



Revelation 1,2,3 ...

Revelation Chapters 1 - 3
Lessons from the Seven Churches to us

Revelation 1,2,3

Study 1: Read Revelation 1:1-8

1) Who's Revelation is this? Why is it significant that John had the revelation communicated to him? Carefully note who communicated this to John (Rev 1:1).

2) Some people refer to this book as 'Revelations'. Why is this inaccurate (Rev 1.1)? Another term often used (this time correctly) is the Greek word '*Apokalupsis*' from which we derive our word '*Apocalypse*'. This word, carries certain meanings in our society but it actually means to unveil or to reveal a mystery; to expose to full view that which was once hidden. Does this meaning help you to understand the Lords intention to its readers?

3) Before we begin looking at this book, from your observations and experiences, what pitfalls should we avoid? From Rev 1:3 what should be the result of "*hearing*" and "*heeding*" the things which are written? Should hearing & heeding be our experience every time God's Word is read (back up your answer scripturally)?

4) Henry Smart (1813-1879) likely paraphrased Rev 1:5&6 when he wrote the following short hymn:

*Unto Him who loved us - gave us,
Every pledge that love could give,
Freely shed His blood to save us,
Gave His life that we might live,
Be the kingdom and dominion,
And the glory evermore.*

What do these verses (1:5&6) teach us of the Lord Jesus? What was the reason for His sacrificial death? Can you think of any biblical references that mention our future existence as a 'Kingdom & Priests'. How should this encourage saints in all ages?

5) The Lords' coming with the clouds is not beheld with joy by the world. Contrast this coming with His coming for the church as described in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 and 1 Corinthians 15:50-58?

6) The Lord Jesus Christ is 'the Alpha & the Omega'. Can you think of any important biblical doctrines contained in this short description?

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Study 2: Read Revelation 1:9 - 20

1) Why is John on the Island of Patmos? Do you believe that his isolation was sanctioned by God although acted on by Rome? Can you think of other biblical stories where God turned a negative into a positive? How have you seen God move in your life through outwardly negative events?

2) John is commissioned to record his observations. Consider the call and ministry of Old Testament Prophets. In what ways are their calls similar to John's and how are they different? Are witnesses always reliable? Why do we trust the men who wrote various portions of God's Word?

3) What do you think the seven golden candlesticks might represent? What do the stars represent? (See 1:12, 1:16 & 1:20)

4) The Apostle John had seen the resurrected Lord Jesus Christ. How is this vision of the Lord different than their series of post-resurrection meetings in the gospels? Do you note any similarities?

5) There is a passage that contains an interesting comment when coupled with this description of Christ; read 1 John 3:2 & 3. To what extent do you think that we will be like the Lord?

6) Ezekiel 1 contains a vivid description of a vision which Ezekiel received. Verse 28 of that book describes his reaction, which is similar to that of the Apostle John's. How would you describe their reactions? Consider the reaction which we as believers will have when we encounter our Lord visually for the first time. Will our reaction be similar or vastly different from the unsaved (see Romans 14:11, Philippians 2:10)? If so what prompts the difference?

7) Revelation 1:19 provides an outline to the book. In this short study series, we will be considering mainly those things which are past & present. The majority of prophetic events begins in Revelation 4:1. Why are outlines to difficult subjects helpful?

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The Church in Ephesus:

Study 3: Read Revelation 2:1 - 7

1) Paul wrote a very upbeat letter to the church at Ephesus (although Paul was in chains at the time). What were some of his main points in that book?

2) Throughout the New Testament there doesn't seem to have been any record of personal interaction between the Apostle John and this church (although tradition suggests that this is where he died). These are really Christ Jesus' words (!) as He leads John to write personally and knowledgeably about them. What does that mean for how He knows each of us? Knowing that He knows, how should we conduct our lives?

3) What are the positive things that this church is doing? Personally, what do you most admire about this assembly?

4) What does the Lord have against them? How is this condition possible? The remedy seems to be to Remember, Repent & Repeat - is this too simple?

5) In a marriage relationship — such as we might see in the book of Ephesians — what are some of the hallmarks of a strong marriage?

6) The Nicolaitan comment in verse 6 has been debated for centuries — this is what the website 'Wikipedia' (which always should be questioned) says: "*Nico means "conquer" in Greek, Laitan refers to lay people, or laity, hence the word could be taken to mean "Lay conquerors" or Conquerors of the Lay People....*". Think about what was to come for the Christian church throughout the centuries — consider why or why not this interpretation may fit?

7) Many different theories have been endorsed regarding the spiritual identity of the seven churches of Revelation (other than their geographical location). Some commentators have speculated that they represent the worldwide character of the church through the past two millennia. Other scholars have theorized that these seven churches are models or patterns that can be found at any time or place for the past two thousand years. Some personalize the churches conditions, saying that they really reflect the condition of individual Christians for the past twenty centuries. Consider how you view the church that you attend. In which ways does it look like the church found in Ephesus? In which ways does it not resemble the Ephesus Church?

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The Church in Smyrna:

Study 4: Read Revelation 2:8-11

- 1) List and discuss the works the Christians in Smyrna are commended for. In which ways does this church differ from Ephesus? Are they similar in any way? Do any items on your list apply to your life in this century?

- 2) The name Ephesus (according to Wilmington's Guide to the Bible) means '*desirable*'. The name Smyrna is said to mean '*myrrh*'. Biblically, what is myrrh associated with? Why or why doesn't this name suit this church?

- 3) For those who regard the seven churches as representing seven church ages (which is not the only interpretation!), Smyrna is regarded as the church that was persecuted severely between 100A.D. to 312 A.D. Why would '*overcoming*' be an important theme for this church? What does this term mean to you today?

- 4) How does the devil '*test*' believers? Does this still happen and if so why does our sovereign God allow this testing? From the scriptures, can you demonstrate whether or not God puts controls upon Satan's '*testing*'?

- 5) Does it help to know that the Lord Jesus '*knows*' what you are going through? How can He encourage a believer to '*not be afraid*'? Do you suffer from fear of future events? If so, how can being told not to fear by God be of any help?

- 6) What is the '*Crown of Life*' (see James 1:12) and is it available for people living today? Is this crown based upon a Christian works?

- 7) The Christians in Smyrna are encouraged to be fearless and faithful. Are these good recommendations for you today? How can a timid person be brave and faithful?

- 8) Why would you tell someone, who you are attempting to encourage during a time of persecution, that they will not be '*hurt at all by the second death*'? Why would anyone think that this is a positive statement?

- 9) Consider how you view the church that you attend. In which ways does it look like the church found in Smyrna? In which ways does it not resemble the Smyrna Church?

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The Church in Pergamum:

Study 5: Read Revelation 2:12-17

- 1) What's in a name? The name Pergamum may mean 'marriage' or 'adulterous'. Describe what this church may have been married to (or been adulterous with)? What does your church's name mean? Does it live up to its title?

- 2) Pergamum seems to have been the seat of Satan's dominion in the Apostle John's day. How is it possible for a church to thrive in such an environment? What is the danger that such a church would face? Can you think of any places where churches exist today that seem to be on the threshold of hell?

- 3) Christ Jesus can claim to know each churches deeds or works. What characteristic of His deity is revealed in His knowledge? Physical persecution seemed to have resulted in Antipas' death. If this type of persecution is unsuccessful what might Satan resort to next? What was involved in renouncing their faith? Have you ever been tempted to renounce your faith?

- 4) The book of Revelation is more understandable with a solid Old Testament background. Who were Balaam and Balak? What errors did Balaam (the prophet for profit) make that are being duplicated by this church? See Jude 1:11-16 (see also Numbers 22-24 & 2 Peter 2:14-16) and from Jude, consider the character of the spiritual companions of Balaam. What are their motives? How well does the desire for financial profit (or even reasonable recompense) and leadership in the church mix? What was the apostle Paul's example regarding compensation (see 1 Thessalonians 2:6-9)?

- 5) Have you ever had to confront heresy in a friend or in the church? What should a church do when false teachers arrive? The Ephesians treated their heretics differently than the believers in Pergamum. What were the heretics in Pergamum trying to get the church to do? What did the Ephesians do differently? Which example provides a better example of how we should deal with heresy?

- 6) There are at least 3 types of possible repentance used in scriptures. **a)** Repentance that reflects only a change of mind **b)** Repentance unto salvation **c)** Repentance which involves a change of mind concerning a spiritual issue in our Christian life and the direction which we are following. What repentance is happening here? Is it easy? Does repentance come easier when we are threatened?

- 7) What is promised to the individual Pergamum 'overcomer'? Speculate on the significance of these two objects? What rewards have been earmarked for Smyrna & Ephesus?

- 8) Consider how you view the church that you attend. In which ways does it look like the church found in Pergamum? In which ways does it not resemble the Pergamum Church?

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The Church in Thyatira:

Study 6: Read Revelation 2:18-29

- 1) Thyatira was the hometown of Lydia (*see Acts 16:14*). The town, historically, may have been controlled by trade guilds which could put a believer in a compromising position due to a guilds expectation that its members participate in pagan activities. Have you had to take a stand for the True God in a way which may have negatively affected your career?

- 2) If you have been considering that these assemblies represent eras in the church - Thyatira is sometimes thought to represent the church's middle ages period. From your knowledge of church history discuss why this interpretation may, or may not be correct.

- 3) The Lord Jesus Christ is referred to as "*the "Son of God"*". What does this description entail? Is it different than His often used phrase "*the Son of man*"?

- 4) This church is not without some admirable qualities. What are they? It would seem from verse 19 that the Lord Jesus has noticed some growth - however is a growth in works always accompanied by a growth in faith / holiness & purity? What might motivate a growth in 'works'?

- 5) Who was Jezebel? What did Jezebel do to the servants of God (*1 Kings 18:4*)? The woman in Thyatira is thought to be a real person who methodically attacks her church. What should this church have done to reduce her effectiveness?. Does the Bible record this church taking any action to protect their testimony? Does this seem to be self destructive to you? Why do church leaders often wait so long before taking action against sin & wrong?

- 6) Document the process which begins with exposing people to false teaching and leads to their eventual ruin. Have you encountered this process in your own experiences? Why should we choose to be like the Bereans (*Acts 17:10*) in our hearing and application of scripture?

- 7) God gives this foul woman time to repent. What would you have done to her? What does this say about the Lord's character? Who were her children? Do we really learn - as we witness the judgement of God against other people (*Revelation 2:22,23*)?

- 8) The Lord always seems capable at separating the wheat from the chaff (*Matthew 3:12*), & the grain from the weeds (*Matthew 13:30*); can you explain why any true believers would have remained at this church? Science seems to teach us that things constantly decay. Knowing this, how difficult will it be for this church to "*hold fast*"? Even here, the Christians are exhorted to "*overcome*". Why or why is it not too late to do this?

- 9) Consider how you view the assembly that you attend, in which ways does it look like the church found in Thyatira? In which ways does it not resemble the Thyatira Church?

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The Church in Sardis:

Study 7: Read Revelation 3:1-6

1) The word Thyatira means '*daughter*'. The name Sardis might mean '*remnant*'. What does this term mean to you? Discuss from the scriptures how the Lord views those who are not the majority but just '*the remnant*'. How do you feel as a believer in Christ Jesus to be a part of a remnant?

2) Sardis is considered by some students to represent the modern reformed church - (churches founded post - October 31, 1517 A.D.). What characterizes those denominations which ascribe to reformed teaching today? Describe some great people and their biblical insights of the reformed era. Discuss whether their views have continued to the present age without alteration. Why do great teachings get altered?

3) List the activities of this assembly for which they are commended. Compare your list to the other churches which we have studied and glean the differences.

4) It seems that this church had a reputation "*what men thought*". Also they were an active church with lots of programs "*what men see*" - however the Lord saw past these things. What did the Lord describe their condition to be? J. Vernon McGee writes "*Although the outward form remains the living creature has vacated the shell*" - Do you agree with his harsh summary, why or why not?

5) This church is sometimes referred to as the 'sleeping church'. Why is sleep a good thing for a person but a terrible discipline for any church? What might lull us into such a state?

6) Discuss the phrase "*I will never blot out his name from the book of life*" (Verse 5). This statement is made as an encouragement to overcome and to remain true & faithful to the Saviour. How does it encourage you? How might some misinterpret this positive comment?

7) Scholars write that the city of Sardis was devoted to the worship of mother - goddess Cybele and no temple worshiper was allowed to approach the temple of the gods with "*soiled or unclean garments*". Much more importantly than this reference to a false goddess, how might believers be viewed as soiled? How can we be made clean? How can the Saviour think that we "are worthy"? (see also God's opinion of our fabricated righteousness (*Isaiah 64:6*) and the righteousness of the High Priest, Joshua (*Zechariah 3:1-5*))

8) With each church listed in these two chapters, modern people are encouraged to have "*an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.*" What have you heard and learned so far from each church?

9) Consider how you view the assembly that you attend. In which ways does it look like the church found in Sardis? In which ways does it not resemble the Sardis Church?

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The Church in Philadelphia:

Study 8: Read Revelation 3:7-13

- 1) Scholars say that Philadelphia was situated in a place prone to earthquakes. Many Philadelphians chose to live in the open countryside, away from town due to the danger of tremors. Also this town bordered two other ancient countries and it was hoped that from this chosen location Greek culture and influence would extend to these ancient countries. Why would the concept of having an “*open door*” be relevant to those who were of the Philadelphian church? What would having an “*open door*” mean to you? Have you ever experienced a door that the Lord shut?

- 2) This “*open door*” which is placed before Philadelphia provides us with the sense of something that is given, bestowed, committed, or entrusted to them. How can any work given by God carry such a sense? Missionaries (or those associated with missions) seem to refer to open doors more than other Christians - why might this be? This church is sometimes viewed as representing the church which exists after about 1730 - 1750 up until the early 1900's. What were some key points of this church age?

- 3) What attributes do you see the Lord using about Himself? Discuss what each term means and why they are important in defining who Christ is. Who was David and how does the Lord Jesus tie into David's lineage? Why would the “*key of David*” be important? Did you ever hear of any keys in David's day?

- 4) Be prepared to list and discuss the positive comments made of this church. Why does the Lord put such emphasis on those who haven't denied His name? Why does this passage seem to imply that as the Lord opens a door for any church, the strength that they need to do His work does not have to be great? How does that go against our human nature?

- 5) Philadelphia demonstrates that the Lord likes faithfulness - sometimes He even chooses to reward faithfulness by increasing our work. Do we see faithfulness as always a positive trait? Do we qualify (or try to diminish) our appreciation of this characteristic?

- 6) Biblically, names can be important. Consider some biblical names that you enjoy the meaning of. Why do the meaning behind these names often seem to carry so much weight - sometimes seeming to influence the very character and future of the person who carries the name? Three names are given to those who overcome. What are they and what might they mean? Why would bearing these names be important? Out of all seven churches listed in these passages, this church has a name which possesses a meaning that even North American non-believers might know. What is this meaning? Why might their name be significant?

- 7) Consider how you view the assembly that you attend. In which ways does it look like the church found in Philadelphia? In which ways does it not resemble the Philadelphian Church?

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The Church in Laodicea:

Study 9: Read Revelation 3:14-22

1) A friend recently noted that Paul is the confirmed author of seven canonical books to seven New Testament churches - Corinth, Thessalonica, Galatia, Ephesus, Colosse, Philippi & the Roman church. From a basic knowledge of these seven New Testament Epistles discuss whether these letters from Paul share any characteristics with the Lord's short observations of seven churches as recorded by John.

2) The Saviour uses three terms to describe Himself. These are '*the Amen*', '*the Faithful and True Witness*' & '*the Ruler of God's Creation*'. What do each of these terms mean? Why do you think that this church needed to think of Jesus Christ in this way?

3) Laodicea is dealt a stern warning in this passage. Its lukewarmness has nothing to do with the warmth of their drinking water but seems tied to its prosperity. Is lukewarmness an ever-present danger for a Christian who possesses even, moderate wealth? Why? Explain the development of the Evangelical church in places like Eastern Europe & China as compared to North America & Western Europe. How does the west compare?

4) Does the church prosper spiritually when we prosper financially - or - does the church prosper more when there is an obvious threat to our faith? What subtle attack has been made against our faith today and why do we not see it? Studying Israel (in books like Judges), what occurred when they were financially strong? Where is your own faith often placed (pensions, wages, houses, lands, stocks etc, or the Lord)? If others looked at you would they say that you are 'self-sufficient'? Privately, examine yourself and consider if consumerism is wrestling for control of your life.

5) How does our Lord describe the members of the Laodicean assembly? What do these awful descriptions mean to you? Note that the Lord does NOT commend this assembly. If you were the ancient messenger who was chosen to deliver this short message to your church, how would you chose to discuss what the Saviour thought of your assembly?

6) It has been said that this church did not live the Values, the Character or the Vision of the Saviour. What should we do to not be like them? How can we avoid His displeasure with our misplaced priorities? Can we still be overcomers even in our nakedness? If so, how? The Lord Jesus is pictured as being outside — knocking — why is He outside?

7) Consider how you view the assembly that you attend. In which ways does it look like the church found in Laodicea? In which ways does it not resemble the Laodicean Church?