



## **TO THE CHURCHES AT SARDIS, PHILADELPHIA, AND LAODICEA REVELATION CHAPTER 3 VERSE BY VERSE COMMENTARY**

### **SUMMARY OF REVELATION CHAPTER 3**

In Revelation chapter 3 Jesus tells the church at Sardis they have a reputation of being alive but are dead! Jesus tells them to wake up, and if they do not wake up, He will come like a thief, and they will not know at what time He will come to them. Jesus tells the church at Philadelphia that He knows their deeds. They have little strength, yet they have kept His word and have not denied His name. Since they have kept His command to endure patiently, Jesus will also keep them from the hour of trial that is going to come on the whole world to test the inhabitants of the earth.

Jesus tells the church at Laodicea He knows their deeds, that they are neither cold nor hot. Jesus wishes they 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.”



**ANCIENT LAODICEA STONE WITH GREEK INSCRIPTION**

## **THE CHURCH AT SARDIS: REVELATION 3:1 TO 3:6**

The city of Sardis was located in West Asia Minor (modern day Turkey), about 50 miles east of Smyrna and 30 miles southeast of Thyatir. Sardis was about 40 miles from Laodicea. Sardis was the capital of the ancient kingdom of Lydia, one of the important cities of the Persian Empire, the seat of a Seleucid Satrap, and the seat of a proconsul under the Roman Empire.

Ancient Sardis had a very large and prosperous Jewish community, which produced the largest ancient synagogue outside of Palestine. Christianity arrived in the 1st century AD and Sardis was one of the Seven Churches of Revelation. Sardis now lies entirely in ruins and is only an archaeological site in the village of Sartmahmut with ongoing excavations.

Sardis was very prosperous, but in the year 616 AD, Sardis' life came to an end. A pre-Islamic Persian army penetrated the defensive lines that had been deployed in eastern Turkey. Soon after, part of that region fell to the Persians, including Sardis. The city fortifications could not do much to stop the Persian troops, and Sardis was sacked and devastated so completely that no attempt to restore the city has been recorded. This incident constituted the end of Sardis' civic life.

A military detachment regained the citadel in 660 AD, but the town itself remained empty and all subsequent references to Sardis are only to a castle on the hill, never to the town. The Islamic forces of the Four Horsemen conquered Sardis in 716 AD, followed by the invasion of the Islamic Ottoman Turks in 1306 AD, and the city has been under continuous Islamic oppression since 716 AD.



**ANCIENT SARDIS SYNAGOGUE MOSAICS**

**Revelation 3:1** “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.

**Rev 3: 2** Wake up! Strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have found your deeds unfinished in the sight of my God.

**Rev 3:3** Remember, therefore, what you have received and heard; hold it fast, 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.

*“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.”* This is another good example of the titles by which Jesus speaks of Himself in the letters to the seven churches are chosen to reflect the spiritual condition of the community addressed.

The church in Sardis, to which Jesus describes Himself as *“him who holds the seven spirits of God and the seven stars”* had no heresies or Baal (Blackstone worshipping Nicolaitans) activities needing correction. Jesus simply says: *“you are dead.”* Jesus, the Son of God, holds the Spirit, not as One who receives it from the Father, but as One who can impart it to men. As man he received it; as God he gives it. The church at Sardis needs such a gift. Hence the repetition about having the seven stars, which appears also in the letter to the Church at Ephesus (Revelation 2:1).

*“Wake up! Strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have found your deeds unfinished in the sight of my God.”* The works of the church at Sardis have been weighed and found wanting before God. They must wake up and be watchful, against sin, and to the commands of Jesus, and perform in a better manner than current state. Jesus warns them (and us) to not let your faith and works die out—for they are about to die.

*“Remember, therefore, what you have received and heard; hold it fast, 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.”* The warning is an echo from what Jesus said in the Gospels (Matthew 24:42-43; Luke 12:39-40). The coming of Christ to judge will be in an hour unlooked for. What kind of hour He would so come was' unknown; the sound of His approaching footsteps unheard.

Apparently, Sardis did not repent and listen to Jesus. This was not John's message to the church at Sardis; it was a message from the Jesus Christ. A dead church, and one unrepentant in its deadness, will be disciplined by Jesus Himself.

Sardis was very prosperous but only survived another five centuries after the warning from Jesus. In the year 616 AD, the freedom of Sardis ended when a pre-Islamic Persian army penetrated the defenses that had been deployed in eastern Turkey. Soon after, that region fell to the Persians, including Sardis itself. Sardis was ravaged, plundered and devastated so completely that no attempt to restore the city from that day in 616 has been recorded.

**Rev 3:4 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.**

**Rev 3:5 The one who is victorious will, like them, be dressed in white. I will never blot out the name of that person from the book of life, but will acknowledge that name before my Father and his angels.**

**Rev 3:6 Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches.**

*“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.”* To be with Jesus in the new heaven and the new earth you must be worthy. The only thing that makes it possible for us to have that future life of active communion with Jesus Christ, in perfect beauty of inward character and of outward form, is that we must keep our faith in Christ and follow his commands.

*“The one who is victorious will, like them, be dressed in white. I will never blot out the name of that person from the book of life, but will acknowledge that name before my Father and his angels.”* This is a solemn and tremendous claim that Christ’s finger can write, and Christ’s finger can erase, a name from that register. Yet it is true. Revelation 20:12-15 tells us anyone whose name is not in the Book of Life is removed from the presence of Jesus and sent to the lake of fire on judgment day.

#### **Revelation 20:12-15 (NIV)**

**And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what they had done. Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. Anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire.**

On the day of judgment Jesus will acknowledge those that acknowledged him. He will testify on our behalf to the Father.

#### **Matthew 10:32-33 (NIV)**

**“Whoever acknowledges me before others, I will also acknowledge before my Father in heaven. But whoever disowns me before others, I will disown before my Father in heaven.”**

Jesus, the Son of God, has an exact and perfect knowledge of all the chosen ones, he knows them by name; and that he has a strong and affectionate love for them, and is not ashamed of them.

The lesson of Sardis is the word of God not only ministers life to those who are spiritually dead, it also strengthens life in those whom Christ has already made alive. Because our life is always dependent upon his sovereign will, we need to beg God constantly for his Word and Spirit. We must remember what Jesus did for us and give him glory and praise.

## THE CHURCH AT PHILADELPHIA: REVELATION 3:7 TO 3:13

Philadelphia today has the modern Islamic name of Ala-şehir in Western Turkey. It is about 100 miles from Smyrna. Philadelphia was established in 189 BC by King Eumenes II of Pergamon (197-160 BC). Eumenes II named the city for the love of his brother, who would be his successor, Attalus II (159-138 BC), whose loyalty earned him the nickname, "Philadelphos", literally meaning *"one who loves his brother"*. Philadelphia is best-known as the site of one of the seven churches of Asia in the Book of Revelation. This city was the youngest of the seven churches of Revelation.

**The Four Horsemen of Revelation (Mohammad, Abu Bakr, Umar and Uthman) DID NOT capture the city, as Islam did to the other six churches of Revelation.** This fulfills what Jesus said to Philadelphia: *"Since you have kept my command to endure patiently, I will also keep you from the hour of trial that is going to come on the whole world to test the inhabitants of the earth."* (Revelation 3:10)

Philadelphia remained steadfastly Christian, and twice, in 1306 and 1324, it was besieged by the Islamic Seljuk Turks, but it retained its independence until after 1390, when it was controlled by the combined forces of the Turks and Christian Byzantines.

According to Greek census data, published in 1905, the metropolis of Philadelphia (Ala-shehir) included 19 Orthodox communities, most all of them Turkish-speaking Christians, not ethnic Greeks, consisting of 14,003 people, 25 parishes and 23 priests. During World War I, the Turkish Christian population there was estimated to be 18,000 to 25,000. All the Christians were moved as a group in 1923 to a suburb of Athens, Greece called *Nea Filadelfia* (meaning "New Philadelphia").



**ANCIENT PHILADELPHIA SAINT JOHN CHURCH LOCATION**

## THE GRECO-TURKISH WAR AFTER WORLD WAR I

At the end of World War I in 1918, the population of Philadelphia (Ala-shehir) in Turkey was mostly Christian, as it had been for nearly 19 centuries. The Christians were classified as “Greeks” by the Turkish Muslim government, but they were most all Turkish Christians—the same faith since the Book of Revelation was given to John.

The Greco-Turkish War of 1919–1922 was fought between Greece and the Turkish National Movement during the partitioning of the Ottoman Empire after World War I, between May 1919 and October 1922. The Greek campaign was launched primarily because the western Allies, particularly British Prime Minister David Lloyd George, had promised Greece territorial gains at the expense of the Ottoman Empire, recently defeated in World War I, as Anatolia (Asian Turkey) had been part of Ancient Greece and the Byzantine Empire before the Ottomans captured the area.



### TURKISH MUSLIM TROOPS CAPTURE SMYRNA 1922

The armed conflict started when the Greek forces landed in Smyrna (now Izmir), on May 15, 1919. Their advance was checked by Turkish forces at the Battle of Sakarya in 1921. The Greek front collapsed with the Turkish counterattack in August 1922, and the war effectively ended with the recapture of Smyrna by Turkish forces and the great fire of Smyrna. Exhausted from four years of bloodshed, no Allied power had the will to engage in a new war and relied only on Greece.

## THE “OPEN DOOR NO ONE CAN SHUT”

### THE 1923 POPULATION EXCHANGE BETWEEN GREECE AND TURKEY

As a result of the defeat, the Greek government accepted the demands of the Turkish National Movement and returned to its pre-war borders, thus leaving Eastern and Western Anatolia to Turkey. The Allies negotiated a new treaty at Lausanne with the Turkish National Movement. It is estimated that from 1900 to 1922, various Turkish Islamic regimes killed from 3,500,000 to over 4,300,000 Christian Armenians, “Greeks”, and Assyrians. Thus, after the war it was very important to protect Christian populations from further Islamic genocide. This could only be achieved by a full population exchange. Mere promises and signed agreements would be quickly broken.

The Treaty of Lausanne recognized the independence of the Republic of Turkey and its sovereignty over Asia Minor, Istanbul, and Eastern Thrace. This is also known as Turkish Thrace or European Turkey, is the part of Turkey that is geographically part of Southeast Europe. It accounted for 3% of Turkey's land area but comprised 14% of the total population. The rest of Turkey is located on the Anatolian peninsula, geographically in Western Asia. The largest city of the region is Istanbul (Constantinople), which straddles the Bosphorus strait between Europe and Asia. This treaty also called for large-scale population exchange.

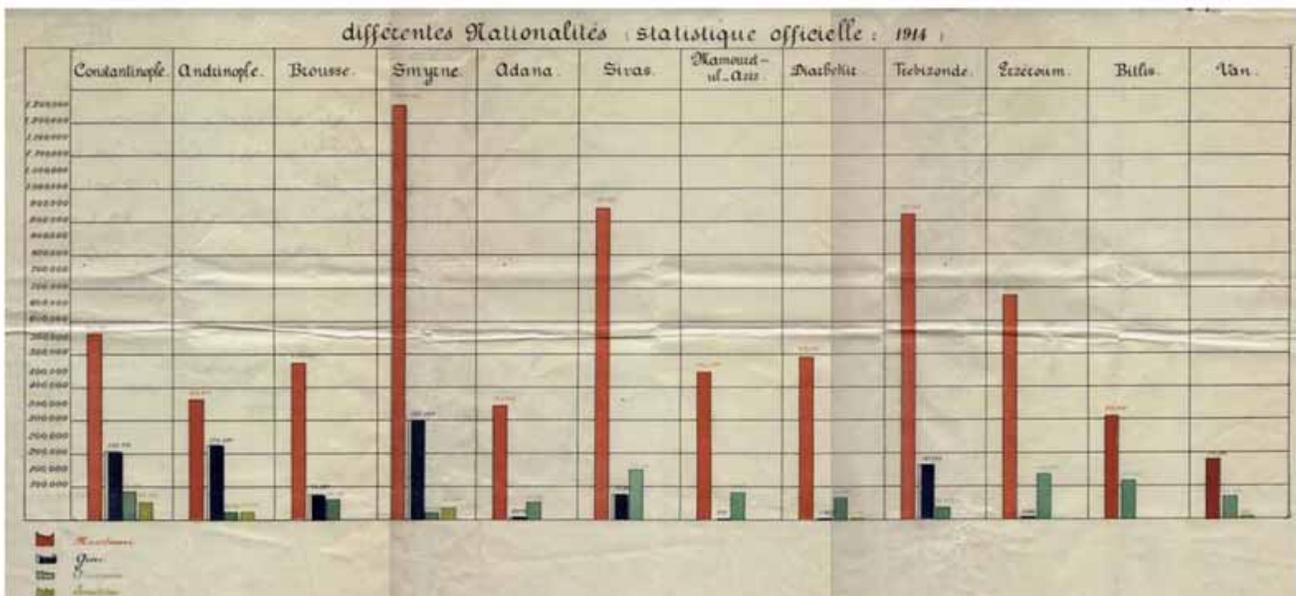
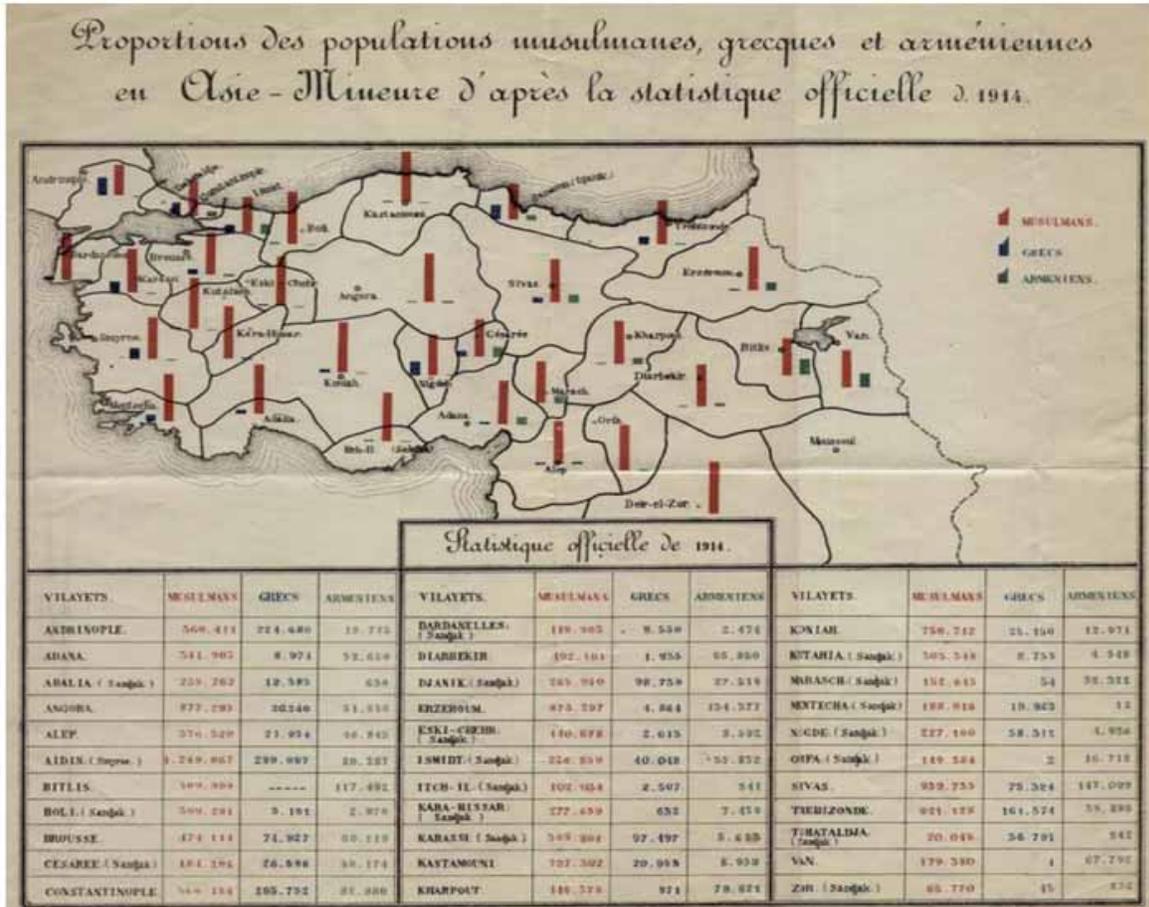
The 1923 population exchange between Greece and Turkey was arranged by "Convention Concerning the Exchange of Greek and Turkish Populations" signed at Lausanne, Switzerland, on January 30, 1923, by the governments of Greece and Turkey. It involved at least 1.6 million people. There were 1,221,489 Greek Orthodox Christians from Asia Minor, Eastern Thrace, the Pontic Alps and the Caucasus, and 400,000 Muslims from Greece. This also included the entire Christian population of Philadelphia. In some respects, it was like Operation Ezra and Nehemiah between 1948 in 1951, as trapped Jews miraculously left Islamic countries and migrated back to Israel.

The new state of Turkey also envisioned the population exchange as a way to formalize and make permanent the flight of its native Christian Greek Orthodox peoples following their genocide (1900–1922), while initiating a new exodus of a smaller number (400,000) of Muslims from Greece as a way to provide settlers for the now depopulated Greek Orthodox villages of Turkey.

This major compulsory population exchange, or agreed mutual expulsion, was based not on language or ethnicity, but upon religious identity, and involved nearly all the indigenous Orthodox Christian citizens of Turkey, including even Turkish-speaking Orthodox Christians citizens, and on the other side most of the native Muslims of Greece, including even Greek-speaking Muslim citizens, such as Cretan Turks. Each group were citizens, and mostly native peoples, of the state seeking to expel them, and neither had representation in the state purporting to speak for them in the exchange treaty. In many cases their families had lived in the country for many centuries.

In terms of Philadelphia (Ala-şehir), due to the developments of the Greco-Turkish War of 1919–1922, the entire local Orthodox Christian element (estimated at more than 20,000 people in 1922) was evacuated in the Greek-Turkish population exchange of 1923. They were safely moved to a suburb of Athens, Greece, named for them as *Nea Filadelfia* ("New Philadelphia"). Just as Jesus promised-- they were spared from the trials of Islamic control and persecution.

The "Convention Concerning the Exchange of Greek and Turkish Populations" agreement was signed at Lausanne, Switzerland, on January 30, 1923, by Greece and Turkey. The 1914 document chart is shown below showing the official figures from the 1914 population census of the Ottoman Empire. The Muslim population of Turkey was given at 20,975,345 (in red), with the Turkish Christian ("Greek") population was given at 1,792,206 (in blue). The third group was Christian Armenian.



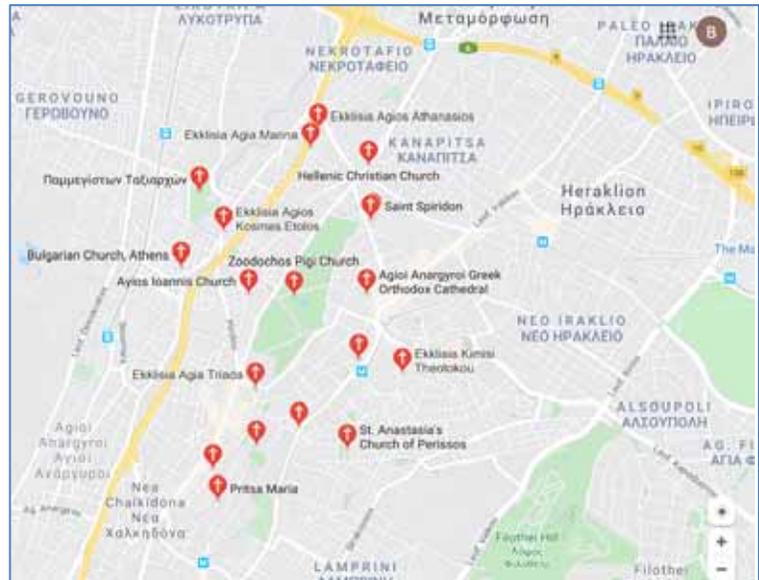
## THE PHILADELPHIA CHURCH TODAY STILL WORSHIPS CHRIST

Nea Filadelfeia (Greek: Νέα Φιλαδέλφεια, meaning “New Philadelphia”) is a suburb of Athens, Greece. It was named after the Anatolian Christian city Filadelfeia, now Ala-şehir in Turkey, and it was settled in 1923 by Greek refugees from Asia Minor after the Greek-Turkish war of 1919-1922.

The population of the Nea Filadelfeia area is about 25,000 people. They have many Christian churches in 2020, as the Google map demonstrates.

Today they fulfill what Jesus promised in Revelation 3:10:

**“Since you have kept my command to endure patiently, I will also keep you from the hour of trial that is going to come on the whole world to test the inhabitants of the earth.”**



**A CHRISTIAN CHURCH IN NEA FILADELFIA (“NEW PHILADELFIA”) TODAY**

**Rev 3:7 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.**

**Rev 3:8 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.**

**Rev 3:9 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.**

*“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.”* Only Jesus, “*who is holy and true*” alone can unlock the hidden treasures of truth. The use of the phrase “*who holds the key of David*” points to Isaiah 22:22-24, and to a wider meaning.

#### **Isaiah 22:22-24 (NIV)**

**I will place on his shoulder the key to the house of David; what he opens no one can shut, and what he shuts no one can open. I will drive him like a peg into a firm place; he will become a seat of honor for the house of his father. All the glory of his family will hang on him: its offspring and offshoots—all its lesser vessels, from the bowls to all the jars.**

Jesus Christ has the true honor of the house of David. We learn this from Hebrews 3:2-4.

#### **Hebrews 3:2-4**

**He was faithful to the one who appointed him, just as Moses was faithful in all God’s house. Jesus has been found worthy of greater honor than Moses, just as the builder of a house has greater honor than the house itself. For every house is built by someone, but God is the builder of everything.**

*“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.”* The church at Philadelphia is the only church that does not receive condemnation from God. They are faithful to the Lord and find being faithful does not always produce results that are beneficial to the members. Yet despite the opposition and persecution he has set before them an open door and no earthly power can shut it. The Islamic armies of Mohammad will never dominate them!! They never closed the door!!

*“Have not denied my name.”* When Christians were brought before Islamic magistrates in times of persecution, they were required to renounce the name of Christ, say the Shahada (the mark of the beast) and to disown him in a public manner. The Muslim teacher Zakir Naik today has made many videos on YouTube of Christians renouncing Jesus Christ as the Son of God. He then requires them to publically say the Shahada. Amidst the persecutions that raged around them, no doubt members of the church at Philadelphia had been summoned to such a trial, and they had stood the trial firmly.

*"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."* Those imposing the solemn guise of Islamic religious worship are in reality carrying on Satan's cause and interest. (*"the synagogue of Satan"*).

Jesus again here tells us that there will be a re-appearance of the same troubles which afflicted the Church of Smyrna: the fixed and contemptuous exclusiveness of the "people of God" was their trial. It is not about trying to be ritualistic "Jewish." It is about claiming to be the true people of God. Islam claims to be the only true religion of God. Qur'an 3:19, 3:85, 5:3 and 61:6 make clear the only true people of God are Muslims, and Islam is the only true religion of God.

Qur'an 3:19 Truly the religion with Allah is Islam.

Qur'an 3:85 And whoever seeks a religion other than Islam it will never be accepted of him and in the hereafter he will be one of the losers.

Qur'an 5:3 This day, I have perfected your religion for you, completed My Favor upon you, and have chosen for you Islam as your religion.

Qur'an 61:6 And remember when Jesus son of Mary said, "O children of Israel I am the messenger of Allah unto you."

It would seem from the next verse, that efforts had already been made to induce them to renounce the name of Christ by those who professed to be the people of God (Jews), though such are speaking for Satan. In Revelation chapter 13, Jesus tells us the false prophet Mohammad will be claiming to understand Jesus (Jesus the prophet, the "messenger"), but will really be speaking for Satan.

### **Revelation 13:11-12 (NIV)**

**Then I saw a second beast, coming out of the earth. It had two horns like a lamb, but it spoke like a dragon. It exercised all the authority of the first beast on its behalf, and made the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast, whose fatal wound had been healed.**

The "two horns like a lamb" are a prophecy about the Qur'an references to Jesus. There are some 37 references to Jesus in the Qur'an. But Mohammad was really speaking for Satan (the dragon), when Mohammad claimed Allah told him Jesus was not God and was not crucified.

Qur'an 5:72 They do blaspheme who say: "God is Jesus the son of Mary." But said Jesus: "O Children of Israel! worship Allah, my Lord and your Lord." Whoever joins other gods with Allah,- Allah will forbid him the garden, and the hellfire will be his abode.

Qur'an 4:157 They said: "We killed Christ Jesus the son of Mary, the Messenger of Allah";-but they killed him not, nor crucified him, but so it was made to appear to them, and those who differ therein are full of doubts, with no certain knowledge, but only conjecture to follow, and for sure they did not kill him.

**Rev 3:10 Since you have kept my command to endure patiently, I will also keep you from the hour of trial that is going to come on the whole world to test the inhabitants of the earth.**

Here we have a specific promise. Jesus made this only to the church at Philadelphia. Some take the passage out of context and use it for a general support for the pretribulation rapture of the church. Certainly the *"hour of trial that is going to come on the whole world to test the inhabitants of the earth"* is in the future, when given to John in 95 AD. The hour of trial is to the whole world, but the promise of protection is only to the church at Philadelphia. The hour of trial (tribulation) is not the same as the wrath of God. The hour of trial is from Satan. We are saved from the wrath of God.

#### **Romans 5:9 (NIV)**

**Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him!**

Jesus tells us to patiently endure persecution. The church at Philadelphia had shown this in the trials which they had experienced; Jesus promises now, that in return, he will keep them safe in the future trials that shall come upon the world. One of the highest rewards of patience in one trial is the grace that God gives us to bear another. God does not leave those who have shown that they will not leave him. We learn more about patient endurance during the tribulation on the rest of the world in Revelation 13:10.

#### **Revelation 13:10 (NIV)**

**"If anyone is to go into captivity, into captivity they will go. If anyone is to be killed with the sword, with the sword they will be killed." This calls for patient endurance and faithfulness on the part of God's people.**

Note that Jesus says *"keep you from"* rather than deliver through. This cannot be the rapture, since the Philadelphia church was not raptured and yet Jesus protected them from the trials of Islam.

**Rev 3:11 I am coming soon. Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take your crown.**

The Philadelphian Church is the only church of the seven in which there was nothing that Christ rebuked. It had no faults, or at least no recorded faults, either of morals or of doctrine. Jesus tells them simply to keep doing what they are doing.

**Rev 3:12 The one who is victorious I will make a pillar in the temple of my God. Never again will they leave it. I will write on them 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 them my new name. Rev 3:13 Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches.**

Jesus promises in Revelation chapters 21 and 22 the new heaven and new earth. We repeatedly have in this book the image of the divine Name written on the foreheads of God's servants, in Revelation 7:3, Revelation 14:1, and Revelation 22:4. Inscribing the name is here means they will be children of God and have their name in the Book of Life. Jesus gives a mark of life; the Shahada, the mark of the beast, is a mark of death.

## THE CHURCH AT LAODICEA: REVELATION 3:14 TO 3:22

Laodicea on the Lycus (modern Turkish: Laodikeia) was an ancient city built on the river Lycus in western Turkey. The ruins of Laodicea are near modern Denizli, Turkey. Many of Laodicea's inhabitants were Jews, and Cicero records that Flaccus confiscated the considerable sum of 9 kilograms (20 lb) of gold which was being sent annually to Jerusalem by the local Jewish community for the Temple (Pro Flacco 28-68).

With its large Jewish community, very early Laodicea became a seat of Christianity. The Epistle to the Colossians (*"I want you to know how hard I am contending for you and for those at Laodicea, and for all who have not met me personally."* Colossians 2:1) mentions Laodicea as one of the communities of concern for Paul the Apostle.

By the end of 5th century AD a powerful earthquake destroyed the city, after which the city lost its importance and could never get back to its former prosperity. The city has never been rebuilt after this natural disaster, and its inhabitants moved to other cities nearby. The area around it today is dominated by the city of Denizli, a city of 650,000 just four miles away.

Islam became nearly universal in Turkey (other than Philadelphia) after the invasion of the Islamic Ottoman Turks, and the area has been under continuous Islamic oppression to this day. Denizli is mostly Islamic, but thankfully some Muslims are accepting Jesus there today.



**ANCIENT LAODICEA MAIN STREET**

**Rev 3:14** “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.

**Rev 3:15** I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other!

**Rev 3:16** So, because you are lukewarm—neither hot nor cold—I am about to spit you out of my mouth.

**Rev 3:17** 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.

**Rev 3:18** 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.

Of all the churches in Revelation, Laodicea most represents our current era, that is to say, sadly, the era of the degeneration of the Church. Laodicea could be thought of as the first church teaching the “Prosperity Gospel.” The word “Laodicea” itself is a compound word of two Greek words meaning at the root level “people” and “just”, and giving to the translation “the self-justifying people”.

The church at Laodicea is the only one that received no positive comments whatsoever from Jesus Christ. Even Sardis, as Revelation 3:4 told us, had some positive comments; *“Yet you have a few people in Sardis who have not soiled their clothes.”* Still even in Laodicea, Jesus always welcomes back the lost in Revelation 3:21. *“To the one who is victorious, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I was victorious and sat down with my Father on his throne.”*

*“I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other!”* The “hot” here is the glowing, fervent zeal and devotion to God and truth, which is commended and commanded elsewhere, as in Romans 12:11-13.

### **Romans 12:11-13 (NIV)**

**Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Share with the Lord’s people who are in need. Practice hospitality.**

Jesus is not seeking the self-conscious, galvanized “hot” which, in days of false piety, passed for zeal. It is an earnestness which does not know itself earnest, being all too absorbed in its work as a servant for the Lord Jesus Christ. Neither is it “cold”, meaning totally untouched by spiritual life, dead and cold, as an unrepentant heathen would be.

If we look at the how soft is the line is between the Church and the world today, we can see exactly what Jesus was telling the church at Laodicea. The soft faith of an enormous mass of professing Christians, the goals of the world are their goals; and the sort of life that the world lives is the sort of life that they prefer to live.

*“So, because you are lukewarm—neither hot nor cold—I am about to spit you out of my mouth.”*

The distaste produced by lukewarm drink, which the stomach naturally rejects with nausea, is used as a figure in which to express the abhorrence of Jesus for those who lacked zeal in His service.

Jesus is not telling the church at Laodicea that they will be saved if all they do is improve their works. The Bible teaches in Ephesians 2:8-10 we have no basis for boasting before Him because of works which we have done. But in James 2:17-19, we see that faith without works is dead.

#### **Ephesians 2:8-10 (NIV)**

**For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.**

#### **James 2:17-19 (NIV)**

**In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. But someone will say, “You have faith; I have deeds.” Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by my deeds. You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder.**

*“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.”* There is worldly wealth and there is spiritual heavenly wealth. They are totally different. Spiritual pride and lukewarm faith are frequently produced by worldly prosperity. Jesus is telling them when compared to the holiness of God, they are wretched.

*“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.”* They are to “buy from me gold refined in the fire”; the emphasis being laid on me (Jesus), in contradistinction to their trust in themselves and their wealth. They are actually poor, not wealthy, (verse 17), and must therefore obtain gold refined by the fire - gold superior to that on the possession of which they so prided themselves, that they may indeed be rich. The “gold” is the living water that comes only from Christ.

To buy this gold (living water) by giving something of equal value in exchange, they were truly unable. Yet it was to be bought, and would entail the sacrifice of something which, though perhaps dear to them, would be nothing in comparison with the eternal life return they would obtain. In this situation, they are very similar to the rich young man in Matthew 19:20-24.

#### **Matthew 19:20-24 (NIV)**

**“All these I have kept,” the young man said. “What do I still lack?” Jesus answered, “If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.” When the young man heard this, he went away sad, because he had great wealth. Then Jesus said to his disciples, “Truly I tell you, it is hard for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of heaven. Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.”**

**Rev 3:19 Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest and repent.**

**Rev 3:20 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 that person, and they with me.**

**Rev 3:21 To the one who is victorious, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I was victorious and sat down with my Father on his throne.**

**Rev 3:22 Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”**

*“Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest and repent.”* This verse is a comfort and encouragement to the church at Laodicea. Jesus requires them to make the sacrifices, not so much that they might be punished for their transgressions, but to prove themselves of the number of God's elect. They must be worthy of the seal of God. Christians are rebuked by Christ, not in a way of wrath, but in a tender manner, in order to bring make them aware of their sin and of their duty, and of their mistake of trusting any creature or system more than Jesus, and that they might be saved.

*“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 that person, and they with me.”* What an offer!! The offer is not to the seven churches, but to “*anyone.*” Here is a revelation of a universal truth, applying to every man and woman on the planet. All who live within the sound of Christ's Gospel and of the written revelations of His grace. The internet means that nearly every person in the world can dine with Christ today.

*“To the one who is victorious, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I was victorious and sat down with my Father on his throne.”* This promise from Jesus is described by Paul in Ephesians 2:6. Note the expression, “*on my throne*” occurs nowhere else. This crowning promise is made to the most unworthy of sinners. It also makes clear Jesus Christ is God.

### **Ephesians 2:6-7 (NIV)**

**And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.**

*“Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”* This closes the letter writing portion of the Book of Revelation to the existing seven churches. In chapters 4-22, Jesus next gives John visions into the future of the world.

Of the seven churches, six would be destroyed. Most were destroyed by the followers of the false prophet Mohammad. Only the church at Philadelphia would escape because of the specific promise Jesus gave to them. The captivity or ruin of the six churches of Asia Minor was consummated. In most today, they pray to Allah in the mosques set up by Mohammad. They read a book (the Qur'an) taking away the atoning sacrifice of Jesus, take the mark of the beast (the Shahada), and pray to Baal in the Kaaba in the great city of Mecca. But those from the Philadelphia church are still faithful to Jesus in 2020, some 1,925 years after Jesus gave his perfect word to them.