

Study #2

**Ephesus: VT LM TC JL**

Smyrna: VT (vivian)

Pergamum: VT (law)

Thyatira: AH (anita)

Sardis: TC AH (tim)

**Philadelphia: LM JL AH TC**

Laodicea LM JL (jonathan)

\*\*\*Third church voted on by small group\*\*\*

Inductive Bible study: compare and contrast

Pergamum -

Philadelphia - sending base of missions, open door for salvation

[Rev 2:1-29 ESV] 1 **"To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: 'The words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand, who walks among the seven golden lampstands. 2 "'I know your works, your toil and your patient endurance, and how you cannot bear with those who are evil, but have tested those who call themselves apostles and are not, and found them to be false. 3 I know you are enduring patiently and bearing up for my name's sake, and you have not grown weary. 4 But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first. 5 Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent. 6 Yet this you have: you hate the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. 7 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.' 8** "And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write: 'The words of the first and the last, who died and came to life. 9 "'I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich) and the slander of those who say that they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. 10 Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and for ten days you will have tribulation. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life. 11 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. The one who conquers will not be hurt by the second death.' 12 "And to the angel of the church in Pergamum write: 'The words of him who has the sharp two-edged sword. 13 "'I know where you dwell, where Satan's throne is. Yet you hold fast my name, and you did not deny my faith even in the days of Antipas my faithful witness, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells. 14 But I have a few things against you: you have some there who hold the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, so that they might eat food sacrificed to idols and practice sexual immorality. 15 So also you have some who hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans. 16 Therefore repent. If not, I will come to you soon and war against them with the sword of my mouth. 17 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, with a new name written on the stone that no one knows except the one who receives it.' 18 "And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write: 'The words of the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and whose feet are like burnished bronze. 19 "'I know your works, your love and faith and service and patient endurance, and that your latter works exceed the first. 20 But I have this against you, that you tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess and is teaching and seducing my servants to practice sexual immorality and to eat food sacrificed to idols. 21 I gave her time to repent, but she refuses to repent of her sexual immorality. 22 Behold, I will throw her onto a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her I will throw into great tribulation, unless they repent of her works, 23 and I will strike her children dead. And all the churches will know that I am he who searches mind and heart, and I will give to each of you according to your works. 24 But to the rest of you in Thyatira, who do not hold this teaching, who have not learned what some call the deep things of Satan, to you I say, I do not lay on you any other burden. 25 Only hold fast what you have until I come. 26 The one who conquers and who keeps my works until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations, 27 and he will rule them with a rod of iron, as when earthen pots are broken in pieces, even as I myself have received authority from my Father. 28 And I will give him the morning star. 29 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'

[Rev 3:1-22 ESV] 1 "And to the angel of the church in Sardis write: 'The words of him who has the seven spirits of God and the seven stars. "'I know your works. You have the reputation of being alive, but you are dead. 2 Wake up, and strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have not found your works complete in the sight of my God. 3 Remember, then, what you received and heard. Keep it, and repent. If you will not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come against you. 4 Yet you have still a few names in Sardis, people who have not soiled their garments, and they will walk with me in white, for they are worthy. 5 The one who conquers will be clothed thus in white garments, and I will never blot his name out of the book of life. I will confess his name before my Father and before his angels. 6 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.' 7 "And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: '**The words of the holy one, the true one, who has the key of David, who opens and no one will shut, who shuts and no one opens. 8 "'I know your works. Behold, I have set before you an open door, which no one is able to shut. I know that you have but little power, and yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name. 9 Behold, I will make those of the synagogue of Satan who say that they are Jews and are not, but lie--behold, I will make them come and bow down before your feet, and they will learn that I have loved you. 10 Because you have kept my word about patient endurance, I will keep you from the hour of trial that is coming on the whole world, to try those who dwell on the earth. 11 I am coming soon. Hold fast what you have, so that no one may seize your crown. 12 The one who conquers, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God. Never shall he go out of it, and I will write on him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down from my God out of heaven, and my own new name. 13 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'** 14 "And to the angel of the church in Laodicea write: 'The words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of God's creation. 15 "'I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were either cold or hot! 16 So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth. 17 For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked. 18 I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire, so that you may be rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself and the shame of your nakedness may not be seen, and salve to anoint your eyes, so that you may see. 19 Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent. 20 Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me. 21 The one who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, as I also conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne. 22 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'"

Revelation 2-3 – The Edge – Study on the Book of Revelation

* **Background:** After reminding us of who Jesus is in chapter 1, Revelation proceeds to give a message to each of the seven churches. These messages praise each city for their good, criticize them for their bad, and gives practical points for returning to their love in Christ.

To the church in Ephesus

* 2:1 – Ephesus was the most influential city and church of the seven. Indeed, it was in this pluralistic city that Paul founded a church that would be nurtured by Priscilla, Aquila, Timothy, and John himself! Mary the mother of Jesus even moved to this vibrant city and church community!
* 2:2-3 – The church in Ephesus was very engaged in strenuous and exhausting labour for the gospel. They were willing to pay the price of commitment. They persevered for the sake of the gospel in the face of strong and relentless opposition, especially persecution from the central Roman government.
* 2:4 – However, They have abandoned their love of God by their preoccupation with materialism, comfort, entertainment, and financial security (Jeremiah 2:2, 5).
* 2:5 – Jesus commands the church of Ephesus (1) to remember their first love for Christ, a free and natural love for Christ (2) to repent from their current way of life, which can often be painful and (3) to re-do those things that they did when they first loved Jesus.
* **Key Point:** Repenting can involve changing schedules and habits and saying ‘no’ to certain commitments, which can be painful and drastic. But this is what Jesus calls us to in order to revive our first love for Him.

To the church in Smyrna

* 2:8 – Smyrna (now Izmir, the third-largest city in Turkey) was a city that had a number of “dead-back-to-life” experiences, being destroyed in 580 BC and rebuilt in 290 BC. It was also obsessed with the word “first,” as it was a rival of Ephesus. Thus, Jesus introduces Himself as “the first and the last” and “who died and came to life.” Note than no criticism is given to Smyrna.
* 2:9 – The church in Smyrna faced immense pressure and tribulation (2 Timothy 3:12), but it was because they were living out their faith well. Pressure came not only from the religious plurality of the Romans, but also from the Jews of the city (“synagogue of Satan”).
* 2:10 – It is certainly difficult to keep faith under pressure. Indeed, Jesus says that they will suffer even more by being “tested” and “tribulation” for 10 days. But the crown of life is for those who keep faith.
* 2:11 – Whomever keeps faith in the face of pressure will receive new life. Our struggle is certainly against the unseen forces of evil (Ephesians 6:12).
* **Key Point:** Sometimes, even when we are doing everything right, we face immense pressure and tribulation. Jesus encourages us to keep faith even in the face of more pressure, with the crown of life in mind.

To the church in Pergamum

* 2:12-13 – Pergamum was a city with diverse ideas that were constantly in conflict. Despite, this, the church there was devoted to Christ even in the face of the death of one of their faithful followers of Christ (Antipas).
* 2:14-15 – However, some Christians in Pergamum held to the teachings of Balaam and the Nicolaitans. In particular, these teachings justified eating food sacrificed to idols and sexual immorality because what happened in the physical was separate from the spiritual (1 Corinthians 10:19). In those days, a person could choose a god to sacrifice an animal to and receive part of that animal back to throw a sacred feast. It was a social-spiritual event. However, these acts certainly have spiritual consequences, even if there were no physical consequences (Acts 15:28-29).
* **Key Point:** When it comes to false teachings, we need to humble ourselves and open our minds to the living Word of God. We also need to repent from sexual immorality.

To the church in Thyatira

* 2:18 – We do not know as much about Thyatira, but we do know that it was the centre of the worship of Apollo.
* 2:20 – The church at Thyatira tolerated the teachings of a woman described here as “Jezebel.” This false teacher spread the view that one could worship both the God of the Bible and other gods; faith was both/and, not either/or.
* 2:24-25 – How can we stand against this teaching of “Jezebel?” We should remember (1) that we ultimately answer to the Son of God (2:18), (2) that Jesus purifies us with his eyes like a flame of fire (2:18), (3) that Jesus is pure and strong (2:18), (4) that Jesus is merciful, just as he was merciful even to Jezebel (2:21), (5) that He gives to us according to our allegiance (2:23), and (6) that He promises to give us authority and Christ Himself (2:26-28).
* **Key Point:** Our allegiance to God is exclusive. It is the underlying authority that governs all our actions.

FtTo the church in Sardis

* 3:1 – Sardis was the largest of all seven churches and was a very active church. It was also one of the wealthiest churches. However, the church was half-hearted and content with mediocrity. Unlike the other churches, it did not face much persecution, which was due to their accommodation for the injustice and immorality of the city.
* 3:2-3: The church was to (1) wake up, (2) strengthen what remained, (3) remember what they have received, (4) hold onto the Holy Spirit, and (5) repent. The nine signs of spiritual vitality are: (1) confession that Jesus is Lord, (2) calling God “Father,” (3) the fruit of the spirit, (4) unity, (5) compassion, (6) growth, (7) emotion, (8) the desire to be holy, and (9) the willingness to die.
* **Key Point:** Spiritual activity does not equate to spiritual life. We need to be passionate about our faith in Christ.

To the church in Philadelphia

* 3:7 – Philadelphia was a city near a volcano. While the soil was fertile, residents frequently left the city, only to return when it was safer.
* 3:7-8 – The open door has many possible meanings. One possible reference is to the door of salvation (Matthew 7:13-14). It could also refer to the door of opportunity (1 Corinthians 16:9, 2 Corinthians 2:12, and Colossians 4:3), meaning opportunity for the spread of the gospel, since Philadelphia was a strategic sending base.
* 3:8 – Philadelphia was the other city (besides Smyrna) that did not receive any criticism from Jesus.
* 3:12 – In light of the frequent leaving from and returning to the city, Jesus tells this church that they will “never… go out of it.” God is unshakeable. Even with their fleeing and returning, God’s faithfulness is solid.
* **Key Point:** God has opened up the door to salvation for us all. How do I respond to this (1) in light of my own brokenness and (2) in light of the brokenness of the world?

To the church in Laodicea

* 3:14 – Laodicea was a self-sufficient city with solvent banks, a famous wool industry, and an excellent medical school that developed a salve for weak eyes. However, it had no water source, unlike its neighbouring cities Hieropolis (hot springs) and Colossae (cool, refreshing water). An aqueduct built from Hieropolis to Laodicea yielded lukewarm water.
* 3:15-16 – While the church in Laodicea appeared to have correct teaching, it had no zeal. Its lack of passion was as nauseating as its lukewarm water. It is the only church out of the seven with criticism but no praise.
* 3:17-18 – The Laodicean church had internalized the Laodicean culture of self-sufficiency, but God’s stern but compassionate words here encouraged them to pursue the true spiritual wealth, attire, and healing that God gives.
* 3:20 – God asks them to let Him into every aspect of their lives, whether it be family, sexuality, money, past, future, dreams, fears, anger, depression, or woundedness.
* **Key Point:** Passionate faith starts with humbling ourselves by removing our self-sufficiency and letting God into every area of our lives.

The Seven Churches

* Seven is the number of completeness and John uses this as a symbol to represent how Jesus addresses all the churches that embody major issues faced by the church despite their period in history.

**Ephesus (2:1-7)**

* Church of the first love, the apostolic Church
* Background - major center for business, politics, worship, trades, the center of the Christian movement. Had notable residents such as Paul, Timothy, John, Mary
* Praise - hard work, strenuous and exhausting labour, diligent and conscientious, perseverance (refusal to participate in idolatrous worship Page 56), kicked out Nicolaitans
* Reproof - left their first love, Jesus! Affection and intimacy had vanished, bride and groom analogy (2 Corinthians 11:2-3)
* Exhortation - 1. Remember: recognize the condition and confess

2. Repent: turn around and refocus on Jesus

3. Re-do: go back to make an effort to fall back in love with Jesus

* Promise - grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of God
* Application - though the church of Ephesus and the city itself was bustling and seemed to be doing the “right things”, they failed to step back and re-evaluate their relationship with God and whether their busy lives lead them back to Christ

**Smyrna (2:8-11)**

* Persecuted church, Diocletian to Constantine
* Background - the loveliest of the seven churches, “first” the crown/flower of Asia,
* Praise - living out faith under thlipsis (crushing pressure; kingdom of God vs kingdom of humans) though they did nothing to receive this pressure as punishment. Christians were ostracised and poor.
* Reproof - reminds Smyrna that Jesus is the first and the last (not much reproof)
* Exhortation - Do not be afraid, be faithful
  + Christians persecuted because they are associated with Christ
  + Quote: “it is the live fish that swim upstream against the current; it is dead fish that comfortably float with the current” :)
  + “Test” - Jesus allows pressure of the world to test us, to prove that he is God and the improve our faith.
  + Jesus has final authority over pressures “10 days” = complete trial
  + Promises of Jesus
* Promise - the “crown of life” (2:10) to those who endures. Those who overcome “shall not be hurt by the second death” (2:11)
* Application - The church of Smyrna did not receive this “crushing pressure” as a form of punishment nor does God promise to lift their burdens but rather to walk with them and to encourage them to continue being faithful

**Pergamum (2:12-17)**

* Church under imperial favour, Constantine
* Background - the church was being attacked by false preaching from the inside and pressures of society from the outside
* Praise -standing firm in the face of bombardment of gospel-contrary ideas from the outside
* Reproof - where Satan has his throne! (temple to Asklepios- serpent god of healing)
  + indifference to influence from within
  + teachings of Balaam and Nicolaitans
  + okay to eat meat sacrificed to idols and sexual immorality
* Exhortation - Kick out those who hold ideas of Balaam and Nicolaitans, abstain from sexual immorality, **do not be fooled by influences from inside the church!**
* Promise - those who overcome, [Jesus] will give some of the hidden manna” (2:17)
  + to the one who overcomes I will give a white stone with a new name written on the stone
* Application - Stay vigilant to false teachings coming even from within the church! Just because a pastor or elder or Sunday school teacher makes a point doesn’t mean you are obligated or should follow verbatim. Always be curious and seek to find the truth for yourself.

**Thyatira (2:18-29)**

* Papal Church, Dark ages
* Background - unusual number of trade guilds. Businesses would have to join these guilds to flourish but guilds associated with idol worship. Therefore, Christians were ostracised.
* Praise - Jesus knows their love and faith and service and perseverance
* Reproof - Trade guilds, Jezebel hiding within the church that taught a theology that **justified compromise** **/** **compartmentalization** (ie: Jezebel of OT- Baal worshipper)
* Promise - to the one who overcomes, I will give authority over the nations. To the one who overcomes, I will give the morning star.
* Application - Our God is a jealous God - he cases after our whole being. He loves us so much that compromising our faith is not an option. What are some of the idols in our own lives that take us away from God?

**Sardis (3:1-6)**

* Reformation Church, protestantism, sixteenth and seventeenth centuries
* Background - shortest of 7 messages. Population of Sardis 60,000- 100,000 and was very wealthy
* Praise
* Reproof - “you are dead” though they seemed the most successful by external measures. **They have lost sight of whom they are working for.** “Content with mediocrity; a perfect model of inoffensive Christianity”
* Exhortation **-**

1. Wake up (3:2-3) - staying vigilant and self-evaluating your faith because we are always “at the edge” of losing authentic spiritual life.

* + 549 BC Cyrus captured Sardis (b/c lack of watchfulness)
  + 218 BC Antiochus the Great captured Sardis “

2. Strengthen what remains - strengthen the forms and structures of the Christian life - committees, ritual, routine, discipline so that they point to Jesus

3. Remember what you received - the Holy Spirit

4. Keep it

5. Repent

* Nine Vital Signs of Spiritual Vitality:

1. Confession that Jesus is Lord
2. Adoption as Children of God
3. Fruit of the Spirit
4. **Unity in Jesus - when we belong to Jesus, we belong to everyone else who belongs to Jesus**
5. Compassion and evangelism
6. Growth of the church
7. Emotion, feeling, passion - natural response to grace and truth that we are moved by the things that move God
8. Desire to be holy
9. Willingness to die - sacrifice of time, money, gifts for the kingdom

* Promise - will not erase your name from the Book of Life if you want to be alive in Christ and not settle for mediocrity
* Application - though the church may be running fellowships, bible studies, and doing all the right things, God is seeking not for these external measures of faith but more importantly, he is seeking for a place in your heart to give purpose to your life.
* What place does Jesus occupy in my life? If Jesus were to take away his Spirit would it make any difference? When was the last time I shared Jesus with another person?

**Philadelphia (3:7-13)**

* Missionary Church, period ushered in by the Puritan movement
* Background - Religious city, “little athens”, founded in 140 BC initially to Hellenize the world, spread Greek language. built near volcanoes - constant need to flee
* Praise - Kept God’s words and have not denied his name
* Reproof - none!
* Exhortation - Look! An **open door!** 
  + open door of salvation “key of David” (Isaiah 20:20-22) - spoke to Jews who had been excommunicated from their synagogues
  + open door of opportunity - presented to a church that had many obstacles and little resources so that God’s glory and power will shine through them.
* Promise - the one who overcomes, I will make a pillar in the temple of my God and he will not go out from it anymore; and I will write upon him the name of my God and….my new name (3:12)
* Application - seize the opportunity of the open door! If you have not walked through the door of salvation, Jesus is waiting for you on the other side! How can we as believers help others walk through this door? Do we have a responsibility to do so?

**Laodicea (3:14-19)**

* Rejected Church, Church of the final apostasy
* Background - had a “need of nothing”; wealthy banks, famous clothing industry with glossy wool and best-dressed people, famous medical school and eye salve = prideful
* Praise - those whom I love, I reprove and discipline (kind of?)
* Reproof - “I stand at the door and knock” -Jesus is on the outside of the church! They are “lukewarm” in their faith - compromise with worldly ways
  + Poor, blind, naked (contrasts with the “wealth” of Laodicea)
* Exhortation - be zealous and repent, let Jesus into the church
* Promise - to the one who overcomes, Jesus will grant the right to sit down with him on the throne
* Application - Evaluate your own life - have you become lukewarm in your faith? We tend to lose sight of Christ when we are not “in need” of anything. Has this happened to you in the past? → Have you allowed Jesus into your house? Into every room and facet of your life?

\*\*\*What about our own church? Where do we stand in the context of the seven churches? What about yourself? Do you recognize any traits from the seven churches that pertain to your own life?\*\*\*