

Recap and Revisit

Teaching 2-21-2026 Pastor Dave

There ARE Christian churches in Ephesus today.

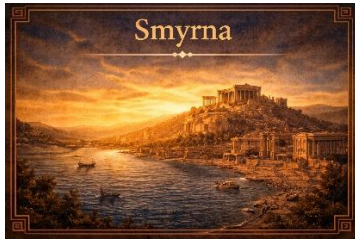
The original Christian community in Ephesus, prominent in the 1st century AD, gradually declined due to geological and political shifts, with the city being largely abandoned by the 14th century. While the city persisted for centuries, the main church structure was destroyed in the mid-7th century by Arab raids, though it remained a site for worship until the 11th century.

While the ancient city of Ephesus is now an uninhabited archaeological site in Turkey (near modern-day Selçuk), there are no active, historically continuous Christian churches from the biblical era. However, the area remains a significant Christian pilgrimage site featuring ruins of early churches, such as the Basilica of St. John and the House of the Virgin Mary, with a small,, Protestant, congregation of, former-Muslim, believers, now, located in, nearby, Selçuk,

-RECAP SLIDES –



2 SMYRNA



1. Smyrna — *The Persecuted Church*

a. Smyrna

b. Historical Prophetic: (Persecuted Church): Era of Roman persecution (c. 100-300 AD).

- i. Strengths:** Faithful amid poverty and persecution.
- ii. Concern:** None—only encouragement.
- iii. Call:** Be faithful unto death.
- iv. Promise:** The crown of life; no harm from the second death.

Revelation 2

8 To the angel of the church in **Smyrna** write:

These are the words of the First and the Last, who died and returned to life.

9 I know your affliction and your poverty—though you are rich! And I am aware of the slander of those who falsely claim to be Jews, but are in fact a synagogue of Satan.

10 Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison to test you, and you will suffer tribulation for ten days. Be faithful even unto death, and I will give you the crown of life.

11 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. The one who overcomes will not be harmed by the second death.

SMYRNA –

Sea port, known for flowers, tropical climate, beauty, 600 bc king Atallah devastated, then Alexander the Great rebuilt into spectacular city of its day, “death and resurrection” – that theme Jesus picks up on.

Smyrna = Myrrh, valued for use in burial and fragrance, they produced and sold the most, myrrh.

Wise men, death of Jesus,

Early Christians resurrected to far better life.

“the one who has died and risen again”

“I know” – Jesus

The word “Tribulation” – is a picture of the ancient torture to stretch a man out and then put weights on his chest until he couldn’t breathe any longer.

Jesus knows that Smyrna is going through tribulation.

“Can’t catch a break?”

“Can’t catch a breath.”

1. Poverty
2. Slander
3. Imprisonment and death

Taking a stand for Christ in Smyrna could mean an impoverished state. Lose your job, your status in the community. Because you wouldn’t worship the gods of the trade unions.

They were slandered, belittled and made fun of.

Jesus said: “I know”

To be imprisoned probably meant that you would be thrown into a rat-infested dungeon... full of human excrement, very little light and certainly not much food.

And to die, well, you'd be thrown to the wild beasts...in a public arena while the crowds cheered, or you'd be burned at the stake or some other horrific way to die.

There were many Christian martyrs in Smyrna, one of the most famous was Polycarp-86 years old.

They came to arrest him, he fixed them a meal and asked if he could pray for an hour. So intense was his prayer, when they heard it, they said "we can't kill this man", they took him before the magistrate and he said "I can't kill him" and begged him to deny Christ. Polycarp said: I've served my master for 86 years, how can I deny Him now"

They started to burn him at the stake, history records a great wind came and blew the flames away from Polycarp. Finally, they stabbed him to death.

Jesus said to the Christians at Smyrna: "I will give you a crown of life".

The symbol of the City of Smyrna was a crown, it was on their buildings, on their coins, the Acropolis overlooking the city had embattlements on top that resembled a crown, during festivities all wore a garland crown, like the Emperor.

However, the Christians did not get honored with a crown, even if they won the games like the Olympics in Smyrna. They were not allowed.

Greek word:

Original Word: στέφανος

Part of Speech: Noun, Masculine

Transliteration: stephanos

This is NOT diadem. We will talk about this later on in the study.

The Greek word for diadem used in Revelation is **διάδημα** (transliterated as *diadēma*). Used in Rev 12:3, 13:1, and 19:12, it refers to a kingly headband or crown symbolizing royal authority, distinguishing it from *stephanos*, which refers to a victor's wreath.

Smyrna-

This was the period of time of horrendous persecution of the Christians, coliseum, circus maximus, lions, burned at stake, sewn into bags to be torn apart by wild beasts, while the onlookers cheered.

One historian said as many as 5 million Christians were slaughtered in the arenas; and this was the existence of the Church at Smyrna.

Remember -Name of city: Smyrna – Myrr – the connection to death and burial.

But Jesus said: "I know."

11 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. The one who overcomes will not be harmed by the SECOND DEATH.

Revelation 20: 14,15

14 Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. THIS IS THE SECOND DEATH—the lake of fire. 15 And if anyone was found whose name was not written in the Book of Life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

"Born once, die twice; born twice, die once"

Jesus says -

To the one who holds onto their faith.

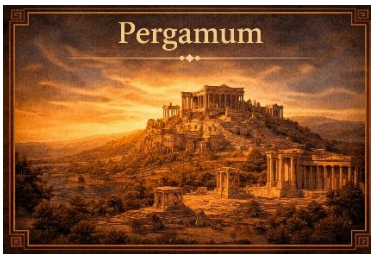
“Endure to the end and I WILL GIVE YOU A CROWN OF LIFE!”

“Hang in there!”

“Stay with it!”

In the end, YOU WILL WIN!

3 PERGAMUM



3 Pergamum — *The Compromising Church*

a. Pergamum Historical Prophetic -(Church-State Union):

b. Pergamum means: thoroughly married.

c. Church compromises with the world/state, especially after Constantine (c. 300-500 AD). The emperor became a Christian. Around AD 313, the Roman Empire was ruled by two main co-emperors: Constantine I (the Great), who controlled the West, and Licinius, who controlled the East. Together, they issued the Edict of Milan in 313, granting religious freedom to Christians. Maximinus II Daza was also a rival emperor in the East until his death in 313.

d. The persecutions of the Christian church stopped immediately.

- i. Strengths:** Held fast to Christ's name under pressure.
- ii. Concern:** Tolerated false teaching and moral compromise.
- iii. Call:** Repent of accommodation to culture.
- iv. Promise:** Hidden manna and a new name.

Revelation 2

12 To the angel of the church in **Pergamum** write:

These are the words of the One who holds the sharp, double-edged sword.

13 I know where you live, where the throne of Satan sits, yet you hold fast to My name. You did not deny your faith in Me, even in the days of My faithful witness Antipas, who was killed among you where Satan dwells.

14 But I have a few things against you, because some of you hold to the teaching of Balaam, (**Numbers 25**) who taught Balak (**King of Moab**) to place a stumbling block before the Israelites so they would eat food sacrificed to idols and commit sexual immorality (**Moabite women** seduced the Israelites and mingled their sexual immorality with their worship) .(Remember the name,

Pergamum means-thoroughly married – they were marrying these practices inside the church) 15 In the same way, some of you also hold to the teaching of the Nicolaitans. **(History does not really tell us who the Nicolaitans were)** 16 Therefore repent! Otherwise I will come to you shortly and wage war against them with the sword of My mouth.

17 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who overcomes, I will give the hidden manna. I will also give him a white stone inscribed with a new name, known only to the one who receives it.

Pergamum the site of the Hellenistic theater, the steepest in all the ancient world, holding 10,000 people. Site of the Pergamum library with 200,000 volumes.

Pergamum was the capital of the Pergamum Empire, later it was bequeathed back to Rome and as Alexander the Great conquered, he made the official language of the Roman Empire,- Greek. So, everyone spoke the same language, which was a momentous avenue to spread the Gospel across the then known world.

The Temple of Zues was in Pergamum, Zues the god of all gods, their king of kings. In the Temple of Dionysus-the god of wine, there was such debauchery, reveling and orgies, that at times they would get out of hand and end up taking human life. Temple of Athena, Asceplipius- god of healing, Demeter-god of agriculture, temple of Hera-queen of the gods.

And Jesus said: “I know”

“I know where you live, where the throne of Satan sits.”

But: To the one who overcomes, I will give the hidden manna. I will also give him a white stone inscribed with a new name, known only to the one who receives it.

White stone:

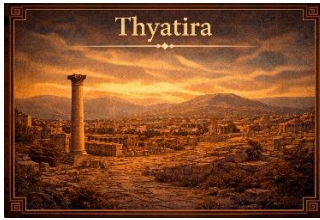
We have talked about these in our Old Testament studies.

In Hebrew, the "white and black stones" associated with divine judgment or priestly breastplates likely refer to the **Urim and Thummim** (אֲוִרִים וְתַמִּיּוֹת), which were likely objects or stones used to determine guilt (black) or innocence (white). Another interpretation includes the **shoham** (שֹׁהַם - onyx), often black or white, used in the High Priest's breastplate.

- **Urim and Thummim:** Scholars believe these were used as lots to answer "yes" or "no," with the Urim potentially representing guilt and Thummim innocence.

In Revelation 2:17, the white stone given to the overcoming church of Pergamum symbolizes a divine token of acquittal, victory, and intimate fellowship with Christ. It represents a "not guilty" verdict, securing access to the heavenly banquet, and signifies a transformed, personal identity through a new name known only to the recipient

4 THYATIRA



18 To the angel of the church in **Thyatira** write:

These are the words of the Son of God, (after His character) whose eyes are like a blazing fire and whose feet are like polished bronze.

19 I know your deeds—your love, your faith, your service, your perseverance—and your latest deeds are greater than your first.

20 But I have this against you: You tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess. By her teaching she misleads My servants to be sexually immoral and to eat food sacrificed to idols. 21 Even though I have given her time to repent of her immorality, she is unwilling.

22 Behold, I will cast her onto a bed of sickness, and those who commit adultery with her will suffer great tribulation unless they repent of her deeds. 23 Then I will strike her children dead, and all the churches will know that I am the One who searches minds and hearts, and I will repay each of you according to your deeds.

24 But I say to the rest of you in Thyatira, who do not hold to her teaching and have not learned the so-called deep things

of Satan: I will place no further burden upon you 25 than to hold fast to what you have until I come. 26 And to the one who overcomes and continues in My work until the end, I will give authority over the nations. 27 He will rule them with an iron scepter and shatter them like pottery —just as I have received authority from My Father. 28 And I will give him the morning star.

29 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

4. Thyatira — *The Corrupted Church*

a. **Thyatira: means- “perpetual sacrifice”**

Historical Prophetic: (Medieval/Compromised Church): The Dark Ages, rise of papal power and corruption (c. 500-1500 AD). Roman Catholic Church ruled and reigned. Until 1517 – Martin Luther

b. Martin Luther is famously said to have nailed his 95 Theses to the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg, Germany, on **October 31, 1517**. This act, which served as a protest against the sale of indulgences and a call for academic debate, is traditionally considered the start of the Protestant Reformation.

i. **Strengths:** Love, faith, service, growth.

- ii. **Concern:** Tolerated a false prophetess leading into immorality.
- iii. **Call:** Repent; hold fast to truth.
- iv. **Promise:** Authority with Christ and the morning star.

Thyatira was founded by Alexander the Great as a military garrison. Temple to Apollo.

No record of any real persecution against the Christians at Thyatira.

Textiles.

Water in Thyatira was so rich in minerals, that dyed red cloth made it famous.

Lydia “the seller of purple” in Paul’s time, was from Thyatira. Bronze smiths, ironsmiths, silver smiths, pottery was coveted.

the entire social, industrial, religious structure of Thyatira was built around the guilds-like a labor union. All of the guilds held festivals in the Temple of Apollo. Thus the problem for Christians. Filled with revelry, drunkenness, debauchery, immorality. But, if you didn’t attend, you risk bringing the wrath of Apollo down on the entire guild – talk about peer pressure!

But I have something against you, because you tolerate the prophetess Jezabel. (Who was manipulating them to

attend the pagan festivals) the deep things of coercion and compulsion and Jesus calls her Jezabel-like OT wife of most wicked king Ahab.

Jesus starts this letter by identifying Himself as “The Son of God” which is what the Romans called Apollo – how apropos to this church.

And He describes Himself with feet of bronze and eyes as a burnished flame – a description that the people in the guilds of Thyatira would understand.

You will smash the powers that be with a rod of iron.
I am the Bright and Morning Star. Revelation 21

5 SARDIS



1 “To the angel of the church in **Sardis** write:

These are the words of the One who holds the seven spirits of God and the seven stars.

I know your deeds; you have a reputation for being alive, yet you are dead. 2 Wake up and strengthen what remains, which is about to die; for I have found your deeds incomplete in the sight of My God. 3 Remember, then, what you have received and heard. Keep it and repent. If you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know the hour when I will come upon you.

4 But you do have a few people in Sardis who have not soiled their garments, and because they are worthy, they will walk with Me in white. 5 Like them, he who overcomes will be dressed in white. And I will never blot out his name from the Book of Life, but I will confess his name before My Father and His angels.

6 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

5. Sardis — *The Dead Church*

Sardis-Historical Prophetic - (Reformed

Church): Protestant Reformation, revival of doctrine but spiritual deadness (c. 1500-1800s).

Strengths: Reputation for life.

Concern: Spiritually dead despite appearances.

Call: Wake up; strengthen what remains.

Promise: White garments and a secure name in the Book of Life.

Sardis was liberated by Alexander the Great in 340 BC from the Kingdom of Lydia; and became an important Greek city central to the worship of Artemis – goddess of the hunt, wilderness, and fertility.

Sardis held the largest Jewish synagogue outside Palestine.

There was a mix in the “house churches” 30-40 individuals in homes of the more wealthy.

Early on, the Christians were a sect of Judaism and not persecuted in Sardis. Not until 64-65 AD, when Nero burnt Rome and blamed it on the Christians, that then we see the real persecution break out and the Christians are seen as a hostile sect in the Empire.

Jesus said: You seem alive, but you are dead.
I will come as a thief in the night.
What did that mean?

King Croesus ruled this region and had built a massive city fortification to protect his vast wealth. Impregnable. When Cyrus came through he couldn't take the city. One night, one of Cyrus's men noticed a guard up on the wall and he looked over and dropped his helmet. The guard soon appeared at the bottom of the wall, came through a secret door, got his helmet and went back in. So now Cyrus had a way in. It happened again, with the Persians.

Just when they thought they were safe, they were not. The thief will come. Jesus knew the history of Sardis.

In Sardis, the church just wanted to get along.
“Why can't we all just get along?”
So, they embraced the culture and said, we can go to worship and eat food sacrificed to idols, and we won't commit adultery-but if you do-that's your thing.

And they lost sight of the MESSAGE.
They were going through the motions, but they lost sight of the message of Jesus Christ coming into the world to save us.

And Jesus said: You look alive, but you are dead.

They compromised the distinction of Christ as opposed to ancient cultures.

The Sardis church had become a “get along” culture.

“Go along to get along.”

“We don’t believe that way, but we don’t want to make waves.”

How do we know?

When they excavated the ruins at Sardis, they found signs in the Jewish synagogue.

On one of the altars, there were Jewish names, only written in Greek.

We may ask, is that a big deal?

To the Jews, their names were **vitaly** important. It symbolized -who they were and who they would become.

Today, we pick names out of a baby name book or name them after celebrities that we like. And sometimes, what or who we worship.

Moon Unit Zappa
Dweezil,
Ahmet Emuukha Rodan
Diva Thin Muffin Pigeen.
River Phoenix

Remember when Babylon captured Israel and took them into captivity, they changed -
Hananiah ("Yah has been gracious") became Shadrach ("Command of Aku" or "Illumined by the sun god").
Michael ("Who is what God is?") became Meshach ("Who is what Aku is?").
Azariah ("The Lord has helped") became Abednego ("Servant of Nabu" or "Servant of Nebo").
Daniel (God is my judge) they changed to Belteshazzar . They were changed to honor Babylonian gods instead of Jehovah.

In the Sardis synagogue, there were Roman reliefs and symbols on the altars and pillars and floors. Symbols of Roman gods. It symbolized loyalty to Rome. They found the gods of Lydian culture, the synagogue was right next to the Roman gymnasium- contests in the nude, the Romans worshiped the body, the communal baths, etc.

Deep offense to the Christians.

A lot of clues that the Christians wanted to “just get along”.

Sardis was a big-time “get along” culture.

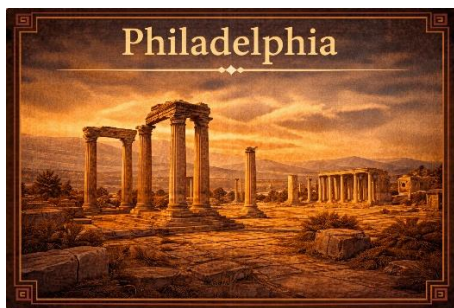
Jesus said: Strengthen what little you have left. And Repent.

“Remember what you learned at first”.

He did say, there are a few that have not “soiled” their purity and white garments.

But for the rest of you: Repent. Keep your garments clean.

6 PHILADELPHIA



7 To the angel of the church in **Philadelphia** write:

These are the words of the One 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.

8 I know your deeds. Behold, I have placed before you an open door, which no one can shut. I know that you have only a little strength, yet you have kept My word and have not denied My name. 9 As for those who belong to the synagogue of Satan, who claim to be Jews but are liars instead, I will make them come and bow down at your feet, and they will know that I love you.

10 Because you have kept My command to persevere, I will also keep you from the hour of testing that is about to come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.

11 I am coming soon. Hold fast to what you have, so that no one will take your crown. 12 The one who overcomes I will make a pillar in the temple of My God, and he will never again leave it. Upon him I will write the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God (the new Jerusalem that comes down out of heaven from My God), and My new name.

13 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

6. Philadelphia — *The Faithful Church*

1. presence. **Philadelphia -Historical Prophetic - (Revival/Missionary Church):** Great missionary movements, spiritual awakening (c. 1800s-early 1900s).

Strengths: Obedient and loyal with little strength.

Concern: None—only affirmation.

Call: Hold fast.

Promise: An open door; permanence in God's

Prosperous until 17 AD when it was struck with cataclysmic earthquake that was so bad that Rome stopped requiring tribute (taxes) for 5 years.

They were hoping for help with rebuilding.

But they were betrayed.

Domitian told them to tear out their lush vineyards.

So, it meant so much when Jesus said: "I am the holy and true" In other words, "I will never betray you".

In the early days of the 1st century the Christians were a sect of the Jews and would actually worship in the synagogue.

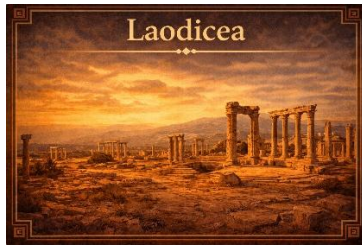
Then it came to the point, that the Jews in the synagogue, like in Philadelphia, began to shut the doors on them and strike them from the register, which meant that they could no longer say "Jesus is Lord" they would have to say "Ceasar is lord" to the Romans.

So, Jesus says: “I will never shut the door on you.” I will never kick you out, like He does to us.

The Church at Philadelphia chose to bear the shame of Christianity and for that Jesus says: “I hold the key of David” which meant He held the authority over the House of Israel, then he said something very fascinating "these who have excluded you, someday they will bow their knees before you and know that I love you."

This is hope to all of us who are excluded in any way.

7 LAODICEA



Revelation 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. 15 I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! 16 So, because you are lukewarm—neither hot nor cold—I am about to spit you out of my mouth. 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. 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.

19 Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest and repent. 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.

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

1. Laodicea — Historical Prophetic –

2. *The Lukewarm Church*

Strengths: Wealth and self-sufficiency (in their own eyes).

Concern: Spiritual complacency—neither hot nor cold.

Call: Repent; seek true riches from Christ.

Promise: Fellowship with Christ and a seat on His throne.

Laodicea (Lukewarm/Apostate Church): Modern era of spiritual lukewarmness, self-sufficiency (c. 1900-present).

Remember:

The seven churches represent **real congregations** with **real struggles**, but also a **comprehensive portrait of church life across all eras**—from faithful endurance to dangerous compromise, from vibrant love to lifeless routine. The repeated refrain, “*He who has an ear, let him hear,*” invites every believer and church to self-examine and respond.

Laodicea was a booming economy.

Prospering.

Affluent society. (Like America)

Banking center of the world

Eye salve, that people came from all over to purchase.

Christians were well off.

When the earthquake came in AD 17 – Laodicea said to Rome: We don't need your help, we will rebuild ourselves.

But, they had no water, so they constructed water pipes to bring from miles away. In the hot Asia Minor sun, by the time it reached Laodicea it was tepid. On top of that, there were a lot of minerals in the water (the residue in the clay pipes is still evident to this day) When you drank it, you would spit it out of your mouth.

Unlike neighboring Colossae who got their water from the snow melt coming off Mount Cadmus and feeding the Lycus River.

Nearby Hierapolis had hot springs (Like Colorado's Glenwood, Pagosa, Steamboat Springs)

Hierapolis hot springs, located in Pamukkale, Turkey, are renowned for their, mineral-rich, (97°F) waters that have been used as a healing spa since the 2nd century BC.

Visitors can swim among ancient Roman ruins in the Antique Pool (Cleopatra's Pool) and walk along the iconic, white, travertine terraces.

So, it is no wonder that when Jesus spoke to Laodicea, that He said: "I wish you were either hot or cold" but quite frankly you remind me of your water, tepid and disgusting to the taste.

Now, the other churches were letting idolatry and sexual immorality and compromise creep in.

But Jesus, to the Church at Laodicea had a strong word.

"I wish you were hot or cold, but because you are luke warm, I will spit you out of my mouth."

We mostly have preached and taken that to mean: "You have to have revive and be 'on fire' for God!"

However, consider this...

Jesus answers why He feels sick to His stomach and feels like vomiting:

But Laodicea

17 You say, 'I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.' (Remember their economy and how they didn't

want Rome's help to rebuild) But you do not realize that you are **wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked.**

Would we want Jesus to say that about us?

Their affluence had excluded Jesus from their lives (as in America today)

They said, they have need of NOTHING.

That was the mentality that had arisen in the Laodicean Church.

Now, there was an affluent marketplace in Laodicea, like 5th Ave or Rodeo Drive. And banks for money changing.

Jesus says: Come into my bank and buy from me GOLD that is pure, refined in the fire, (all through scripture GOLD is character, and intestinal fortitude, integrity, refined under pressure, persecution, trial, trouble -and robes of white (always defined as RIGHTEOUSNESS)

I will put the SALVE (Laodicean commodity) on your eyes, so you can see.

Jesus wanted to open their lives to HIS wealth and wisdom.

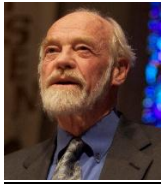
He wraps up their letter: I stand at the door and knock. And dine with them (intimacy)

With all of these letters to the 7 churches, Jesus is the conqueror, the winner, the Lord and He says: If you have ears to hear, then hear!

Notice the last words in Chapter 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. 22 Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the **churches** (then and today).”

CLOSING:



Eugene Peterson author of *Reversed Thunder*, viewed the Book of Revelation not as secret code for future events, but as a **pastoral vision of Christ-centered worship and reality**, urging believers to experience God's presence rather than just gather facts. He sees it as a Christ-focused call to worship and faithful living, using rich imagery to reveal God's enduring reality in all circumstances.

"If you don't have a past, you don't have an identity. And if you don't have a future, you don't have hope."- Dr. John Lennox

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Dr. Joe Stowell- President Cornerstone University –

Our Daily Bread Ministries

Dr Mark Wilson – Director Asia Minor Research Center,
Antalya, Turkey

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Link for YouTube:

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