

# Dr. David Mathewson, Revelation, Session 7, Revelation 3 – 7 Churches Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Study Guide, 4) Briefing Document, and 5) FAQs

Revelation 3--7 churches

## 1. Abstract of Mathewson, Revelation, Session 7, Revelation 3 – 7 Churches, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

This lecture excerpt from Dr. Dave Mathewson's course on the Book of Revelation **analyzes** the messages to three churches: Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea. **He interprets** the promises and warnings given to each church, **connecting** them to later imagery in Revelation and **drawing parallels** to Old Testament texts, especially Isaiah. The lecture **highlights** the importance of maintaining faithful witness, avoiding compromise with pagan practices, and understanding the symbolic language used to describe spiritual states. **Ultimately**, the messages serve as both warnings and encouragements for believers to remain steadfast in their faith.

**2. 24 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Mathewson, Revelation, Session 7 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (New Testament → Revelation).**



**Mathewson\_Revelation\_Session07.mp3**

### 3. Briefing Document

Okay, here is a detailed briefing document summarizing the key themes and ideas from the provided lecture excerpts on Revelation chapters 2 and 3, focusing on the churches of Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea:

#### **Briefing Document: Revelation Chapters 2-3 - Churches of Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea**

**Overall Theme:** This lecture focuses on the messages to three of the seven churches in Revelation: Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea. Dr. Mathewson analyzes the specific commendations and rebukes given to each church, linking the promises to later imagery in Revelation, and explaining their significance within the historical context. He stresses the importance of spiritual discernment and faithfulness as key themes, also highlighting the dangers of compromise with pagan practices.

#### **Key Concepts and Ideas:**

- **The Importance of Faithful Witness:** The messages to the churches are warnings about the dangers of compromising with the Roman Empire and its pagan idolatry. The overarching theme is about the need for faithful witness, even amidst suffering and persecution.
- **Eschatological Promises:** The promises made to the overcomers in each church are linked to the future eschatological realities described later in Revelation (especially chapters 19-22), providing motivation for present faithfulness.
- **Spiritual Discernment:** Mathewson emphasizes the need for spiritual insight and understanding to grasp the true condition of the church and God's will for it. This discernment is key to responding to God in obedience and maintaining faithful witness.
- **Symbolic Interpretation:** Mathewson highlights that the text uses symbolism extensively. These are not to be interpreted literally but as conveying deeper spiritual truths.

## Specific Churches:

### 1. Sardis (Revelation 3:1-6):

- **Reputation vs. Reality:** Sardis had a reputation for being alive, but was actually spiritually dead. As Mathewson points out: "Sardis had a reputation for being alive, yet actually, they were dead."
- **Call to Repentance:** Jesus calls the church to repent, and promises to those who overcome that they will be clothed in white garments and their names will not be blotted out of the Book of Life.
- **White Garments:** These represent their final salvation, perfection, and vindication for their suffering and faithful witness. The quote, "The garments are probably simply a symbol of their final salvation and perfection and, more specifically, a symbol of victory and even vindication" encapsulates this idea.
- **Book of Life:** This is symbolic of the security and belonging of God's people. The assurance their names will not be blotted out is a form of litotes, meaning that God will keep them if they persevere. Mathewson clarifies: "This language of your names will not be blotted out is a figure of speech called litotes, which is a way of saying something by stressing its opposite or its negative... God will keep you. You can be certain that you will reach the goal of your eschatological salvation if you overcome and persevere."

### 1. Philadelphia (Revelation 3:7-13):

- **Positive Evaluation:** Philadelphia, like Smyrna, receives a completely positive evaluation. It suffers but remains faithful.
- **Christ as Holy and True:** Jesus is described as "him who is holy and true, who holds the key of David," emphasizing his authority.
- **The Key of David:** This is connected to Isaiah 22 and applied to Christ, the ultimate son of David. Christ's keys are symbols of authority over entrance into or exclusion from the Davidic kingdom, and ultimately God's kingdom. Mathewson says, "So, Jesus then would be seen as the ultimate one who has the keys and the authority. The keys are the symbol of authority of entrance into or exclusion from the kingdom."
- **The Open Door:** This is not primarily a door of evangelistic opportunity but entrance into the Messianic kingdom, already granted by Christ's authority to those who are faithful. As Mathewson points out, "The open door here is not a

door of opportunity for evangelism. The open door is the entrance into the kingdom of God."

- **Synagogue of Satan:** These are Jews who persecute the Christians. They will be made to acknowledge God's love for the Philadelphian Christians and bow before them, a reversal of traditional expectations. Mathewson says, "Now, these Jews who persecute God's people will come and bow down to the people of God, the church in Philadelphia. And acknowledge that God loves them."
- **Promise of Preservation:** God will keep them from the hour of trial. This is not about physical removal but divine protection during times of judgment.
- **Temple and New Jerusalem Imagery:** They are promised to be pillars in God's temple and participants in the New Jerusalem, highlighting their future inheritance.

#### 1. **Laodicea (Revelation 3:14-22):**

- **Wholly Negative Evaluation:** The Laodicean church receives a wholly negative evaluation. Mathewson explains: "Christ says nothing good, such as I know where you are. And I praise you for your faithfulness. And I praise you because you have done some good work. But I have this against you. Instead, the entire evaluation of the church is negative."
- **Spiritual Complacency:** Their wealth has led to spiritual complacency, ineffectiveness, and a lack of witness. Mathewson says, "...Christ goes after their complete complacency. That is, they are so reliant on their own wealth and comfort in their situation. That they simply have no witness at all."
- **Lukewarm:** This is not a middle ground between hot and cold, but rather represents a repulsive, useless state. The term is explained through the context of the cities' water supplies, rather than referring to spiritual temperature. Mathewson notes, "So, lukewarm does not stand for wishy-washy, middle-of-the-road Christianity. It stands for dead, ineffective, useless Christians." The city's water was tepid and gross, unlike neighboring cities' refreshing sources.
- **Jesus Outside the Church:** Jesus is knocking at the door of their church, excluded by their complacency, and seeking to be welcomed back. "Jesus Christ is seen as standing outside of his church. Not welcome in it," says Mathewson.
- **Call to Repentance and True Wealth:** They are called to repent and seek true, spiritual riches, sight, and garments.

- **Promise of Ruling:** To those who overcome (by repenting), they are promised the right to sit with Christ on his throne, and rule with him.

#### **Connection to the Rest of Revelation:**

- **Warning to Churches:** Chapters 2 and 3, as Mathewson says, "will determine how each of the churches. Read the rest of the book of Revelation. Or how the rest of Revelation. Apply specifically to each church." The messages to the churches form a context within which the rest of the Book must be read.
- **Reinterpretation of Visions:** The visions of chapters 4-22 are symbolic interpretations of the situations and promises described in chapters 2 and 3. Mathewson explains, "Chapters four through twenty-two. Will from a visionary perspective. Interpret what John has actually said. In chapters two and three."
- **Spiritual Discernment Required:** Understanding the rest of Revelation requires the spiritual insight and discernment described in these chapters. As Mathewson notes, "...Revelation chapters four through twenty-four requires spiritual insight. It requires understanding and the eyes of the spirits, the sevenfold Spirit, to help us to grasp and understand. The true situation of the church."

#### **Conclusion:**

Dr. Mathewson emphasizes that these messages to the seven churches are not just historical accounts but have ongoing relevance for the church in all times. He underscores the need for faithfulness, spiritual discernment, and avoiding compromise. The promises made to overcomers are a motivation for perseverance, reminding the church of its ultimate hope and destiny. The warnings highlight the dangers of complacency and accommodation with worldly values and practices, and the need to stay focused on Christ and His kingdom.

## 4. Mathewson, Revelation, Session 7, Revelation 3 – 7 Churches

### Revelation Study Guide: Chapters 2-3

#### Quiz

**Instructions:** Answer the following questions in 2-3 sentences each.

1. What was the primary issue with the church in Sardis, and what were the two promises made to those who overcome?
2. According to the lecture, what does the "Book of Life" symbolize, and what figure of speech is used to describe the promise that names will not be blotted out?
3. What was unique about the church in Philadelphia in comparison to the other churches in Revelation chapters 2 and 3?
4. What Old Testament passage is referenced when Jesus speaks of holding the "key of David," and what is the significance of this key?
5. How does the lecture interpret the open door presented to the church in Philadelphia, and what does it signify?
6. How did the Jewish population in Philadelphia treat Christians, according to the lecture?
7. What are the two main promises given to the church in Philadelphia if they overcome?
8. What was the most significant problem plaguing the church in Laodicea?
9. How does the lecture explain the imagery of "lukewarm" in the message to the Laodicean church, and what cultural context is used to interpret it?
10. According to the lecture, what is the significance of Jesus stating, "I stand at the door and knock," in the message to the Laodicean church?

#### Quiz Answer Key

1. The church in Sardis had a reputation for being alive, but Jesus said they were actually dead. The promises to those who overcome include being dressed in white garments and having their names remain in the Book of Life.

2. The Book of Life symbolizes the security and belonging of God's people and the certainty of their salvation. The figure of speech used to describe the promise is litotes, which is stating something by stressing its opposite or its negative.
3. The church in Philadelphia, along with Smyrna, was unique because it received a positive evaluation from Jesus with no rebuke or condemnation. They were suffering for their faithfulness, and described as having little power.
4. The Old Testament passage referenced is Isaiah 22, where Eliakim is given the key to the house of David. In Revelation, this signifies Jesus' authority to permit entrance to or exclusion from God's kingdom.
5. The open door is interpreted not as an evangelistic opportunity but as entrance into the messianic kingdom. This signifies the Philadelphians' access to God's kingdom through Christ's authority.
6. The Jewish population in Philadelphia distanced themselves from Christians, likely to preserve their privileges under Roman rule. They may have even been instrumental in persecuting and slandering them.
7. The two main promises given to the church in Philadelphia if they overcome are that they will be kept from the hour of trial and that they will become pillars in the temple of God, participating in the New Jerusalem.
8. The most significant problem in the church of Laodicea was its complacency and compromise due to wealth. They were spiritually poor, blind, and naked despite their affluence.
9. The "lukewarm" imagery is not about spiritual temperature being in the middle of hot and cold but refers to the uselessness of Laodicea's water supply. It signifies that they are spiritually ineffective, like the tepid water in their city.
10. This signifies that Jesus is outside of the Laodicean church, not welcome, and needs to be invited back in by repenting and welcoming him back into their midst. He has been left out of the church.

## Essay Questions

**Instructions:** Answer the following essay questions thoroughly, drawing from the provided lecture material.

1. Analyze the different ways the churches in Sardis and Philadelphia are portrayed in Revelation, and discuss what these portrayals suggest about the criteria for spiritual health and faithfulness according to the lecture.
2. Explore the Old Testament connections that are made within the lecture, such as the key of David in Isaiah 22, and explain how these references contribute to the understanding of Jesus' role and authority in Revelation.
3. Discuss the significance of the symbols and images used in the messages to the churches, such as white garments, the Book of Life, and the open door, and how these symbols contribute to the understanding of salvation and judgment in Revelation.
4. Compare and contrast the messages given to the churches in Philadelphia and Laodicea, and analyze the key factors that contribute to their respective evaluations by Jesus, according to the lecture.
5. Explain the concept of spiritual discernment as described in the lecture. How does the lecture suggest the churches should apply the lessons of chapters 2 and 3 to their current circumstances?



## Glossary of Key Terms

- **Eschatological Salvation:** The final salvation or deliverance of believers at the end of time, as described in Revelation.
- **Litotes:** A figure of speech in which an affirmation is made indirectly by denying its opposite; often used for emphasis.
- **Davidic Kingdom:** The kingdom of God, which is linked to the lineage of King David from the Old Testament, and connected to the Messianic rule of Jesus.
- **Emperor Cult:** The practice of worshiping Roman emperors as gods, a significant form of idolatry in the time of Revelation.
- **Synagogue of Satan:** A term used in Revelation to describe those who falsely claim to be God's people and persecute believers, often associated with the Jewish community in the area.
- **New Jerusalem:** The final, heavenly city, the ultimate dwelling place of God's people, as depicted in Revelation 21-22.
- **Pillar (in the temple):** A symbol of stability, honor, and permanence in God's presence in the New Jerusalem and in the temple, as used in the promises to Philadelphia.
- **Hierapolis:** A city near Laodicea known for its hot springs, mentioned as a point of contrast to illustrate the spiritual state of the Laodicean church.
- **Colossae:** A city near Laodicea known for its cold, refreshing water, mentioned as a point of contrast to illustrate the spiritual state of the Laodicean church.
- **Lukewarm:** In the context of the Laodicean church, it symbolizes a state of spiritual ineffectiveness and uselessness, not a middle ground between hot and cold.
- **Amen:** A term signifying faithfulness, truth, and certainty that is used to describe Jesus in the message to Laodicea.

## 5. FAQs on Mathewson, Revelation, Session 7, Revelation 3, 7 Churches, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

### FAQ on Revelation Chapters 2-3 (Based on Dr. Mathewson's Lecture)

1. **What was the main problem that the church in Sardis faced, and what promises were given to those who overcome?** The church in Sardis had a reputation for being alive, but was actually spiritually dead. Their problem was complacency, and a lack of spiritual vitality despite appearances of life. Those who overcome (remain faithful) in Sardis are promised white garments, symbolizing their purity, victory, and vindication, and their names will remain in the Book of Life, assuring their salvation. The key issue was the call to repentance and a rejection of compromise with the surrounding culture.
2. **Why was the church in Philadelphia unique among the seven churches, and what did it mean for Jesus to have the "key of David"?** Philadelphia, along with Smyrna, is unique because it received no condemnation or negative evaluation from Jesus, highlighting their faithfulness despite their weakness. Jesus holding the "key of David" signifies that He has the ultimate authority to grant or deny entrance into the kingdom of God. This imagery is linked to the Old Testament, specifically Isaiah 22 and 9, where a figure with authority over the kingdom is described. This key is not just about opportunities for evangelism, but about access to God's kingdom itself.
3. **What did the "open door" symbolize for the church in Philadelphia?** The "open door" for the church in Philadelphia is not primarily a door for evangelistic opportunities, but rather the entrance into the messianic kingdom itself. Jesus, holding the keys to the kingdom, has granted them access, securing their place within it regardless of their worldly power or suffering. This symbolizes their already secured and certain inheritance of God's Kingdom and assurance that they were included in the Messianic Kingdom.

4. **Who were the "synagogue of Satan" in Philadelphia, and what did Jesus promise to do with them?** The "synagogue of Satan" refers to those who claimed to be Jews but were not truly of God and were persecuting the Christians in Philadelphia. They were likely motivated by a desire to maintain their privileges under Roman rule by distancing themselves from Christians. Jesus promises that these persecutors will one day acknowledge the love that God has for the Philadelphian Christians by bowing down to them. This is an inversion of Old Testament prophecies where nations bow down to Israel.
5. **How are the promises to the church in Philadelphia connected to later chapters of Revelation?** The promises to the church in Philadelphia, such as being a pillar in God's temple and participating in the New Jerusalem, are direct allusions to the imagery found in Revelation chapters 21 and 22. These images reinforce the idea that their perseverance guarantees their inheritance of the New Jerusalem. They would also be kept safe when God pours out his judgment during the great trial.
6. **What was the fundamental problem with the church in Laodicea, and how did their physical wealth contribute to their spiritual state?** The Laodicean church was the worst off of the seven. They were completely complacent and self-reliant due to their wealth, leading to a lack of spiritual effectiveness. Instead of being on fire for Christ or cold and therefore being a negative witness, they were like the lukewarm water of their city, ineffective and disgusting. Their material affluence and comfort had made them spiritually blind, poor, and naked in God's eyes and made them useless to Him. This was an ironic contrast to their real-world status, highlighting how worldly success can lead to spiritual deadness.
7. **What does the image of Jesus standing outside the door of the Laodicean church signify?** The image of Jesus standing outside the door of the Laodicean church highlights that they have become so spiritually complacent and self-reliant that they have excluded Christ from their own community. They are more reliant on their wealth and social status rather than their relationship with Christ. He is not a part of their spiritual life. Instead, they need to repent and allow Christ back into the center of their community by opening the door. This is not primarily an individualistic call to salvation but a call to the church as a whole to return to its dependence on Christ.

8. **What is meant by the phrase "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches"? How do chapters 2 and 3 relate to the rest of Revelation?**

This phrase emphasizes the need for spiritual discernment to truly understand the messages to the seven churches. It is a call to listen, not only to the words themselves, but to the deeper implications about the spiritual state of the church. Chapters 2 and 3 serve as a diagnosis of the church, revealing their struggles with compromise and complacency. The rest of the Book of Revelation (chapters 4-22) should be read with this diagnosis in mind. The later chapters interpret the situation of the churches symbolically, showcasing God's judgments and promises, and also providing a call to repentance for those not fully committed to God. The reader is meant to see the churches in chapter 2 and 3 as a template for their current spiritual condition and to examine themselves.