



The Letters to the 7 Churches

TEACHER'S GUIDE

A 5 WEEK INDUCTIVE BIBLE STUDY

SCRIPTURE PATHS BIBLE STUDIES

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Letters to the Seven Churches

Lesson #1, Introduction and Chapter Overviews

TEACHER'S GUIDE

You are about to begin the adventure of the *Letters to the Seven Churches of Revelation* Bible Study. May God grant you grace, understanding, and a desire to apply all you will learn from His incomparable and unfailing Word!

Please don't faint when you take a look at this lesson! I know there's a lot here, but the process is so worth the effort. Try to break this lesson up into pieces so you won't feel overwhelmed. The goal is to help you gain a working knowledge of the opening chapters of Revelation before you dive into the rest of the lessons for this study. Understanding the flow of the book will help you understand what God intends for you to know, while guiding you in a proper interpretation of the book. Ask the Lord for insight into His Word as you answer the questions that follow.

Using only the text of Revelation Chapters 1-3, try to answer the following questions. Be sure to note the Scripture references that show where you found your answer. At this point in the lesson, you may not be able to answer every question using *only* your Bible. You will have an opportunity a while later in this lesson to complete your answers using other Bible study sources.

1. *Who* wrote the book?

John—who identifies himself as God's bond-servant in verse 1. He also states that he testifies to all he saw and received from God and through Jesus Christ in verse 2.

Verse 4, uses his name again.

Verse 9, I, John, your brother and fellow partaker

2. *To whom* is it written?

Verse 4—John to the seven churches that are in Asia

Verse 11—write and send it to the seven churches

3. *When* was the book written?

Verse 9—when he was on the island of Patmos

Verse 10—on the Lord's day

Possibly AD 95-96

4. *Where* was it written?

Verse 9 from the island of Patmos

John's effective testimony for Christ led the Roman authorities to exile him to the small, desolate island of Patmos in the Aegean Sea (1:9). This island of volcanic rock was one of several places to which the Romans banished criminals and political offenders.¹

The small island of Patmos is about 7.5 miles (12 km) long from north to south and at its widest is 6 miles (10 km) from east to west. It is the northernmost island of the Dodecanese. With an area of 13 square miles (35 sq. km) and a circumference of 25 miles (37 km), the volcanic island presents a largely rocky and treeless landscape.

5. What is the *general tone* of the author in the first three chapters?

Informative; encouraging; exhorting; confronting and admonishing

It's a forthright, but encouraging letter

Now go back and answer the above questions using your study Bible notes, a Bible dictionary or Bible commentary to add details to your answers above.

6. From **Chapter 1** answer these questions:

a. Summarize the contents of this chapter.

Chapter explains why the book is being given and provides a picture of the Risen Lord Jesus in His glory and power. He is powerful but kind and encouraging too.

b. What is the main point the author is trying to communicate to his readers?

The main point can be summed up in verses 3 or 19: 3 Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of the prophecy, and heed the things which are written in it; for the time is near. 19 "Therefore write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after these things.

God wants the early churches to know what He intends for the future. But it is meant as a strengthening book and God desires them (and us) to be prepared in heart for the coming events.

c. List what you learn about Jesus Christ from this chapter.

Verse 1 the letter is His revelation given to Jesus by God to then give to the churches

Verse 2 John testified of Jesus' testimony

Verse 5 [grace and peace] from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness—the firstborn of the dead—the ruler of the kings of the earth

Verse 5 [all glory from verse 6] to Him who loves us—and released us from our sins by His blood

Verse 6 He has made us to be a kingdom—made us to be priests to His God

Verse 6 all glory and dominion be given to Him forever and ever

¹ Bruce Wilkinson and Kenneth Boa, [*Talk Thru the Bible*](#) (Nashville: T. Nelson, 1983), 511.

Verse 7 He is coming in the clouds—every eye will see Him—all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him

[might be referring to God—Verse 8 I am the alpha and the omega—who was, who is, and who is to come—the almighty]

Verse 9 the tribulation, kingdom, and perseverance are in Jesus

Verse 9 John was exiled because of his testimony about Jesus

Verse 10 John was in the Spirit on the Lord's day

Verse 10 He has a voice like the sound of a trumpet

Verse 13 one like the son of man—clothed in a robe reaching to His feet—girded across His chest was a golden sash

Verse 14 His head and hair were white, like white wool, like snow—His eyes were like a flame of fire

Verse 15 His feet were like burnished bronze—voice like the sound of many waters

Verse 16 in His right hand He held seven stars—out of His mouth came a sharp two-edged sword—face like the sun shining in its strength

Verse 17 He touched and comforted John and identified self as I am the first and the last

Verse 18 He is the living One—He was dead, but is alive forevermore—keys of death and Hades

Verse 19 commands John to write

Verse 20 He explains the mystery

d. What do you learn about God in this chapter?

Verse 1 God gave the revelation to Jesus to give to John, of the things that would soon take place—He also sent and communicated it by His angel

Verse 2 John testified of God's Word

Verse 4 God is the One who is, who was, and who is to come—He reigns on a throne

Verse 5 Jesus made us priests to His God and Father

Verse 9 John was exiled because of the Word of God

7. From **Chapter 2** answer these questions:

a. What are the contents of this chapter?

Messages to the church at Ephesus and Smyrna, Pergamum, and Thyatira are given in this chapter.

b. What's the main point John is trying to communicate to his readers?

God knows the true state of every church and what's really going on behind the scenes. God has commendation and exhortation for every church as well. He is specific in how the churches are to give Him glory.

c. List what you learn about Jesus Christ from this chapter.

Verse 1 Jesus is the One who holds the stars in His right hand—He is the One who walks among the 7 golden lampstands

Verses 2-3 Jesus knows their deeds of faithfulness

Verse 4 Jesus has something against them too.

Verse 7 Jesus urges us to hear what the Holy Spirit says to the churches

Verse 7 Jesus will grant to all overcomers to eat of the tree of life which is in the Paradise of God

Verse 9 Jesus knows their poverty and tribulation

Verse 10 commended to be faithful until death and Jesus will give them the crown of life

Verse 11 all overcomers will not be hurt by the second death

Verse 12 Jesus has a sharp two-edged sword

Verse 13 I know where you dwell

Verse 14 but I have this against you

Verse 16 if they don't repent, Jesus Himself will come and make war with them with the sword of His mouth

Verse 17 overcomers will receive hidden manna, a white stone, and a new name written on that stone that no one else knows

Verse 18 son of God—eyes like a flame of fire—feet like burnished bronze

Verse 19 I know your deeds

Verse 20 but I have this against you

Verse 21 gave false teacher time to repent

Verses 22-23 consequences for unrepentance

Verse 25 hold fast until I come

Verse 26 to the overcomers Jesus give authority over the nations—rule with a rod of iron—

Verse 27 will give the morning star

d. What do you learn about God in this chapter?

Verse 7 the paradise of God

Verse 18 Son of God

Verse 27 Jesus receives authority from His Father

8. From **Chapter 3** answer these questions:

a. Summarize the contents of this chapter.

Messages of Sardis [really a dead church], Philadelphia [a little power, but faithful], and Laodicea [wish you were hot or cold].

b. What's the main point Paul [John] is trying to communicate to his readers?

God knows the true state of every church and what's really going on behind the scenes. God has commendation and exhortation for every church as well. He is specific in how the churches are to give Him glory.

Jesus is specific in how He is to be worshiped. He is involved and has "ideas" about what He wants His churches to look like. This is so crucial for us to understand!

c. What do you learn about Jesus Christ from this chapter?

Verse 1 I know your deeds

Verse 2 wake up cause your deeds aren't completed yet

Verse 3 if you don't repent I will come like a thief

Verse 4 a few haven't soiled their garments and will walk with Me in white

Verse 5 I will not erase name from book of life and I will confess name before the Father

Verse 7 Jesus is holy, true, has the key of David, opens and shuts

Verse 8 I know your deeds

Verse 9 I will cause the synagogue of Satan to come and bow down at your feet and make them know I have loved you

Verse 10 I will keep you from the hour of testing

Verse 11 I am coming quickly

Verse 12 I will make overcomes a pillar in the house of God, write on him the name of God

Verse 14 Jesus is the Amen, faithful and true witness, the beginning of creation

Verse 15 I know your deeds, I wish you were cold or hot

Verse 16 I will spit you out of my mouth

Verse 19 those whom I love, I discipline, reprove

Verse 20 I stand at the door and knock; I will come in and dine with him

Verse 21 to overcomers I will grant to sit down with Me on My throne, just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on His throne

d. List what you learn about God in this chapter.

Verse 1 Jesus has the seven spirits of God

Verse 2 complete your deeds in the sight of God

Verse 5 I will confess his name before my Father and His angels

Verse 12 overcomers will be made a pillar in the temple of God; overcomers will receive the name of God and the name of the city of God, Jerusalem comes down out of heaven from God

Verse 14 Jesus is the beginning of creation of God

Verse 21 Jesus sat down with the Father on His throne when He overcame sin and death

9. Write down any observations or insights you have gained thus far in Revelation Chapters 1-3.

Just love the picture of Jesus in His opening statements to the churches.

Love the repetition of "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."

Love the encouragement of the overcomer list to all the churches.

Love Jesus' biblical counsel in overcoming and putting away sin.

Letters to the Seven Churches

Lesson #2, Chapter 1

TEACHER'S GUIDE

Read all the way through Chapter 1 before beginning this lesson. Ask the Lord to give you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him (Eph. 1:17).

1. According to verse 1 what is the book of Revelation about?

The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show to His bond-servants, the things which must soon take place; and He sent and communicated it by His angel to His bond-servant John,

The book of Revelation is about the things that must soon take place.

2. Define the term *revelation* [Strong's #602]. Based on that definition what do you learn about God's purpose for this book?

To be revealed. The be made manifest. Things that were hidden are now made visible.

God's purpose in this book is to reveal His plan for the rest of mankind's history. He wants to let His children know what it is, so they'll be prepared for it and can praise Him for sovereign reign and wisdom.

3. Sort out the "who gave what to whom" tangle from verses 1-2. Explain the different roles of *God, Jesus Christ, John*, and the *bond-servants* as seen in verses 1-2.

It is Jesus' revelation [the things that must soon take place] that was given to Him [Jesus] by God. God intended that Jesus show His [Jesus'] revelation to His bond-servants. He [Jesus] sent and communicated the Revelation of the things that must soon take place by His [Jesus'] angel to His [Jesus'] bond-servant John. It was John then who testified [of all he saw] to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus.

God to Jesus, Jesus to His angel, His angel to John, and John to Jesus' bond-servants of the things which must soon take place—the revealing of God's plan.

4. John says you will be blessed if you do 3 things (verse 3). What are they? Explain the difference between each of the stages. What reason does he give for doing those things (verse 3)?

Blessed if you read.

Blessed if you hear the words of prophecy.

Blessed if you heed the things written in it.

Why will you be blessed if you do those things? Because the time is near!

5. Revelation 1:3 is the first of seven beatitudes or blessings in the book of Revelation. Be blessed as you look up and list the rest of the blessings. Any surprises? See 14:13; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7, 14.

13 And I heard a voice from heaven, saying, "Write, 'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on!' " "Yes," says the Spirit, "so that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow with them."

15 ("Behold, I am coming like a thief. *Blessed is the one who stays awake and keeps his clothes, so that he will not walk about naked and men will not see his shame.*")

9 Then he said to me, "Write, 'Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.' " And he said to me, "These are true words of God."

6 *Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years.*

7 "And behold, I am coming quickly. *Blessed is he who heeds the words of the prophecy of this book.*"

14 *Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter by the gates into the city.*

Love that 20:6 is basically just like 2:11; and that 16:15 is like 3:4-5

It's good to die as a believer; it's good to be of sober spirit and be ready for the Master's return; it's good to be invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb; it's good to take part in the first resurrection because it means the second resurrection has no power over you; it's good to pay attention to and obey the words of this book; and it's good walk in holiness for the holy ones will eat of the tree of life and enter into God's holy city.

6. Read Matt. 24:36-39 and 2 Pet. 3:3-9. Now look up the following verses from the book of Revelation 1:1, 3, 7; 3:11; 22:6-7; 10, 12, 20. What do you learn about God's plan?

36 "But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone. 37 "For the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah. 38 "For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, 39 and they did not understand until the flood came and took them all away; so will the coming of the Son of Man be.

3 Know this first of all, that in the last days mockers will come with their mocking, following after their own lusts, 4 and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation." 5 For when they maintain this, it escapes their notice that by the word of God the heavens existed long ago and the earth was formed out of water and by water, 6 through which the world at that time was destroyed, being flooded with water. 7 But by His word the present heavens and earth are being reserved for fire, kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men. 8 But do not let this one fact escape your notice, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like one day. 9 *The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.*

1 The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show to His bond-servants, *the things which must soon take place*; and He sent and communicated it by His angel to His bond-servant John, 3 *Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of the prophecy, and heed the things which are written in it; for the time is near.*

7 Behold, *He is coming with the clouds*, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him. So it is to be. Amen.

11 *'I am coming quickly*; hold fast what you have, so that no one will take your crown.

6 And he said to me, "These words are faithful and true"; and the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, *sent His angel to show to His bond-servants the things which must soon take place*. 7 "And behold, *I am coming quickly*. Blessed is he who heeds the words of the prophecy of this book."

10 And he said to me, "Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, *for the time is near*."

12 "*Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done*."

20 He who testifies to these things says, "*Yes, I am coming quickly*." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

It's always been God's plan for history to culminate in the Lord Jesus' glorious return where everything will be accounted for, judged, and made right, where God's holiness will reign, and He will no longer have to exercise His merciful patience with sinful, stubborn men. God is patient, but He is not forever patient. He has decreed a day when judgment will come—just as in the days of Noah.

7. Who is John writing to and what is his greeting to them (verse 4)? In verse 4 which member of the Trinity, described as *Him*, is being discussed?

John is writing to the seven churches that are in Asia.

God the Father is described here since Jesus is mentioned in the very near context in verse 5.

4 John to the seven churches that are in Asia: Grace to you and peace, from Him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne,

Most commentators agree that *the seven Spirits* referred to in vs. 4 is the Holy Spirit in His fullness since seven is used in the Scriptures to indicate completeness.

8. John also sends greetings from Jesus to the seven churches. How is Jesus described in verses 5-7?

5 and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To Him who loves us and released us from our sins by His blood— 6 and He has made us to be a kingdom, priests to His God and Father—to Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.

7 BEHOLD, HE IS COMING WITH THE CLOUDS, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him. So it is to be. Amen.

Jesus is described as the faithful witness—the firstborn of the dead—the ruler of the kings of the earth. He is described as the one who loves us; the one who released us from our sins by His blood. He is described as the one who made us to be a kingdom, to be priests to God the Father. He is described as the One who deserves glory and dominion forever and ever! He is described as coming with the clouds, whom every eye will see (even those who killed Him), and over whom all the tribes of the earth will mourn.

May we bow in worship for our dear Savior right now!

9. After reading the description of Christ in verses 5-6, it is no wonder that glory and dominion belong to Him. Spend some time thinking on each of the qualities about Jesus listed here in verses 5-6 then write out a prayer of thanks and praise. See also Ps. 115:1 and Revelation 5:11-14.

Dear Father, how we praise you for Jesus Christ, for the infinite kindness you have bestowed upon us in sending Jesus to take on flesh, sacrifice Himself for our sake. Thank you for saving, rescuing, healing me through Jesus. May Jesus Christ be worshiped in His glory to the degree that He was not worshiped in His humiliation. Oh, Lord, we look forward to that day when we will see Jesus as He is in His glory, might, power, holiness, and yet still, in His love for foolish people. Oh, let me not be a glory stealer, seeking my own glory rather than giving it to Jesus, lifting up Jesus, worshiping Jesus.

1 Not to us, O LORD, not to us, But to Your name give glory Because of Your lovingkindness, because of Your truth.

11 Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne and the living creatures and the elders; and the number of them was myriads of myriads, and thousands of thousands, 12 saying with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing." 13 And every created thing which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all things in them, I heard saying, "To Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, be blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever." 14 And the four living creatures kept saying, "Amen." And the elders fell down and worshiped.

10. In verse 8 Jesus identifies Himself as the Alpha and Omega. What is an *alpha* and an *omega* and what does it signify about Jesus?

An alpha is the first letter of the Greek alphabet, while the Omega is the last letter of the Greek alphabet. Jesus is saying He is the first and the last. The beginning and the end of all things.

This could be God speaking. Most jump the ship of context at verse 8 and say God inserts Himself here since it says "thus says the Lord God" though Jesus is also called the Lord God...It could go either way here and is not a hill to die on.

As to the context, all acknowledge that verse 7 applies to the Son; there is insufficient contextual warrant for making a sudden shift in this verse to avoid the application of divine titles to the Son, as the Arians argue for. As to antiquity, both ante-Nicene and post-Nicene writers concur in applying this text to Christ, such that "never were men more unanimous than the ancients were in this matter; there being no one exception, on record, p 1504 against it." As to reasons for applying this text to the Father, some argue that since in verse 4 the title "which is, which was, and which is to come" applies to the Father, the same title used here must likewise. But this fails to recognize that the same titles are often given to both, as the title "Alpha and Omega" most certainly is (Re 1:11, 17. 2:8. 22:13. See related note on Re 3:14). The objection that the title "the Almighty" is always in Scripture applied to the Father, never the Son, is mistaken, for (1) "it is mere groundless presumption to suppose that as often as that title is applied to the one *God* in the Old Testament, it is applied to the Father only: since it may often be understood indifferently either of Father, or Son, or of the whole Trinity"; (2) "there are several texts of

the Old Testament, which we have good reason to believe are to be understood particularly of God the Son. Psalm 24 has by the primitive Fathers been interpreted of Christ. The title Lord of hosts (*Kurios dunameon*), applied to Christ in that Psalm, is equivalent to Almighty (*Kurios pantokrator*), as the LXX Interpreters render the same words indifferently by one or other, as may easily be seen in a multitude of instances, by looking into Trommius's Concordance."¹

- a. Look up Revelation 1:17-18; 2:8; 21:6; 22:13. Now read Is. 41:4; 44:6; and 48:12.

How would those sequence of verses show that Christ is God?

17 When I saw Him, I fell at His feet like a dead man. And He placed His right hand on me, saying, "Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last, 18 and the living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades.

8 "And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write: The first and the last, who was dead, and has come to life, says this:

6 Then He said to me, "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give to the one who thirsts from the spring of the water of life without cost.

13 "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end."

4 "Who has performed and accomplished it, Calling forth the generations from the beginning? 'I, the Lord, am the first, and with the last. I am He.' "

6 "Thus says the Lord, the King of Israel and his Redeemer, the Lord of hosts: 'I am the first and I am the last, And there is no God besides Me.

12 "Listen to Me, O Jacob, even Israel whom I called; I am He, I am the first, I am also the last.

When Jesus Himself says He is the alpha and the omega, He knows full well that God too has proclaimed Himself to be God in this very same manner. To make that claim is also to claim that Jesus is God also. When God says there is no God besides Me, Jesus then takes on that mantle and states the obvious—He is God and one with the Father. One God, three persons.

11. How does John describe himself in verse 9? Why was he on the island of Patmos? He says he is their brother and fellow partaker (or sharer) in the kingdom, sharer in the tribulation, sharer in perseverance.

He was on the island because of his preaching about Jesus and his proclamation of God's message.

12. In verse 10 John says, *I was in the Spirit*. What does he mean by that? See Revelation 4:2; 17:3; 21:10.

2 *Immediately I was in the Spirit*; and behold, a throne was standing in heaven, and One sitting on the throne.

¹ Jerome H. Smith, [*The New Treasury of Scripture Knowledge: The Most Complete Listing of Cross References Available Anywhere- Every Verse, Every Theme, Every Important Word*](#) (Nashville TN: Thomas Nelson, 1992), 1503–1504.

3 And *he carried me away in the Spirit into a wilderness; and I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast, full of blasphemous names, having seven heads and ten horns.*

10 And *he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God,*

When you are in the Spirit in this way, you are able to see things, hear things, able to go to far away places.

- a. Read how the other biblical writers described this same occurrence: Ezek. 2:2; 3:12-14; 11:5; Acts 10:10; 2 Cor. 12:2-4.

2 As He spoke to me *the Spirit entered me and set me on my feet; and I heard Him speaking to me.*

12 Then *the Spirit lifted me up, and I heard a great rumbling sound behind me, "Blessed be the glory of the LORD in His place."* 13 And I heard the sound of the wings of the living beings touching one another and the sound of the wheels beside them, even a great rumbling sound. 14 *So the Spirit lifted me up and took me away; and I went embittered in the rage of my spirit, and the hand of the LORD was strong on me.*

5 Then *the Spirit of the LORD fell upon me, and He said to me, "Say, 'Thus says the LORD, "So you think, house of Israel, for I know your thoughts.*

10 But he became hungry and was desiring to eat; but while they were making preparations, *he fell into a trance;*

2 I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago—*whether in the body I do not know, or out of the body I do not know, God knows—such a man was caught up to the third heaven.* 3 And I know how such a man—*whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, God knows— 4 was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which a man is not permitted to speak.*

WHATEVER THIS IS, IT'S NOT THE NORMAL SPIRITUAL CONDITION OF WALKING WITH THE LORD, WALKING IN THE POWER OF THE Holy Spirit. THIS IS DIFFERENT, AS EVEN PAUL ACKNOWLEDGES.

The apostle's experience involves only God and him. For another, the language is chaste and unspectacular. The image evoked is of a man seeking the face of God in profound meditation, meeting God in an unaccustomed fashion such that a consciousness of time and other objects is transcended; and God begins to reveal in a rapid succession of stimulating visions a message to be wafted to the churches.

In this trance-like state, John heard a great voice, which had the clear tone and strong sound of a trumpet. But for all of its strength, the voice was intelligible; and John was instructed to write all that he would see on a scroll, which, in turn, would be sent to seven churches.²

This is a special phrase that marks off the different visions that John received (cf 1:10; 4:2; 17:3; 21:10). It seems to refer to a trance-like state in which a revelation was given (cf. Acts 10:10; 22:17; 2 Cor. 12:1ff).³

² Paige Patterson, *Revelation*, ed. E. Ray Clendenen, vol. 39, The New American Commentary (Nashville, TN: B&H, 2012), 66–67.

³ Robert James Utley, *Hope in Hard Times - The Final Curtain: Revelation*, vol. Volume 12, Study Guide Commentary Series (Marshall, TX: Bible Lessons International, 2001), 24.

13. What did John hear (verse 10) and what was he told to do (verse 11)?

He heard a loud voice like a trumpet. He was told to write what he saw in a book and then send the book to the seven churches.

14. What does John see after turning around to see who was speaking to him? See verses 12-13. You may have already guessed who this is, but if you haven't you can read what the figure has to say about himself in verses 17-18. Who is it?

One like the son of man [that is a figure like that of man]; clothed in a robe with a golden sash.

Who is it? The one who is the first and the last. The living One who was dead and is now alive forevermore [never to die again]; who holds the keys to death and hades [hell]. This is Jesus.

15. What do the golden lampstands represent? See verse 20. What is significant about *where* the figure was standing?

The seven golden lampstands are the seven churches—so Jesus is walking, standing among His churches in verse 13. He is among them, with them, near them, not leaving them to themselves, observing, watching, helping, upholding. He is near and knows their sins, failures, and faithful deeds.

Oh Lord, thank you for your ever-present help. That you do not leave us alone. You are near, You see, You watch. Thank you!

16. How is Jesus described in verses 14-16?

His head and hair were white like wool and snow; his eyes were like a flame of fire; feet like burnished bronze; voice like sound of many waters; right hand holds seven stars; out of mouth came a sharp two-edged sword; face like sun shining in its strength.

17. No longer a baby, the suffering servant, or a lamb led to the slaughter, we now see Jesus as the King of kings and Lord of lords who is ready to bring judgment to the world.

- a. What do you notice about Jesus' eyes from these verses? See verse 14; 2:18; 19:12; Heb. 4:13.

His eyes are like a flame of fire.

18 "And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write: The Son of God, who has *eyes like a flame of fire*, and His feet are like burnished bronze, says this:

12 *His eyes are a flame of fire*, and on His head are many diadems; and He has a name written on Him which no one knows except Himself.

13 And there is *no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him* with whom we have to do.

His eyes search and see. They are full of light; there is no darkness in them.

- b. How did His voice change from verse 10 to verse 15? See also Ezek. 43:2. Verse 10 voice is loud like a trumpet

Verse 15 voice like the sound of many waters

2 and behold, the glory of the God of Israel was coming from the way of the east. And *His voice was like the sound of many waters*; and the earth shone with His glory.

- c. What is the purpose of the sword in Jesus' mouth? See verse 16; 2:16; 19:15. The kind of sword He has in His mouth is called a *rhomphaia* [Strong's #4501]. See what else you can find out about this sword.

It is a sharp two-edged sword.

16 'Therefore repent; or else I am coming to you quickly, and *I will make war against them with the sword of My mouth*.

15 From His mouth comes a sharp sword, *so that with it He may strike down the nations, and He will rule them with a rod of iron*; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty.

This sword is a sword of judgment.

It is a large sword for battle, a broadsword. He fights His enemies using the Word of God from His mouth, but He is here to wage war against His enemies. This is different than the sword of Hebrews 4:12 which is a small sword or dagger, used for cutting up animals and cutting through flesh.

18. John called himself the one "whom Jesus loved" and felt comfortable enough to lay his head on Jesus' chest at the Last Supper, so how did John respond to this vision of Jesus (verse 17)?

When he saw the risen Lord Jesus in His glory, he fell at His feet like a dead man [he fainted in fear because of the glory and holiness of Christ].

19. John is not the only one who has fallen to his feet at the sight of the revealed glory of God. Look up the following verses to see the common way to respond to Jesus Christ our Lord and God when His glory is revealed. See Gen. 17:1-3; Ezek. 1:28; 44:4; Matt. 17:2-6.

1 Now when Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, "I am God Almighty; Walk before Me, and be blameless. 2 "I will establish My covenant between Me and you, And I will multiply you exceedingly." 3 *Abram fell on his face*, and God talked with him, saying, 28 *As the appearance of the rainbow in the clouds on a rainy day, so was the appearance of the surrounding radiance. Such was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD. And when I saw it, I fell on my face* and heard a voice speaking.

4 Then He brought me by way of the north gate to the front of the house; and *I looked, and behold, the glory of the LORD filled the house of the LORD, and I fell on my face*.

2 And He was transfigured before them; and His face shone like the sun, and His garments became as white as light. 3 And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him. 4 Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us to be here; if You wish, I will make three tabernacles here, one for You, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah." 5 While he was still speaking, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and behold, a voice out of the cloud said, "This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased; listen to Him!" 6 *When the disciples heard this, they fell face down to the ground and were terrified*.

20. How does Jesus encourage John in verses 17-18? How would those words be encouraging for John as he lays in a heap at Jesus' feet?

He proclaims who He is in all His glory, but tells John, don't be afraid of Me. It would be absolutely terrifying to see Jesus in all His holy glory. We would know that we should be torched off in that holy presence and yet, Jesus again shows mercy and says, "Do not be afraid." He has mercy on poor, frail, sinful men.

21. What does Jesus commission John to write (verse 19)?

Write the things you have seen, the things that are, and the things which will take place after these things.

Verse 19 provides a simple outline for the book of Revelation: the things which you have seen (Chap. 1); the things which are (Chaps. 2-3); and the things which shall take place after these things (Chaps. 4-22).

22. Finally, in verse 20, Jesus clears up any confusion we may have had about any of the *sevens* that He reveals in this chapter. What do the seven stars and the seven lampstands represent in the vision?

Seven stars are the seven angels for the seven churches. So every church has an angel to protect it. The seven lampstands are the seven churches. So Jesus holds the seven angels who guard and protect the churches in His right hand. Then Jesus stands among the lampstands—that is, He stands with and among His churches. He never leaves us or forsakes us.

23. From your findings in Chapter 1 please finish the following sentences.

a. God is:

God is overseeing the details of history. His plan has been put into motion and no part of it will be left out.

b. Jesus is:

Jesus is the mighty one, the one who is glorious in might and splendor, who comes to make war with His enemies, but still He shows compassion to His children and His bride, the church.

c. I am:

I am convicted that I have not honored Jesus as He deserves. I want to confess and repent of my sins so that I stand before Him in holiness, not dragging my sin into His presence. He is worthy to be feared and honored and worshiped.

These truths make me:

These truths make me want to worship, to proclaim His might and power. To live more rightly, more holy, more faithfully before Him.

d. I need to:

I can't do anything in my own strength, but must rely on Him to sanctify me, to help me, to guide me.

Letters to the Seven Churches

Lesson #3, Chapter 2—Ephesus, Smyrna, and Pergamum

TEACHER'S GUIDE

My friend, Becky Hintz shared some of the writing tasks for this study in Revelation. Enjoy her insights as you work on this lesson. Ask the Lord to give you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him (Eph. 1:17).

Read the letter to the church at Ephesus in Revelation 2:1-7.

1. From verses 2-6, list the commendations Christ has for the Ephesian church. Commended for their deeds, toil, perseverance, and that they can't tolerate evil men and they test those who say they are apostles but aren't, revealing that they are false apostles. And they are again commended for their perseverance, endurance, and have not grown weary. Wow! That's a big list of commendations. I would be so happy to be commended in that way!

2. We live in an age in which tolerance is considered a high virtue. Yet the Ephesian believers are commended for refusing to tolerate evil men! What does this indicate about God's view of tolerance? See also Psalm 139:19-22; 2 Jn. 7-11.

There are some things that are not to be tolerated! God is not "okay" with all things!

19 O that You would slay the wicked, O God; Depart from me, therefore, men of bloodshed. 20 For they speak against You wickedly, And Your enemies take Your name in vain. 21 Do I not hate those who hate You, O Lord? And do I not loathe those who rise up against You? 22 I hate them with the utmost hatred; They have become my enemies.

7 For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is the deceiver and the antichrist. 8 Watch yourselves, that you do not lose what we have accomplished, but that you may receive a full reward. 9 Anyone who goes too far and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God; the one who abides in the teaching, he has both the Father and the Son. 10 If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house, and do not give him a greeting; 11 for the one who gives him a greeting participates in his evil deeds.

Don't tolerate false teachers. Don't tolerate evil doers. Do not tolerate anyone who twists the gospel message. Our allegiance to Jesus supersedes our love for others.

3. Christ rebukes this church for leaving its first love. After looking up Acts 19:1-29 and 20:17-38, describe the pedestal from which they fell.

1 It happened that while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul passed through the upper country and came to Ephesus, and found some disciples. 2 He said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" And they said to him, "No, we have not even heard whether there is a Holy Spirit." 3 And he said, "Into what then were you baptized?" And they said, "Into John's baptism." 4 Paul said, "John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in Him who was coming after him, that is, in Jesus." 5 When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. 6 And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began speaking with tongues and prophesying. 7

There were in all about twelve men. 8 And he entered the synagogue and continued speaking out boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading them about the kingdom of God. 9 But when some were becoming hardened and disobedient, speaking evil of the Way before the people, he withdrew from them and took away the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus. 10 *This took place for two years,* so that all who lived in Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks. 11 God was performing extraordinary miracles by the hands of Paul, 12 so that handkerchiefs or aprons were even carried from his body to the sick, and the diseases left them and the evil spirits went out. 13 But also some of the Jewish exorcists, who went from place to place, attempted to name over those who had the evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, “I adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preaches.” 14 Seven sons of one Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, were doing this. 15 And the evil spirit answered and said to them, “I recognize Jesus, and I know about Paul, but who are you?” 16 And the man, in whom was the evil spirit, leaped on them and subdued all of them and overpowered them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded. 17 This became known to all, both Jews and Greeks, who lived in Ephesus; and fear fell upon them all and the name of the Lord Jesus was being magnified. 18 *Many also of those who had believed kept coming, confessing and disclosing their practices.* 19 *And many of those who practiced magic brought their books together and began burning them in the sight of everyone; and they counted up the price of them and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver.* 20 *So the word of the Lord was growing mightily and prevailing.* 21 Now after these things were finished, Paul purposed in the Spirit to go to Jerusalem after he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, saying, “After I have been there, I must also see Rome.” 22 And having sent into Macedonia two of those who ministered to him, Timothy and Erastus, he himself stayed in Asia for a while. 23 About that time there occurred no small disturbance concerning the Way. 24 For a man named Demetrius, a silversmith, who made silver shrines of Artemis, was bringing no little business to the craftsmen; 25 these he gathered together with the workmen of similar trades, and said, “Men, you know that our prosperity depends upon this business. 26 “You see and hear that not only *in Ephesus,* but in almost all of Asia, this *Paul has persuaded and turned away a considerable number of people,* saying that gods made with hands are no gods at all. 27 “Not only is there danger that this trade of ours fall into disrepute, but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis be regarded as worthless and that she whom all of Asia and the world worship will even be dethroned from her magnificence.” 28 When they heard this and were filled with rage, they began crying out, saying, “Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!” 29 The city was filled with the confusion, and they rushed with one accord into the theater, dragging along Gaius and Aristarchus, Paul’s traveling companions from Macedonia.

17 From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called to him the elders of the church. 18 And when they had come to him, he said to them, “You yourselves know, from the first day that I set foot in Asia, how I was with you the whole time, 19 serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials which came upon me through the plots of the Jews; 20 *how I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you publicly and from house to house,* 21 solemnly testifying to both Jews and Greeks of repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. 22 “And now, behold, bound by the Spirit, I am on my way to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there, 23 except that the Holy Spirit solemnly testifies to me in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions await me. 24 “But I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself, so that I may finish my course and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify solemnly of the gospel of the grace of God. 25 “And now, behold, I know that all of you, among whom I went about preaching the kingdom, will no longer see my face. 26 “Therefore, I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men. 27 “For I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole purpose of God. 28 “Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. 29 *“I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; 30 and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them.* 31 *“Therefore be on the alert, remembering that night and day for a period of three years I did not cease to admonish each one with tears.* 32 “And now I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified. 33 “I have coveted no one’s silver or gold or clothes. 34 “You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my

own needs and to the men who were with me. 35 “In everything I showed you that by working hard in this manner you must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He Himself said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’ ” 36 When he had said these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all. 37 And they began to weep aloud and embraced Paul, and repeatedly kissed him, 38 grieving especially over the word which he had spoken, that they would not see his face again. And they were accompanying him to the ship.

4. The Ephesians replaced true love for God with doctrinal discernment, which in itself is a good and commendable thing! What “spiritual” activities or practices in your life can threaten to take the place of truly loving Christ? (See Luke 10:38-42 for another example of such an exchange.)

38 Now as they were traveling along, He entered a village; and a woman named Martha welcomed Him into her home. 39 She had a sister called Mary, who was seated at the Lord’s feet, listening to His word. 40 But Martha was distracted with all her preparations; and she came up to Him and said, “Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to do all the serving alone? Then tell her to help me.” 41 But the Lord answered and said to her, “Martha, Martha, you are worried and bothered about so many things; 42 but only one thing is necessary, for Mary has chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her.”

Doing what’s right can’t replace love for the Lord. Our hearts need to be His before and during our expressed love and obedience. It’s the attitudes and motivations that make the difference here. It’s a both/and, not an either/or.

5. After detailing their sin, Christ gives the Ephesians a threefold command. What steps are they to take? What is threatened against the church if they do not repent (verse 5)?

Remember from where you have fallen; repent; do the deeds you did at first.

If you will not repent, I am coming to you and will remove your lampstand out of its place.

6. If Christ were to look at your life, would He find that you, too, have in some sense “left your first love?” Following His command to the Ephesians, take a moment now to “remember from where you have fallen.” Was there a time in your walk when you were more zealous for the Lord? What did you do, feel, think about? What changed?

First love is so quick to respond, repent, and give all to follow Christ. There’s such a willingness to hazard all for the sake of Christ.

7. For the Ephesian church (and possibly for you) the next step is to repent—to return to a deep love for the Lord and the deeds that follow. But how does one do this exactly? Spend some time praying through Psalm 32, and record any insights you glean about how one can draw near to God.

1 How blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, Whose sin is covered! 2 How blessed is the man to whom the LORD does not impute iniquity, And in whose spirit there is no deceit! 3 When I kept silent about my sin, my body wasted away Through my groaning all day long. 4 For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me; My vitality was drained away as with the fever heat of summer. Selah. 5 I acknowledged my sin to You, And my iniquity I did not hide; I said, “I will confess my transgressions to the LORD”; And You forgave the guilt of my sin. Selah. 6 Therefore, let everyone who is godly pray to You in a time when You may be found; Surely in a flood of great waters they will not reach him. 7 You are my hiding place; You preserve me from trouble; You surround me with songs of deliverance. Selah. 8 I will instruct you and teach you in the way which you should go; I will counsel you with My eye upon you. 9 Do not be as the horse or as the mule which have no understanding, Whose trappings include bit and bridle to hold them in check, Otherwise they will not come near to you. 10

Many are the sorrows of the wicked, But he who trusts in the LORD, lovingkindness shall surround him. 11 Be glad in the LORD and rejoice, you righteous ones; And shout for joy, all you who are upright in heart.

Can't be silent about my sin. Must confess it to the Lord. Once we confess our sin, the Lord forgives and covers over our sin. Verse 6 Let everyone who is godly pray to you in a time when you may be found—repentance must take place before the heart is hardened. We cannot be stubborn and hard-hearted toward the Lord or His ways.

8. Who is called to hear what the Spirit says to the churches (verse 7)? Who needs to pay attention to these letters?

Those who have an ear. Those who have an ear to hear from God and what He says. Who needs to pay attention? Everyone, but especially those who are ready to hear and obey.

9. At the end of each church's letter, Christ gives a promise to "him who overcomes." Look up 1 John 5:4-5 to see how John uses this designation. To whom are all of these promises made?

4 For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. 5 Who is the one who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

The promises are given to all those who overcome. And guess who that is?! The one who believes that Jesus is the son of God by faith.

Read the letter to the church at Smyrna starting at Revelation 2:8.

10. From verses 9-11, what was this church experiencing? What were they about to endure?

They were experiencing tribulation and earthly poverty and the blasphemous utterings of the professing Jews. They were experiencing suffering, and some would be thrown into prison and some would die for Christ.

11. When Christ calls them rich (verse 9), what does He mean? Read Matt 5:11-12, James 2:5, and Rev. 3:17-18 to see what it means to be rich in God's eyes.

They were rich in faith. Rich in the kingdom. They were rich in the ways that really mattered. They were only experiencing earthly poverty, not spiritual poverty.

11 "Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me.

12 "Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you. IT'S MORE OF THE PARADOXES OF THE KINGDOM. EARTHLY POVERTY BUILT ON THE KINGDOM OF GOD RESULTS IN SPIRITUAL AND KINGDOM RICHES.

5 Listen, my beloved brethren: did not God choose the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him? THE POOR CAN BE RICH—RICH IN FAITH. GOD SEES RICHES FROM A WHOLE DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE. HE IS DEFINITELY LEAVING FROM A DIFFERENT DOCK THAN WE ARE WHEN IT COMES TO ASSESSING OUR CONDITION.

17 'Because you say, "I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing," and you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked, 18 I advise you to buy from Me gold refined by fire so that you may become rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself, and that the shame of your nakedness will not be revealed; and eye salve to anoint your eyes so that you may see. TRUE RICHES COME FROM GOD, NOT FROM THIS WORLD. IT'S SO FOOLISH TO DEVOTE OUR HEARTS TO THESE KIND OF RICHES, WHEN THE LORD WILL PROVIDE EVERLASTING RICHES.

12. From verses 9-11, what encouragements, promises, and commands does Jesus give to the church at Smyrna?

Jesus commends them for being spiritually rich in spite of their poverty and tribulations.

Commanded not to fear suffering. Told about the future, but encouraged to persevere for 10 days until they die, then will receive crown of life.

10 'Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, so that you will be tested, and you will have tribulation for ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.

13. Christ does not waste a single word. How could His self-description in verse 8 itself be an encouragement to these suffering saints?

Since they were to die for Christ, it's encouraging to see that He died (they will enjoy the fellowship of His sufferings) but rose again. Because He rose from the dead, showing that he conquered sin and death, we can go through death, knowing that it's not the end, but only the beginning.

14. What condemnations or rebukes does Jesus have for the church in Smyrna?

None. None! Oh, to be found faithful like that! That Jesus would only have encouragements and "well done" words for me!

15. What is Jesus' purpose in writing to this suffering church? What is His tone and what strategies does He employ?

He is strengthening them, but He doesn't hide from them the events and trials that they will face. He seeks to prepare them so they will persevere.

His tone is encouraging. Bolstering. Strengthening, but not hovering or coddling.

16. How can we follow Christ's example when we encounter suffering people? See Matt. 12:20; 2 Cor. 1:3-4; 1 Thess. 5:14.

20 "A BATTERED REED HE WILL NOT BREAK OFF, AND A SMOLDERING WICK HE WILL NOT PUT OUT, UNTIL HE LEADS JUSTICE TO VICTORY.

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, 4 who comforts us in all our affliction so that we will be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.

14 We urge you, brethren, admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with everyone.

We need to be careful of their wounds and weakness. We can recount specific comforts and truths that God has used to comfort and strengthen our hearts. The goal is not to commiserate, but to strengthen and comfort in affliction.

We encourage the fainthearted, the weak, the weary. We tangibly help the weak (those who can't help themselves and need the strength of others. We need to be patient with those who are suffering. They aren't their usual "strong" selves and it's easy for the "strong" to be impatient with the suffering and fainthearted.

17. As Christ's representatives on earth, we should always be ready to offer words of encouragement and hope to those enduring trials. What are some key Scriptural passages and promises that we can use to minister to the bruised and hurting? For starters, look up Ps. 145:14-20, Rom. 8:28, and 2 Cor. 4:16-18, and then add your own.

14 The LORD sustains all who fall And raises up all who are bowed down. 15 The eyes of all look to You, And You give them their food in due time. 16 You open Your hand And satisfy the desire of every living thing. 17 The LORD is righteous in all His ways And kind in all His deeds. 18 The LORD is near to all who call upon Him, To all who call upon Him in truth. 19 He will fulfill

the desire of those who fear Him; He will also hear their cry and will save them. 20 The LORD keeps all who love Him, But all the wicked He will destroy.

28 And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.

16 Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day. 17 For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, 18 while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

Romans 4:18-21: 18 In hope against hope he believed, so that he might become a father of many nations according to that which had been spoken, "So shall your descendants be." 19 Without becoming weak in faith he contemplated his own body, now as good as dead since he was about a hundred years old, and the deadness of Sarah's womb; 20 yet, with respect to the promise of God, he did not waver in unbelief but grew strong in faith, giving glory to God, 21 and being fully assured that what God had promised, He was able also to perform.

Psalms 46; 33; 37; 107; the overcomer promises of Revelation; Philippians 1:6; Psalm 27:1-2, 13-14; Luke 12 and Matthew 6; Habakkuk 3:16-19; Hebrews 13:5-6; 12:1-3.

“Thou art the Lord who slept upon the pillow
Thou art the Lord who soothed the furious sea,
What matter beating wind and tossing billow
If only we are in the boat with Thee?

Hold us in quiet through the age-long minute
While Thou art silent and the wind is shrill:
Can the boat sink while Thou, dear Lord, art in it?
Can the heart faint that waiteth on Thy will?”

~Amy Carmichael

Read the letter to the church at Pergamum beginning in Revelation 2:12.

18. From verses 13-15, what information can you glean about the situation faced by the church in Pergamum?

They lived in a perilous place, a place of great spiritual darkness and battles. There was pressure on them to deny Christ and many were being killed.

They were compromising by listening and allowing false teachers.

13 'I know where you dwell, where Satan's throne is; and you hold fast My name, and did not deny My faith even in the days of Antipas, My witness, My faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells. 14 'But I have a few things against you, because you have there some who hold the teaching of Balaam, who kept teaching Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit acts of immorality. 15 'So you also have some who in the same way hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans.

19. For what does Christ commend this church (verse 13)?

They were faithful to remain true to Christ, even in the midst of persecution and death.

20. What does Christ have against this church, and what does He command them to do about it (verses 14-16)?

They have some in the church who are putting stumbling blocks before the believers—telling them to do things contrary to the Scriptures. It may be like Balaam’s teaching or just may be in the same vein. They also have some who hold to the teaching of the Nicolaitans.

They were to repent of allowing this to corrupt the church and take the steps necessary to rid the church of this pernicious teaching and wicked behavior.

pagan, idolatrous worship practices¹

Like the Israelites who were seduced by Balaam’s false teaching, some in the church at Pergamum were lured to mix with the pagan system²

They believed one could attend pagan feasts, with all their debauchery and sexual immorality, and still join the church to worship Jesus Christ.³

The Nicolaitans followed similar wicked teaching as the “Balaamites.”

From the way this verse is connected with the preceding we should probably draw the inference that the Balaamite error was akin to that of the Nicolaitans. But the language shows that they were not identical.⁴

The phrase **in the same way** indicates that the teaching of the **Nicolaitans** led to the same wicked behavior as that of the followers of Balaam. As discussed in chapter 4 of this volume, the **Nicolaitans** derived their name from Nicholas, one of the seven men chosen to oversee the distribution of food in Acts 6. Whether he became an apostate (as some of the early church fathers believed) or the **Nicolaitans**, his followers, perverted his teachings is not known. Abusing the biblical teaching on Christian liberty, the **Nicolaitans** also taught that Christians could participate in pagan orgies. They seduced the church with immorality and idolatry.⁵

Compromise with worldly morality and pagan doctrine was prevalent in the church, especially in the third century when Christianity became popular. So compromise with pagan morality and departure from biblical faith soon corrupted the church.⁶

¹ Robert James Utley, [*Hope in Hard Times - The Final Curtain: Revelation*](#), vol. Volume 12, Study Guide Commentary Series (Marshall, TX: Bible Lessons International, 2001), 40.

² John F. MacArthur Jr., [*Revelation 1-11*](#), MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 1999), 88.

³ John F. MacArthur Jr., [*Revelation 1-11*](#), MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 1999), 88.

⁴ Leon Morris, [*Revelation: An Introduction and Commentary*](#), vol. 20, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1987), 71.

⁵ John F. MacArthur Jr., [*Revelation 1-11*](#), MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 1999), 89.

⁶ John F. Walvoord, [*“Revelation,”*](#) in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 936.

21. What do we learn about the teaching of Balaam from verse 14? Now look up Numbers 25:1-9 and 31:16. What consequences did Israel face for tolerating Balaam’s teaching? How does this help explain the forcefulness of Christ’s demand for repentance?

“kept teaching Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit acts of immorality.”

1 While Israel remained at Shittim, the people began to play the harlot with the daughters of Moab. 2 For they invited the people to the sacrifices of their gods, and the people ate and bowed down to their gods. 3 So Israel joined themselves to Baal of Peor, and the Lord was angry against Israel. 4 The Lord said to Moses, “Take all the leaders of the people and execute them in broad daylight before the Lord, so that the fierce anger of the Lord may turn away from Israel.” 5 So Moses said to the judges of Israel, “Each of you slay his men who have joined themselves to Baal of Peor.” 6 Then behold, one of the sons of Israel came and brought to his relatives a Midianite woman, in the sight of Moses and in the sight of all the congregation of the sons of Israel, while they were weeping at the doorway of the tent of meeting. 7 When Phinehas the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, saw it, he arose from the midst of the congregation and took a spear in his hand, 8 and he went after the man of Israel into the tent and pierced both of them through, the man of Israel and the woman, through the body. So the plague on the sons of Israel was checked. 9 Those who died by the plague were 24,000. 16 “Behold, these caused the sons of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to trespass against the Lord in the matter of Peor, so the plague was among the congregation of the Lord.

22. Called Satan’s dwelling place, the city of Pergamum was a hub of several different forms of idol and emperor worship. Why would toleration of false teaching be both especially tempting and especially dangerous for believers in such a locale?

They could easily get drawn back into their previous life. It was wicked, wicked worship. Nothing holy about it. A melding of the old and new lives/teachings, just doesn’t work. It is a perversion and doesn’t give God glory in any way.

23. The problem of false teachers and their gangrenous influence is not limited to the church at Pergamum. What do these false teachers look like? What is every local church commanded to do with them? See Acts 20:28-31; Titus 3:10-11; 2 Peter 2:1-3; 2 John 7-11; Jude 17-23.

FALSE TEACHERS LOOK LIKE shepherds. They come into the flock. They look like fellow sheep.

FALSE TEACHERS GO TOO FAR. They don’t stay within God’s revealed Word. False teachers seek to draw people away after themselves. False teachers infiltrate the church. False teachers are stubborn and don’t listen to reproof. False teachers cause trouble—dissensions, conflict. False teachers are worldly minded not spiritually minded.

Be on guard to protect the flock. Be on the alert for false teachers. Reject a factious, dissension causing man. Don’t greet or welcome the false teacher. Don’t participate in their evil deeds. Be merciful to them, but recognize the danger that comes with associating with them (in other words, don’t tar and feather them, but also deal with them as with an asp).

28 “Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. 29 “I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; 30 and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them. 31 “Therefore be on the alert, remembering that night and day for a period of three years I did not cease to admonish each one with tears.

10 Reject a factious man after a first and second warning, 11 knowing that such a man is perverted and is sinning, being self-condemned.

1 But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves. 2 Many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of the truth will be maligned; 3 and in their greed they will exploit you with false words; their judgment from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep. 7 For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is the deceiver and the antichrist. 8 Watch yourselves, that you do not lose what we have accomplished, but that you may receive a full reward. 9 Anyone who goes too far and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God; the one who abides in the teaching, he has both the Father and the Son. 10 If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house, and do not give him a greeting; 11 for the one who gives him a greeting participates in his evil deeds. 17 But you, beloved, ought to remember the words that were spoken beforehand by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ, 18 that they were saying to you, "In the last time there will be mockers, following after their own ungodly lusts." 19 These are the ones who cause divisions, worldly-minded, devoid of the Spirit. 20 But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, 21 keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting anxiously for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life. 22 And have mercy on some, who are doubting; 23 save others, snatching them out of the fire; and on some have mercy with fear, hating even the garment polluted by the flesh.

24. It has been said that tolerance is the last virtue of a corrupt society. Why does the world so dearly love tolerance? How do they try to pressure Christians into adopting this value system?

Tolerance allows wickedness. Tolerance hates right and wrong. Tolerance hates holiness. Tolerance parades as love, but tolerance does NOT love God.

25. How have you been tempted to be drawn into the mindset of the Pergamum church, perhaps tolerating sins either in your own heart or in those around you, and then justifying such tolerance? What would be the solution to this problem, and what would you need to change?

The solution is the same—repent! Always repent, confess, fear the Lord and turn away from evil. The sins of the heart will turn into the sins of the flesh unless we repent of them soon, quickly.

“Consider that no sin against a great God can be strictly a little sin.”

~Ralph Venning, *The Plague of Plagues*

Letters to the Seven Churches

Lesson #4, Chapters 2 and 3—Thyatira and Sardis

TEACHER'S GUIDE

Becky Hintz' diligence shines in this week's lesson. There's much to glean from these letters to the churches. May God bless you in your efforts to learn and apply these lessons.

Read the letter to the church at Thyatira beginning at Revelation 2:18.

1. As is His pattern, Christ opens with words of praise for the church in Thyatira. What were they doing right, according to verse 19?

They were faithful to love well. They were living by faith. They were serving well and persevering in the faith. In fact, they were even improving in their deeds. They were more loving, more full of faith, serving more and persevering better than they had previously.

19 'I know your deeds, and your love and faith and service and perseverance, and that your deeds of late are greater than at first.

2. This sounds like a great church! Yet Christ points out a major problem. What is it (verse 20)?

They tolerated the woman Jezebel, who was a false teacher. She was leading the saints astray in her false teaching, so that they were committing acts of immorality and eating things sacrificed to idols.

20 'But I have this against you, that you tolerate the woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, and she teaches and leads My bond-servants astray so that they commit acts of immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols.

3. What do we learn about the woman "Jezebel" and her teaching from verses 20-24? What similarities does she have with the infamous idolater in the Old Testament? See 1 Kings 21:20-26.

She wanted to lead—called herself a prophetess.

She was teaching her own blend of false doctrine—which was leading to immorality and pagan worship.

When confronted she was unwilling to repent.

Warned of future consequences of great sickness for herself and her followers, unless they repented.

She and her children will die of pestilence.

Her teachings came from the "deep things of Satan."

20 Ahab said to Elijah, "Have you found me, O my enemy?" And he answered, "I have found you, because you have sold yourself to do evil in the sight of the Lord. 21 "Behold, I will bring evil upon you, and will utterly sweep you away, and will cut off from Ahab every male, both bond and free in Israel; 22 and I will make your house like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and like the house of Baasha the son of Ahijah, because of the provocation with which you have provoked Me to anger, and because you have made Israel sin. 23 "Of Jezebel also has the Lord spoken, saying, 'The dogs will eat Jezebel in the district of Jezreel.' 24 "The one belonging to Ahab, who dies in the city, the dogs will eat, and the one who dies in the field the birds of heaven will eat." 25 *Surely there was no one like Ahab who sold himself to do evil in the sight of the Lord, because Jezebel his wife incited him. 26 He acted very abominably in following idols, according to all that the Amorites had done, whom the Lord cast out before the sons of Israel.*

4. Instead of overlooking the sin in their midst, what should the church have done with these immoral people? Review Matt. 18:15-20; 1 Cor. 5:11-13; Gal. 6:1. Why do many churches (including Thyatira, a church of otherwise solid believers) choose not to do this?

The church should have gone to them and showed them their sin, and then kept after it until it was dealt with instead of allowing it to remain.

Many churches, just like Thyatira, don't deal with sin because of pride (we know better than God about what is the most loving, wise thing to do), because of the fear of man (don't want them to get mad and leave the church), don't love God first (human relationships seem to take precedence over our relationship with God).

15 "If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother. 16 "But if he does not listen to you, take one or two more with you, so that by the mouth of two or three witnesses every fact may be confirmed. 17 "If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. 18 "Truly I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven. 19 "Again I say to you, that if two of you agree on earth about anything that they may ask, it shall be done for them by My Father who is in heaven. 20 "For where two or three have gathered together in My name, I am there in their midst."

11 But actually, I wrote to you not to associate with any so-called brother if he is an immoral person, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or a swindler—not even to eat with such a one. 12 For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Do you not judge those who are within the church? 13 But those who are outside, God judges. Remove the wicked man from among yourselves.

1 Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted.

Thyatira was an industrial city controlled by guilds, or trade unions. These guilds held regular festivals in honor of pagan gods, involving sacrificing animals, eating the meat, and then indulging in immoral activities. All guild members were required to attend these festivals, and refusing to do so could mean forfeiting one's membership in the guild, resulting in unemployment. Christians who did not participate were considered social outcasts, and often found themselves in poverty.

5. In this setting, how could believers justify participating in these festivals, or at least tolerating others who chose to do so? In contrast, take a look at what the Scriptures say: Matt. 6:24, James 4:4, 1 Jn. 2:15-17.

"I need to do it for my job." "Everyone is doing it." "It's not that big of a deal. I'm not worshiping the idols in my heart."

24 "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.

4 You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

15 Do not love the world nor the things in the world. *If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.* 16 For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. 17 The world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever.

Do we really believe 1 Jn. 2:15?!!! If we love the world, we cannot, prove that, we are not Christians.

6. What are some ways in which we can be tempted—or pressured—to compromise devotion to the Lord in order to fit in with the world in our day and age? What insight do the following verses provide in your struggle against temptation? Ps. 119:9-11; Matt. 5:30; Rom. 13:14.

We can be tempted to fit in with the world by misunderstanding what it means to be a Christian, by not being in the Word enough, by thinking the world can fulfill my heart's longings. Pressured by loved ones or well meaning friends, compromise can happen due to fear or lust.

9 How can a young man keep his way pure? By keeping it according to Your word. 10 With all my heart I have sought You; Do not let me wander from Your commandments. 11 Your word I have treasured in my heart, That I may not sin against You. 30 "If your right hand makes you stumble, cut it off and throw it from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to go into hell. 14 But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts.

The Word protects us from sin. The Word helps us not sin the sin of compromise. Compromise is the opposite was what Jesus counsels when it comes to fighting sin. Make no provision for the flesh.

7. What does the fact that God had already warned Jezebel to repent—and given her plenty of time to do so—demonstrate about His character? What do the following verses teach us about His attitude towards sinners? See Ezek. 18:30-32; Is. 55:7; 2 Pet 3:9.

God is patient! He is long suffering with sinners in putting up with sin for their sake.

30 "Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, each according to his conduct," declares the Lord God. "Repent and turn away from all your transgressions, so that iniquity may not become a stumbling block to you. 31 "Cast away from you all your transgressions which you have committed and make yourselves a new heart and a new spirit! For why will you die, O house of Israel? 32 "For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone who dies," declares the Lord God. "Therefore, repent and live." GOD DOESN'T DESIRE TO ENACT CONSEQUENCES AND JUDGMENT. HE WANTS US TO REPENT AND DO WHAT IS RIGHT.

7 Let the wicked forsake his way And the unrighteous man his thoughts; And let him return to the Lord, And He will have compassion on him, And to our God, For He will abundantly pardon. THE LORD IS SO COMPASSIONATE!

9 The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance. HE IS PATIENT WITH A PURPOSE!

8. Christ details the punishments that He will mete out to Jezebel and her followers. What will be revealed through the execution of these punishments (verse 23)?

The churches will know that God searches the minds and the hearts and God will execute consequences according to their deeds.

23 'And I will kill her children with pestilence, and all the churches will know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts; and I will give to each one of you according to your deeds.

9. Along these same lines, in His self-description in Rev. 2:18, Christ states that He has eyes like a flame of fire. Why does He highlight this attribute to this particular church? What does He want the wayward members to understand? See also Prov. 24:11-12; Jer. 17:10; Acts 5:1-11.

They needed to know that what they were doing wasn't going unnoticed—NOR IS IT EVER UNNOTICED BY THE LORD.

11 Deliver those who are being taken away to death, And those who are staggering to slaughter, Oh hold them back. 12 If you say, "See, we did not know this," *Does He not consider it who weighs the hearts? And does He not know it who keeps your soul? And will He not render to man according to his work?*

10 *"I, the Lord, search the heart, I test the mind, Even to give to each man according to his ways, According to the results of his deeds.*

1 But a man named Ananias, with his wife Sapphira, sold a piece of property, 2 and kept back some of the price for himself, with his wife's full knowledge, and bringing a portion of it, he laid it at the apostles' feet. 3 But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back some of the price of the land? 4 "While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not under your control? Why is it that you have conceived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God." 5 And as he heard these words, Ananias fell down and breathed his last; and great fear came over all who heard of it. 6 The young men got up and covered him up, and after carrying him out, they buried him. 7 Now there elapsed an interval of about three hours, and his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. 8 And Peter responded to her, "Tell me whether you sold the land for such and such a price?" And she said, "Yes, that was the price." 9 Then Peter said to her, "Why is it that you have agreed together to put the Spirit of the Lord to the test? Behold, the feet of those who have buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out as well." 10 And immediately she fell at his feet and breathed her last, and the young men came in and found her dead, and they carried her out and buried her beside her husband. 11 And great fear came over the whole church, and over all who heard of these things.

10. Few of us actually think we can hide anything from God, yet in practice many believers try to do just that—either by distancing themselves from God when they sin, or like some of the Thyatirans, refusing to repent altogether. How should an understanding of God's omniscience cause us to deal with our sin? Look up Ps. 32:1-7; 139:23-24; Prov. 24:16; James 5:16; 1 Jn. 1:8-9.

It should actually drive us to God. It should entice us to go to the Lord who knows all. It should actually make us love Him more. God is sosoooo good! If we want forgiveness then we MUST confess and repent of our sins. It is cleansing and sanctifying to be open and humble before each other that we are sinners and have sinned. We lie when we don't admit sin, but God is always faithful to cleanse us and forgive us when we confess our sins to Him.

1 How blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, Whose sin is covered! 2 How blessed is the man to whom the Lord does not impute iniquity, And in whose spirit there is no deceit! 3 When I kept silent about my sin, my body wasted away Through my groaning all day long. 4 For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me; My vitality was drained away as with the fever heat of summer. Selah. 5 I acknowledged my sin to You, And my iniquity I did not hide; I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord"; And You forgave the guilt of my sin. Selah. 6 Therefore, let everyone who is godly pray to You in a time when You may be found; Surely in a flood of great waters they will not reach him. 7 You are my hiding place; You preserve me from trouble; You surround me with songs of deliverance. Selah.

23 Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me and know my anxious thoughts; 24 And see if there be any hurtful way in me, And lead me in the everlasting way.

16 For a righteous man falls seven times, and rises again, But the wicked stumble in time of calamity.

16 Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.

8 If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. 9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

11. What instruction does Christ give to those who have remained faithful (verses 24-25)?
What blessings await them for their obedience (verses 26-29)?

There are no further instructions for those who have remained faithful—that is, those who have not held to the false teaching or engaged in the deep things of Satan. They are just instructed to hold fast, just as they have been doing.

24 'But I say to you, the rest who are in Thyatira, who do not hold this teaching, who have not known the deep things of Satan, as they call them—I place no other burden on you. 25 'Nevertheless what you have, hold fast until I come. The blessings that await them—authority over the nations given to them to oversee (they will have complete authority given by Christ over the nations during the millennial kingdom), given the morning star

26 'He who overcomes, and he who keeps My deeds until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations; 27 and he shall rule them with a rod of iron, as the vessels of the potter are broken to pieces, as I also 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.'

12. Define the term *hold fast* (Strong's #2902). What else are believers to "hold fast"? See 2 Thess. 2:15; Heb. 4:14; 6:18.

Hold onto; seize, hold firmly, comes from the root word of strength—so carries with it the idea of using your strength to hold onto something. You start doing this and don't stop.

15 So then, brethren, *stand firm and hold to the traditions* which you were taught, whether by word of mouth or by letter from us.

14 Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, *let us hold fast our confession*.

18 so that by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have taken refuge would have *strong encouragement to take hold of the hope* set before us.

SUMMARIZE: WHAT IS THE CHURCH OF THYATIRA LIKE?

PRAY THAT WE WOULD HEED THE WARNINGS AND HOLD FAST LIKE THE PEOPLE AT THYATIRA.

Read the letter to the church at Sardis beginning at Revelation 3:1.

13. How does Christ describe Himself as He opens this letter, and what does He know about this church (verse 1)?

He who has the seven spirits and the seven stars.

I know your deeds and that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead.

14. How can this church have a reputation for being alive, and yet be dead? See what insights you can gain from the way these terms are used in the following verses: Eph. 2:1, 5; 5:14; 1 Tim 5:6; Titus 1:16. What sort of people filled the pews in this church?

They do all the right things but not from a right heart. It is a dead church because the spirit of God is not at work in the lives of the people. The people are not saved, spiritually dead. You can be spiritually dead while physically alive. You can be spiritually dead even while professing faith in Jesus—and your deeds will prove the point.

1 And you were dead in your trespasses and sins,

5 even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved),

14 For this reason it says, “Awake, sleeper, And arise from the dead, And Christ will shine on you.”

6 But she who gives herself to wanton pleasure is dead even while she lives.

16 They profess to know God, but by their deeds they deny Him, being detestable and disobedient and worthless for any good deed.

15. List all of the actions that Christ commands the church of Sardis to take in verses 2-3.

Wake up. Strengthen the things that remain [because they were about to die and your deeds aren't completed]. Remember what you have received and heard. Keep what you have received and heard. Repent.

2 ‘Wake up, and strengthen the things that remain, which were about to die; for I have not found your deeds completed in the sight of My God. 3 ‘So remember what you have received and heard; and keep it, and repent. Therefore if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come to you.

16. What will happen if they fail to follow these commands (verse 3)? What is the intended impact of these words upon unrepentant sinners?

Jesus will come like a thief (and they will face judgment) (and like a thief, they won't know when that will happen) if they don't wake up and repent.

Jesus' warning is to spur them to action. To deal with things today. To repent, to wake up, to be made spiritually alive.

17. In contrast, if the Sardisians were walking in obedience, how would they view Christ's sudden return? See John 14:2-3; 1 Cor. 15:51-55; 1 Thess. 1:9-10; 4:16-18; Rev. 22:20.

With anticipation at living with Him. With joy at the perishable being made imperishable, that death no longer has victory over them. Waiting for His rescue from the wrath that will surely come to an unbelieving world. Comforted by this knowledge. Eagerness—come quickly, Lord Jesus.

2 “In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you.

3 “If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also.

51 Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, 52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. 53 For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality. 54 But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, “Death is swallowed up in victory. 55 “O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?”

9 For they themselves report about us what kind of a reception we had with you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God, 10 and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, that is Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath to come.

16 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord. 18 Therefore comfort one another with these words.

20 He who testifies to these things says, “Yes, I am coming quickly.” Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

18. When you think of the very real possibility that Christ could return even today, what is your gut reaction? Is your conscience pricked by any particular areas of your life? Take a moment to search your heart and confess any hidden or persistent sins to the Lord, so that you can honestly say, "Come, Lord Jesus!"

So thankful! So ready!

19. In verse 4 Christ shifts gear to highlight a different group within the church, those who have *not soiled* (NKJV *defiled*, Strong's #3435) their garments. Define this word, look up Rev. 14:4, and record any insights into what these people were like.

Defiled, stained, polluted, corrupted. Soiled with mud and filth.

To defile is to engage in sin. lived holy lives.

4 These are the ones who have not been defiled with women, for they have kept themselves chaste. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These have been purchased from among men as first fruits to God and to the Lamb.

20. What promises are made to the few who have not soiled their garments (verses 4-5)?

They will walk with Jesus clothed in white garments. He considers them worthy. Their names will not be erased from the book of life. Jesus will confess their names before the Father and his holy angels.

4 'But you have a few people in Sardis who have not soiled their garments; and they will walk with Me in white, for they are worthy. 5 'He who overcomes will thus be clothed in white garments; and I will not erase his name from the book of life, and I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels.

JUST A NOTE: NO OVERCOMER WILL EVER, EVER HAVE THEIR NAME ERASED IN THE BOOK OF LIFE. IT IS INSCRIBED WITH AN IRON STYLUS. OUR NAMES ARE ENGRAVED UPON Jesus' NAIL-PIERCED HANDS.

21. Why should we care about the color of our heavenly apparel? Look up the following verses to see who wears these white garments and why they are so special. Matt. 17:2; 28:2-3; Rev. 6:11; 7:9, 13-14; 19:7-8.

Jesus wears light, white garments. Believers wear white. Our clothing symbolizes our cleansing because of Jesus.

2 And He was transfigured before them; and His face shone like the sun, and His garments became as white as light.

2 And behold, a severe earthquake had occurred, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled away the stone and sat upon it. 3 And his appearance was like lightning, and his clothing as white as snow.

11 And there was given to each of them a white robe; and they were told that they should rest for a little while longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brethren who were to be killed even as they had been, would be completed also.

9 After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could count, from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, and palm branches were in their hands;

13 Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, "These who are clothed in the white robes, who are they, and where have they come from?" 14 I said to him, "My lord, you know." And he said to me, "These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

7 "Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready." 8 It was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.

22. Look up the following verses to see what you can discover about the book of life: Luke 10:20; Rev 13:8; 20:12-15; 21:23-27.

The book of life records the names of all those who belong to Jesus. Because we can never lose our salvation, we can NEVER have our names erased from the book of life, so 3:5 is stating in a different way that no believer will ever experience this.

20 “Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that **your names are recorded in heaven.**”

8 All who dwell on the earth will worship him, everyone whose name has not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who has been slain.

12 And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; **and another book was opened, which is the book of life;** and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. 13 And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds. 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’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.**

23 And the city has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God has illumined it, and its lamp is the Lamb. 24 The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it. 25 In the daytime (for there will be no night there) its gates will never be closed; 26 and they will bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it; 27 **and nothing unclean, and no one who practices abomination and lying, shall ever come into it, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of life.**

23. What great things Christ is preparing for us in heaven! Write out a prayer of thanks to God for the inheritance that awaits us. Enjoy meditating on the glories of heaven today!

Lord, it is so encouraging and hope-building to think on heaven. I do so look forward to living with you in heaven, to seeing you in your glory. I love you, Lord and miss you! I can’t wait to be with you. Lord, you are so kind in preparing things for us so we can live with you.

SUMMARIZE: WHAT IS THE CHURCH OF SARDIS LIKE?

PRAY THAT WE WOULD HEED THE WARNINGS AND HOLD FAST LIKE THE PEOPLE AT SARDIS.

“A heavenly mind is a joyful mind; this is the nearest and truest way to live a life of comfort, and without this you must needs be uncomfortable. Can a man be at a fire and not be warm; or in the sunshine and not have light? Can your heart be in heaven, and not have comfort? O Christian get above. Believe it, that region is warmer than this below.”

~Richard Baxter, *The Saints’ Everlasting Rest*

“And the city has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine on it, or the glory of God has illumined it, and its lamp is the Lamb.” ~Rev. 21:23

Letters to the Seven Churches

Lesson #5, Chapter 3—Philadelphia and Laodicea

TEACHER'S GUIDE

Read the letter to the church of Philadelphia beginning in Revelation 3:7.

1. How is Jesus described in the beginning of the letter to the church at Philadelphia (verse 7)?

Holy, true, the one who has the key of David that opens and no one can shut, and who shuts and no one can open.

7 “And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: He who is holy, who is true, who has the key of David, who opens and no one will shut, and who shuts and no one opens, says this:

2. When you are given keys to something what does that signify?

It means you have responsibility. You are trustworthy. You have a job to do. You have authority.

- a. So when Jesus says He has the keys to David’s house what does that mean? See also Is. 9:7; 22:22; Luke 1:32; Rev. 1:18.

It means He has the power to let in who He wants or keep out who He wants.

That description stresses Christ’s omnipotence; what He does cannot be overturned by someone more powerful. “I act and who can reverse it?” declared the Lord in Isaiah 43:13 (cf. Is. 46:9–11; Jer. 18:6; Dan. 4:35). No one can shut the doors to the kingdom or to blessing if He holds them open, and no one can force them open if He holds them shut. In light of the promise in verse 8, Christ could also be referring to opening and shutting doors for service. In either case, the emphasis is on His sovereign control over His church.

That Jesus Christ, the holy, true, sovereign, omnipotent Lord of the church, found nothing to condemn in the Philadelphia church must have been a joyous encouragement to them.¹

7 There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, On the throne of David and over his kingdom, To establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness From then on and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will accomplish this.

22 “Then I will set the key of the house of David on his shoulder, When he opens no one will shut, When he shuts no one will open.

32 “He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; 18 and the living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades.

- b. How complete is His authority according to verse 7?

It is complete. No one else has the authority or the power to do what He is doing. No one else has the keys to David’s house. If anyone wants in they must first come to Jesus to gain entrance.

3. Jesus, with eyes like a flame of fire, sees all and proclaims, *I know your deeds*. In response to that knowledge, what does Christ do for this church (verse 8)?

¹ John F. MacArthur Jr., [*Revelation 1–11*](#), MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 1999), 119.

He puts before this church an open door [for service]—and no one can shut it because the Lord has sovereignly propped it open for them.

4. What does the open door mean? See 1 Cor. 16:9; 2 Cor. 2:12; Col. 4:3.

Paul talked about it being an opportunity for service, for the gospel preaching, even when there were many who wanted to “shut the door.” For Paul, it was how he described those ministry opportunities that only come from the Lord.

9 for a wide door for effective service has opened to me, and there are many adversaries.

12 Now when I came to Troas for the gospel of Christ and when a door was opened for me in the Lord,

3 praying at the same time for us as well, that God will open up to us a door for the word, so that we may speak forth the mystery of Christ, for which I have also been imprisoned;

5. Why does He put an open door before this church according to verse 8?

Because they have a little power. They have kept His Word. They have not denied my name.

6. Why are those 3 elements enough for effective service for Christ? See also 2 Cor. 12:8-10 and Phil. 4:13.

We don't need *much* power. We just need *Christ's* power. His power is enough and my little bit of power points to God's omnipotence.

8 Concerning this I implored the Lord three times that it might leave me. 9 And He has said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.” Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. 10 Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.

13 I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.

7. List what you learn about the Jews of Philadelphia from verse 9.

Christ calls them a synagogue of Satan. They say they're Jews but Jesus says they're lying. But He will make sure that they come bow down in humility before the church and know that Jesus loves that little faithful church.

Their situation is similar to Philippians 2:9-11: 9 For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, 10 so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

8. What promise is given to this church (verse 10)?

I will keep you from the hour of testing that will come upon the whole world, for those who dwell on the earth.

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

9. See 1 Cor. 15:51-52; 1 Thess. 4:13-18; and 5:1-11, especially verses 4-5, 9 to see how God intends to accomplish the promise of Revelation 3:10. What do you learn?

READ THE CHILDREN'S BOOK, “Jesus IS COMING AGAIN!” by David Reagan

51 Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, 52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. GOD KEEPS HIS CHILDREN FROM THE TIME OF TESTING FOR THE WHOLE WORLD BY RAPTURNING OUT HIS CHURCH.

13 But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope. 14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus. 15 For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. 16 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord. 18 Therefore comfort one another with these words. THE RAPTURE IS GOD'S MEANS OF KEEPING THE BELIEVERS FROM THE HOUR OF TESTING.

1 Now as to the times and the epochs, brethren, you have no need of anything to be written to you. 2 For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night. 3 While they are saying, "Peace and safety!" then destruction will come upon them suddenly like labor pains upon a woman with child, and they will not escape. 4 *But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that the day would overtake you like a thief; 5 for you are all sons of light and sons of day. We are not of night nor of darkness;* 6 so then let us not sleep as others do, but let us be alert and sober. 7 For those who sleep do their sleeping at night, and those who get drunk get drunk at night. 8 But since we are of the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet, the hope of salvation. 9 *For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ,* 10 who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep, we will live together with Him. 11 Therefore encourage one another and build up one another, just as you also are doing.

10. Jesus tells this faithful church to be ready because He is coming quickly. What are they to do (verse 11)?

Hold fast what you have.

11. The meaning of the phrase, *hold fast what you have so that no one will take your crown* is explained by Col. 2:18, as well as 1 Cor. 9:24 and 2 John 8. What is the idea being expressed?

Hold fast to what you have is also like saying don't let anyone defraud you. holding fast to what you have is like running the race to win. Holding fast to what you have is watching over your self so you don't lose what you've accomplished.

Holding fast means you understand the value of what you're holding and you will not let it go. You have your eye on the prize.

18 Let no one keep defrauding you of your prize by delighting in self-abasement and the worship of the angels, taking his stand on visions he has seen, inflated without cause by his fleshly mind,

24 Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win.

8 Watch yourselves, that you do not lose what we have accomplished, but that you may receive a full reward.

- a. What is the crown that we will receive? See 1 Cor. 9:25; 2 Tim. 4:8; James 1:12; 1 Pet. 5:4; Rev. 2:10.

The crown we will receive is imperishable, it is righteous, it is awarded to me by the Lord Himself, it is promised so as real as if it were here now, it is unfading and glorious, it is a crown of life.

25 Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable.

8 in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing.

12 Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.

4 And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.

10 'Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, so that you will be tested, and you will have tribulation for ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.

12. How does Jesus encourage this struggling church to stand firm (verse 12)?

To him who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the house of My God. *And* he won't ever have to leave the house of God. *And* he will bear the name of God *and* the name of God's city. *And* he will have a new name.

12 'He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he will not go out from it anymore; and I will write on him the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God, and My new name.

13. The church at Philadelphia was a faithful church. What little gifts they had, they used effectively because they were grounded in the Word and loved Jesus no matter what the cost. How is this church an encouragement to you in your own walk with the Lord?

I love that they were faithful in their area of the kingdom. They used what they had to the fullest. God sees. He knows what's up. It is encouraging. I just love the encouragement to hold fast. It's a simple task. Just don't let go. But sometimes that can prove the most challenging. This church didn't let go. They adhered to the Word of God and obeyed. I love the encouragement to persevere. The longer I run the race the more the encouragements to just stay in the race are precious. Don't need to be first. Just finish.

SUMMARIZE: HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE THE CHURCH AT PHILADELPHIA?

PRAY.

Read the letter to the church at Laodicea in Revelation 3:14-22.

14. How is Jesus described in the beginning of the letter to the church at Laodicea (verse 14)?
The amen. The faithful and true witness. The beginning of Creation.

15. What does Jesus know about their deeds (verse 15)?

He knows their deeds are neither cold nor hot.

16. What does Jesus want for this church (verse 15)?

He wishes they were cold or hot.

17. The physical location of Laodicea provides insight into what Jesus is communicating to this church. Laodicea received its water from Hieropolis, known for its famous hot springs, and from Colossae, which was known for its pure, cold water. However, by the time the hot water from Hieropolis and the cold water from Colossae flowed down the mountain to Laodicea, the water would be lukewarm. No time of refreshing would come from its tepid

temperature. Note that the contrast Jesus is making is between the two kinds of water: *on one side*, cold water that would be refreshing to drink, and hot water that is good for bathing—and *on the other side*, the lukewarm water that was available to the Laodicean population. What is the problem with lukewarm water? How does Jesus respond to the church's lukewarm attitude toward Him? See verses 15-16.

Lukewarm water isn't quite hot enough for comfort. It doesn't make hot drinks taste good because they are no longer warm. Cold water to cool us off or refresh our thirst is kind of meh. Lukewarm doesn't refresh. It literally at times makes you want to spit it out of your mouth.

Jesus wishes they were cold or hot. Both give refreshment. But lukewarm anything just doesn't do it. In fact, Jesus finds it abhorrent, so much so that He wants to spit them out of His mouth.

18. The Laodicean's lukewarm attitude in the things of God can be traced to how they viewed themselves spiritually. How do they see themselves according to verse 17?

They saw themselves as rich and not needing anything. They didn't understand or truly see their spiritual condition accurately.

19. What is their true spiritual state (verse 17)?

They are actually wretched, poor, miserable, blind, and naked.

20. What advice does Jesus give them (verse 18)? What spiritual truths is Jesus trying to convey to the Laodicean church? For help formulating your answer look up Zech. 13:9 and 1 Pet. 1:6-7; Is. 61:10 and Rev. 19:7-8; Matt. 13:10-17 and 2 Pet. 1:9.

Jesus tells them to buy His gold that is refined by fire. that's the way they'll become rich. He tells them to buy white robes from Him so they can be clothed in righteousness and their shame and spiritual nakedness will be covered. Jesus also tells them to buy eye salve for their eyes so their spiritual blindness is removed.

Jesus is trying to convey to the Laodiceans that they aren't seeing things accurately. They need to come to the Lord, recognizing that He uses trials to test and refine our faith. And there isn't one of us who isn't in need of the refining fires. There isn't one of us who isn't in need of the righteousness of Christ to cover our nakedness. There isn't one of us who isn't in need of spiritual sight gained from reviewing our salvation and the debt we owe Jesus.

18 I advise you to buy from Me gold refined by fire so that you may become rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself, and that the shame of your nakedness will not be revealed; and eye salve to anoint your eyes so that you may see.

9 "And I will bring the third part *through the fire, Refine them as silver is refined, And test them as gold is tested.* They will call on My name, And I will answer them; I will say, 'They are My people,' And they will say, 'The Lord is my God.' " GOD TESTS HIS PEOPLE IN THE FIRES OF AFFLICTION.

6 In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, 7 so that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ; OUR FAITH IS TESTED BY THE FIRES OF AFFLICTION.

10 I will rejoice greatly in the Lord, My soul will exult in my God; For He has clothed me with garments of salvation, He has wrapped me with a robe of righteousness, As a bridegroom decks himself with a garland, And as a bride adorns herself with

her jewels. THE LORD WRAPS HIS CHILDREN IN THE GARMENTS OF SALVATIONS AND RIGHTEOUSNESS. HE DOES IT. IT CERTAINLY ISN'T US.

7 "Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready." 8 It was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. WE ARE TO CLOTHE OURSELVES IN RIGHTEOUS ACTS.

10 And the disciples came and said to Him, "Why do You speak to them in parables?" 11 Jesus answered them, "To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been granted. 12 "For whoever has, to him more shall be given, and he will have an abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has shall be taken away from him. 13 "Therefore I speak to them in parables; because while seeing they do not see, and while hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. 14 "In their case the prophecy of Isaiah is being fulfilled, which says, '*You will keep on hearing, but will not understand; You will keep on seeing, but will not perceive;* 15 *For the heart of this people has become dull, With their ears they scarcely hear, And they have closed their eyes, Otherwise they would see with their eyes, Hear with their ears, And understand with their heart and return, And I would heal them.*' 16 "But blessed are your eyes, because they see; and your ears, because they hear. 17 "For truly I say to you that many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it. SPIRITUAL BLINDNESS IS HEALED BY THE LORD. WAKING UP AND OPENING OUR EYES.

9 For he who lacks these qualities is blind or short-sighted, having forgotten his purification from his former sins. FORGETFULNESS OF ALL Jesus HAS DONE FOR US LEADS TO OUR BLINDNESS AND OBTUSE ATTITUDES.

21. Lest they grow discouraged by these things, Jesus reminds them of an essential truth. What is it (verse 19)? What further action does He urge them to do in verse 19?

Those whom I love I reprove and discipline. Then Jesus urges them to be zealous (fervent) and repent. Take action! Do it and be willing to do whatever it takes to be right with the Lord.

22. Many believe that Rev. 3:20 is *only* a salvation call to unbelievers. The problem with that view is that Jesus has been talking to believers at the church of Laodicea (For example, Jesus disciplines them because He loves them according to verse 19). Based upon what you know about the church at Laodicea what is Jesus seeking from them in verse 20?

Jesus is looking for repentance, for communion, for relationship—that we would know Him. The eternal God desires to dine with us, to talk with us, to sup with us. He draws near with an invitation for us to draw near to Him.

23. Jesus' words to this church should drive us to examine our own hearts. See Ps. 139:23-24 and 2 Cor. 13:5. What are some ways you can guard your heart from spiritual apathy?

Regular times of testing and searching my heart. Repentance. Reviewing Christ's love and work and responding with gratitude. Reviewing God's faithful work. Being humble.

23 Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me and know my anxious thoughts; 24 And see if there be any hurtful way in me, And lead me in the everlasting way.

5 Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you—unless indeed you fail the test?

24. In the chart below record what you have learned about each of the Seven Churches of Revelation.

SCRIPTURE PATHS BIBLE STUDIES

Discovering the Treasures of the Word

The Churches	The description of Jesus to that church	What Jesus knows about that church	What Jesus has against that church	What Jesus' solution is for the problem in that church	Jesus' encouragement to the overcomers
Ephesus	Holds the 7 stars in His right hand, walks among 7 lampstands	Deeds, toil, perseverance, cannot tolerate evil men, put to test false teachers, perseverance, endured, not grown weary	Left first love	Repent and do the deeds you did at first	You hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans; grant to eat of the tree of life
Smyrna	First and last, dead but came to life	Tribulation, poverty, the blasphemy they are enduring	Nothing		Do not fear suffering, be faithful, receive crown of life, not hurt by 2 nd death
Pergamum	Sharp two-edged sword	Knows they live in a difficult place, hold fast, didn't deny Christ.	Tolerate those who hold to balaam's teaching and the Nicolaitans.	Repent or war is coming from Jesus.	Hidden manna, white stone, new name on it.
Thyatira	Eyes like flame of fire, feet like burnished bronze	Deeds, love, faith, service, perseverance, growing in faithful deeds	Tolerate false teaching and sin in the church,	Repent	Hold fast what you have, authority over the nations, rule the nations, morning star
Sardis	7 spirits of God, 7 stars	Deeds, your reputation (alive but really dead)	They are dead though they think they are alive	Wake up. Strengthen what remains. Complete deeds. Remember teaching and repent.	Faithful will walk with Jesus in white garments, name in book of life, name confessed before Father and angels
Philadelphia	Holy, true, key of David, who opens and shuts.	Know your deeds. Open door. A little power, kept the Word, not denied Jesus.	Nothing.	Verse 11—hold fast what you have.	Pillar in the temple of God. We will not leave. Wear the name of God, the city, and Jesus' new name.
Laodicea	The Amen, faithful, true witness, beginning of Creation.	He knows their deeds, neither hot or cold.	They are lukewarm.	Buy true spiritual riches. Repent.	Sit down on Jesus' throne.

25. As you think over Jesus' message to the seven churches, what did you find the most encouraging, the most convicting, and the most motivating?

It's convicting and encouraging to read every time that Jesus says, "I know your deeds." Comforting to know He sees the things done in secret. It's good to see the things that are important to Jesus when it comes to His churches. He loves faithfulness and perseverance and holding fast to the Word and fighting against sin in His churches, but He doesn't want it divorced from love. The answer to tolerating sin is repentance. In fact, it's the answer to whatever ails us. Repentance. How God loves our repenting hearts!

Thank you for the privilege of studying your Word, Lord. In doing this study, I see how little I showcased You, how much I passed by, and how much needs improvement, but I'm thankful, Lord, that you have preserved these letters for us today. How we need their reproofs and encouragements for our hearts individually and corporately. Oh, dear Father, bring us to repentance. Help us see where we're like these churches in our own lives. Help us have the courage and love for You to repent and turn away from the pernicious, enslaving sins that we tolerate. May we hold fast! Endure. Persevere. Run well.