



## **Revelation 2:4**

(4) Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.

## **Revelation 2:9-11**

(9) I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan. (10) Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life. (11) He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.

## **Revelation 2:13-15**

(13) I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is: and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth. (14) But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication. (15) So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes, which thing I hate.

## **Revelation 2:19-20**

(19) I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last to be more than the first. (20) Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and

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to eat things sacrificed unto idols.

### **Revelation 3:1**

(1) And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write; These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead.

### **Revelation 3:4**

(4) Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy.

### **Revelation 3:8**

(8) I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name.

### **Revelation 3:11-12**

(11) Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown. (12) Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name.

### **Revelation 3:15**

(15) I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot.

### **Revelation 3:19**

(19) As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.  
*King James Version*

Note that each of these congregations—those in Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea—was located in a Gentile city, and in all probability,

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each congregation's membership was primarily Gentile. It is quite likely that in each congregation the Jews were a minority.

Recall that the Romans ravaged Jerusalem in AD 70, and its Christians had to flee to Pella to save their lives. It is highly probable that none of these congregations had any communication with any survivor of the first congregation in Jerusalem. All of the apostles except John were dead, and he had been banished to Patmos. This circumstance was far different from the one in which the church was founded.

Were these Gentile congregations still part of the [true church](#)? Were they free of flaws and perfect in their character, attitudes, and doctrines? Would such a negative judgment eliminate them from being a true assembly?

Consider these further factors: [Revelation 2:4](#) commends the congregation in Ephesus for doctrinal vigilance but castigates it for leaving its first [love](#). [Revelation 2:9-11](#) shows Christ commending Smyrna for being spiritually rich, but He also admonishes them to overcome. Despite His commendation, they are not a finished product.

[Revelation 2:13-15](#) praises those in Pergamos for not denying their [faith](#), but its members are doctrinally divided, and they permit [heresy](#) to continue. [Revelation 2:19-20](#) presents Thyatira as growing in good works, but its members tolerate heresy and are guilty of sexual immorality.

[Revelation 3:1, 4](#) exposes Sardis as spiritually dead, though it contains a few who remain undefiled, indicating that its members have virtually lost their faith and are capable only of dead works. [Revelation 3:8, 11-12](#) reports that those in Philadelphia are faithfully enduring, but Christ admonishes them to hold fast and overcome. Finally, [Revelation 3:15, 19](#) judges Laodicea as spiritually bankrupt and gives it no commendation at all. The congregation is strongly advised to be zealous and repent.

What does a composite picture of these congregations reveal?

1. All seven of them are admonished to [repent](#), hold fast, or remain faithful.
2. Only two of them, Smyrna and Philadelphia, receive strong commendations and no listing of their sins and other shortcomings.
3. Two of them, Pergamos and Thyatira, receive a lesser commendation and fairly strong rebukes for sexual immorality and allowing deceivers into the congregation.

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4. Two of them, Sardis and Laodicea, receive strong rebukes and no commendations.

In terms of a true church in a single corporate body, what do we see? Only sixty years or so following [Christ's resurrection](#), we have a mixed bag as regards overall stability and righteousness.

Even so, is any one of them not a true congregation, an assembly of truly called-out ones? Does Christ in any way say that even one of them was no longer part of His church, His body of people? Not in the least. There are, however, warnings that, if they did not repent, some within their [fellowship](#) might not be within the Body of Christ in the future. Two things are sure:

1. Some of these congregations are clearly spiritually better than the others.
2. Some of them are decidedly awful, even though, using carnal judgment, they may outwardly appear good.

Since Revelation is an end-time book, the overview given in [Revelation 2 and 3](#) is especially significant at this time. It is forecasting what things will be like just before Christ returns, and He uses these first-century congregations to illustrate His forecast for our time.

Remember that [God](#) is judging us individually within each group. An attitude that we should not allow to grow in us is to think that we are the only ones who retain a true-church identity. The other side of that same concept is that, even if we agree that others are still part of the true church, we are still better than they are—indeed, everybody else is [Laodicean](#) by comparison.

This unmistakably holier-than-you attitude is extremely destructive to true brotherhood and proper fellowship and unity. [Luke 18:9-14](#) records this teaching of Christ concerning self-righteousness and its effects on these matters. Those who elevate themselves in their judgment of themselves as compared to their fellow members bring on themselves this condemnation. God does not justify them when they make this kind of judgment.

— John W. Ritenbaugh

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