



Revelation 2-3 The Seven Churches

As we begin this overview of the book of Revelation, take time to pray that God would open up our hearts to hear and understand His Word, comfort our minds with His grace and peace, and fix our eyes firmly on Jesus Christ.

Go back and read Revelation 1. Here is the basic background to the book of Revelation.

The Theme: The revelation (unveiling) of the glory and power of Jesus Christ.

The Author: The apostle John while in exile on the isle of Patmos.

The Date: Probably around AD 90 during the reign of Domitian.

The Audience: The seven churches of Asia Minor, which are representative of all churches.

The Promise: Blessing on those who read, hear, and keep these words.

The Approach: Our study will take the futurist approach, seeing Revelation 4-20 as speaking of a future seven-year tribulation and future millennial kingdom on earth.

In Revelation 1, John records what he saw in his initial vision of Jesus Christ. In Revelation 2-3, Jesus speaks to seven churches in the region of Asia Minor. These churches seem to represent all types of churches throughout church history. As you read, consider which of these churches may best describe our own local church and what message that Jesus Christ would have for us.

Read about each of the seven churches of Revelation over the next seven days.

Write down your observations in the margin next to each passage.

DAY ONE Ephesus

Ephesus was one of the major cities in Asia and the site of one of the seven wonders of the ancient world, the temple to Diana. On his third missionary journey, Paul established a church in Ephesus (Acts 19). The apostle John probably lived and ministered in Ephesus before his exile on Patmos. Apollos, Timothy, and Aquila & Priscilla also ministered in Ephesus at some point.

Pray and ask God to speak to your heart as you read Revelation 2:1-7.

“To the angel of the church of Ephesus write, ‘These things says He who holds the seven stars in His right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands:

How is Jesus described in this passage?

“I know your works, your labor, your patience, and that you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars; and you have persevered and have patience, and have labored for My name’s sake and have not become weary.

What does Jesus commend them for?

Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love. Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place—unless you repent. But this you have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.

What does Jesus rebuke them for?

“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God.” (NKJV)

What does Jesus encourage them to do?

What does Jesus promise to those who overcome (i.e., all true believers)?

How would you describe the church at Ephesus in one word? _____

Write out a response to God. How is God speaking to you through His Word?

DAY TWO
Smyrna

Smyrna was a seaport city about 35 miles north of Ephesus. It was a beautiful city. Within the city was a temple dedicated to the Emperor Tiberius thus making it a center of emperor worship.

Pray and ask God to speak to your heart as you read Revelation 2:8-11.

“And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write, ‘These things says the First and the Last, who was dead, and came to life:

How is Jesus described in this passage?

“I know your works, tribulation, and poverty (but you are rich); and I know the blasphemy of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. ¹⁰ Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.

What does Jesus commend them for?

¹¹ “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death.” (NKJV)

What does Jesus encourage them to do?

What does Jesus promise to overcomers?

How would you describe the church at Smyrna in one word? _____

Write out a response to God. How is God speaking to you through His Word?

DAY THREE
Pergamum

Pergamum was a city about 45 miles north of Smyrna. It was a center of much pagan worship with temples dedicated to Zeus and Caesar Augustus, as well as to Dionysius (god of wine), Asclepius (god of healing, symbolized by a serpent), and Demeter (goddess of grain).

Pray and ask God to speak to your heart as you read Revelation 2:12-17.

“And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write, ‘These things says He who has the sharp two-edged sword:

How is Jesus described in this passage?

“I know your works, and where you dwell, where Satan’s throne is. And you hold fast to My name, and did not deny My faith even in the days in which Antipas was My faithful martyr, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells. But I have a few things against you, because you have there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit sexual immorality. Thus you also have those who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate. Repent, or else I will come to you quickly and will fight against them with the sword of My mouth.

What does Jesus commend them for?

What does Jesus rebuke them for?

What does Jesus encourage them to do?

“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give some of the hidden manna to eat. And I will give him a white stone, and on the stone a new name written which no one knows except him who receives it.” (NKJV)

What does Jesus promise to those who overcome (i.e., all true believers)?

How would you describe the church at Pergamum in one word? _____

Write out a response to God. How is God speaking to you through His Word?

DAY FOUR
Thyatira

Thyatira was about 35 miles southeast of Pergamum. It was the center for numerous trade guilds and had a wool dying industry. It was the home of Lydia, “a seller of purple fabric” (Acts 16:14).

Pray and ask God to speak to your heart as you read Revelation 2:18-29.

“And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write, ‘These things says the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet like fine brass:

How is Jesus described in this passage?

“I know your works, love, service, faith, and your patience; and as for your works, the last are more than the first. Nevertheless I have a few things against you, because you allow that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce My servants to commit sexual immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols. And I gave her time to repent of her sexual immorality, and she did not repent. Indeed I will cast her into a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of their deeds. I will kill her children with death, and all the churches shall know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts. And I will give to each one of you according to your works.

What does Jesus commend them for?

What does Jesus rebuke them for?

“Now to you I say, and to the rest in Thyatira, as many as do not have this doctrine, who have not known the depths of Satan, as they say, I will put on you no other burden. But hold fast what you have till I come. And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations—‘He shall rule them with a rod of iron; They shall be dashed to pieces like the potter’s vessels’—as I also have received from My Father; and I will give him the morning star. “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.” (NKJV)

What does Jesus encourage them to do?

What does Jesus promise to those who overcome (i.e., all true believers)?

How would you describe the church at Thyatira in one word? _____

Write out a response to God. How is God speaking to you through His Word?

DAY FIVE
Sardis

Sardis was a city about 30 miles south of Thyatira. It was an important, wealthy city in this region, located on a major trade route. It had much pagan worship along with many mystery cults and secret societies.

Pray and ask God to speak to your heart as you read Revelation 3:1-6.

“And to the angel of the church in Sardis write, ‘These things says He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars:

How is Jesus described in this passage?

“I know your works, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead. Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die, for I have not found your works perfect before God. Remember therefore how you have received and heard; hold fast and repent. Therefore if you will not watch, I will come upon you as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you. You have a few names even in Sardis who have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with Me in white, for they are worthy.

What does Jesus rebuke them for?

What does Jesus encourage them to do?

He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels.

What does Jesus promise to those who overcome (i.e., all true believers)?

“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.” (NKJV)

How would you describe the church at Sardis in one word? _____

Write out a response to God. How is God speaking to you through His Word?

DAY SIX
Philadelphia

Philadelphia was a smaller city about 30 miles southeast of Sardis. It was known for wine production and its chief deity was Dionysus, the god of wine. Since the city was subject to numerous earthquakes, many of the people of the city chose to live outside the city walls.

Pray and ask God to speak to your heart as you read Revelation 3:7-13.

“And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write, ‘These things says He who is holy, He who is true, “He who has the key of David, He who opens and no one shuts, and shuts and no one opens”’:

“I know your works. See, I have set before you an open door, and no one can shut it; for you have a little strength, have kept My word, and have not denied My name. Indeed I will make those of the synagogue of Satan, who say they are Jews and are not, but lie—indeed I will make them come and worship before your feet, and to know that I have loved you. Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth. Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown.

He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more. 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 I will write on him My new name. “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.” (NKJV)

How is Jesus described in this passage?

What does Jesus commend them for?

What does Jesus encourage them to do?

What does Jesus promise to them?

How would you describe the church at Philadelphia in one word? _____

Write out a response to God. How is God speaking to you through His Word?

DAY SEVEN
Laodicea

Laodicea was a wealthy town about 90 miles east of Ephesus. It was known for its banking, production of wool cloth, and medicines, particularly an eye salve. It sat between the cool streams of Colossae and the hot springs of Hierapolis and thus was also known for its lukewarm, ill-tasting water.

Pray and ask God to speak to your heart as you read Revelation 3:14-22.

“And to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write, ‘These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God:

How is Jesus described in this passage?

“I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth. Because you say, ‘I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing’—and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked—I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent.

What does Jesus rebuke them for?

Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me. To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne. “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.” (NKJV)

What does Jesus encourage them to do?

What does Jesus promise to them?

How would you describe the church at Laodicea in one word? _____

Write out a response to God. How is God speaking to you through His Word?
