

MESSAGE
TO THE
SEVEN CHURCHES

A Bible Study For Small Groups



This Study is designed to help discover a practical message, from the Letters to the Seven Churches in the Book of Revelations, which can be applied to our everyday life. It is intended to be more practical than theological but the material included in this study should give the Believer a solid theological foundation for studying the remainder of the Book of Revelation.

It is designed for use in a Small Group setting. Each person in the Small Group should read and complete the assignments for the week before coming to the Small Group meeting. The Small Group meeting will provide an opportunity for each person to share what they have learned and to ask questions regarding the week's study materials.

Section 1 – 12 weeks

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02 – 1:1-4 1:11

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12 - review/summary

This was originally an expository series of sermons given in the church where I was serving as Pastor. A few years later, they were edited to be used as a Bible Study. There are a few things I feel I should share with you before using this material:

First: I had no intent of sharing or publishing this material until encouraged to do so by some friends. While I did consult several commentaries as I was preparing the original sermon series, I did not make notes of the references used in the messages. There was not in the beginning, nor is there now, any intent to plagiarize. Should you see anything you feel is the original thought of another, I ask for your grace and mercy.

Second: In my notes for teaching (or preaching), I tend to spell certain words phonetically for the purpose of emphasis. When transforming these notes from sermon notes to teaching notes, I felt inclined to leave a number of these phonetic spellings. They help me to make emphasis in the lesson at particular points.

Third: In my notes for teaching (or preaching), I make little effort to conform to rules of grammar. One example is that I often use a hyphen (-) to indicate a point where I may want to pause slightly and to keep certain thoughts connected as I speak. Another example is that I will use local colloquialisms to make points in the message.

Please accept that these notes are not an academic work. But I do hope they will help the preacher or teacher to be able to more quickly prepare their own sermon or teaching.

Revelation – Message To 7 Churches - 01

The book of Revelation is considered as belonging to the group of literature that is referred to as “apocalypse”. This term is generally used to denote a type of literature that speaks of supernatural things of a destructive nature.

Most writers of apocalyptic events are rather pessimistic concerning man's ability to cope with evil, or to cope with an evil world. It is fairly common that the great cosmic forces of evil that lie behind these apocalyptic events are cloaked in vivid and bizarre symbols. We can see examples of this as far back as the book of Daniel in our Old Testament. There are some subtle differences between apocalyptic writings and prophetic writings.

First, apocalyptic writings concerns a future time when God will reach into the events of mankind's existence and bring the entire system of our world to an end. Prophecy speaks of a future that will arise, or come about, from our current existence. Prophecy, in general, does not speak of the end of the human race, but only of the future events of the human race.

Secondly, apocalyptic writings tend to be dualistic. Typically the current time is viewed as being under the control of an evil and powerful entity, such as Satan; while the future time will be controlled by a powerful and righteous Deity, such as God.

Thirdly, apocalyptic writings make greater use of symbolism.

Almost everyone agrees that the New Testament book of Revelation clearly fits into the classification of “apocalyptic” literature. And I do not totally disagree with this. However, there are some important differences in Revelation from apocalyptic writings in general.

Apocalyptic writers are pessimistic regarding the present age and man's future of survival. The book of Revelation appears to carry an overall attitude of optimism concerning mankind's future.

If we pay close attention to what is said in the book of Revelation, we can sense the attitude that was expressed in John 16:33; *“In the world you have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.”*

While there will be an outbreak of Satanic activity in the last days, don't worry; God will remain in sovereign control of us and this world. Our Redemption has already been won by the Lamb of God. Apocalyptic writings leave us with a doubtful hope of surviving the coming evil. The book of Revelation goes with the idea that the outcome has already been decided, and it is in our favor.

The prospect and likelihood that great suffering will take place, the survival and victory of God's people is assured.

Another important difference between apocalyptic writings and Revelation is seen in the call for repentance, or of moral urgency. Apocalyptic writings generally speak of the pain, destruction, and suffering as unavoidable. Revelation offers suggestions that those who repent of their moral deficiency will be spared.

Revelation – Message To 7 Churches - 01

The book of Revelation does clearly have some apocalyptic qualities, but it is more prophetic than apocalyptic. The reader is not left with a hopeless destruction at the end. Not only is there victory in the end for Believers, there is instruction as to how one can escape some of the suffering that is foretold.

We can also find help in separating true beliefs from false. The failures of the churches in Asia are disclosed for the apparent purpose of helping others avoid destruction and punishment. There is the message that the martyrs will be vindicated. There is a ribbon of salvation that runs the entire length of the book of Revelation.

Christ Jesus, as The WORD, and as the Son of God, reveals to the saints what He is given from the Father. The revelation from Christ, discloses, heavenly secrets which are inaccessible to human senses. While addressed to seven churches, it is in fact a writing to all churches, and to all ages.

In the book of Revelation, Jesus discloses the course of the life of the church toward her perfection at the end. Through these churches, the grace of God comes by the Holy Spirit to prideful humanity. The churches are addressed in the name of Jesus Christ, because it was in His humanity that Christ was the faithful witness of his deity, and cleansed us from sin by His blood.

.1. What are some of the reasons you have heard people give – or teach – as to what the purpose of the book of Revelation is?
(don't have to believe it – you have heard it)

.2. What are some of the things you hope to learn from the study of the Messages to the Seven Churches?

Revelation – Message To 7 Churches - 01

A description is given to each church – as to “whom” the message is from. The descriptions given – concerning the “from whom” the message is given is significant to each church. It isn't just a religious description. So pay close attention to this as you read the Messages to each church.

The average person who reads the Book of Revelation is fascinated by its content and yet at the same time perplexed by it. To a great number of modern readers it seems an unclear collection of visions and prophecy. To those who study this work slowly and carefully, it is a wonderful source of Christian teaching and encouragement.

There is no reason to be ashamed of confessing that much of the imagery in this Book is strange to the modern reader. The symbols and visions of Revelation seem to cloud the message. This is a good place to remind ourselves that this language and imagery was not strange to the first century believers. If we take the time to become familiar with the apocalyptic (or end time) literature of that day, primarily the Old Testament prophetic writing, then we are likely to gain the ability to more correctly interpret this work.

The imagery and symbolism used in this work was most likely necessary due to the visionary and futuristic content. What words could have been used to describe some of these future and unseen events? This type of writing was not used for the purpose of being ambiguous or frustrating. “Evil” is a somewhat abstract term and can be under interpreted by many. So to write about something being “evil” may cause one person to shutter, but others would naturally interpret the same passage to be speaking of something as nothing more than “bad.” However, a woman “drunk with the blood of the saints” paints the same basic ghastly picture in the mind of each reader.

Many believers have allowed the book of Revelation to become a controversial work or have made it into one. Some have become so fanatical that they have singularly focused on the prophecy and either miss or ignore Christ in this work. Others have become so frustrated by the controversy that they have decided to simply stay away from the text of Revelation.

Read Revelation 22:7, 22:10, and 22:16 and make notes:

These verses make it clear that we cannot ignore this work. The message contained within the book of Revelation is intended for the churches. It was not to be sealed up, and we are expected to keep these words. A caution needs to be extended concerning the great diversity of interpretations and view points on the Book of Revelation. We must not allow these things to discourage us from mining and gleaning the marvelous Christian truths found with it.

Revelation – Message To 7 Churches - 01

There are those who suggest John used knowledge of other writings which were not part of the text we accept as the Bible when he was writing the Book of Revelation. When one studies carefully this text, it seems evident John was more likely to have been drawing from an understanding of the Old Testament prophetic writings and the personal first hand experiences of the teachings of Jesus Christ.

There are a variety of viewpoints from which people study the Book of Revelation. Each of these views determines to a great degree what we receive from this work as we read it. The most common of viewpoints are probably the Futuristic, Historic, Preterist, and the Idealistic viewpoints.

The **Futuristic** viewpoint considers all visions except chapters 1, 2, and 3 as being for some future time that will occur immediately preceding and following the second coming of Jesus Christ. There are many theological arguments against this view. The most simple argument is this would make the text irrelevant to the contemporary church until the return of Christ.

The **Historic** viewpoint considers all the events and visions as past historical times. The theological arguments against this view get lost in the vigorous arguments among its proponents as to which historical events or times are being referred to by the various visions. The most simple argument is in chapter 1 verse 3; John calls this work “prophecy.”

The **Preterist** view considers the work as relating to the contemporary time in which it was written. In other words, this says all of the events and visions were referring to things which had happened or were happening in John’s life time. This view takes Revelation out of the realm of prophecy and confines its application to those within the first six centuries (“what soon must take place”). This view would make the work irrelevant to contemporary Believers. This view also is refuted by John calling this “prophecy.”

The **Idealist** view considers Revelation as basically a poetic symbolism of spiritual truths. Everything in the book becomes “spiritualized” and nothing is to be applied to any specific event, present or future. This view might teach some spiritual truths concerning the battle Satan wages against God, but prevents it from shedding any light on the future. The same argument concerning prophecy used against Historical and Preterist views apply.

A better view is suggested which we will call the **Pastoral** viewpoint. This view considers the Book of Revelation to be a Pastoral letter which contains apocalyptic prophecy. This letter is to help believers separate true beliefs from false beliefs. It also encourages authentic Christian discipleship even in times of suffering or mistreatment. These messages are appropriate to believers in any generation.

In the Book of Revelation we find prophecy to be sure; but this prophecy, upon careful examination, is not mere foretelling or prediction. The prophecy in the text of Revelation gives both warning and consolation; judgment and blessing. We must take care to focus on the messages of warning and consolation rather than becoming victims of tunnel vision concerning future foretelling.

Revelation – Message To 7 Churches - 01

Some of the churches mentioned in this work were experiencing persecution. This can give Christians everywhere a practical reason to guard against emperor worship and encourage them to be faithful to Christ. Five of the seven churches had serious problems. The biggest problem appears to be a lack of loyalty to Christ. This gives practical warning for believers to guard against allowing heresy to creep into their church.

Some people see the message in Revelation to be wholly pessimistic concerning the outcome of God's efforts and activity in this world. Those who study this book with the mind of Christ tend to find a different message. First, our hope does not lie in this world but in Christ. Second, it doesn't matter how bad evil becomes, Christ WILL NOT allow believers to be overcome by evil. Third, Christ is giving us an outline of how things are going to unfold so that we are not caught unaware.

The constant recurring , or the continual, message found in the Book of Revelation is the call to God's people to repent.

The Gospels record the Lord's promise to build a Church. The book of Acts records the establishment of the Church. The Epistles give instructions on how to do the work of the Church

The Letters to the Seven Churches in the book of Revelations gives us a clear understanding of what the Lord expects from the Church. The letters reflect Christ's expectation of the church as a result of what Jesus had taught and what the apostles taught after His ascension. He expects nothing less from the church today.

Make a list of things you have heard that the Letters to the Seven Churches teaches.

Revelation – Message To 7 Churches - 01

Write your thoughts and questions regarding this study to share with the group:

Revelation – Message To 7 Churches - 02

Read Revelation 1:1 and make notes:

The message is from:

The purpose :

Who brought the message to John:

The word “revelation” is from the Greek word “apokalypsis” which means to expose what was formerly hidden. The book of Revelation contains a message that was at previous times hidden from man; but is now revealed. God is ultimately the source of all revealing to man. Look at what Daniel declared to Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel 2:28-29.

The message revealed in the book of Revelation was ultimately from God, who gave it to Jesus Christ. Then Jesus gave the message to an Angel. The Angel gave the message to John. Then John was told to take the message and make it available to all Believers.

The vision and revelation recorded in the book of Revelation was given to Jesus Christ by God for the express purpose of showing his servants what was going to happen. God wanted believers to know history was not a series of haphazard and unrelated events. Instead, there is a divine decree which orders the things that must come to pass. This “revealing of coming events” is the normal operating procedure for God.

Read Amos 3:7 and make notes:

Some have presented as a problem the statement that these events must “soon take place” and after 2000 years the end of time has not come. One attempt to explain this is to use the concept in

Read 2 Peter 3:8 and make notes:

Revelation – Message To 7 Churches - 02

Some have tried to reconcile this by stating the “soon to happen” was the persecution of the church rather than the end of history. Others have stated this means the events are certain to occur while still others say this simply refers to the suddenness with which they will take place. Probably the best interpretation is to take the phrase at face value. When Jesus was teaching of God bringing about justice for his children who cry out to him day and night he said,

Read Luke 18:7-8 and Romans 16:20 and make notes:

In the prophetic context, the end is always imminent. In the consideration of God being from everlasting to everlasting, any event of mankind will come to consummation in a relative brief moment.

In your own words, write the purpose of the message in Revelations:

Read Revelation 1:2 and make notes:

The original text can be interpreted to say “testimony to Jesus” but the majority of Bible Scholars believe the most accurate application is “testimony from Jesus.” Jesus is the one who is giving the testimony concerning these things.

Read Revelation 1:3 and make notes:

Revelation – Message To 7 Churches - 02

There is a blessing for God's people in this revelation and a message to the church. There is a blessing for those who read it. There is a blessing for those who hear and take it to heart. The blessing is not automatic and it will not come upon us like a surprise. The blessing depends upon a two step process. Step one, we must hear it. Step two, we must take it to heart.

“Take to heart” is translated from the Greek word “terountes” which means to observe, watch, and keep. Since the hearer is expected to “take to heart” what is written in this message it is reasonable to receive this as a moral instruction as well as a prophetic prediction.

The Greek word translated “time” in this text is the word “kairos” which speaks of a time of crisis, a decisive moment, or an appointed moment.” Today is the day of Salvation, or the appointed time to be saved. The time for making a decision by believers in Jesus Christ is at hand. It is important for each one to carefully consider where we stand with our faith in Jesus Christ and how we will respond to the world around us. The time for making a decision to be obedient to the message is now.

The promised blessing in the Book of Revelations is a conditional promise. You will be blessed (1) if you hear the message and (2) if you take it to heart.

What are some of the other New Testament promises of blessing that are conditional? Some blessings may have only one condition while others may have several conditions. Is Salvation a conditional promise? Is Baptism with the Holy Spirit a conditional promise?

Read Revelation 1:4 and make notes:

Read Revelation 1:11 and make notes:

The letter is written to literal churches actually existing at that time. There certainly were other churches. We need to be careful not to become bogged down in the prophetic symbolism of these particular seven churches.

Revelation – Message To 7 Churches - 02

In the New Testament writings, Asia usually refers to the part of the Roman empire which was the western part of Asia minor. The book of Acts speaks of other churches which were located in Asia such as Troas, Colossae, and Hierapolis which surely would be equal in importance to those listed in Revelation. There is no completely satisfactory answer as to why only these seven are mentioned in Revelation. Some claim the number seven was used to represent completeness and or perfection, but if this were the case any seven would do and perhaps it would have been appropriate to use the first seven established.

Others have suggested the Asian churches had organized into seven groups with each of these being the head of one of the groups, but there isn't any biblical reason to take this view. Some have suggested these seven churches were chosen because the associated cities held some special relationship to emperor worship, but the context of the messages to the churches doesn't indicate this. Others suggest the most likely answer is to be found in the fact that these seven churches were located on a circular road which connected the most populated, most wealthy, and most influential parts of the Asian province in the Roman empire. Why the churches in Asia rather than those in some other continent?

These seven churches were probably chosen because they were typical of the qualities of obedience and disobedience found in churches of every age. Seven were chosen probably because seven is a number of completeness and those listed fairly represents the different types of attitudes and responses.

However, the prophecies about them and to them extend far beyond those localities. These seven churches not only represented seven types of churches that existed in John's day, but exist in every era of the church age. These seven churches were probably chosen because of the meaning of their name and the situation that was occurring in that church. The name of each church means something significant to understanding the message. The introductory description Christ uses when speaking to each one has a meaning. After evaluating each church, the promise to the "overcomer" in all churches is expanded and clarified.

What are some reasons you believe (or have heard) these seven churches were named?

The letters to the Seven Churches in chapters 2 and 3 are intricately related to the vision, titles, and descriptions in chapter 1. The writer identifies himself by a descriptive term or phrase taken from the vision in chapter 1 and one which is appropriate for that local church. These letters are messages, or special words, which are a continuation of the vision in chapter one and are intended for all believers. Sharing letters was a practice the early church believers were accustomed to.

Revelation – Message To 7 Churches - 02

Read Colossians 4:16 and make notes:

Read 2 Corinthians 1:1 and make notes:

It is clearly spelled out that the letter to the church at Colossae was to be shared with the church at Laodicea after it had been read to the congregation at Colossae. And in like manner, the letter to the church at Laodicea was to be shared with the church at Colossae. The letter to the church at Corinth was to be shared with all the saints or believers throughout Achaia. This would imply that the letters written to a particular church giving guidance and direction concerning spiritual matters and lifestyle would be expected to be shared with other believers and churches with whom they had contact. If this is true, then the letters to the seven churches would not have only been for the eyes and ears of the specific church named in the letter, but would have been intended for all believers to read, learn, and make adjustments to their lifestyle accordingly.

The letters to the churches in Revelation can be seen as an inspection report from Christ. One in which he issues warnings and words of encouragement to each church inspected. When we understand the letters to be a part of the whole apocalypse then we can see they are intended to exhort and edify the universal church. The plural is significant “Let him hear what the Spirit says to the `churches’.”

Some have argued that the “angels” of each church referred to the human messengers or the ruling official in each congregation. Throughout the rest of the text in Revelation the word “angel” is clearly used in reference to heavenly beings and this is approximately 60 times. It would be most appropriate to interpret the term consistently throughout. This would mean the letter is to the prevailing spirit of the local church. It is not meant to be taken literally as the guardian angel of the local church nor is it the ruling official of the congregation. Close inspection indicates the letter is not just to the leader, or the leaders, of the local church, but to every member of the congregation.

Each letter in Revelation is prefaced by a charge to write to the angel of the specific church. In each one we find:

- A. Identification of the author in a descriptive phrase taken from chapter 1.
- B. Acknowledgment of achievements.
- C. Indictment for misconduct, if any.
- D. Words of encouragement, censure, counsel, and warning.
- E. Exhortation to hear and promise to those who conquer or overcome.

Revelation – Message To 7 Churches - 02

This overall symmetry in composition is designed to speak to the universal church a message of necessity to have patient endurance. Consider the promise of blessing to those who hear and take the message to heart that is recorded in Revelation 1:3. Then consider the similar promise of blessing found in Revelation 22:7. This indicates the entire content of this book is one work, one message, one purpose. This promise of blessing for those who hear and put this message into action is like two ends of the same ribbon used to tie around the rolled up scroll. It is not to be divided into many messages but one message to all believers.

What are some things you hope to learn from the remainder of this study on the letters to the Seven Churches? (remember, those who seek find – and those with no expectations don't seek)

Write your thoughts and questions regarding this study to share with the group:

Revelation – Message To 7 Churches - 03

Who gave the Revelation and message?

Read Revelation 1:4-5 and make notes:

Read Psalms 90:2; John 1:1-2; 2 Timothy 1:9; Titus 1:2 and make notes:

As finite beings, we have a hard time understanding or expressing eternal things. John seems to do the best any of us could do in paraphrasing the divine name of God. He attempts to express the eternally existent God we serve has no beginning and has no end. He existed before anything of this world, he exist currently, and he will continue to exist long after this entire world has ceased to exist. This title of Jesus Christ is reassuring to the believer as we face the uncertainty of our world's future.

Title #1: Who is and who was and who is to come.

Reflect upon the fact that Jesus, our Savior, existed before there was time and He will exist forever, even after time ceases to exist. We did not exist before we were conceived. However, we are promised, as believers in Jesus, to receive life everlasting. What impact, if any, does this have on your attitude toward your daily life as a Christian?

Read Revelation 1:5 and make notes:

Revelation – Message To 7 Churches - 03

Read John 3:32; John 18:37 and make notes:

The Greek word translated “witness” in this text is the word “martyr” from which we get our English word “martyr.” This speaks of a person who suffers death for their commitment to a cause. Just because a believer is killed does not make them a martyr; even if they experience an early or untimely death. To be a Christian martyr, is to be killed as a result of your commitment to Jesus. To those who are about to enter into a time of persecution, Jesus stands as the model of how to stand and not compromise the truth of God. Jesus’ life on earth showed his credibility as a faithful witness - even to the point of suffering.

Title #2: Faithful witness.

Read Revelation 1:5 again and make notes:

Read John 11:25 and make notes:

Even though Jesus experienced the martyr’s end, he did not remain dead. To those who are facing eminent danger, be encouraged that Jesus was the “firstborn” of the dead. Not only the first one to be permanently raised from death but he is the pre-eminent and supreme one among those raised from the dead. For Jesus to be called the “firstborn” indicates there will be others to follow. This is our reasonable expectation as believers.

Title #3: Firstborn from the dead.

Among those who know you best, do you have a reputation as a faithful witness for Christ? What evidence exist to support your answer? Do you honestly expect to rise from death?

Revelation – Message To 7 Churches - 03

Read Revelation 1:5 again and make notes:

Read 1 Timothy 6:15 and make notes:

For the one who has been vindicated by experiencing resurrection, there is the promise of Jesus becoming the “king of kings” and “lord of lords.” The devil offered Jesus all the kingdoms of this world (Matthew 4:8-9) if he would worship Satan. By faithfully being obedient to the Heavenly Father, Jesus now is given authority over every kingdom, not only on the earth but all kingdoms and their kings. Every king on this earth is subject to the rule of Jesus Christ whether they acknowledge it or not. The believer is reassured that we are following the ultimate of winners and victors.

Title #4: Ruler of the kings of the earth.

Read Revelation 1:5 again and make notes:

Read Jeremiah 31:3; Galatians 5:1 and make notes:

Jesus has done more than atoned for our sins, and more than just having paid for our sins. He has set us free from the guilt and control our sins had on us. Two Greek verbs are used which indicate a change in the tense. He is the one who currently loves us and he is the one who has already loosed us from our sins and will continue to loose us from sins should we become entangled by them again. Believers have a promise of a continuing relationship with Jesus.

Title #5: Who freed us from our sins.

Since believers are servants of the one to whom all kings are subject, why do we fear them instead of being obedient to Jesus?

Revelation – Message To 7 Churches - 03

What does the statement “has freed us from our sin” and “will continue to free us from our sins” say to you?

Read Revelation 1:6 and make notes:

Read Exodus 19:6; Isaiah 61:6 and make notes:

Even though the whole earth belongs to the Lord, His desire was, and is, to have a kingdom in which everyone is a priest. The first century believers appear to have understood the church to be the true Israel and thus the inheritors of the blessings promised to those who would be obedient. Corporately, the church has a royal standing in regards to Christ. The Greek word for the greatest amount of time is used in this text, the “eon.” The phrase translated “for ever and ever” in the Greek literally speaks of eons being multiplied times eons to represent how long he is to receive glory and power.

Title #6: Who made us a kingdom of priests.

Do you see yourself as a Priest? What about a “priest in training?” What evidence is there to support this answer?

Read Revelation 1:8 and make notes:

Read Revelation 1:17; Isaiah 44:6; Isaiah 48:12 and make notes:

Revelation – Message To 7 Churches - 03

There wasn't anyone before God. Neither will there be anyone who will out live or out last our God. This phrase doesn't simply mean God is the first letter and the last letter, but he is everything in between as well. God is certainly the first thing, he is surely the last thing, but he is also everything between first and last as well. To those who facing threats, what a comforting thought to realize we have standing with us the one who is the beginning of the matter and the end of it as well, not to mention the one who controls all that occurs between beginning and end.

Title #7: Alpha and Omega.

What does the idea of Jesus being first, last and everything in between say to you concerning your daily walk?

Read Revelation 1:18 and make notes:

Read John 6:51; John 14:6; John 10:28 and make notes:

This title designates Christ in a manner that is a sharp contrast to the dead idols of the world's religions. He is not only the possessor of life, he is the giver of life. His not "a life" but He is "the life." There is no other life except what is found in Christ.

Read Acts 17:28 and make notes:

Title #8: The Living One.

Read Revelation 1:18 and make notes:

Revelation – Message To 7 Churches - 03

“Hades” is the Greek counterpart of the Hebrew “sheol” which is the place of departed souls and not the place of torment “gehenna.” Christ not only has control over death but he has control and authority over the location of those who have departed this physical life. Through the obedient sinless life of Christ, his agonizing death and his triumphant resurrection from death; He has the right to hold the keys of death and Hades. For the believers who might be faced with the prospect of losing their physical life, this title stands as a reassurance that we will still be under Christ’s control after our physical life should end.

Title #9: Holds keys of death and Hades.

The one who is life has authority (holds the keys) over death. Is it encouraging that the one who is death does not have authority over the Living?

Write your thoughts and questions regarding this study to share with the group:

Revelation – Message To 7 Churches - 04

Appearance of One giving Revelation:

Read Revelation 1:12-13 and make notes:

Read Revelation 1:20 and make notes:

The Greek word used for Angel could refer to human messenger. The Angels mentioned in this book are closely connected with the Spirit of God. It seems best to interpret these as spiritual messengers rather than human messengers.

It is believed candles were not known or in use at this time in history. The reference in this vision is to seven stands of which each one would hold an oil burning lamp. Moses was instructed :

Read Exodus 25:31-37 and make notes:

To represent each church as a lampstand is fitting when we consider Jesus' teaching:

Read Matthew 5:14-16; Matthew 28:20 and make notes:

What a word of comfort to realize that Christ is here among us should we face adversity or persecution. The description of the robe is that of the high priest's robe in that it goes to the feet and has a high girding at the chest. Jesus, our high priest, is here with us. He is very much aware of our current situation and circumstances. He is not caught off guard by our needs or our request.

Revelation – Message To 7 Churches - 04

Description #1: Stands among the golden lampstands.

Description #2: Robe down to his feet.

Description #3: Golden sash around chest.

Would you prefer to see Jesus standing among us with a sword in hand and looking like a warrior instead of a priest with authority? Why?

Read Revelation 1:14 and make notes:

Read Daniel 7:9; Leviticus 19:32 and make notes:

Even from ancient times, God called for reverence and respect of the elderly. The white hair is symbolic of the experience and wisdom acquired from the years lived. Jesus is exhibiting not only white hair but his whole head is white, calling for the utmost respect and reverence.

Description #4: Head and hair white like wool.

What message do you think is in this passage that says not only Jesus' hair is white but his whole head?

Read Revelation 1:14 again and make notes:

The eyes blazing like fire speaks of the ability to see through our masks and costumes with which we try to hide. He is able to penetrate to the inner man.

Read 1 Samuel 16:7 and make notes:

Description #5: Eyes like blazing fire.

Revelation – Message To 7 Churches - 04

Read Revelation 1:15 and make notes:

The “bronze” feet speak of stability and endurance. The fact that these feet have been refined in a furnace speak of the purity. There is nothing left hidden on the inside of these feet which might give way under stress or pressure. His ability to stand firm under all circumstances is sure.

Description #6: Feet glowing like bronze in furnace.

To the lost, or those guilty of sin, Blazing Eyes are a threat. These penetrating eyes say, “I will see what you have hidden in your life.” The feet of bronze are threatening to these same people because they appear as something strong enough to crush and destroy them.

What do these two descriptions say to the Believer?

Read Revelation 1:15 again and make notes:

The sound of “rushing waters” probably doesn’t refer to a loud volume but the ability to drown out every other sound. When standing near a stream or river where the water is flowing rapidly over rocks, the sound doesn’t appear so loud as to hurt one’s ears but it is difficult to hear another person who is speaking. The words spoken by our Lord will be heard and nothing or no one else will shout him down or overpower him with their speech.

Description #7: Voice like sound of rushing waters.

Read Revelation 1:16 and make notes:

The right hand symbolizes power, control, and even safety. The Angels assigned to the churches are under the control of Jesus and are kept safe by him as well. The number of stars in his hand is probably determined only by the churches to which the letters are addressed. Remember, seven is a number indicating completeness and this represents the complete church.

Revelation – Message To 7 Churches - 04

Surely every true church in the world is under the control of Christ. An important message is found in the simple fact that if the churches are in the hand of Christ then they are also under his protection.

Description #8: Right hand held 7 stars.

What does these two descriptions say to you?

Read Revelation 1:16 again and make notes:

Read Hebrews 4:12 and make notes:

The sword is not in the hand, but is in the mouth. The sharp double edged sword is probably best seen as the Word of God. It is the Word of God that shall defeat the enemies of God and the enemies of God's people. Regardless of the influential or mesmerizing teachings of this world's religions, the Word of God will prevail.

Description #9: From mouth came sharp double-edged sword.

Read Revelation 1:16 again and make notes:

The shining face speaks of his evident glory. The brilliant shining of Christ was seen once before at the Mount of Transfiguration recorded in Matthew 17:2. This is also the description Jesus gave of the righteous after those which cause evil are casts into the fiery furnace at the judgment (Matthew 13:41-43). The absence of that which causes sin allows the true brilliance of the glory of God to shine forth.

Description #10: Face like sun shining in brilliance.

What personal message do you receive from these two descriptions?

Write your thoughts and questions regarding this study to share with the group:

Revelation – Message To 7 Churches - 05

Ephesus:

Read Revelation 2:1 and make notes:

Ephesus (eff-eh-sus) means “desirable or full purposed.” One word to describe the church at Ephesus is “fallen.”

It seems appropriate for Ephesus to receive the first letter. This was the most important city of proconsular Asia in that day. It was located at the mouth of the Cayster river on the gulf of the Aegean sea. Ephesus is considered by many to have been at the crossroads of that civilization. The people of this city were very cosmopolitan and they were transient in nature. This provided Ephesus with a history of wide political and cultural values.

Read Acts 18:19; Acts 18:24; Acts 19:35 and make notes:

Artemis was the Greek “bee” goddess. The statue of Artemis was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. Artemis is known as Diana in Latin. This temple served as a bank for kings and merchants. The temple of Artemis also gave asylum to criminals who were fleeing prosecution. The pride of human learning, strong Jewish prejudice, the effects of riches, sensual indulgences, and influence of idolatry were all very obvious in Ephesus.

Read 1 Corinthians 15:32; 1 Timothy 1:2-3; 2 Timothy 1:16-18 and make notes:

Revelation – Message To 7 Churches - 05

Message is From:

Read Revelation 2:1 again and make notes:

Read John 10:28 and make notes;

The message is from the one who has control of the churches (“holds the seven stars in his right hand”, and is “among the lampstands.” Jesus has previously declared that “no one” can take from His control those whom He holds. To say Christ holds the angels is to say they are under his control.

Read Matthew 18:20; Hebrews 2:12 and make notes:

The one who sends the message is also very aware of their circumstances and activities (“walks among the seven golden lampstands”) because he is right there with them going in and out among them. This is how he is able to know their works or know their overall lifestyle. In the letter to the Hebrews, Jesus is quoted as declaring He will praise us in the presence of the congregation. This means Jesus planned to be in the congregation when they were together.

What affect should it have on us to realize Jesus walks around in our church or home group during the meeting or service?

What I know about you:

Read Revelation 2:2-3 and make notes:

Revelation – Message To 7 Churches - 05

Read Revelation 2:6 and make notes:

Jesus Christ has firsthand and intimate knowledge of their works and their loyalties. Since He “walks” among them, He is not relying on the report of another but sees for himself. Christ is not only aware of their deeds and accomplishments; he is aware of their hopes, dreams, desires, and goals. Jesus knows all about us and what we do (all things.)

Read Luke 10:22; John 21:17 and make notes:

Doing The Work:

The Greek word in Revelation 2:2 which is translated “work” refers to “labor to the point of sweat and exhaustion.” It is a commendable thing for the Ephesian Believers to be busy doing “the work.” God actually expects us to work and not to be lazy as indicated in the following Scriptures.

Read Matthew 25:35-36; Matthew 5:16; 1 Timothy 6:18; Hebrews 13:16 and make notes;

Revelation – Message To 7 Churches - 05

Enduring Patiently:

Read Luke 21:19; Hebrews 10:36; James 1:2-4; James 1:12; James 5:7 and make notes:

Not Tolerating Evil Doers:

Read Matthew 5:8; 2 Corinthians 6:17-18; 2 Corinthians 7:1; Ephesians 5:11 and make notes:

Read 2 Thessalonians 3:6; Hebrews 12:14; 2 Peter 3:11 and make notes:

Revelation – Message To 7 Churches - 05

Testing Preachers and Teachers:

Read 1 John 4:1-3; Matthew 7:15-20 and make notes:

The Apostle Paul warned the early believers to be on guard for such as this:

Read Acts 20:28-31 and make notes:

Bearing The Name Of Christ:

Read Matthew 10:22; Matthew 10:39; Matthew 19:29; 2 Corinthians 4:11; 2 Corinthians 12:10 and make notes:

Revelation – Message To 7 Churches - 05

Hated Practices Of Nicolaitans:

The believers in Ephesus hated the “practices of the Nicolaitans” not the people who were Nicolaitans. The Nicolaitans claimed to have insight into divine things but they were demonic in nature. The Nicolaitans claimed a special freedom had been given to them. Because of this special freedom, things that would be sin if committed by others would not be sin if committed by a Nicolaitan. They taught it did not matter what one did with or to their physical body. They engaged in and encouraged indiscriminate sexual relations claiming it did not affect the spiritual body.

In order to believe something like this, one would have to deny New Testament Scriptures such as:

Read 1 Peter 2:9; 1 Corinthians 6:19 and make notes:

The Ephesian believers were not lacking in serious or sustained religious activity. They had even continued their religious activities to the point of suffering. The Ephesian believers did not blindly accept those who claimed to be apostles or prophets. They apparently understood that miracles accompanied false prophets and false apostles just like they did authentic prophets.

Read 2 Thessalonians 3:6; 2 John 1:9-11 and make notes:

Evaluate yourself honestly. How are you doing in regard to and list the evidence to support your evaluation:

1. Doing The Work Of A Christian.
2. Enduring Patiently
3. Not Tolerating Evil Doers

Revelation – Message To 7 Churches - 05

Verdict:

Read Revelation 2:4 and make notes:

The Ephesian church was noted for its work, patience, hatred of evil doers, and a careful weeding out of false teachers. However, it had failed to maintain its faithfulness of commitment to the “first love.”

Christ did not deny their sincerity but he is disapproving of their diminished commitment. He did not find them guilty of changing their doctrine, but of leaving their first love. First love can mean the love that came first in time, such as a first girl friend or first boy friend. It can also mean the first in importance, such as a husband’s love for his wife is more important than his love for his work or his hobby.

Read Deuteronomy 6:5; John 14:15; Matthew 15:8 and make notes:

Even in the midst of vigorously weeding out false prophets, they had let their guard down and had departed from the most important relationship. Perhaps in their zeal and desire to have sound teaching and the extra efforts to keep out imposters, they created an atmosphere dominated by suspicion which choked out brotherly love. Good works and pure doctrine must not become emptied of redemptive agape love and grace of God. As we distance ourselves from the personal and real love of God, it becomes increasingly difficult to have cooperative relationships with other believers.

In the church at Ephesus, programs, ministries, and fellowship of the church had become more important than personal relationship with the Heavenly Father and the Savior.

Read Matthew 24:12 and make notes:

Revelation – Message To 7 Churches - 05

The Church Lost It's Love For People:

Read John 13:34-35; John 15:12; 1 Corinthians 1:10; 1 Peter 1:22 and make notes:

What is most important to us?

Do we love God's Word or a version of God's Word? Give evidence to support your answer.

Do we love most, God's Word or what a particular minister claims God's Word says? Give evidence to support this answer.

Revelation – Message To 7 Churches - 05

Word to specific church:

Read Revelation 2:5 and make notes:

Jesus is providing a way out or a way back. Like the citizens of the city, the believers in Ephesus were at a crossroads. A decision about the direction is called for. This verse shows their failure to be no small mistake or discrepancy.

This is the basic outline for any and all broken relationships; in the family, friends, church, and the community at large:

1. Remember our past
2. Repent of our mistake
3. Do the right thing
 - A. for the sinner - accept Jesus as Savior
 - B. for the strayed believer - turn around and walk the walk

In 2 Samuel 7:8, David was reminded that he had received God's blessing and favor when he was being faithful. The prodigal son remembered where he had come from in Luke 15:17-18 when "he came to himself."

Read Matthew 3:2; Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38; Acts 3:19; Acts 8:22 and make notes:

Revelation – Message To 7 Churches - 05

Return To The Way Of Love:

Read 1 Corinthians 13:1-3; 1 John 5:2-3; Galatians 5:6 and make notes:

Love and relationships are expected to mature as they grow, but we should never forget the satisfying and simple purity of the first love part of the relationship with our Heavenly Father. In this phase of a relationship, one is doing out of love while law and duty play little part in determining what we will do. Without this kind of love for those around us, the church ceases to be a church. The threat to “remove your lampstand” should not be seen as losing their salvation or being refused a place in the rapture of the church. It simply speaks of Christ, who is daily walking among the churches, removing that local church’s place from the kingdom. A church who refuses to repent is in certain danger of having Christ to take away their place in the kingdom which would mean his spirit would no longer dwell among them.

Consider the statement: “Remove your lampstand from its place.” Revelation 1:20 reveals lampstand to be the local church. This is not speaking about extinguishing the light, but of moving it from one place to another. Many have preserved the purity of their doctrine, but have allowed their heart to become cold, or even defiled. If doctrine is only a thing of our mind, then having our lampstand removed is the most likely result. The only defense is to allow doctrine to become a thing of the heart.

The lamp stand (lamp holder) has no light in and of itself. The lampstand can only hold up and display the light that is placed upon it. The lampstand was designed to be placed where it will be of benefit to those in darkness. Three outside actions are needed in order for the lampstand to be able to hold a lamp that provides light. First, the lamp is supplied with oil (God gives the Holy Spirit). Second, the lamp just be lighted (God sets the light to burning within us). Third, the stand must be placed in a position to help those in need (God establishes His church). If we refuse to receive the oil, or refuse to be lighted, we will not have light to shine. If we have light, it will shine.

The local church is a light bearer only by the power of God. We can lose our permission, our authorization, to be a “light bearer” for our community. We have light to share only by intimate relationship with the Heavenly Father.

Revelation – Message To 7 Churches - 05

It appears often in history when the gospel begins to die in one locality, it shines brightly in another. Each local church is responsible for its individual members and leadership. A loving devotion to Christ and relationship with Him can be lost in the zeal of doing the work. This can result in our “loosing” our right, or our place, of bearing light to a dark and lost world.

History indicates Ephesus did turn around for a time. The believers in Ephesus were commended in the late second century by Ignatius. Then in A.D. 431, the council of Bishops met in Ephesus and ratified the council of Nicea. But the city’s Christian stand finally fell. After the Arab onslaught came the Turks, and then the Mongols in 1403. Today, this city’s once famous seaport is only a marsh, covered with reeds. The lampstand was removed.

What can I learn from this church?

Word to all Churches:

Read Revelation 2:7 and make notes:

We are expected to “hear” AND to “overcome.” The overcomer is not just a person who has conquered an earthly foe, but one who has remained faithful to Christ through everything. Paradise is translated from the Greek word “paradeisos” which means a park or a garden. Paradise was originally a Persian word meaning pleasure garden. It later came to represent the place of the righteous dead to Judaism.

Jesus Christ is the one who restores the Lost Paradise where men and women can walk and talk with the Heavenly Father. Paradise is where the tree of life is found. Rather than a hidden or secret location, Paradise may be the divine relationship with God. In keeping with the Jewish understanding, paradise symbolizes the restored God - man perfect fellowship that existed before sin came into the world. The tree of life is to be found in this perfect fellowship with God.

Only two times in Scripture does the promise of “paradise” occur. This is the same word for paradise that Adam and Eve enjoyed together with God. The first time it was promised was to the thief on the cross. The second time is to those who overcome the evil temptations of this world

Revelation – Message To 7 Churches - 05

Make a list: In what areas do you need to “overcome?”

Write your thoughts and questions regarding this study to share with the group:

Revelation – Message To 7 Churches - 06

Smyrna:

The name Smyrna (smur-nah) comes from the word “myrrh” which means “offering of sacrifice.” The Church at Smyrna can be described by the word “afflicted.”

Located approximately 35-40 miles north of Ephesus on the east shore of the Aegean sea. Smyrna was a large, beautiful, and wealthy city. It was an important seaport and known as the birthplace of Homer. Smyrna was allegedly founded in the 3rd millennium B.C. by a mythical Amazon who gave the city her name. Among the paved streets of Smyrna was the “Golden Street.” Along this street were many temples to a variety of gods. Smyrna was also deeply into emperor worship where this practice was compelled upon its citizens.

There is no evidence to show who founded the church in Smyrna. It is thought to have grown out of the church at Ephesus. Basically all of the tribulation this church experienced came from the Jews and not from the pagans who worshiped idols. They were despised by the Jews, threatened with being put into prison, and allowed to die painfully.

Church history shares a beautiful story of Polycarp, the Bishop of Smyrna. He was brought into the arena and told to denounce Jesus or he would be burned at the stake. Polycarp, called by some “that old faithful”, said, “86 years I have served my Lord. Never did he denounce me. How can I deny him? . . .”

Message is From:

Read Revelation 2:8 and make notes:

Read John 8:58; Romans 1:4; Philippians 2:6 and make notes:

Revelation – Message To 7 Churches - 06

This message is from the one who is the beginning and the end (title #7) - and the one is firstborn from among the dead (title #3). This is a tremendous word of comfort to those experiencing persecution. The one they serve is the Lord of history. He is in control. The citizens of Smyrna proudly declared themselves to be “first in Asia” in beauty and emperor worship. Believers were reminded, by this introduction, that they are serving the one who is First in every way. The one who is “the first and the last” experienced suffering himself and thus can understand their pain.

He “who died and came to life again” certainly sends a message to believers who were being threatened not only with imprisonment but with death. He is the one who can give them victory over the most important death (the second death). The Greek text literally says “became dead” and “became alive.”

If you die before Jesus returns, do you believe you will “become alive” again? Why?

What I know about you:

Read Revelation 2:9 and make notes:

Read John 16:33 and make notes:

These believers were poor in worldly wealth but rich in spiritual wealth. For this church to be physically poor in a prosperous and wealthy city is most likely a direct result of the persecution and prejudice they were facing. The ultimate and real source of persecution for every Christian is revealed - it is Satan.

This was being channeled through people who were magnifying ceremonies of the law to a place above the grace and mercy of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. These religious persons who masqueraded as Jews claimed Christianity was a heresy.

Revelation – Message To 7 Churches - 06

Secular Wealth	Spiritual Wealth
Contingent value	Absolute value
Not virtuous	Virtuous
Sometimes blessing Sometimes an obstacle	Always a blessing
Dependent upon circumstances	Inalienable
Demands respect	Commands respect

Read James 2:5; 1 Timothy 6:18 and make notes:

These believers were rich in faith. Since we are justified by faith, this makes us spiritually rich. Sin causes guilt, this bankrupts us thus making us spiritually poor. The truly rich are those who are rich in faith and rich in good works.

Church history records many easily recognizable afflictions such as beatings, burnings, raping, and imprisonment. However, there are many forms of afflictions that are not so easily recognized at first glance; such as mental, psychological, and spiritual afflictions. While the men and women around the believers in Smyrna may not have recognized the full extent of their pain, Christ Jesus was assuring them that he did.

Neither should it have been a surprise that they were experiencing persecution. Jesus and the apostles had been warning the believers that this was to come.

Tribulation:

Read John 15:18-20; 2 Timothy 3:12; 1 Peter 4:4; 1 Peter 4:13-16 and make notes:

Revelation – Message To 7 Churches - 06

Read Matthew 10:17-18; Matthew 24:9; John 15:20-21; John 16:2; Philippians 1:29; Hebrews 12:3; 1 Peter 4:12 and make notes:

Which is most dear to you; Worldly wealth or Spiritual wealth? What is the evidence to support your answer?

Which is most evident in your life to others who look upon your daily walk? Give an example.

Poverty:

Read Matthew 8:20; 2 Corinthians 6:10; 2 Corinthians 8:9 and make notes:

Revelation – Message To 7 Churches - 06

Spiritual Wealth:

Read Matthew 6:20; Matthew 19:21; Luke 12:33; Philippians 4:19; 1 Timothy 6:19; Hebrews 11:24-26 and make notes:

What Assurance:

Read Romans 8:35 and make notes:

Verdict: (none)

No specific words of verdict are given. This could indicate these believers were being as faithful as could be expected.

Why do you think Christ gave no verdict concerning this church? It may help to review this week's study.

Revelation – Message To 7 Churches - 06

Word to specific church:

Read Revelation 2:10 and make notes:

Read Matthew 10:30-31; 2 Corinthians 4:1; Philippians 1:28-29; 1 Corinthians 10:13; Hebrews 4:14-16 and make notes:

The phrase translated “be faithful” in Rev 2:10 most accurately would be translated “become faithful.” This is more of an instruction “to become” than it is one “to remain.” The need to become faithful will arise when the troubling and difficult times fall upon the believers. It is necessary to determine beforehand what we will do. This church is instructed to set their heart and mind to become faithful in difficult times. When the hard and painful times occur, the decision will already have been made - we will be faithful!

Have you ever been called upon to make an important decision in the midst of a time of pain and agony. It is difficult to make the best decisions in such a time. The most frequent reply is “I don’t care,” because dealing with the pain seems more important at the moment than anything else. Our decisions usually concern nothing more long term than decreasing our pain. We need to determine in advance what we will do. This decision can best be made when we can be objective and consider the long term effects of our decision.

Christian Faithfulness:

involves	in the face of
Sincerity	Hypocrisy
Fidelity	Fraud
Diligence	Indolence
Courage	Danger
Perseverance	Suffering

Revelation – Message To 7 Churches - 06

The “ten days” are probably not a specific time period of a literal ten days, but signifies a fixed time. This probably means to convey the message that it will not last or that it will be a short time. The promise of a “crown of life” is contrasted against the “crown of Smyrna” which referred to the beautiful skyline of the city of which most citizens proudly boasted.

Read Philippians 3:8 and make notes:

Even though believers are under the attack of Satan; if they will remain faithful, God will give them a “crown of life.” This is a life Satan cannot take away and he cannot destroy.

Smyrna was one of the few cities that withstood the invasion of the Turks. It was also the last city to fall under Islam. It was the survival of Smyrna that sparked the renaissance movement. Today, Smyrna is the Turkish city of Izmir. Half of its population is still Christian.

What can I learn from this church?

Word to all Churches:

Read Revelation 2:11 and make notes:

There is a greater fear of the spiritual death (second death) than the physical death (first death). Those who have doubts or who don't know their status concerning the second death tend to resist the first death with great effort. Those who have assurance that they will not pass through the second death, have no, or at least very little, fear of the first death. Every believer who overcomes persecution and overcomes things meant to discourage the faithful has a promise of deliverance from any harm at all by the second death.

The original word translated “hurt” signifies being wrongly judged. The faithful followers of Jesus can be wrongly judged in regard to physical death, but we have Christ's promise that we will not be wrongly judged concerning spiritual death.

Revelation – Message To 7 Churches - 06

Honestly, what is your attitude, or your outlook, concerning you and spiritual death after physical death?

How much fear and concern do you have in regard to facing physical death? What is the basis for this fear?

Write your thoughts and questions regarding this study to share with the group:

Revelation – Message To 7 Churches - 07

Pergamum:

The name Pergamum (per-guh-mum) literally means "much married." Pergamum can be described with the word "undisciplined."

Pergamum was located approximately 50-65 miles north and east of Smyrna and 10 miles inland from the Aegean sea. It was situated in the fertile valley of the Caicus (kay-cus) river. Pergamum had the honor of being the provincial capital of Roman Asia. The city was known for both wealth and beauty. The library in Pergamum contained nearly 2000 volumes. There were temples to several gods in Pergamum but the city had two main religions. The first was the worship of Dionysus (die-oh-nee-sus), god of royal kings, which was represented by the bull. The second was worship of Asclepius (as-lee-pee-us), the savior god of healing, represented by the snake. The modern city of Bergama is located there today.

The church at Pergamum apparently started strong as indicated by the reference to Antipas, who was put to death as a faithful witness. Unfortunately, the transfer of this faithfulness from the leader to the congregation never took place, so the church was incomplete. The good start had not produced fruit.

Message is from:

Read Revelations 2:12 and make notes:

Read Hebrews 4:12 and make notes:

Message is from description #9 (From mouth came sharp double-edged sword.). The Pergamum believers were bombarded with the forceful and divided teaching from the city's two main religions. Some who claim to be Christians were still holding onto teachings of Balaam (bay-lum) and some were holding onto teachings of the Nicolaitans (nick-oh-lay-shuns). It is interesting that the Lord will use the Word of God against these Balaamites and Nicolaitans. Pergamum had been given rare and special power by Rome and the city's symbol was the sword. The introduction of Christ serves to remind the Pergamum believers that they had become citizens of another kingdom; a more powerful kingdom.

The Word of God is like a Sharp Two Edged Sword. Is the Sword going to fight to protect you or will it prune from you unwholesome attitudes, words, and actions? Why do you think this is true?

Revelation – Message To 7 Churches - 07

What I know about you:

Read Revelations 2:13 and make notes:

The Lord is very much aware that the Believers in Pergamum lived in a difficult environment. Satan has his throne there. This may indicate an immense level of wickedness took place in this city. Pergamum boasted of being the official place for all of Asia to worship Caesar. We can only imagine the hostility that would have been exhibited toward those who would profess to be a Christian in this city. Our Lord also is aware of their loyalty even in the face of death.

The believers in Pergamum were commended for keeping the Faith pure. This is one of the things the early believers had been instructed to do. The importance of acknowledging Jesus as the Christ and warning against denying him had been stressed several times to the early believers.

Read Titus 1:9; Titus 2:1; 1 Timothy 4:6; Matthew 10:32-33; Mark 8:38; Luke 12:8; 1 John 2:22-23 and make notes:

It is realistic to expect believers to keep themselves pure even in the midst of great evil and wickedness. Obadiah kept a clean conscience even in the house of Ahab. Daniel kept his integrity amidst the corruption of Babylon. Nehemiah kept his piety while living with and serving the Persians. Samuel kept his Godly character in the house of ungodly priests (Eli's sons). We can live a faithful Christian life in any environment if we truly desire to do so.

Paul and the other apostles warned the early church believers that there would be hard times where our faithfulness would be tried.

Revelation – Message To 7 Churches - 07

Read Acts 14:22; Philippians 1:29; 2 Timothy 3:12; 1 Peter 4:12-13 and make notes:

Even Jesus had predicted hard times were in store for the true believers.

Read Matthew 10:17-18; Matthew 24:9; Luke 21:12; John 16:2 and make notes:

What are some of the excuses you have used in the past to justify failing to keep your faith pure?

Revelation – Message To 7 Churches - 07

Verdict:

Read Revelations 2:14-15 and make notes:

Pergamum believers were divided. Some are following the example of the "faithful witness", Antipas, but others are following the way of Balaam, and some are following the way of the Nicolaitans. Deception is Satan's primary method of getting God's people into sin. Frequently, Satan's victims don't recognize the evil of what they are being taught until they have become captive. Balaam and Jezebel are two O.T. names which are distinctly associated with seduction, deception, and treachery. For these two names to be used in discussing the situation at Pergamum makes it clear the threat of evil is serious. Some of the Pergamum believers did not see the harm in continuing to enjoy the meal shared by their pagan friends or family. Pergamum believers were not keeping a clear and distinct separation from those indulging in the practices of the temple prostitutes. While many of the Pergamum believers did not engage in these pagan activities, they tolerated their actions without objections.

The pastor and elders apparently were not doing their duty to protect the church from false teachers. When church leadership is defective in the area of discipline, this is a sure means to bring about certain judgment of Christ. Defective church discipline defaces an otherwise beautiful church. Jesus Christ holds church leadership accountable for what they allow to be taught or practiced within the church.

The account of Balaam is found in the book of Numbers chapters 22-25. The doctrine of Balaam is clearly identified in chapter 31 of Numbers as being the cause of the Israelites turning away from the Lord.

The early church believers had been instructed to stay clear of any possible connection with anything that could look like the doctrine of Balaam.

Read Acts 15:20; Ephesians 5:11; 1 Corinthians 5:7-13; Romans 1:32; Romans 16:17; Ephesians 5:3 and make notes:

Revelation – Message To 7 Churches - 07

The overall complaint against the believers in Pergamum was the gross worldliness that had taken over the majority of the believers there. This is something the early church believers had been warned against.

Read 1 Corinthians 5:11; 2 Corinthians 6:14; 2 Corinthians 6:17-18; Ephesians 5:11; 2 Thessalonians 3:6 and make notes:

Are there any sinful actions or activities you are holding onto from your past? If so, list them.

What do you need to do in order to clearly separate yourself from pagan activities for your past?

Revelation – Message To 7 Churches - 07

Word to specific church:

Read Revelations 2:16 and make notes:

If you don't repent, the Word of God will become a sword against you. The phrase "I will soon come to you" is not speaking of Christ's second coming. This is a warning to this church that Christ is about to come against them if they don't repent immediately.

This had been the foundational message throughout the ministry of Jesus Christ.

Read Matthew 3:2; Luke 13:3 and make notes:

This is a message the early church believers had been hearing all along.

Read Acts 3:19; Acts 8:22; Hebrews 2:3 and make notes:

The warning was a familiar one to the first century believers.

Read John 12:48; 2 Peter 3:17

Revelation – Message To 7 Churches - 07

What can I learn from this church?

Word to all Churches:

Read Revelations 2:17 and make notes:

Those who refuse to banquet with the pagans receive the promise to be fed divine manna by Christ. Jesus declared "I am the bread which came down from heaven." When God fed the Old Testament Israelites manna in the wilderness, some of it was put inside the ark. This manna was hidden from public view and was a type of Christ Himself as the "Bread of Life." The Israelites prospered and were victorious over their enemies when the Ark was present. Others may not be able to see the hidden manna of which the overcoming believer is nourished. They will, however, see the outward results in our lifestyle and the fruit of it. The Balaamites and the Nicolaitians both promised secret or hidden knowledge. Jesus promises the overcomers hidden nourishment.

Read John 6:32-35; John 6:51; John 6:58; John 6:63 and make notes:

The white stone "with" a new name written on it gives a special message to the believers. The first part of the message concerns the color white. In that culture, when a person was given a formal invitation to an official event, such as a royal banquet, they would receive a pretty stone with their name carved into it. When they returned the stone, the host knew who was coming. It was also customary in that culture for a jury to cast a dark stone to indicate a guilty verdict and a white stone to indicate innocence. Jesus declares the invitations would be upon a white stone, signifying purity and innocence.

Revelation – Message To 7 Churches - 07

Read Isaiah 62:2 and make notes:

The second part of the message concerns the declaration that they would have a "new name" written on it. God gave people like Abraham and Jacob a "new name." The new name was given when the person entered into a new relationship with God. The new name indicates the new relationship the overcomer has entered into. This signifies the "new creation" the believer, comes to be in Christ Jesus and the new character of the redeemed believer. This very formal invitation will be given to those who refuse to compromise their loyalty to Christ Jesus.

Do you have the Bread of Life inside you? What is the evidence of this?

What will you do with the Official Formal Royal Invitation Christ has extended to you?

Write your thoughts and questions regarding this study to share with the group:

Revelation – Message To 7 Churches - 08

Thyatira:

The name “Thyatira” (thigh-ah-tie-rah) means “sacrifice of labor”. The church at Thyatira can be described with the single word “tolerant.”

Thyatira was located approximately 40-45 miles east and south of Pergamum. While it was not a great city by any standard, it was still an important city for the commerce of wool, linen, apparel, dyed materials, leather goods, tanning, and especially bronze works. There were strong trade guilds in Thyatira. These labor unions influenced to a great degree the social, political, economic, and religious activities of the city. Most of these trade guilds had their own patron gods, feasts, and seasonal celebrations. Apollo, the sun god, was worshipped in Thyatira. Today, the biblical city of Thyatira is known as “Akhisar.”

Lydia mentioned in the book of Acts 16:12-15 was probably a member of the dyers guild in Thyatira. It is believed the house church of Lydia became the first church in Thyatira.

Message is from:

Read Revelation 2:18 and make notes:

Read Hebrews 1:2-8; Hebrews 4:13 and make notes:

This message is from the description #5 (Eyes like blazing fire) and #6 (Feet glowing like bronze in furnace). The blazing eyes may have meant to capture the attention of those who are familiar with Apollo, the sun god; but it was more likely referring to the penetrating discernment of the false prophetess Jezebel. Nothing escapes the penetrating sight of Christ. The feet like burnished bronze no doubt caught the attention of those associated with the bronze works of the city. Feet of bronze speaks of a lasting foundation. It isn't going to crumble and fall and it isn't going to be worn down by the environment.

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Read John 15:19; Romans 2:21-24; 1 John 2:15-16 and make notes:

Are you concerned about what the penetrating vision of Jesus will see in your life and heart?
Explain your answer.

What I know about you:

Read Revelation 2:19 and make notes:

The Lord knows their love and faithfulness. He is aware of the fact that they have manifested (or have made known) their love by the works of service they perform and by their faithfulness in a time of trial. They persevered in difficult times and this is praiseworthy.

It is easy for people to claim to have love for others. Our service to them, or lack of service, is an indicator of the reality and level of our love. The Greek word “agape” was used here which is the highest form of love.

Read Hebrews 6:10; Titus 2:10; James 1:2-5 and make notes:

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When others, especially Christ, view our works and faithfulness; are they convinced of our love or do they receive cause for doubting it? Give an example.

Verdict:

Read Revelation 2:20 and make notes:

The believers in Thyatira have allowed a false prophetess, compared to Jezebel, to remain in the church. This false prophetess has encouraged sexual immorality. She has also enticed believers to worship others in addition to the Christ. The Lord's most emphatic accusation is not regarding the horrendous perversions of this Jezebel like false prophetess. It isn't even against her success and influence among the believers. The strongest accusation is directed toward her refusal to repent! Christ has given her time specifically for the purpose to repent, and she refused to do so.

The accounts of Jezebel can be found in 1 Kings chapters 16, 18-21, and 2 Kings chapter 9.

Read 2 Peter 3:9; Romans 2:4; Romans 1:28; 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12; Matthew 7:2; Matthew 16:27 and make notes:

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Read Romans 2:5-6; Galatians 6:7-8; Ephesians 4:1; Ephesians 5:15; Hebrews 10:23; 1 Peter 1:17 and make notes:

Do you take advantage of your opportunities to repent?

Word to specific church:

Read Revelation 2:22-25 and make notes:

Read Ephesians 5:6 and make notes:

The bed has been an object related to her sin and perversion and now it will become an object of her suffering. She will be forced into bed. This probably means sickness. She will not die on this bed of sickness until she witnesses the death of her children. This is an important message. Christ is ready to forgive the repentant sinner of even the most vile of sins. He will even allow a time to repent. But He will punish severely those who refuse to repent.

This pronouncement is a bold statement, whether “her children” refers to her biological children or to those who follow her perversion. When the calamity comes, the believers in Thyatira will know God said in advance that this would happen.

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The Lord makes a mocking reference to this false prophetess' claim to know and teach deep things of a spiritual nature. She has ridiculed the Christians, pointing to the shallowness of their teachings compared to hers. Christ refers to these as “so called” deep things.

Read Acts 15:28-29 and make notes:

He instructs the believers in Thyatira to “hold on to what you have until I come.” It may not look spectacular to those like this false prophetess, but hold on to it, because there are great things in store for those who do. The promise is no additional burden will be laid upon you. You will not be asked or expected to do more.

What can I learn from this church?

Word to all Churches:

Read Revelation 2:26-29 and make notes:

Read 1 Corinthians 6:2 and make notes:

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To those who overcome is the promise to be given authority over nations. There is also a promise of receiving as a gift, the morning star. This promise comes with a qualifier attached to it; “and does my will to the end.” This promise is not to those who are faithful for a time, but to those who remain faithful.

Many have tried to explain the “morning star” in a variety of ways and usually relate it to Satan. To receive Satan doesn’t sound like a blessing but sounds more like punishment. The best interpretation of this phrase in the Book of Revelation is that it refers to Christ Jesus. In Revelations 22:16, Jesus calls himself “the morning star.” This is the gift the faithful to the end believer will receive.

Read Luke 19:17; Luke 22:28-29 and make notes:

Have there been times when your faithfulness ceased in a time of hardship? If so, write a brief summary of that situation.

What changes do you need to make in regards to future faithfulness?

Write your thoughts and questions regarding this study to share with the group:

Revelation – Message To 7 Churches - 09

Sardis:

The name Sardis means “escaping, that which remains, or remnant.” The church at Sardis can be described with the word “incomplete.”

Sardis is located approximately 50 miles east and slightly south of Ephesus and 30 miles south of Thyatira. Sardis enjoyed some prominence as a prosperous city of commerce but it was more of a strategic city for military purposes in the Hermus River valley. The acropolis, known also as the temple of Artemis, was located at Sardis and it rose some 800 feet above the north section of the city. It’s almost vertical rock walls made it impregnable. Another feature of Sardis was the necropolis, or the cemetery of a thousand hills. It received this name because the thousands of burial mounds were visible up to seven miles from Sardis. Sardis was able to retain it’s wealth well into the second century of the Christian era primarily through a successful wool industry, but it’s political importance was all but gone.

Message is from:

Read Revelation 3:1 and make notes:

Message is from description #8 (Right hand held 7 stars). Christ introduces himself as the one who is in control of the seven spirits, or the complete spirit, of God. If the believer in Sardis is strong, it is because Christ has given them his spirit as an encouragement. If the believer in Sardis is dead like their city, it is because Christ has withdrawn his spirit from the unfaithful. Even though the majority of those claiming to be believers are in fact dead, the faithful believers have the assurance of Christ to sustain them with divine power.

Read John 3:34; Colossians 2:9 and make notes:

Seven is the number of “completeness, fullness, perfection.” The “seven spirits” is a reference to the “seven fold manifestation” of the Holy Spirit; or the complete manifestation of the Holy Spirit.

Revelation – Message To 7 Churches - 09

The seven fold aspect of the Holy Spirit was known among the Old Testament believers as shown in Isaiah.

Read Isaiah 11:2 and make notes:

1. Spirit of the Lord
2. Spirit of Wisdom
3. Spirit of Understanding
4. Spirit of Counsel
5. Spirit of Power
6. Spirit of Knowledge
7. Spirit of Reverence (fear)

The seven fold manifestation of the Holy Spirit is outlined for New Testament Believers in John's account of the gospel.

- .1. Comforter – Counselor John 14:16
- .2. Truth John 14: 17
- .3. Personal Presence John 14: 18-20
- .4. Special Manifestation of Christ John 14: 21-22
- .5. Abiding Presence of Trinity John 14: 23-24
- .6. Teacher John 14: 25-26
- .7. Peace of Christ John 14: 27

The Holy Spirit was described as a “life giving”, “counselor”, “spirit of truth”, “teacher”, “guide”, and “power giver” regularly in the early church.

Read Romans 8:11; John 16:7; John 16:13; Acts 1:8 and make notes:

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This is perhaps the best a finite being (man) can do to express or understand an infinite being (Holy Spirit). There is no limit to the ways the Holy Spirit can manifest Himself to or among the believers.

Can you think of a way the Holy Spirit could manifest Himself that would not fit into one of these categories or a combination of these? If so, list it here.

What I know about you:

Read Revelation 3:1 again and make notes:

Christ's knowledge of the believers in Sardis reveals the truth about the conditions in the church there. He is basically saying, I know what you have done and what you have not done. He also states he is aware that they claim to be a healthy church, but that is not the reality of their situation. They are not only unhealthy, they are dead!

It is interesting to note that Christ is the one who declares this church to be "dead." The believers in Sardis appear to have followed the pattern of the citizens of the city. They were all living and relying on past accomplishments. Just as the citizens of the city were living off of the past fame of their city, the believers were trying to live off of some past faithfulness and past obedience. All of their loyalty and service to the Lord Jesus Christ was at some time in the past. There was no current life, activity, or loyalty. About the only thing Sardis had of any fame at this time was the massive number of graves outside the city. The city was known for it's dead. The church at Sardis was no more spiritually active and alive than were those people in the graves in the necropolis.

It is noteworthy that there is no persecution or tribulation mentioned. Satan need not afflict a dead person, or a dead church. The absence of spiritual trouble and spiritual attack is more likely an evidence of being spiritually dead rather than spiritually blessed. The false teachers and heretics would pass up a dead church like Sardis and seek out one which still has at least some life.

Being "alive" is more than simply having physical life. This concept had been taught to the early believers all along.

Read 1 Timothy 5:6 and make notes:

Revelation – Message To 7 Churches - 09

Does your testimony consist of a relationship with God in times past, or does it include very current interaction between Christ and you? Give an example.

Verdict:

Read Revelation 3:2 and make notes:

You started the job, but you didn't finish it. You started the race, but quit before the course was completed. You started out being faithful and obedient, but you stopped. The Sardis church was one where many programs were started and few, if any, were finished.

The church had many professions but little or no fruit. The complacency of life that permeated the citizens of Sardis had caused the believers there to give up on their mission for Christ. The situation in the church in Sardis was very serious but it wasn't yet hopeless.

The church at Sardis was the kind that had all sorts of programs, ministries, and activities; but they were dying. Other churches may have seen this one as being progressive, well liked, popular, prosperous, and a good place for fellowship. Verse 2 says some things were still alive, so the church wasn't totally dead yet. How can a church have so much going on, so many ministries being conducted, so many programs, and yet be dying?

The early church had already been warned that a day would come when people would be going through the motions in a religious format, but there wouldn't be any life to it.

Read 2 Timothy 3:5 and make notes:

The church that has a form of worship but denies the power of worship focuses on ritual and ceremony of worship instead of the relationship with Christ. They conduct activities to keep the organization going instead of leading people to a personal relationship with Christ. They conduct fellowship to grow members to the organization instead of growing relationship with the Lord. They have Bible study and classes in form, but there is no learning or growing concerning the Word of God. All of the ministry they conduct is for the sole purpose of the livelihood of the organization.

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It is usually very difficult to convince such a bustling and busy church that they are in the process of dying. We need to be careful to remember some other words from the New Testament.

Read Matthew 7:21; Matthew 15:8; Mark 7:6; Romans 14:17; Galatians 4:10-11; Ephesians 5:14 and make notes:

The services, ministries, and meetings in the Sardis church were not the problem. These are in fact things the church should do. It was the spirit of the people or the heart of the people that was wrong.

Are you experiencing a daily personal relationship with Jesus? If so, what is the evidence of this?

Why are you busy with the things you do? Why? What's the purpose?

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Word to specific church:

Read Revelation 3:2-4 and make notes:

The original text translated “Wake up” is a command in the present tense to be constantly on alert. It is a serious call to reverse the negligent attitude toward the things of Christ Jesus. The first step to the death of a person or a church is the failure to remain spiritually alert. Jesus was alert, He only did and said what the Heavenly Father did and said. You must take some immediate action to strengthen the life that is left among you or all life will soon be gone. The second step to spiritual death is the failure to feed, nourish, and strengthen what is alive.

Jesus foretold that there would be very few who would be alert and take the necessary action to obtain and maintain life:

Read Matthew 7:14 and make notes:

The church in Sardis was warned to:

1. remember how they had received
2. awaken and hold fast to the original gift
3. repent, confess their wrong, and turn back to Christ
4. judgment of Christ will fall if they refuse to repent

If the believers in Sardis refuse to remember and obey what they have previously received from the Lord, he will come upon them like a thief at a time when they least expect it. This was not a reference to the second coming of Christ. This statement would strike a serious chord in the heart of any citizen of Sardis. This city was attacked many times but was unable to be taken by the enemy. This otherwise impregnable city was taken by Cyrus in the 6th century B.C. like a thief when they expected it the least. One of the Persian soldiers had noticed one of the citizens exiting and returning to the city through a secret passage on the back side of Sardis. The soldier followed him and found the secret entrance. Cyrus and his troops quietly entered in a way and at a time when the city least expected. This reminder was meant to be a serious wake up call to the believers in Sardis.

The early church believers had been instructed all along by the apostles that it was important to be alert and attentive to the Lord’s leading.

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Read 1 Thessalonians 5:6; 1 Peter 5:8; 2 Corinthians 2:11;

For the church at Sardis, the only hope to avoid complete death - was repentance. This repentance would mean turning again to the teachings of the Gospel of Christ and once again holding faithfully to the Word of God. This repentance would mean serving Christ right now and not resting on past works or service.

This warning was not new; it had been give before. It is necessary to Obey the warning.

Read Colossians 2:6-7 and make notes:

The reference to soiled garments was probably intended to get the attention of those who were looking more to their lucrative wool business than to the Lord Jesus. In most of the pagan religions of that day, it was forbidden to approach the god of the temple in clothing that was dirty or stained. The citizens of Sardis were very concerned with their outward appearance. The believers in Sardis had apparently lost all concern of inner purity while still striving to maintain the acceptable outer appearance. Christ is referring to the spiritual clothing, or the robe of righteousness he gives to every believer.

There were a few who had not soiled the robe he had given. These will walk with him as though they are dressed in white. To “walk with Christ” indicates being in His presence. It also means He is walking with the Believer. The believer is accompanied by Christ in their travels and actions. They are going in the same direction and following the same path.

This shows again that it is possible to walk in a Christ honoring manner even in a bad environment. Also this statement stands as a reminder that God always has a remnant. Remember what God said to Elijah when Elijah was sure he was the last believer and wanted to die?

What can I learn from this church?

Revelation – Message To 7 Churches - 09

Word to all churches:

Read Revelation 3:5-6 and make notes:

There is a three fold promise to those who overcome. First, those who overcome the pulls and temptations of pagan society will receive white clothes to wear to show their purity of heart and faithfulness. The believer is to be “clothed with Christ.” We are expected to “put on” Christ.

Second, the overcomer in this world is assured their name will never be removed from the book of life. It won't be erased, it won't be marked through, and it won't be painted over where it can't be identified. This is a strong promise. Once we become citizens in the kingdom of God, our name can never be taken from the list of citizens. In the pagan religion of Sardis, as well as many others, if a person should come before their god with stained or soiled garments, their name would be permanently removed from the official list of citizens of that city. In some cities, Christians were under threat of being branded as rebels and being stripped of their citizenship. There was no means of having it restored once citizenship was revoked.

Third, Christ promises to acknowledge the overcomer's name before the Heavenly Father and before the Angels of heaven. The word translated “acknowledge” is the one used for giving testimony or confession in a court of law. How comforting to know that Christ Himself will be the one who will testify to our legal citizenship in the kingdom of God. There could be no better or more reliable witness!

Read Luke 10:20 and make notes:

Consider the three promises in this letter to those who are overcomers. What does this say to you in regards to your everyday lifestyle?

Write your thoughts and questions regarding this study to share with the group:

Revelation – Message To 7 Churches - 10

Philadelphia:

The word “Philadelphia” (fill-ah-dell-fee-ah) means “brotherly love.” The one word that describes the church at Philadelphia is “patience.”

Philadelphia was located approximately 25-30 miles south and east of Sardis. It was positioned on a high plateau in the Hermus river valley. The main highway which ran through Philadelphia connected Smyrna, about 100 miles west, and Asia to Phrygia in the east. In the first century A.D., the imperial post road from Rome, Troas, Adramyttium, Pergamum, and Sardis passed through Philadelphia on the way to the east. Philadelphia earned the title “Gateway to the East” because of its commercial significance. Just to the northeast of the city was a great vine-growing area and Philadelphia had textile and leather industries which added to the city’s prosperity. The city of Alashehir is located on that site today.

Philadelphia had been established by the Pergamenian king Attalus II who named the city Philadelphus (“brother love”) because of his love for his brother. The city had been intended to be a “mission city” to take the Greco-Asiatic culture and language into Lydia and Phrygia. It apparently was successful because the Lydian language completely ceased to be spoken in all of Lydia by A.D. 19.

Philadelphia experienced several name changes as various emperors took control. The city inhabitants tried to hold on to the name Philadelphia in addition to the new names given it by the new emperors. The inhabitants of Philadelphia anguished over the identity crisis and how little consideration a new emperor had for their identity as a city.

The area was prone to earthquakes. An earthquake destroyed Philadelphia in A.D. 17, along with 11 other cities. Many people preferred to live in the rural area as opposed to being within the city for fear of another earthquake.

Nothing is known of the origin of the Philadelphia church, but it prospered under the ministry of a prophetess named Ammia. She was universally recognized as ranking with Agabus and the four daughters of Philip in the gift of prophecy. The city of Philadelphia held out as a Christian location long after the surrounding countryside had come under Muslim control.

Message is from:

Read Revelation 3:7 and make notes:

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This message is from title #8 (The Living On) and title #9 (Holds keys of death and Hades) . The phrase “Holy and true” can only refer to God himself. The Greek phrase translated “one who is true” literally means the “one who is genuine instead of counterfeit.” This is certainly a description of God’s presence among men. Hosea 11:19 refers to God as “the Holy One among you.” Being the “True One”, He is completely reliable and trustworthy. This introduction must have brought encouragement to this local church which received nothing but commendation from the Lord.

Read John 15:1; 1 John 2:8 and make notes:

The “key of David” no doubt had special meaning to these Believers. The “key” refers to the power of the keys normally held by the king unless he had delegated another to do so. The name “David” clearly pointed to and reminded them of Christ being the Messiah. Christ opens the door into the kingdom of God and no one can shut the door Christ has opened. Christ shuts the door for non-believers to keep them from the kingdom of God and no one can force open the door Christ has shut. There was a heretical sect of the Nazarenes in Philadelphia who kept telling the Philadelphia Believers they would not be allowed into the kingdom of God. This specific introductory title made it clear that Christ was the one who would determine who will enter and who will not enter rather than some person or religious group on earth. Even if they should find themselves shut out from the local synagogues, Christ promises them entrance into the more important kingdom.

Read Hebrews 1:8-9; 1 John 5:20 and make notes:

The “genuine one” who “is holy” is the one who determines the doors to be opened and the ones to be closed. What does this say to you personally?

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What I know about you:

Read Revelation 3:8 and make notes:

I not only know your deeds but I know that you have little strength. However, this little church with little strength, had the right kind of strength. I know even in your little strength that you have kept My Word and you have not denied My Name.

The church in Philadelphia received commendation and not rebuke.

1. It was evangelistic and missions minded
2. It kept the Word of Christ
3. It confessed Christ in all that it did

Read 2 Corinthians 8:12 and make notes:

This church was alive in Christ. It most likely had a minister who:

1. lived in the Word of God
2. lived in the face of Prayer
3. presented and taught the Word of God
4. exhorted believers to live for Christ, study the Word, pray, witness, and minister
5. led the church to minister and reach out, not only to their local community but to the world

How do you rate in regards to being evangelistic and missions minded? What is the evidence?

How well are you keeping the Word of Christ? What is the evidence?

Do you confess Jesus in ALL that you do? Evidence?

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Verdict:

Read Revelations 3:8 again and make notes:

Christ has been given all authority in Heaven and earth. No one can overrule Christ's decision to place "an open door" before the Philadelphia believers. Christ has made a way available to them which no one can take away from them or to which no one can deny them access. This phrase probably had a double meaning. Speaking of an "open door" certainly would get the attention of the believers who lived in a city that was expected to be a "doorway" for culture to be taken to the east. Not only was there an open door into the kingdom of God for the Believers in Philadelphia, but Christ was giving them an open door to be missionaries to the east even though they had but "little strength." That this is a true interpretation can be evidenced by the lengthy time of Christianity remaining in Philadelphia after the surrounding area fell to the Muslim faith.

Word to specific church:

Read Revelation 3:9-11 and make notes:

Satan is the one whom Jesus declared "is a liar. . . there is no truth in him." Those who are of the synagogue of Satan are given to lies and refusing the truth. They claim to be Jews but are not. These people were lying about being a Jew and they were also denying the truth of Jesus being the Christ.

There probably is no more difficult trial than the waiting through a period of prolonged inactivity and diminishing strength. It is our basic human nature to try to do something when nothing is happening. There is a strong drive to "try something" especially when we realize our resources (strengths) are decreasing. Perhaps the painful trial of waiting is the reason Christ spoke such encouraging words to the believers in Philadelphia.

"I will make them come and fall down at your feet and acknowledge that I loved you" is a very striking statement. These people who have persecuted the believers in Jesus as the Christ will be made to admit that God has indeed been with the Church in Philadelphia and the believers in Christ are God's people. This is part of what is expressed in Philippians

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Read Philippians 2:10-11 and make notes:

This may also be fulfillment of a prophecy in Isaiah:

Read Isaiah 60:14 and make notes:

Some people will do this with joy and gladness but obviously some will be made to do this against their wishes if not repentant. God still loved the Jewish people, but the church had become the true people of God and the new inheritors of the promises of God.

Read Romans 12:10; 1 Thessalonians 4:9; Hebrews 13:1; John 13:35; Romans 2:28-29; Romans 9:6-9; 2 Peter 2:9 and make notes:

Some conditions are laid out in order to receive a specific promise. “Since you have kept my command to endure patiently” “I will also keep you from the hour of trial that is going to come upon the whole world to test those who live on the earth.” The conditions were the keeping of the command to endure patiently. This says they endured without complaining and grumbling about having to endure. The promise is to spare them the “hour of trial.” There has been a great deal of debate about the “hour of trial.” Some believe this is the time of “woes” which will come upon the world before the end. Others believe this a time of judgment God will bring upon the non-believers more than a time of evil befalling mankind. It is very likely that both of these are intended by this statement in which case there is a promise to “be kept” in both situations.

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For those believing in a rapture of the believers before any time of tribulation, this is interpreted to indicate the faithful believers will not be on earth by the time the tribulation times begin. This is possible, but there is another very distinct possibility. In Proverbs 7:5 we are promised to be kept from the presence of the harlot and in James 1:27 we are promised to be kept from the pollution of the world. When God says he will “keep” us does not mean that we will be completely exempt from the environment or the time of such things. It does mean that if such troubling comes to the area where we are that He will protect us from it’s harm. He will keep us in the time of trouble, famine, disease, pestilence, testing, or tribulation. This interpretation of the promise to be kept will not help settle the debate over when the rapture will occur but it does give a reassurance that the believer will be protected regardless.

Considering the city of Philadelphia becoming completely surrounded by those of Muslim faith a short time later, it certainly was an encouragement to the believers there to reflect on this promise. Surely, this promise helped to continue keeping the command of the Lord to endure patiently.

The phrase “I am coming soon” was not a threat but a promise of his soon return. The encouragement to “hold on to what you have, so that no one will take your crown” is an exhortation not to allow Satan or other men to divert them from their loyalty to Christ; for Christ is the “crown of life.”

What can I learn from this church?

Word to all churches:

Read Revelation 3:12-13 and make notes:

To those who overcome, there is a two fold promise. First, the overcomer will be made into a pillar in the temple of God. What a tremendous word of encouragement this is. These people had seen the devastation of their city by earthquakes and had noticed the only things left standing were the huge temple columns. The promise is the believers who overcome the evil and temptation of this world will be given a place in His temple from which they cannot be shaken by the disturbances of life or evil.

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Secondly, the overcomer will be given recognition and honor. Frequently a faithful servant was honored by having their name engraved on one of the pillars of the temple. The non-believing world around the overcomer may try to ostracize them, but Christ is promising to give them a place of recognition in His kingdom that is worthy of noble respect.

Notice what is going to be written upon the believer who overcomes:

1. Write on them the name of My God
2. Write on them the name of the City of My God
3. Write on them My New Name

Read Matthew 6:20; 1 Peter 1:4 and make notes:

Do you live your daily life as one who is being given an unshakeable place in God's Kingdom?
List some evidence of this?

What personal message do you receive in the promises of having God's name written on you?

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Write your thoughts and questions regarding this study to share with the group:

Revelation – Message To 7 Churches - 11

Laodicea:

The word “Laodicea” (lay-odd-eh-see-ah) means “justice for the people.” The one word to describe the church at Laodicea is “self-complacent.”

Laodicea was located approximately 40-45 miles south and east of Philadelphia and about 100 miles east of Ephesus. It was one of the cities in the Lycus valley along with Colosse and Hierapolis. The Roman road that came from the coast of Ephesus ran straight through the center of Laodicea so it was an important trade and communication center. Loadicea was famous for the glossy black wool produced there. It is unknown whether this was a natural color or if it was dyed. The city was a noted banking center with great wealth. Laodicea’s financial strength was such that they refused imperial help in rebuilding the city after a great earthquake in A.D. 17 destroyed the city; choosing instead to pay for everything themselves. This is the site of the modern city of Eskihisad.

A renowned school of medicine was located at Loadicea. A famous cure for eye defects, which was called Phrygian powder, came from Loadicea along with noted ear ointments. The two main gods worshipped in Laodicea was Men Karou, a healing god, and Zeus, the supreme god to the Greeks.

Laodicea, while wealthy in finances, was poor in water. The water for the city came by means of an aqueduct 6 miles long. By the time the water arrived in Laodicea, the water had been warmed to the temperature of the outside air. The Laodicean citizens had only lukewarm water to drink and use. This seemed a fitting symbol of the city’s attitude in general. The citizens of Laodicea were noted for the lack of excesses in anything. They did not zealously stand against anything nor did they zealously support anything.

Epaphras was a citizen of Laodicea and ministered to the Christian believers in the Lycus valley.

Read Colossians 4:12-13; In Acts 4:17 and make notes:

Message is from:

Read Revelation 3:14 and make notes:

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This message is from title #7 (Alpha and Omega) and title #4 (Ruler of the kings of the earth). The Hebrew word translated in the Greek to “amen” is an acknowledgment of that which is sure, certain, and valid. It is a human response to what the divine has stated or has done. Jesus is the “Amen” as can be seen in his obedient and complete response to God’s will. 2 Corinthians 1:20 declares, “For no matter how many promises God has made, they are ‘Yes’ in Christ. So through him the ‘Amen’ is spoken by us to the glory of God.” This also points out the faithful and true witness Jesus was to be. It is interesting that Christ doesn’t identify himself to the Laodiceans as the creator or the first born of creation, but as the ruler of creation. This states his supreme and absolute power and authority.

Read John 3:18; Matthew 28:18; John 5:22; Mark 9:1 and make notes:

Consider the titles used in this letter. What does this say to you?

What I know about you:

Read Revelation 3:15-17 and make notes:

Christ knows personally their lack of zeal toward supporting any action, teaching, or program as well as their lack of zeal in opposing anything at all. Lukewarm attitude is the sure result of a self-complacent people. How much the Christ wishes they would stand for something or stand against something. Just take a stand for something!

Care needs to be taken not to interpret this statement to say Christ would rather they be spiritually cold or spiritually wrong than to be lukewarm in their beliefs. Would Jesus Christ truly wish someone would be spiritually cold and indifferent - even spiritually dead? The concept of spiritual hot or spiritual cold was not a concept in use at that time, so this would mean nothing to them. The terms hot or cold in regard to activity, however, was meaningful to them. The better interpretation in this case is to see this as a statement regarding their complacent, self-satisfied and indifferent attitude toward all issues and causes.

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Are you spiritually inactive (cold), spiritually active (hot), or unconcerned about being spiritually active (lukewarm)? What is the evidence to support your answer?

Verdict:

Read Revelations 3:16-17 again and make notes:

Heirapolis, seven miles to the north of Laodicea, had famous hot springs located there. Colosse, less than ten miles away from Laodicea, had an ample supply of refreshing cool water. This “hot-cold” statement surely reminded the Laodicea believers of the usefulness of the hot springs and the refreshing qualities of the cool water in neighboring cities. Christ tells them that because of the lukewarmness he is about to spit (Grk emesai= vomit) you out of my mouth. Compromise can be a great means by which we can keep the peace and avoid damage and destruction of battle. But compromise to the point of peace at any cost is not only useless to Christ but is enough to make him vomit. Christ expects the Believer to be useful for something.

Perhaps even worse than the overall complacency was the ignorance of the real condition of the believers at Laodicea. The believers in Laodicea had interpreted their material success as God’s blessing on them and as a result assumed this meant they were in God’s favor and “spiritually rich.” “You do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind, and naked.” The Laodicean believers were in really bad shape and too blind to see their condition for what it is. This is almost the reverse of the believers in Smyrna where Christ told them they think they are poor but they are in fact rich. The word translated “wretched” refers to the situation where everything a person owned has been destroyed or plundered by war. The Laodicean believers had become spiritually destitute.

Read 2 Peter 1:9; 1 Peter 3:3-4 and make notes:

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Jesus says it would be better to be cold than to be lukewarm. Better to have no commitment at all than to have a half-hearted commitment. A cold person would know they need clothing and shelter. The lukewarm person would not be convinced of their need. The Pharisees in Jesus' day were a clear picture of those who are lukewarm spiritually.

Read Luke 18:11 and make notes:

It is so sad that the Pharisee did not see how desperately he was in need !

Was it possible that the believers in the church in Laodicea had equated physical prosperity and wealth with a right spiritual relationship? Whatever their perception of themselves, Jesus declared them to be:

1. spiritually inferior (wretched)
2. spiritually miserable
3. spiritually poor
4. spiritually blind
5. spiritually naked
- 6.

Word to specific church:

Read Revelation 3:18-20 and make notes:

Gold was a major source of the city's wealth. Christ is encouraging them to buy His gold instead of the world's gold they had been placing their trust in. Take hold of spiritual gold so that you can be truly rich. Instead of trying to be clothed in the shiny black wool this city was famous for, Christ wanted them to clothe their shameful nakedness with the white robes of righteousness. The famed Phrygian powder was useless in restoring the blinded spiritual sight. Christ is offering a salve for the spiritual eyes that would allow them to see things for the way they really are. Christ's word to the believers in Laodicea is to "buy" these things from him. The concept of buying infers an effort on our part and the giving up of something in order to get something else. To buy something, we must go to where it is located, then we must choose what we will buy, then we must give up something to cover the cost of what we buy. This does not speak of a Christ who tracks us down and wrestles us to the ground and makes us take something. It speaks of an active participation and desire on our part to have the item.

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Read Hebrews 12:5-6 and make notes:

The phrase “I love” is the Greek “phileo” which is to have affection for. Christ will spit out those who have no passion one way or the other (they do not love him) and will discipline those whom he has affection toward. The real difference between those who are spit out and those who are disciplined appears to be in their response to Christ. He is here offering himself to all. Those who respond will be disciplined. Those who feel nothing will be spit out.

The call to the believers in Laodicea is to repent. Those who respond to this invitation are given the opportunity to dine with Christ. In the culture of that day, having intimate fellowship usually involved the main meal of the day. Christ is offering a daily fellowship with the believer who repents. This is being offered by way of the Holy Spirit as we see in John 14:23.

What can I learn from this church?

Word to all churches:

Read Revelation 3:21-22 and make notes:

Those who overcome in this world will be given a place with Christ in the kingdom to come. Christ overcame this world, its temptations and evils, and was given the place of highest honor. Those who overcome this world through Christ will be given a place with him in his reign.

What is the personal message you receive from this promise?

Revelation – Message To 7 Churches - 11

Write your thoughts and questions regarding this study to share with the group:

Revelation – Message To 7 Churches - 12

“Overcomer” means “to conquer, to become victorious” or in today’s terminology, “to become a winner.” Overcomers are those believers who rise above the spiritual problems and adversities that befall their particular life, congregation, or community. They live very real yet faithful obedient lives.

Summary of What Overcomers Will Receive

1. Right to eat from Tree of Life in the Paradise of God.
2. Will not be hurt by the second death
3. Some of the hidden manna
4. A new name
5. Authority over nations
6. Morning Star
7. Dressed in White
8. Name not erased from the Book of Life
9. Will acknowledge them before Father in heaven and His angels
10. Make a pillar in temple
11. Never leave temple of God
12. Write name of God on them
13. Write name of City of God on them
14. Write on them a new name
15. Right to sit with Jesus on His Throne

As you review these promises to the Overcomer, write the insights God has given you during this study series:

Revelation – Message To 7 Churches - 12

Additional Scriptures for Overcomers:

Read Genesis 3:15; John 16:33; 1 John 2:13; 1 Corinthians 15:26; 1 Corinthians 15:55-57; Hebrews 9:28; Ephesians 2:8 and make notes:

Write a short summary of what these Scriptures tell you. (compare with the Scriptures from Revelations in Lessons 2 through 11).

Read 1 John 5:4-5; Philippians 3:10; Hebrews 1:3; 2 Corinthians 5:17 and make notes:

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Write a short summary of what these Scriptures say to you. (compare with Scriptures from Revelations in Lessons 2 through 11)

Read 1 Corinthians 9:24; Philippians 3:14; Revelation 21:7 and make notes:

Write a short summary of the message you received from these Scriptures. (compare with the Scriptures from Revelations from Lessons 2 through 11)

Revelation – Message To 7 Churches - 12

The counsel given to the Seven Churches gives us a terrific outline of how Believers can become overcomers in this life:

Ephesus - remember your first love - repent and do what you did at first

Smyrna - be faithful even to the point of death

Pergamum - repent, otherwise the Lord will come and fight against you

Thyatira - hold onto what you have until Jesus comes

Sardis - remember what you have received and heard - then be obedient

Philadelphia - hold on to what you have that is alive

Laodicea - cover yourself with true riches from God and receive healthy vision from Him

Use these as a guideline; Write a personal set of instructions as to what you will do to insure you are an overcomer:

What would you give as the overall message found within the Letters To The Seven Churches in the Book of Revelations?

Write your thoughts and questions regarding this study to share with the group: