

Introduction to the Revelation

I. New Testament Background

A.	Gospels	Acts	Letters	Revelation
1.	Portrait	Program	Purpose	Prospect
2.	We believe	We serve	We change	We overcome
3.	Photo album	Diary	Letters	Mountain view
4.	Facts	Aims	Truths	Outcomes
5.	Biographic	Historic	Didactic	Prophetic
6.	Jesus	Prophet	Priest	King
7.	Comes and dies	Lives	Works	Comes again

B.. Apocalyptic Literature

1. Popular style - between Old and New Testaments
2. Royal Line - a king coming from David's line - *Isaiah 11:1*
3. Righteous Heir - *Jeremiah 23:5*
4. Shepherd and King - *Ezekiel 34:23*
5. *Day of the Lord* - present age and age to come
 - a. Blast into history with destruction and judgment
 - b. Like a woman giving birth - you know its coming

C. Apocalyptic Versus Prophetic

1. **A.** World beyond repair: dissolving the present world for a new one.
P. Present world: an outcry for social, economic, political spiritual justice.
2. **A.** God's judgment and wrath: a part of the process.
P. Called to obey and serve God in the now.
3. **A.** Pessimist - golden age coming only after the destruction of this one.
P. Optimist- believed present situations could be mended, repaired, change.

II. The Revelation of Jesus Christ

A. Apocalypse Now - *Revelation 1:1-3*

1. God revealing His will - *Galatians 2:2*
2. God revealing His Son - *Ephesians 3:3*
3. God revealing His holiness - *Romans 2:5*
4. God revealing Himself through preaching - *I Corinthians 14:6*

B. Blessings - *Revelation 1:4-8*

1. Eternity - 3X mentioned in the greeting
2. Trinity - mentions Father, Son and Holy Spirit

C. Introductions - *Revelation 1:9-11*

1. John - brother and companion in suffering, Kingdom and patient endurance.
2. Patmos - because of the Word of God and testimony of Jesus.
3. Lord's Day - move from Saturday to Sunday.
4. In the Spirit - apostolic authority - *I Corinthians 7:40*
5. Seven Churches - Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea
 - a. Types/Stages of Churches - healthy or unhealthy, good or bad
 - b. Churches in History - prophetic future
 - c. Actual Churches - Asian Minor

D. Lamps and Lampstands - *Revelation 1:12-20*

1. Jesus Christ exalted and glorified
2. Doxology - first and last, living and resurrected
3. Stars - angels over each church
4. Lampstands - churches proclaiming the light of God

The Church in Ephesus *Revelation 2:1-7*

I. The Metropolis

A. Capital city Asia Minor (now Turkey)

1. Center of land and sea trade - strategic point
2. One of three most influential cities in eastern part of Roman empire - Ephesus, Antioch and Alexandria
3. Temple Diana (Gr. Artemis) one of the seven wonders of the ancient world
4. Major industry was manufacture of silver images of the goddess
5. Immorality and crime was very high - had a need for a court system - Ephesus was the court seat - town clerk - *Acts 19*
6. Large colony of Jews gathered there - free city - no Roman rule
7. Area is now a marshland beach and the city is in ruins

II. Paul's Ministry to the Ephesians - three years - *Acts 20:13-38*

1. Earliest reference to Christianity - AD 52 - Paul visited with Priscilla and Aquilla - *Acts 18:18-21*
2. The ministry of Paul interfered with the silversmith trade - *Acts 19:21-41*
3. Paul warned the Ephesians that false teachers would come and try to draw the people away from God - *Acts 20:31*
4. The church resisted the false teachings
 - a. Paul refers to them as saints - the faithful in Christ - *Ephesians 1:1*
 - b. Paul reminded them

Before

Dead in transgressions
Objects of wrath
Followed ways of the world
God's enemies
Enslaved to Satan
Followed our own evil thoughts & desires

After

Made alive with Christ
God's mercy and salvation
Stood for Christ and truth
God's children
Free in Christ to love, serve & reign with Him
Raised up with Christ in glory

5. When Paul departed, Timothy was left at Ephesus - *I Timothy 1:3*
6. John stayed in Ephesus where he had jurisdiction over the seven cities - Ephesus, Smyrna, Thyatira, Pergamum, Philadelphia, Laodicea, Sardis

II. Message to the Church

- A. Christ holds the seven stars in his right hand - the messengers - the angels
- B. Christ walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands - the churches
- C. Christ knows the deeds of the church

1. Working hard - Gr. *Kopos* - *Romans 16:12, I Corinthians 15:10, Galatians 4:11* zealous for God in service
2. Perseverance - Gr. *Hupomone* - heroic courage in accepting sufferings, hardships and trials in God's grace and for God's glory
3. Resisted sin and false teaching - they did not tolerate them - *I John 4:1-3, I Thessalonians 5:21, Matthew 7:19-20*

LAMPS AND LAMPSTANDS

Midwest City Free Methodist Church

- D. Forsook their first love
 - 1. Enthusiasm is gone
 - 2. Love for the brotherhood is gone - dissension, criticism
 - 3. Love for Christ is gone - alive relationship turned religious
- E. Reminder - the height from which you have fallen
- F. Repent - turn around and do the things you first did
- IV. Warning to the Church - *I will come to you and remove your lampstand (2:5)*
 - A. Church ceases to be Christ-centered, evangelical, effective, fruitful
 - 1. Candlesticks in the temple gave light for the priests to see
 - 2. We are to be the light to the surrounding communities
 - 3. The lights can go out - Jesus could extinguish the lamp if they do not fulfill their purpose
 - B. Nicolaitans - "To conquer the people" - believers who compromised their faith
 - 1. Gr. Equivalent *Balaamites*-Balaam means "to conquer the people"-*Numbers 22:1-24, 31:16*
 - a. Balaam acknowledged the Lord was a powerful God
 - b. Did not believe in the Lord as the only true God
 - c. Obedient only to God if it profited him
 - 2. Dangers inside church connected to idol worship, eating meat sacrificed to idols and practicing sexual immorality
- V. To Him Who Overcomes
 - A. Tree of life - obedience and its reward
 - 1. Tree of life and tree of knowledge of good and evil - *Genesis 2:9*
 - a. Eating from the tree of life brought eternal life
 - b. Eating from the tree of knowledge brought realization of good and evil - Adam & Eve were disobedient and the cost was great
 - B. Paradise lost through Adam & Eve - regained through Jesus Christ - where we shall be forever and ever

The Church in Smyrna --Revelation 2:8-11

I. The Metropolis

- A. "Crown of Asia" - Asia Minor (Turkey)
 - 1. Ionians settled, destroyed during 7th Century BC (Lydians)
 - 2. Smyrna rebuilt in 4th Century BC
 - 3. Safe harbor on Aegean Sea
 - 4. 25 miles north of Ephesus
 - 5. Lovely city, temples for gods, library, stadium etc.
 - 6. Free city, yet faithful to Rome
 - 7. Three factions; Christians, Jews, Allegiants to Rome
 - 8. Bishop Polycarp martyred in 155 AD

II. Early Christianity in Smyrna

- A. Gospel presumably spread from Ephesus - *Acts 19:8-10*
- B. One of seven churches in Asia under John's authority.
- C. Paul visited Smyrna on 3rd missionary journey
- D. Like other Churches opposing sides controlled - *Acts 22:22-30*
- E. Slander brought against Christians
 - 1. Sacrament = Cannibalism
 - 2. Agape, "love feast" = orgy
 - 3. Christianity made believers/ non-believers = family splitting
 - 4. No idols = atheism
 - 5. Caesar is not Lord = Political disloyalty
 - 6. Judgment of Hellfire = Arson/ Incineration

III. Word Spoken of Smyrna

- A. Calls himself "First" and "Last" - *Isaiah 44:6*
- B. Says he "Died" yet "Came to Life"
- C. Sufferings of People
 - 1. Afflictions - Gk. *Thlipsis*—crushing under heavy object
 - 2. Poverty
 - a. Gk. *Ptocheia* - complete destitution
 - b. Gk. *Penia* - satisfies needs with own hands
- D. Riches - *James 2:5*
- E. Synagogue of Satan - Slap in face of Jews

IV. Message to the Church

- A. **Do Not Be Afraid to Suffer**
 - 1. Prophecy
 - a. The devil will come
 - b. Persecution - came in waves
 - c. Imprisonment - usually led to death
 - 2. Promise - For 10 days
- B. **Be Faithful**
 - 1. To the point of death - it's war
 - 2. The "Crown of Life" is the prize - *James 1:12*
 - a. Gk. *Stephanos* - crown of joy/ victory
 - b. Gk. *Diadema* - royal, kingly crown
 - 3. The victor will not be hurt by second death.
 - a. **Physical death** - all will die, no distinction
 - b. **Spiritual death** - those who lack faith

The Church in Pergamum

I. The Metropolis

A. Greatest City in Asia Minor

1. Capital city for 400 years from 282 BC by Alexander the Great.
2. Built upon hill overlooking the River Caicus - could see the Mediterranean Sea.
3. Second greatest library in the ancient world - Alexandria 1st.
4. Animal parchments developed and sold there.
5. Two famous shrines and Caesar worship.
 - a. Altar for Zeus - animal sacrifices all day long.
 - b. Asclepios - god of healing and medicine [*Asclepios Soter*/sign of the serpent.]
6. The right of the sword - *ius gladii*

II. Christianity in Pergamum - *Revelation 2:12-17*

A. Exhortations

1. *I know where you live* - difficult place to overcome evil
2. *You remain true* - they refused to deny Christ.
3. *Did not renounce your faith* - avoided lining up with the world
4. *My faithful witness* - *Antipas* - same title as Christ - *Revelation 1:5; 3:14*

B. Rebukes

1. Some hold to the teachings of Balaam - enticement
2. Some hold to the teaching of Nicolaitians - conquerer
 - a. Sexual immorality
 - b. Food sacrificed to idols
 - c. Deception

C. Repentance

1. Turn to God.
2. Turn away from your sin, selfishness and wicked desires.
3. Judgment starts with the Church.

D. Reward

1. *I will give some hidden manna* - revelation of Jesus Christ.
2. *I will give a white stone with a new name* -
 - a. Precious stones also fell with the manna (legend)
 - b. Colored stones used for counting - white would be different
 - c. Juries used black stones for guilty, white for innocent
 - d. Given in Rome for keys or stones of the city special privilege, rights and honor
 - e. Celebrative days call white days; white stones good days; black - bad day
 - f. Amulets with superstitious names - the name of Jesus Christ
 - g. Everything new - white stones represent new men & women in Christ
 - h. New name means a new status:
Abram - Abraham
Jacob - Israel
New self - our new status in the new name - kingdom of eternity.

The Church in Thyatira *Revelation 2:18-29*

I. The Metropolis

A. City in Lydia (Asia Minor) on the Lycus River

1. Industry was the sale of purple cloth - “turkey red” from the “madder-root” plant - Lydia - *Acts 16:14*
2. On a great highway between two rivers - center of commerce - more trade guilds than any other city - pottery, cloth making & dyeing

B. Garrison town for many centuries

1. Male warlike figure armed with a battle-axe mounted on a horse
2. Female wearing a battlemented crown

II. Message to the Church

A. Jesus, the Son of God - *Daniel 10:4-6, Revelation 19:11-16*

1. Eyes like blazing fire
2. Feet like burnished bronze

B. Christ knows the church

1. Knows the deeds - *Acts 26:20, I Timothy 6:18, Hebrews 10:24, James 2:26, I Peter 2:12*
2. Desires we grow in love and faith
3. Live out our faith by doing acts of service - *Ephesians 6:7*
4. Persevere - spend days wisely - days are short

C. Warning to the Church - *I Kings 16:31; 21:1-15; II Kings 9:7-10; 30-37*

1. Tolerated sexual immorality
 - a. Sexual immorality causes hurt outside of marriage
 - b. We show that we prefer to satisfy our own desires than according to God’s plan - unwilling to wait on God
 - c. Violates the commitment which is necessary to relationships
 - d. Can bring disease to our bodies
 - e. Destroys families, church and communities - integrity is destroyed
2. Jesus desires we come to repentance and waits for us
3. Jesus knows what is in our hearts and minds - *Romans 8:27*
4. Jesus will repay everyone according to their deeds - *II Timothy 4:1*
5. Hold on to sound doctrine, confessions of faith, teaching of Christ - *I Timothy 1:3-5, II Timothy 1:13*

III. To Those who Overcome - remain faithful to the end

A. Jesus will give authority over the nations - *Psalms 2:8-9, Revelation 19:15*

1. Rule with an iron scepter - reign with Jesus
2. Will dash them to pieces like pottery - Judge the nations - *Jeremiah 19:1-15, I Corinthians 6:2-3*

B. The Morning Star - Jesus - *Luke 1:78-79; II Peter 1:19; Revelation 22:16*

The Church in Sardis

I. The Metropolis

A. A City Upon a Hill

1. Ancient Oriental city hostile to the Greek World.
2. Build upon Mount Tmolus overlooking the River Hermus.
3. Two cities developed - one on the mountain and other in the valley.
4. King Croesus made Sardis a wealthy and lost that wealth to the Persians.

B. A City That Sleeps

1. Twice Sardis was captured because of its pride - Persians and Greeks.
2. Destroyed by an earthquake in 17 AD - rebuilt by Romans.
3. Became the centre for the wollen trade and known for the art of dyeing wool.

II. Christianity in Sardis - *Revelation 3:1-6*

A. Rebukes

1. Jesus Christ holds the Seven Spirits and Seven Stars
 - a. Seven Spirits - denotes the Holy Spirit - *Isaiah 11:2*
 - b. Seven Stars - denotes the churches - *Revelation 1:4*
2. A Dead Church
 - a. Pretending to have faith in God - looks alive
 - b. Dying in their sins - *Ephesians 2:1*
 - c. No problems with heresy or persecution

B. Exhortations

1. *Wake Up! (Watch)* - stand guard against the enemy - *I Peter 5:8*
2. *Strengthen...* - take charge of their faith - *II Peter 1:5-7*

C. Imperatives

1. The Risen Christ says: "Remember" - forgiveness of sins.
2. The Risen Christ says: "Obey" - Word of God.
3. The Risen Christ says: "Repent" - choose God.
4. The Risen Christ says: "I Will Come" - eternity is near.

D. The Faithful Few

1. Walking with God - a vital relationship.
2. Dressed in White - pure and holy.
3. Book of Life - counted for the Kingdom of God.
4. Acknowledged - Jesus Christ will confess our name to the Father.

The Church of Philadelphia

I. The Metropolis

A. The City of Brotherly Love

1. Youngest of the seven cities - founded in 140 BC.
2. Center for Greek Culture and language to Lydia and Asia Minor.
3. Built on a fertile, volcanic plain - AD 17 great earthquake destroyed the city.
4. Changed named with several emperors - "Neocaesarea" and "Flavia".

B. A Faithful Witness

1. Remained strong and free until the 14th Century.
 - a. Greek City surrounds by Muslims.
 - b. Greek Orthodox Church - separated 1054 from Roman Catholic.
2. Today still maintains a Greek Church with a Bishop.

II. Christianity in Philadelphia - *Revelation 3:7-13*

A. Three Great Titles

1. The Holy One - set apart for the glory of God - *Isaiah 6:1-5*
2. The True One - God is the flesh (real) - *John 1:14*
3. The Gatekeeper - the final authority - *Isaiah 22:20-24*

B. An Open Door

1. An opportunity to proclaim the Good News: forgiveness of sins.
2. A healthy relationship to Christ himself: "I am the Gate" - *John 10:7*
3. A connection to the Jewish people: grace and truth to legalistic people.
4. A door of prayer: coming before God

C. Promises

1. Loved by God - a new covenant by faith in Jesus Christ.
2. Special Deliverance - a reward for faithfulness and endurance.
3. Second Coming - warning, comfort, promise.
**Hold on* - believing, waiting and enjoying the grace of God.

D. More Promises

1. Pillar of God - important part of God's plan.
 - a. Peter, James and John were considered pillars of the Church.
 - b. Abraham was considered to be the pillar of the faithful.
2. Security - never leave or forsake the church.
3. Adoption - a special grace for God.
 - a. God places His name over His people - *Numbers 6:22-27*
 - b. God's name shows His mark upon His people.
4. Citizenship - connected to the city of God.
 - a. It is a gift of God for all who believe
 - b. It represents the presence of God - God lives in His city.
 - c. The ancient world identify itself around its cities.
5. New Name - a name of victory and triumph.
 - a. No one knows the name except Jesus himself - *Revelation 19:12*
 - b. It is a sign of intimacy with the Holy One.

The Church of Laodicea

I. The Metropolis

A. The Tepid City

1. Six cities in the ancient world named Laodicea - on the Lycus.
2. Founded in 250 BC by Antiochus of Syria.
3. Named for his wife Laodice.
4. Stood guard on the main trade road from Ephesus to Asia Minor.
5. Two Great Gates: on the eastside, Ephesian Gate and on the westside , Syrian Gate.
6. Became a center for travel and trade.
7. Water source came from a spring 6 miles away by an underground aqueduct.

B. No Need For God

1. Mass wealth - refused Roman help to rebuild after 61 AD earthquake.
2. Mass produced wool - famous in the ancient world - no one naked in Laodicea.
3. Famous medical school - ointment for ears and eyes.

II. Christianity in Laodicea - *Revelation 3:14-22*

A. Historical Setting

1. Jewish presence - over 7500 male Jews in the area.
2. Archippus - first Bishop over Laodicea.

The Apostolic Constitutions 8:46 and Colossians 4:17

B. The Titles of Jesus Christ

1. Amen - *Isaiah 65:16* or *John 1:51*
2. Witness - A messenger from God who is true.
3. Ruler of God's Creation - Creation is good - *John 1:3*

C. Not One Good Word

1. Lukewarm - Their deeds were indifferent - "outward appearance but no power"
2. Spit or vomit - Christ is nauseated by their lives
3. Confidence in wealth - wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked.
4. Come to the Lord
 - a. Purified gold - faith in Jesus Christ - *I Peter 1:7*
 - b. White clothes - righteousness and holiness - *Colossians 3:12*
 - c. Healing salve - salvation, wholeness, redemption - *Matthew 4:23*

D. Rebuke - *Proverbs 3:12*

"Those whom I love I rebuke."

1. Earnest - **be real**
2. Repent - **turn around**
3. Listen - **obey**
4. Open up - **grow**

E. Promise - To sit on the throne

1. We must overcome - evil.
2. We must listen - Holy Spirit.