

# REVELATION & THE DECEIVED CHURCH

## *Revelation 2 & 3*

**IN THESE TWO CHAPTERS**, John saw what the church would be like before the events of the last days of the last days were unleashed. He saw a deceived and compromised church. The Devil began to compromise the church as soon as it was revealed. The apostasy of the church would continue to increase until it permeated the entire church structure in the last of the last days.

The apostle Paul warned of this great apostasy taking place before the Antichrist appears on earth: “Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition” (2 Thessalonians 2:3). The phrase *that day* refers to the return of Christ to the earth (2 Thessalonians 2:2). The *falling away* is the apostasy of the church. The *man of sin* is the Antichrist. This apostasy removes the restraining power of the Holy Spirit that has kept the Antichrist from rising upon the earth (2 Thessalonians 2:7-8). An active, Spirit-led church is the light that holds the darkness back. However, light merged with compromise (sin) is a great darkness, a darkness that deceives a person into thinking that he is a Christian when he is far removed from the Spirit of God (Matthew 6:23).

Revelation 2 and 3 reveal the apostasy of the church, setting the stage for the appearance of the Antichrist. Since we are living in the day when the Antichrist could appear at any time, we must also recognize that the present church is living in deception, thinking it is *the* church. However, according to the words written in this chapter, the church today is far removed from God’s Holy Spirit, which is the distinguishing mark of the true church.

The messages to the seven churches were not written only for those named by John; they are also relevant to Christians throughout all generations. Since we are living in the time when the book of Revelation is being fulfilled, it would be wise to give careful attention to these messages and to ask ourselves, “Do we need to change how we think about God and how we live our lives?” After each message, Jesus makes the statement, “He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.” We must ask ourselves, “Do we hear what Jesus is saying to us? Am we willing to do what is necessary to repent and become true Christians?”

The messages reveal these churches to be hard workers for Christ. They were patient, untiring, defenders of correct doctrine, persecuted, charitable, faithful, and appearing to be devout Christians. However, Christ condemned most of them because they were living without the power of God. They were Christians only for monetary gain, they tolerated sin, were involved with immorality, submersed in the occult, allowed teachers to teach false doctrine, lived on their reputation, and would not take an all out stand either for or against Christ, preferring to compromise.

In these last days, it is important that we heed Christ's words and repent so that we might be counted worthy of eternal life. These messages are written to cause conviction and to turn the apostate church toward repentance, while giving hope to those who have not compromised their trust in God.

In two of the seven messages, Christ did not speak any condemnation to the churches, the first being to the church in Smyrna. When reading about this church, you will notice that it is different from all the others. It experienced much tribulation, lived in poverty, and was lied about and criticized by those who said they belonged to God. They were thrown into prison and killed because they put their trust in Jesus. The church in Philadelphia was the second church Jesus spoke to without condemnation; they were also persecuted. The contrast between these two churches and the other five should strike godly fear into the hearts of churches today, causing each individual to fall prostrate, crying out to God in repentance.

Dear brothers and sisters: Do not think that once you are a Christian you are exempt from troubles. Jesus warned that, "In the world ye shall have tribulation..." (John 16:33). Paul reminds us that, "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Timothy 3:12). Whenever you face persecution, do not focus on the trouble at hand, but on the reward that will be given when Jesus returns. This is what Paul echoed when he wrote, "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Romans 8:18). As you develop patience as you go about your day-to-day activities, your faith is strengthened. As James says, "My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing" (James 1:2-4). Patience is the key to holding firm to your faith in the most difficult of times and for growing in faith. Learning patience in the small things of life will give you strength to endure the greater challenges when they come.

After this great apostasy permeates the church, the rest of the events preceding Christ's coming are ready to take place.

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*Taken from the book:  
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