

*The Seven Churches of Revelation*



*Jesus' Words to a Tolerant Church*

**Revelation 2:18-29**  
**Week 4 - Feb. 25, 2024**

# Welcome!

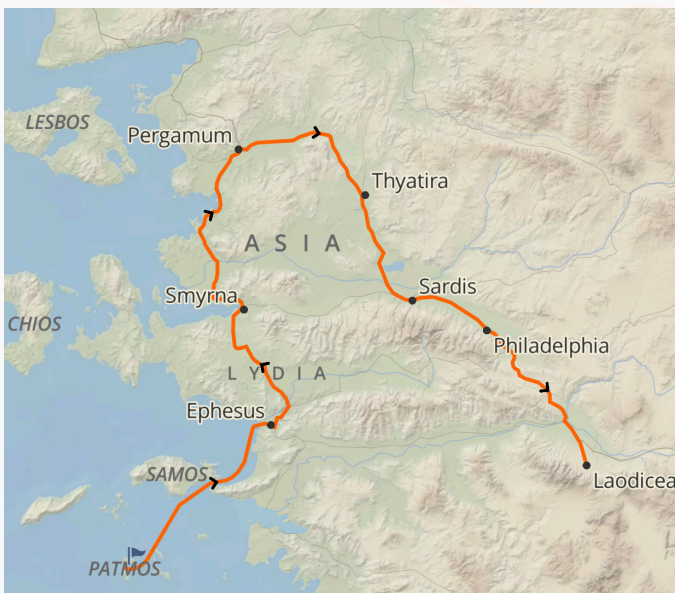
Welcome to the Winter 2024 Life Group Series! In this session, we will be learning about the Seven Churches of Revelation.

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.

## Catechism Corner

### Q & A 94

Q. What does the Lord require in the first commandment?

A. That I, not wanting to endanger my own salvation, avoid and shun all idolatry,<sup>1</sup> sorcery, superstitious rites,<sup>2</sup> and prayer to saints or to other creatures.<sup>3</sup> That I rightly know the only true God,<sup>4</sup> trust him alone,<sup>5</sup> and look to God for every good thing<sup>6</sup> humbly<sup>7</sup> and patiently,<sup>8</sup> and love,<sup>9</sup> fear,<sup>10</sup> and honor<sup>11</sup> God with all my heart. In short, that I give up anything rather than go against God's will in any way.<sup>12</sup>

### Q & A 95

Q. What is idolatry?

A. Idolatry is having or inventing something in which one trusts in place of or alongside of the only true God, who has revealed himself in the Word.<sup>13</sup>

1 1 Cor. 6:9-10; 10:5-14; 1 John 5:21

2 Lev. 19:31; Deut. 18:9-12

3 Matt. 4:10; Rev. 19:10; 22:8-9

4 John 17:3

5 Jer. 17:5, 7

6 Ps. 104:27-28; James 1:17

7 1 Pet. 5:5-6

8 Col. 1:11; Heb. 10:36

9 Matt. 22:37 (Deut. 6:5)

10 Prov. 9:10; 1 Pet. 1:17

11 Matt. 4:10 (Deut. 6:13)

12 Matt. 5:29-30; 10:37-39

13 1 Chron. 16:26; Gal. 4:8-9; Eph. 5:5; Phil. 3:19

# What We Believe

1. Read Revelation 2:18-29. What title does Jesus have in our text? What does the title mean?

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

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

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

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# Thyatira Facts

When Rome defeated Antiochus in 189 BC, Thyatira was incorporated into the kingdom of Pergamum, Rome's ally. Peace and prosperity followed. Under the Roman emperor Claudius (AD 41–54), Thyatira rose to new prominence and was permitted to issue its own coins. The emperor Hadrian included this city in his Middle East itinerary (AD 134), a hint of the importance of Thyatira in the 2nd century AD

Elwell, W. A., & Beitzel, B. J. (1988). Thyatira. In Baker encyclopedia of the Bible (Vol. 2, p. 2059). Baker Book House.

# God Speaks to Us

# Cross References

1. Our text links idolatry and sexual immorality together. How could these seemingly very different sins tied to one another?

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2. Most modern Christians won't be found in pagan temples engaging temple prostitutes as an act of religious devotion. Do we still struggle with idolatry and sexual immorality? If so, how? If not, why not?

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

**Rev. 2:18** - Ps. 2:7-9

**Rev. 2:19** - 1Th. 1:3

**Rev. 2:20** - 1 Ki.16:30-33

**Rev. 2:21** - 2 Pe. 3:9

**Rev. 2:22** - Rev. 18:9

**Rev. 2:23** - Je. 17:10

**Rev. 2:24** - Mt. 11:30

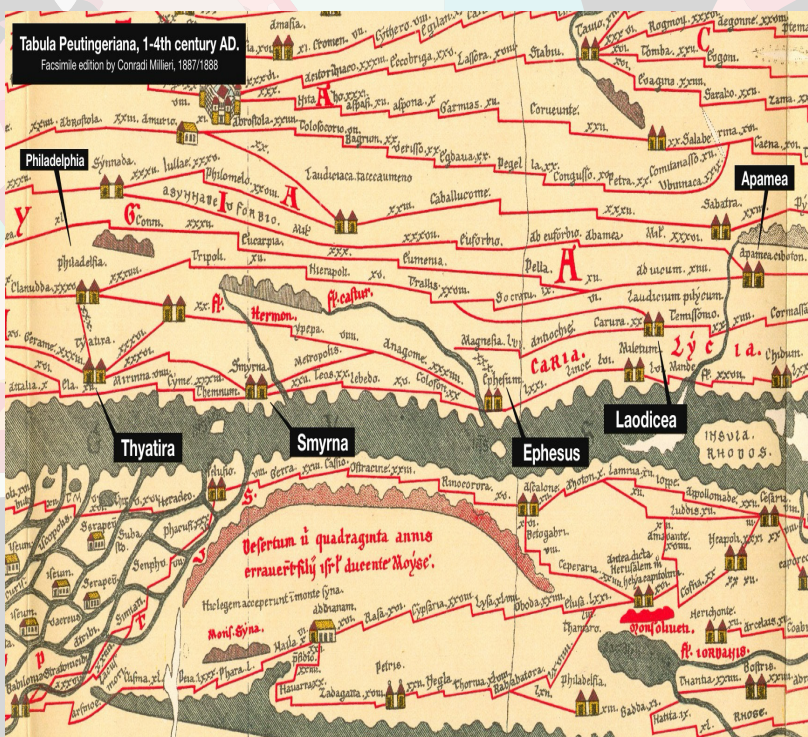
**Rev. 2:25** - Mt. 16:27

**Rev. 2:26** - Ps. 2:1-12

**Rev. 2:27** - Ps. 2:9

**Rev. 2:28** - 2 Pe. 1:19

**Rev. 2:29**- Rev. 2:9



A nineteenth century facsimile of the Peutinger Map (1-4th century) with labels added for Philadelphia, Thyatira, Smyrna, Ephesus, Laodicea, and Apamea.



“We should strive for unity and peace among Christians, but never at the expense of truth.”

- Jan Hus

## God Speaks to Our Families

1. How would you counsel a Christian parent whose child has “come out” as LGBTQIA?

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2. How would you counsel a Christian parent whose child has decided to renounce her faith in Christ and converted to another religion or become an atheist?

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# God Speaks in Worship



1. Read Heidelberg Catechism Q&A's 94 and 95. How does worship remind us that God is the only one in whom we should put our trust?

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2. During worship we confess our sins to God and hear the assurance of our pardon from God's word. Does this mean God tolerates our sin? Why or why not?

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# The Gospel Call

1. The Christian Reformed Church in North America (of which First CRC is a member) has recently defined “unchastity” in the Heidelberg Catechism as being any deviation from the Biblical model for human sexuality. The Bible gives God’s people two options for our sexuality. We are to be either 1. Celebrate or 2. Engage is sexual activity between one man and one woman in marriage. This move has caused division within our denomination. Is unity as a denomination more important than holding to a strict interpretation of God’s will for us as expressed in scripture? Why or why not?

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2. The world interprets Christianity’s desire for traditional gender and sexual norms as hateful toward the LGBTQIA community. Is the world’s take accurate? If yes, explain how. If no, explain why not.

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“I fear many of us have become numb to the poison we are drinking. When it comes to sexual immorality, sin looks normal, righteousness looks very strange, and [Christians] look a lot like everybody else.”

- Pastor Kevin DeYoung

