



YES, NO AND MAYBE

1. I would make a great nighttime security guard.
2. God wants us to irritate the people around us.
3. God will protect us from the time of trouble.
4. God will let the enemy take your crown.
5. Laodicea's issues match today's churches in that it was apathetic.

DIG DEEPER

➤ READ Revelation 3

« What do you think is God's purpose in sending these messages to the seven churches?

THE LAST 3 OF THE 7 CHURCHES

» Chapter 3, Vss. 1-6: The Message to the Church in Sardis -

- **From** - The one who has the sevenfold Spirit of God and the seven stars
- **Compliment** - None. [The church in Sardis receives no compliment from Christ, only criticism. The only other church similarly faulted is the seventh church, Laodicea.]
- **Complaint** - You have a reputation for being alive but you are dead! [Like the city itself, the church at Sardis gloried in past splendor, but ignored present decay.]
- **Advice** - Wake up! Strengthen what little remains, for even what is left is almost dead. I find that your actions do not meet the requirements of my God. Go back to what you heard and believed at first; hold to it firmly. Repent and turn to me again. [Foreign armies had captured the city of Sardis twice in its history because of its failure to watch. The Christians of Sardis now have an opportunity to avoid a parallel spiritual destiny. The unsaved in Sardis saw the church as a respectable group of people who were neither dangerous nor desirable. They were decent people with a dying witness and a decaying ministry.]
- **Discipline** - If you don't wake up, I will come to you suddenly, as unexpected as a thief.
- **Reward** - All who are victorious will be clothed in white. [There is some evidence from antiquity that temple worshipers were not permitted to approach their gods and goddesses wearing dirty garments.] I will never erase their names from the Book of Life, but I will announce before my Father and his angels that they are mine. [The statement about the names being blotted out would also be significant to people in the Roman Empire, where citizenship was vitally important (see Acts 22:24-30).]

« What does it say about God that He wants Sardis to break their habit of being attacked while their guard is down?

» Chapter 3, Vss. 7-13: The Message to the Church in Philadelphia - [Philadelphia was situated in a strategic place on the main route of the Imperial Post from Rome to the East, and thus was called "the gateway to the East." It was also called "little Athens" because of the many temples in the city. The church was certainly located in a place of tremendous opportunity.]

- **From** - The one who is holy and true, the one who has the key of David. What he opens, no one can close; and what he closes, no one can open. [In the New Testament, an "open door" speaks of opportunity for ministry (Acts 14:27; 1 Cor. 16:9; 2 Cor. 2:12; Col. 4:3). He gave the church at Philadelphia a great opportunity for ministry.]
- **Compliment** - You have little strength, yet you obeyed my word and did not deny me. Because you have obeyed my command to persevere, I will protect you from the great time of testing that will come upon the whole world to test



NOTES

DIG DEEPER...CONTINUED

those who belong to this world.

- **Complaint** - None.
- **Advice** - I am coming soon. Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take away your crown.
- **Discipline** - None.
- **Reward** - All who are victorious will become pillars in the Temple of my God, and they will never have to leave it. And I will write on them the name of my God, and they will be citizens in the city of my God—the new Jerusalem that comes down from heaven from my God. And I will also write on them my new name. [The name of my God indicates that the overcomer belongs to God. That of the city of my God signifies that he has citizenship rights in the new Jerusalem (cf. Gal. 4:26; Heb. 11:10; 12:22; 13:14). My new name possibly refers to the new state of affairs brought about by the consummation of redemption.]

« What does it say about God that He is so passionate about you belonging to Him, your citizenship in heaven, and writing His new name on you?

» **Chapter 3, Vss. 14-22: The Message to the Church in Laodicea** - [Laodicea, at the junction of the valley of the Lycus and the Maeander and at the intersection of three important roads, commanded the approaches to Phrygia. It was one of the richest commercial centers in the world, so that we have here a picture of the church in an affluent society. Laodicea was noted for its banking and for its manufacture of clothing from the local black wool. It was an assize town and boasted a famous medical school. It also was located near Hieropolis, where there were famous hot springs, and Colossae, known for its pure, cold water.]

• **From** - The one who is the Amen—the faithful and true witness, the beginning of God’s new creation. [The Amen reflects ‘the God of truth’ (lit. ‘the God of Amen’, Isa. 65:16) and is reinforced with the faithful and true witness (cf. 1:5). This reliability stands in sharp contrast to the unfaithfulness of the Christians in this city.]

• **Compliment** - None. [There is no divine commendation given to this church. Of course, the Laodiceans were busy commending themselves! They thought they were glorifying God, when in reality they were disgracing His name just as though they had been walking around naked.]

• **Complaint** - You are neither hot nor cold. [The word lukewarm (chliaros) appears only here in the New Testament. The sense “unusable” or “barren” hits the mark.] You say, ‘I am rich. I have everything I want. I don’t need a thing!’ And you don’t realize that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked. [The church at Smyrna thought itself poor, when it was really rich (Rev. 2:9); the Laodiceans boasted that they were rich, when in fact they were poor. Perhaps we have here a hint of why this church declined spiritually: they had become proud of their ministry and had begun to measure things by human standards instead of by spiritual values.]

• **Advice** - I wish that you were one or the other! Buy gold from me—gold that has been purified by fire. Then you will be rich. Also buy white garments from me so you will not be shamed by your nakedness, and ointment for your eyes so you will be able to see. 19 I correct and discipline everyone I love. So be diligent and turn from your indifference. “Look! I stand at the door and knock. If you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in, and we will share a meal together as friends.” [These people could not see themselves as they really were. Nor could they see their Lord as He stood outside the door of the church. Nor could they see the open doors of opportunity. They were so wrapped up in building their own kingdom that they had become lukewarm in their concern for a lost world. The deipnon was the main meal of the day and was a leisurely affair, not a hurried snack (cf. John 14:23). And he with me brings the believer into active fellowship. It emphasizes the continuing fellowship. It all forms a remarkably tender appeal to a church far gone from its rightful state.]

• **Discipline** - I will spit you out of my mouth! [Christ’s threat to spit you out of my mouth—literally “vomit”—means that he will judge and reject them for their self-righteousness or self-sufficiency (rather than for their lack of spiritual fervor).]

• **Reward** - Those who are victorious will sit with me on my throne, just as I was victorious and sat with my Father on his throne.

« How is it possible to successfully grow a church, but still disappoint God?

« What does it say about God that despite our self-focus, His great desire is to spend time with us—at an unhurried meal...Or even sharing His throne with us?

MY PRAYER...

1. How do I struggle with the same issues that the seven churches did?
2. How does God show His patience to me?
3. What new aspect of God’s character does He want me to know?



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