



DEAR CHURCH SERIES STUDY GUIDE

WE ARE SO EXCITED YOU HAVE JOINED US FOR OUR DEAR CHURCH SERMON SERIES. THE BOOK OF REVELATION IS THE CAPTIVATING, POWERFUL, AND AT TIMES CONFUSING LAST BOOK OF THE BIBLE. WE ARE CONVINCED THAT GOD WILL SPEAK TO YOU THROUGH THIS SERIES. EACH WEEK, ALONG WITH THE SERMON OUTLINE, WE WILL PROVIDE A FOUR-PAGE STUDY GUIDE TO HELP YOU READ, UNDERSTAND, AND APPLY THE CHAPTERS COVERED. WE HOPE THIS WILL BE HELPFUL FOR YOU PERSONALLY AS WELL AS FOR DISCUSSION AND SHARING WITH YOUR LIFE GROUP, FAMILY AND FRIENDS. AS MATT SMETHURST SAID, *"GOD DID NOT GIVE US THE BOOK OF REVELATION SO WE'D BUILD BOMB SHELTERS IN THE BACKYARD. HE GAVE US THIS BOOK SO WE'D BUILD BIGGER DINNER TABLES AND INVITE OUR FRIENDS OVER AND TELL THEM ABOUT JESUS."*

WITH LOVE, PASTORS GLENN AND ERIC

REVELATION 1-3: READ • UNDERSTAND • APPLY

REVELATION 1:1-19 • SEVEN CHURCHES

"The revelation of Jesus Christ" (1:1) was written by the apostle John while in exile on the island of Patmos, off the coast of present-day Turkey. It was addressed to seven actual churches. Revelation begins with letters from Christ himself to these churches, letters that include commendation, criticism, and comfort. Then comes a long series of visions of judgment on the wicked, all in highly symbolic language. The church is depicted under great distress but is assured of the final triumph of Jesus as "King of kings and Lord of lords" (19:16), bringing to an end the rebellion of humanity and ushering in "a new heaven and a new earth" (21:1) where God Himself will reign forever and ever (11:15). Revelation was probably written A.D. 95-96.

APPLICATION

- How will you personalize and pass along the blessing of verse 3?
- Read verses 12-18 again, slowly. What do the images suggest about Christ? How does this make you feel?
- In your spiritual life right now, are you "on Patmos" (suffering, feeling exiled) or "in the Spirit" (reigning) or experiencing both at the same time? Why?

REVELATION 2:1-7 • EPHESUS

Location : Ephesus was the capital of Asia Minor, a center of land and sea trade and one of the most influential cities in the eastern part of the Roman Empire.

Significance: Christ commended the church of Ephesus for its “deeds...hard work...and perseverance,” and for its rejection of false apostles (Revelation 2:2-3). Despite its hard work and doctrinal integrity, Christ faults the community for having “forsaken the love [they] had at first” (Revelation 2:4). This “forsaken love” can mean that the Ephesians had become less devoted to Christ or that the work they did was no longer motivated by love for one another.

APPLICATION

- In what ways have you lost your first love for Christ (v. 4)? What has helped you keep that love alive?

REVELATION 2:8-11 • SMYRNA

Location: The city of Smyrna was about 25 miles north of Ephesus. It was nicknamed the “Port of Asia” because it had an excellent harbor on the Aegean Sea.

Significance: Smyrna was home to a large Jewish community hostile to Christians. The Bible notes that slanderous accusations by Jews against Christians had led to Christian persecution by Roman authorities (Acts 14:2, 19; Acts 17:13). Christ’s revelation to the church of Smyrna commends the community for its material poverty but its spiritual wealth, and acknowledges its wrongful persecution (Revelation 2:9).

APPLICATION

- What do Jesus’ words to the church of Smyrna teach about suffering (v. 10-11)? How can this encourage you this week?

REVELATION 2:12-17 • PERGAMUM

Location: The city of Pergamum was renowned for its pagan practices.

Significance: The letter to the church of Pergamum lauds the congregation for upholding its faith despite the city’s pervasive pagan influences (Revelation 2:13). The letter then addresses the church’s sin by denouncing some of its members for following false teachings that brought about religious and moral compromise (Revelation 2:14-15).

APPLICATION

- If Jesus were to write a letter to your church, what would He say?

REVELATION 2:18-29 • THYATIRA

Location: Thyatira was a working person's town, with many trade guilds for cloth making, dyeing, and pottery. The city was secular, with no focus on any particular religion.

Significance: Jesus' letter to the church of Thyatira praises it for growing in faith and service (Revelation 2:19). The church's downfall was its devotion to a false prophet that led some members to commit idolatry and immorality (Revelation 2:20). Although the false prophet remained unrepentant, Jesus affirms that the congregation can still repent by turning away from the prophet's ways (Revelation 2:21-22).

APPLICATION

- How did Christ show patience to the church in Thyatira?

REVELATION 3:1-6 • SARDIS

Location: The wealthy city of Sardis was actually in two locations. The older section of the city was on a mountain, and when its population outgrew that spot, a newer section was built in the valley below.

Significance: Our Lord faults the church of Sardis for maintaining an outward appearance of being "alive," while actually being spiritually dead (Revelation 3:1). Alluding to the city's history of prior surprise attacks, Jesus warns the congregation to "wake up" and repent, lest he "come like a thief" to bestow His judgment (Revelation 3:2-3). Those in the church of Sardis who heed Christ's warning will be "dressed in white," a symbol of purity and victory, and will be acknowledged in Heaven's Book of Life (Revelation 3:5).

APPLICATION

- What dangers exist for Christians who rely on an image instead of nurturing a genuine spiritual life (v. 2)?

REVELATION 3:7-13 • PHILADELPHIA

Location: Philadelphia was founded by the citizens of Pergamum. The community was built in a frontier area as a gateway to the central plateau of Asia Minor. Philadelphia's residents kept barbarians out of the region and brought in Greek culture and language.

Significance: Christ praises the church of Philadelphia for remaining faithful in the face of trials despite their limited strength (Revelation 3:8). Jesus does not reproach the church of Philadelphia but he condemns its persecutors (Revelation 3:9). Christ promises that if Philadelphia's congregants remain faithful to Him, He will protect them from the "hour of trial" and make them pillars in God's heavenly temple (Revelation 3:10-12).

APPLICATION

- How does the Church of Philadelphia's reward (v. 12) fit their faithfulness?
- If Jesus took your spiritual temperature today, what would he find you to be: hot, cold, or lukewarm?

REVELATION 3:14-22 • LAODICEA

Location: Laodicea was the wealthiest of the 7 cities, known for its banking industry, its manufacture of wool, and a medical school that produced eye ointment. But the city had a water supply problem. At one time an aqueduct was built to bring water to the city from hot springs.

Significance: Jesus' letter to the church of Laodicea wastes no time denouncing the congregation for its lukewarm faith, threatening to "spit" the congregation out of His mouth (Revelation 3:16). Christ scolds this church for allowing its economic prosperity to cause it spiritual bankruptcy and reveals that, despite its economic wealth, only He can provide spiritual wealth (Revelation 3:17-18). Those in Laodicea's church who open the door to Christ will share in His Heavenly banquet and have the right to sit with Him on His throne (Revelation 3:20-21).

APPLICATION

- What steps can you take this week to keep from being indifferent to what God wants?

REFLECTION

SERMON

What stood out to you from the sermon? How will you apply it to your life? Who will you share it with?

READING

Which of the churches addressed in chapters 2 and 3 do you relate to most? Explain.

PRAYER

This week in your prayer time, spend time asking God to reveal any areas of your life that, like these 7 churches, he is calling you to repent and turn away from. Quiet your mind and heart and allow yourself to wait to hear God's voice. You can journal, go for a walk, or listen to worship music—anything that will help you spend time in God's presence and listen to his direction.