



**Recap:** The church is purified by Christ, empowered by his Spirit, and sent into the world to shine the light of Christ.

### The Structure of Jesus' Letters to the Churches

1. **The Revelation of Jesus Christ**
2. **The Situation and Challenge: Repent or Endure**
3. **"He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."**

<sup>9</sup> And he said, "Go, and say to this people: "'Keep on hearing, but do not understand; keep on seeing, but do not perceive.' <sup>10</sup> Make the heart of this people dull, and their ears heavy, and blind their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed." (Isaiah 6:9-10 ESV)

See also Matthew 13:10-14a ESV

The hearing formula indicates that these letters coupled with the visions function to protect those walking in faith, awaken others from their spiritual slumber, or further harden one in their spiritual blindness. (Beale)

*Let the evildoer still do evil, and the filthy still be filthy, and the righteous still do right, and the holy still be holy."*  
(Revelation 22:11 ESV)

God's sovereignty and human responsibility work together in one's faith journey from beginning to end. Our message is a "savor of life unto life or death unto death for those who hear it" (Spurgeon).

#### 4. **Judgment for the Compromiser; Hope for the Overcomer**

"The general main point of chapters 2-3 can be formulated in the following manner: *Christ encourages the churches to witness, warns them about compromise, and exhorts them to 'hear' and to overcome compromise in order to inherit the promise of eternal life with him.* Therefore, the logical development of each letter climaxes with the promise of inheriting eternal life with Christ, which is the main point of each letter." G.K. Beale

**The Perseverance of the Saints:** Those who have demonstrated genuine saving faith in Jesus Christ and are indwelt and kept by the Holy Spirit. Thus, they persevere in the faith and develop an adoring love for God as they come to know him better. This love for God is revealed by one's love for their neighbor and one's obedience to Jesus' commands found in Scripture.

### Temptations to Compromise

- Opposition from the Outside (Smyrna and Philadelphia)
- Spiritual Apathy (Ephesus, Sardis, and Laodicea)
- False Teaching from the Inside: The Syncretism of the Nicolaitans (Ephesus, Pergamum and Thyatira)

The false teaching of the Nicolaitans was likely early forms of Gnosticism that embraced an evil/good dualism between the physical and the spiritual that allowed for Christians to participate in the surrounding idolatrous culture to avoid economic and social losses. Ultimately, Gnosticism denied the God of the Bible and justified sin under the guise of Christian liberty. In short, they sought to be friends of God and the world at the same time.

"The will of God is not that we become so politicized that we turn our mission field into our enemy. Christians are right to repudiate sin, and to declare without equivocation that sin is an offense to our holy God... It's time for the church to be about the ministry of reconciliation—for God's people to boldly and faithfully proclaim his gospel and for his church to be salt and light in this dark and desperate world. That was the Lord's message to the churches in Revelation. He commanded them to put off worldliness and corruption, to renew their love for him, and to guard the purity of his gospel and his church. Virtually every admonition, rebuke, warning, and call to repentance our Lord makes in these letters is applicable to the church in the twenty-first century." John MacArthur

## Letters to the Churches

### *Letter to Ephesus: Cold-Hearted Church*

<i>Revelation</i>	Christ sovereignly reigns and cares for his church.
<i>The Situation</i>	They abandoned the love they had at first—God and others. cf. Matt. 24:12-14; Rev. 14:1-7
<i>Warning</i>	Jesus will remove their status as a church. cf. 1 Jn. 4:7-8
<i>Hope</i>	The one who conquers will know the fullness of God’s design for his creation. cf. Rev. 22:1-5
<i>Takeaway</i>	<p><b><i>Faith in Christ should yield an active love for God, the family of God, and your neighbor.</i></b></p> <p><b>Two Ways to love Your Neighbor:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) Seek their good simply because they are image-bearers.</li> <li>(2) Share the gospel with them.</li> </ul>

### *Letter to Smyrna: Church in Tribulation*

<i>Revelation</i>	Christ, the Resurrected One
<i>The Situation</i>	Fiery, yet temporary trial on the horizon. cf. Dan. 1
<i>Warning</i>	No warning; Christ challenges them to endure in faith unto death. cf. Rev. 6:9-11; 13:1-10
<i>Hope</i>	The one who conquers will not be hurt by the second death. cf. Rev. 20:4-6
<i>Takeaway</i>	<b><i>Let your hope in the bodily resurrection sustain you in the trial.</i></b>

### *Letters to Pergamum and Thyatira: Babylon in the Church*

<i>Revelation</i>	Christ possesses the perfect Word of God and will judge the world with it. (cf. Num. 22)
<i>The Situation</i>	<p>Due to the idolatrous nature of the civic, economic, and social life in Ancient Rome, some in both cities have embraced the syncretism of the Nicolaitans, while Thyatira is tolerating a key false prophet to the movement. (cf. Num. 31:16; Rev. 13:11-18)</p> <p>False Teaching molds you into the surrounding culture and justifies sin. Identify it. Avoid it.</p>
<i>Warning</i>	Those who compromise with the culture will be struck down. cf. Rev. 14:8-13; Ch. 17-18
<i>Hope</i>	The one who conquers will have spiritual satisfaction in Christ today and will be given entrance into the Marriage Supper of the Lamb and authority in Christ’s Kingdom. cf. Rev. Ch. 19-22:5
<i>Takeaway</i>	<b><i>Choose this day whom you will serve. Jesus is sufficient and will satisfy. You cannot be a friend of God and the world.</i></b>

**What would Jesus say to MeadowBrook?  
Where are you in danger of compromise?**