Empire.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Read Verse 1. Why is the reference to their "reputation" significant to Sardis?

2. There is no mention of any persecution of this church.

Why would that be and what would that mean for us today?

4. In verse 2 it says that Jesus "found [their] deeds unfinished in the sight of God." What cultural allusion is being made here and what was Jesus implying?

In what ways could today's church be guilty of the same thing?

5. What does the mention of having your name "blotted out" in this passage have to do with the idea of citizenship in the ancient world?

How might this passage sometimes be misconstrued with security of salvation?

6. Sardis teaches us that we must beware of our success.

Discuss the following questions in relation to this statement:

a. Has the abundance and ease of living we enjoy in our culture led to some unhealthy attitudes about spiritual life and growth?

b. Can we expect spiritual maturity to be a painless and carefree process?

c. Is the idea of commitment and sacrifice understood as a necessary part of being a disciple, or do we come to God on our own terms?

7. End your time by discussing your thoughts on these statements:

"Where we say, 'I would never do that!' is the exact place we must guard against."

Has the strife in our current culture added to complacency or muted it to some degree?

How do we reverse the trend? If indeed there is a trend?

What are marks of an alive church?

Close with praying for each other.

SARDIS EXTRA STUDY FOR YOU - IF YOU WANT:)

3:1

"He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars" This phrase is another allusion to the glorified Christ (cf. 1:4,16,20). The seven stars refer to the churches and her leaders in 1:20; the seven spirits may be a related metaphor because in 4:5 they are related to the seven lampstands, which are also mentioned in 1:20 as referring to the churches. These seven spirits of God are also mentioned in 5:6 as part of the description of the lamb.

"I know your deeds" Jesus was aware of the strengths and weaknesses of His churches (cf. 2:2,19; 3:1,8,15).

NASB, NKJV "that you have a name that you are alive"

NRSV "that you have a name of being alive"

TEV "that you have a reputation of being alive"

NJB "how you are reputed to be alive"

This was a devastating revelation. They thought they were right with God, spiritually pleasing to Him (cf. Isa. 29:13; Rom. 2:19-20; Col. 2:16-23; II Tim. 3:5), but they were not!

3:2

NASB, NRSV, TEV, NJB "Wake up". NKJV "Be watchful"

This is literally "be thou continually watching." It is the first of five present imperatives found in verses 2 and 3. Jesus commands His church to keep watching!

NASB, NKJV "strengthen the things that remain"

NRSV "strengthen what remains"

TEV "strengthen what you still have"

NJB "put some resolve into what little vigor you have left"

They were to act now and continue to act to preserve what remained of their dying faith.

"for I have not found your deeds complete in the sight of My God" They may have looked spiritual (cf. Isa. 29:13), but they were much like the religious people mentioned in Matt. 7:21-23 and Col. 2:16-23.

The term "complete" means "mature, perfect, equipped for the assigned task." They had not allowed God to complete what faith had started (cf. Phil. 1:6).

3:3

"remember what you have received and heard" This relates to the gospel which they heard and continued to receive. Christianity is not a decision only, but a lifestyle relationship. It involves believing a message and receiving a person. It results in a changed and changing life of repentance and obedience.

"keep it" This is an ongoing command.

"repent" This implies a complete repentance.

"Therefore if you do not wake up" The action is potential, contingent on their response to Jesus' commands, but not assured.

"I will come like a thief" This is often used of the Second Coming (cf. Matt. 24:43-44; Luke 12:39-40; I Thess. 5:2,4; II Pet. 3:10; Rev. 16:15). However, in this context it seems to refer to a temporal judgment of this church.

3:4

"a few people in Sardis who have not soiled their garments" The putting on and taking off of clothing was used as a metaphor of the Christian life (cf. Eph. 4:22,24,25,31; Col.

3:8,10,12,14; Heb. 12:1; James 1:21; I Pet. 2:1). Some believers had not compromised with pagan culture.

"they will walk with Me in white" White clothing is used as a symbol of purity or victory in vv. 4,5,18; 6:11; 7:9,13-14; 19:14. The term "walk" is often used as a metaphor of the Christian life (cf. 3:5; 21:24; I John 1:6,7; 2:6,11; III John 3-4).

3:5

"He who overcomes" Four things will be given to the one who overcomes.

1. they will walk with the Messiah, v. 4
2. they will be clothed in white
3. their names will never be blotted out of the book of life
4. the Messiah will acknowledge them as His own in the presence of the Father and His angels

"I will not erase his name from the book of life" This is a strong Double negative. When citizens died, their names would be erased from the rolls of their city but God will never erase believers from His rolls.

This metaphorical phrase "the book of life" is also found in Rev. 20:12-15, where two books are mentioned:

1. the book of life which is made up of the names of God's people (cf. Exod. 32:32-33; Ps. 69:28; Isa. 4:3; Dan. 12:1; Luke 10:20; Phil. 4:3; Heb. 12:23; Rev 13:8; 17:8; 20:12,15; 21:27)
2. the book of deeds or remembrances which records the deeds of both the wicked and righteous (cf. Ps. 56:8, 139:16; Isa. 65:6; Mal. 3:16)

"I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels" As believers confess Christ ("call on His name," cf. Rom. 10:9-13), He also confesses them before the Father (cf. Matt. 10:32; Luke 12:8).

"Confess" is the Greek term that was used in three senses:

1. to publically confess sins to God and others present (cf. Matt. 3:6; Mark 1:5; Acts 19:18; James 5:16)
2. to publically confess faith in Christ (cf. Phil. 2:1; and possibly Rom. 14:11)
3. to publically praise God (cf. Matt. 11:25; Luke 10:21; Rom. 14:11 {Isa. 45:23}; 15:9 [Ps. 18:49])

A related Greek word was used in similar ways:

1. to acknowledge sin (cf. I John 1:9)
2. to acknowledge faith in Christ (cf. Matt. 10:32; Luke 10:32; John 9:22 [negatively, John 1:20; 12:42])
3. to affirm a belief in something (cf. Acts 23:8; 24:14; Heb. 11:13)



CHURCH #6 PHILADELPHIA 3:7-13

OPEN WITH PRAYER & CATCH UP A BIT.

7 "And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: 'The words of the holy one, the true one, who has the key of David, who opens and no one will shut, who shuts and no one opens.

8 " 'I know your works. Behold, I have set before you an open door, which no one is able to shut. I know

that you have but little power, and yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name. 9 Behold, I will make those of the synagogue of Satan who say that they are Jews and are not, but lie—behold, I will make them come and bow down before your feet, and they will learn that I have loved you. 10 Because you have kept my word about patient endurance, I will keep you from the hour of trial that is coming on the whole world, to try those who dwell on the earth. 11 I am coming soon. Hold fast what you have, so that no one may seize your crown. 12 The one who conquers, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God. Never shall he go out of it, and I will write on him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down from my God out of heaven, and my own new name. 13 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'

1. It the newest of the seven cities. It was located on a major trade route to Sardis and it had flourished. It was located in a fine agriculture area, especially for grapes. The god Bacchus, or Dionysus, was one of its chief deities. It was also an active earthquake area and was destroyed in the huge quake of a.d. 17, which also destroyed ten other major cities of the area. However, the after-shocks continued in this area and the population moved to the surrounding countryside. It was also a center for the Emperor's cult (as were Smyrna and Pergamum) which was possibly the source of much of the Churches' persecution in the provinces. It was a major center of Hellenistic culture and aggressively exported its influence. It seems to have been founded for this very purpose on the border of Mysia, Lydia and Phrygia.

DISCUSION QUESTIONS:

1. Jesus says that the Church in Philadelphia has only a little power.

What is an area of our life in which we don't have full control of the outcome of things?

How do you trust God in those areas of life?

What have you learned along the way?

2. When you face trials, are you more likely to pray to ask God to remove those trials from your life, or to give you the strength in the midst of those trials?

Can you ask for both of these at the same time?

Read Matthew 26:39 to see an example from Jesus.

3. The blessing in the book of Revelation is for those who not only listen to what is written, but observe what is said. For this reason, we always want to consider how we are going to respond to what we've read. Take some time to meditate on how your life is going to be different based on what you've heard, read, & talked about.

4. In verse 7 Jesus describes himself as the "Holy One" and "True One." How is this different from the introduction of the other letters and what is the significance of each name?

Also in verse 7 Jesus mentions having the "Key of David."

What does a key typically represent and what does this specific key relate to?

What would this mean to the Church in Philadelphia?

5. In verse 8 we are told that the Church in Philadelphia, "loved God's Word, faced opposition bravely, and used what little strength they had to glorify the Lord." What might this look like in our church family?

Philadelphia considered to be the "Doorway to the East".

How might that play into an understanding of what Jesus says in verse 8?

6. Read verse 9 and Romans 2:28 together. What is the connection and application we can draw from connecting these two passages?

Connection:

Application:

7. Read verse 10. Discuss your view of this verse as it relates to being delivered "from" tribulation or being delivered "in" tribulation.

Which view do you think this passage points to and Why? Feel free to disagree:)

8. Jesus says in verse 11 that He is coming soon. Contrast his "coming" in this passage with each of the previous mentions of it to the other churches (i.e. Ephesus, Pergamum, Sardis) and identify the differences.

9. What application can a modern day church make from this passage?

How about you personally?

Close with praying for each other.

PHILADELPHIA EXTRA STUDY FOR YOU - IF YOU WANT:)

3:7

"He who is holy, who is true" Verse 7 is a series of four descriptive clauses describing Jesus with titles for YHWH.

"Holy" was used 30 times in Isaiah to describe YHWH.
John usually substituted the term "righteous" (cf. 15:3; 16:7; 19:2).

"True" was often used of YHWH (cf. Isa. 65:16; Jer. 10:10; I John 5:20; Rev. 15:3; 16:7; 19:2).

The first two, "holy" and "true," are used again of God in Rev. 6:10. The term "true" in Greek meant "true as over against false," but in Hebrew it meant "faithful or trustworthy."
Jesus is surely both (cf. 3:14; 19:11; 21:5; 22:6).

"who has the key of David" This is an allusion to the royal Davidic Messiah of II Samuel 7, but particularly of Isa. 22:22, from where this exact imagery is drawn.

"Who shuts and no one opens" This refers to the preaching of the gospel

3:8

"I have put before you an open door which no one can shut" This refers to either

1. preaching opportunities (keys, cf. Matt. 16:19)
2. entrance into the Messianic banquet (clothed in white, cf. v. 4)
3. a divine opportunity for service (cf. Acts 14:27; I Cor. 16:9; II Cor. 2:12; Col. 4:3)

"because you have a little power" This is the first of three reasons why Jesus opened such a wonderful door of opportunity. This church and Smyrna are the only ones of the seven churches to which Jesus had nothing negative to say.

"and have kept My word"

implies a particular time of persecution or a decisive act of obedience. They had "little faith," but they used it well!

"and have not denied My name" This may be a reference to the persecution caused by the demands of the Concilia, local supporters of the Emperor worship (cf. 2:13).

3:9

"I will cause those of the synagogue of Satan," This may refer to Jewish opposition to the gospel. The Church, not unbelieving Jews, is the true people of God.

"I will make them come and bow down at your feet" This is an allusion to Isa. 45:14; 49:23; 60:14, which initially spoke of the Gentiles coming into the Jewish nation, but because these so-called Jews rejected the Messiah they would come to bow to these Gentile believers to show God's love to them (cf. Isa. 43:4,9). This is a good example of how the NT in general, and John in particular, has modified the OT prophecies concerning Israel. John uses a text that originally saw the Gentiles coming to a restored Jerusalem to worship YHWH, but in the new age of righteousness this geo-political image is expanded to include a believing world (Jew and Gentile) having unbelieving Jews come and bow down! This universalization of Israel and Jerusalem shows that Revelation, while substantiating a literal fulfillment of OT prophecies to a Jewish nation, also transforms them (cf. Eph. 2:11-3:13). This is the "mystery of the gospel hidden from the ages"!

3:10

NASB "Because you have kept the word of My perseverance"

NKJV, NJB "Because you have kept My command to persevere"

NRSV "Because you have kept my word of patient endurance"

TEV "Because you have kept my command to endure"

This may be a reference to John 8:51 or 17:6. Jesus is not promising to keep His church from persecution because in the letters to the seven churches persecution, even death, was occurring.

Verse 10 refers to a world-wide judgment of God on unbelievers. It is crucial to distinguish between the "tribulations" believers endure in faith and "the wrath of God" that falls on an unbelieving world.

Interpreters differ over how the church will be spared amidst this eschatological judgment:

1. some see the church as going through it protected by God (cf. John 17:15)
2. others see this as pointing toward a rapture of believers before this period.

Note: God's people were not spared persecution and death during the first few centuries in a Greco-Roman culture or the continuing persecution and death as the gospel spread. Will they be spared the end-time birth pains? Persecution has always purged and strengthened the church, but what about the Great Tribulation?

The literary unit of chapters 2-3, in which the Church experiences persecution, is followed by the literary unit of heaven, in which the martyred Church prays for revenge. This "wrath of God" is given in stages of severity (seals-1/4, trumpets-1/3, bowls-total destruction), each stage given for the purpose of calling the lost to salvation & judging the Gentile world. God's ultimate wrath, the second death, the lake of fire (cf. Revelation 20), is no longer for redemption, but is totally punitive.

The persecuted church becomes the victorious church and the persecuting unbelievers experience persecution! God is in control!

"to test those who dwell on the earth" This phrase is used repeatedly throughout to refer to a settled state of rebellion by unbelievers (cf. Rev. 6:10; 18:13; 1:10; 12:12; 13:8, 12, 14; 17:8). God wants them to repent and believe (cf. I Tim. 2:4; II Pet. 3:9), but they will not, even amidst the expanding judgments of the seals, trumpets, and bowls.

3:11

"I am coming quickly" This is a continuing emphasis upon the immediacy of the Lord's coming (cf. 1:1, 3; 2:16; 22:7,12,20). The early church expected the immediate return of the Lord. This is the hope of every generation of Christians.

"hold fast what you have" As believers hold on to God, He will hold on to them (cf. Gal. 6:9). This is the covenant relationship of God's sovereignty and mankind's mandated response! Salvation is an initial decision of repentance and faith (cf. Mark 1:15; Acts 3:16,19; 20:21) followed by lifestyle repentance and faith, obedience, service, and perseverance. All of these items are necessary for mature Christianity.

"crown" This is another reference to the stephanos (laurel leaf) crown mentioned in 2:10. It was a reward for faithfulness.

3:12

"I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God" Philadelphia was in an earthquake area; the metaphor of a pillar conveyed the concept of stability. Prominent citizens' names were inscribed on the pillars of the temples in Philadelphia. The term "temple" here is a term (naos)

from the verb "to dwell" and was used of the place where deity's very presence dwelt. The overcoming believers will never have to leave God's presence (cf. Ps. 23:6; 27:4-6). This may be a metaphor because apparently there will be no temple in the new age (cf. 21:22).

"I will write on him the name of My God" Notice the five-fold repetitions of "My" in v. 12. This is a wonderful acknowledgment of intimacy with God. The name symbolized ownership (cf. 7:3; 14:1; 22:4).

"the new Jerusalem. . .new name" Revelation picks up on the prophecies of Isaiah.

1. new things, 42:9; 43:19; 48:6 (Rev. 21:5)
2. new song, 42:10 (Rev. 5:9; 14:3)
3. new name, 62:2; 65:15 (Rev. 2:17)
4. new heaven and new earth, 65:17; 66:22 (Rev. 3:12; 21:1).

The new heavenly city, Jerusalem, is also prophesied in Isaiah: 40:2,9; 41:27; 44:20,28; 52:1,2,9; 62:1,6,7; 65:18,19; 66:10,13,20 (Rev. 21:2,10). It is the metaphor for the presence of God among His people. The OT prophecies have been universalized. New Jerusalem is not a city in Palestine, but the promise of a new age of righteousness.



CHURCH #7 LAODICEA 3:14-22

OPEN WITH PRAYER & CATCH UP A BIT

14 "And to the angel of the church in Laodicea write: 'The words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of God's creation.

15 " 'I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were either cold or hot! 16 So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold,

I will spit you out of my mouth. 17 For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked. 18 I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire, so that you may be rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself and the shame of your nakedness may not be seen, and salve to anoint your eyes, so that you may see. 19 Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent. 20 Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me. 21 The one who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, as I also conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne. 22 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.' "

It was one of three cities in the Lycus River valley (the other cities were Colossae and Hierapolis). Churches were founded in each of these three cities, probably by Paul's convert, Epaphras (cf. Col. 1:17; 4:12-13). It was founded by the Seleucid ruler, Antiochus II, who named it after his wife, Laodice, in 250 b.c. It was located on a militarily defensible site like Philadelphia. Remember his offspring Antiochus IV from Daniel? It was noted as a banking center. It was located in a fertile agricultural and pastoral region, especially suited for raising a special black sheep for which it became famous worldwide. It mass-produced a black outer garment called a "trimeta." It had a very large Jewish population. It, like Pergamum, was a center for the worship of the healing god Asclepius. The city was the site of a medical school which was noted for its ear and eye salve.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why does Jesus' declaration to be the "Amen" and the "Faithful and True Witness" in verse 14?
2. Take a moment to recount the three things that Laodicea was famous for during the writing of this letter (banking, black wool, eye salve). How does this factor in to what Jesus says to them in verse 17?

Do we (or our churches) think that we are self-reliant and have no need of Jesus?
How does this happen and what does it look like.

3. Go back and compare what Jesus said to the church in Smyrna to what he says here to Laodicea. What is the contrast you find and what do you think creates this difference?

4. Verse 18 can also be understood from a cultural perspective. Jesus mentions three things that they need to get from him... Refined Gold, White clothes, and salve for their blindness. The three things that the Laodiceans would have thought they had no need for.

What things today in our culture give us a false sense of security?

What might Jesus say we need from him today?

5. Read verse 16 and discuss why it is so shocking to read.

What are the implications of this for churches today?

In light of this discussion how should we understand being "hot, cold, and lukewarm?"

Is there anything in your life that cannot be explained in human terms?

6. Consider verses 15 and 16. When do you want a hot drink? When do you want a cold drink (see Matthew 10:42 where the same word is used)? When do you want a lukewarm drink?

Christ begins His evaluation of the Laodiceans by saying that they are neither cold nor hot. Laodicea's water supply had to be provided from a distant source through pipes. The resulting water was lukewarm and barely drinkable. By contrast, the neighboring town of Hierapolis had medicinal hot springs, and neighboring Colossae was supplied by a cold mountain stream. Christ urges the church to be refreshing (cold) or medicinally healing (hot), rather than like the Laodicean water supply. Be able to minister in some valuable way, rather than being worthless, as lukewarm water is!

7. Verse 20 is frequently memorized and used in evangelism. To whom is Jesus speaking in this verse? How does it fit in with the rest of the letter? See John 14:23.

Close with praying for each other.

LAODICEA EXTRA STUDY FOR YOU - IF YOU WANT:)

3:14

"The Amen" This is an allusion to a title of YHWH, "the God of the Amen," in Isa. 65:16. The term "Amen" is a form of the OT word for "believe" or "faith" (cf. Gen. 15:16; Hab. 2:4). It usually emphasized faithfulness or trustworthiness (cf. 1:6; II Cor. 1:20).

"the faithful and true Witness" This may be another phrase from chapter 1 (cf. 1:5). In the Septuagint both of these adjectives are used to refer to YHWH.

NASB, NKJV "the Beginning of the creation of God"

NRSV "the origin of God's creation"

TEV "the origin of all that God has created"

NJB "the Principle of God's creation"

This is an allusion to both Gen. 1:1 and John 1:1. The terms "beginning" (Hebrew, bereshith) and "origin" (Greek, archē) have two connotations: (1) start or (2) origin, source.

This phrase was used in the Trinitarian controversy of the fourth century and is an allusion to Pro. 8:22-31. Wisdom was YHWH's first creation and through wisdom all else was created.

This was probably the origin of John's use of "logos" in his Gospel (cf. John 1:1). This is one of the strongest passages on the pre-existence of Christ (cf. John 1:1; 8:57-58; II Cor. 8:4; Phil. 2:6-7; Col. 1:17), and also of Christ being the Father's agent in creation (cf. John 1:3; I Cor. 8:16; Col. 1:15,18; Heb. 1:2).

3:15

"you are neither cold nor hot" This may be an allusion to the lukewarm water that the people of this city had to drink because of the local hot springs. A similar charge is made against the church of Sardis (cf. 3:1).

3:16

"I will spit you out of My mouth" The warnings of 2:5; 3:3,16,17 are shocking when it is realized that they are addressed to the visible churches of the first century. This is not the loss of salvation, but the loss of effective ministry (cf. 3:19; Heb. 12:5-13).

3:17

"Because you say, 'I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing'" Verses 17 and 18 are a historical allusion to Laodicea as a center of banking, a center for dyed wool, and a center for eye salve. The tragedy of their prosperity was that they thought they had so much when they had so little (cf. 3:1).

3:18

"buy from Me" This may be an allusion to Isa. 55:1-3, where God's offer of salvation was free, but described as a cost.

"that the shame of your nakedness will not be revealed" In the OT nakedness was a sign of defeat, judgment, and poverty.

3:19

"I reprove" This Greek term is used in the sense of "to expose and thereby to heal or correct" (cf. John 3:20; Eph. 5:11-14).

"and discipline" Being disciplined by God is a sign that we are members of His family (cf. Job 5:17; Pro. 3:12; Ps. 94:12; Heb. 12:6).

"be zealous" It is from the same word root as "hot" or "boiling" (zestos) used in 3:15-16. Knowing and serving God must be a flaming passion and lifestyle.

"and repent" There is a recurring insistence throughout these seven letters that Christians, not just unbelievers, must repent and return to Christ for maturity, stability, and joy (cf. 2:5, 16, 22; 3:3, 19). Repentance is a lifestyle, not only an initial action!

3:20

"I stand at the door and knock" really "I stand and continue to stand at the door" "and continue to knock." Although this church received no word of praise, it did receive a warm invitation. This is not the invitation to become a Christian, but rather an invitation for the church members to return to vital fellowship with Christ. This verse is often used out of context to refer to evangelism.

The metaphor of "a door" was used in the Gospels (cf. Mark 13:28-29; Luke 12:36) as a way of referring to the nearness of Christ's coming.

"if anyone hears My voice and opens the door" This is a Third class conditional sentence implying potential but not certain action. In many parts of the world knocking is accompanied by a verbal greeting. Notice the volitional element; the person/church must respond and open the door. This is the covenantal aspect of all of God's relationships with humans. He takes the initiative, He sets the agenda, but humans must respond. Also, notice that the response is not just initial but continual. Salvation is not a product, but a lifestyle relationship. It has its ups and downs, but the existential fellowship is sure!

"I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me" This is an allusion to the peace offering (cf. Leviticus 3, and 7), a time of fellowship where God symbolically ate with the offerer. Others see this as a reference to the eschatological Messianic banquet.

The term used here for a meal is the one used for the meal at the end of the day, which was the major time of family fellowship and companionship. In the East eating has always been a sign of covenant, friendship, and fellowship.

3:21

"I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne," This is a powerful image of intimate fellowship and inclusion. There are many allusions in the NT to believers' reigning with Christ (cf. 2:26, 27; Luke 22:30; Matt. 19:28; I Cor. 6:2 ff; II Tim 2:12; Rev. 20:4).

Revelation 22:5 implies Christians' eternal reign with Christ.

"as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne" It is wonderful to know that Jesus has already overcome the world (cf. John 16:33; Eph. 1:21-22) and that He is already seated at the Father's right hand (cf. Eph. 1:20; I John 2:1 and Rev. 22:1) and that He wants us to join Him in His victory!