

The Seven Churches of Revelation
Jesus' Words to a Suffering Church



Revelation 2:8-11
Week 2 - Feb. 11, 2024

Welcome!

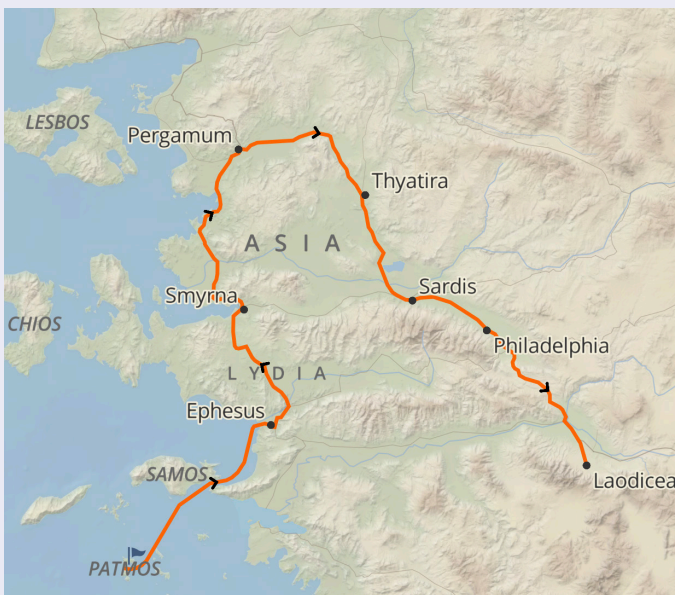
Welcome to the Winter 2024 Life Group Series! In this session, we will be learning about the Seven Churches of Revelation.

First CRC of Hanford is in the midst of transition, and has been through quite a lot over the last few years. We've weathered political discontent, a pandemic, the loss of our Senior Pastor who'd served twenty years in the role, watched, prayed, and cried as we've lost beloved members of our church family.

All churches have struggles, and according to the book of Revelation, they always have. Join us in this seven week study as we examine ancient churches in their strengths and struggles.



Map of the Ancient Churches



Tips for Reading the Book of Revelation

The book of Revelation, written by the Apostle John, is one of the most misunderstood books of the Bible. It's full of strange imagery that's unfamiliar to modern readers. However, the careful reader will discover patterns in the text that help us interpret it.

Our texts roughly have the following pattern.

1. Setting - the church under discussion.
 2. Title - a title of Jesus.
 3. Commendation - what the church is doing right.
- Complaint - what the church is doing wrong.
Correction - what the church needs to do to get back on track.

Before You Come to Life Group

1. If you're bringing a new person to the study, we recommend getting them study materials ahead of time so they can feel prepared.
2. Pray that the LORD will open your eyes and heart to receive the lessons he has to teach you in the study.
3. Read the scripture focus for the study.
4. Go through the questions and think about how you might answer them. We've provided space in the study for you to write down your answers if you'd like.

Chatechism Corner

Q & A 27

Q. What do you understand
by the providence of God?

A. The almighty and ever present power of God¹ by which God upholds, as with his hand, heaven and earth and all creatures,² and so rules them that leaf and blade, rain and drought, fruitful and lean years, food and drink, health and sickness, prosperity and poverty³— all things, in fact, come to us not by chance⁴ but by his fatherly hand.⁵

1 Jer. 23:23-24; Acts 17:24-28

2 Heb. 1:3

3 Jer. 5:24; Acts 14:15-17/a>; John 9:3; Prov. 22:2

4 Prov. 16:33

5 Matt. 10:29

What We Believe

1. Read Revelation 2:8-11. What title does Jesus have in our text? What does the title mean?

2. What commendation does Jesus have for the church in Smyrna? Do you think Jesus would commend the First CRC of Hanford for a similar reason?

3. What complaint does Jesus have for the church in Smyrna? Do you think Jesus has a similar complaint against the First CRC of Hanford?

4. What correction does Jesus give to the church in Smyrna? What's the outcome if they correct themselves? What's the outcome if they don't correct themselves?

Smyrna Facts

“Smyrna was famous for its beauty. Apollonius of Tyana marveled at how Mount Pagus was crowned with a circle of beautiful public buildings. The historian Strabo remarked on the city’s beauty, wealth, and fine wines. In AD 29, seven cities competed for the right to build a temple to the emperor Tiberius. Smyrna was chosen, and became the “temple warden” (Tacitus, Annals 4.55–56). It acquired another temple under the emperor Hadrian. Archaeologists have discovered coins portraying Nero, dedications to the emperors Titus and Domitian, and statues of Domitian, Trajan, and Hadrian (Yamauchi, New Testament, 58). These artifacts all demonstrate Smyrna’s devotion to the emperor.”

-The Lexham Bible Dictionary. Lexham Press.

Cross References

1. The church in Smyrna was suffering. The Lord gave them hope through a promise. What promises of God do you rely upon when you are hurting?

2. On a scale from 1 to 10, 1 being absolute persecution with Christians being martyred for professing their faith in Christ and 10 being absolute freedom to practice our faith, where do you believe you fall in your current circumstances? Give examples of your freedom to live your faith, as well as any examples when you were persecuted for your faith.

See how our text fits into the story of the Bible by referencing itself!

Revelation 2:8 - Isaiah 44:6

Revelation 2:9 - 1 John 4:1, Psalm 1:6

Revelation 2:10 - John 15:21, Hebrews 12:3-5, Matthew 24:9

Revelation 2:11 - Jeremiah 2:2, Matthew 23:23, Matthew 24:12



A view across the agora ruins at Smyrna to the columns of the Western Stoa—a covered public walkway in ancient times.



“Suffering is better than sinning. There is more evil in a drop of sin than in an ocean of affliction. Better, burn for Christ, than turn from Christ.”

- Charles Spurgeon

God Speaks to Our Families

1. Christians take our children’s faith seriously because we love them and want the best for them. We also don’t like to watch our children suffer. Why do we call our children to a faith that will likely result in their suffering?

2. Our text mentions that the church in Smyrna endured “tribulation and poverty” yet they were rich. How is your family poor (what are you lacking)? How has the Lord made your family rich (how are you blessed)?



God Speaks in Worship



1. How do we remember Christ's suffering during worship? How does remembering Christ's suffering benefit us?

2. How do we remember the suffering of the church, our city, state, country, and the world during worship? What hope does worship give us in a world full of suffering?

The Gospel Call

1. We live in a world full of suffering. How would we answer an unbeliever who calls God evil for ignoring the suffering of humanity?

2. What's outside your comfort zone when it comes to sharing your faith? Should our comfort zone ever prevent us from sharing the gospel? Why or why not?

“Let us understand that God is a physician, and that suffering is a medicine for salvation, not a punishment for damnation.”

- Saint Augustine

