



**Comparisons and Study Questions
for the Seven Churches in Revelation Talks
February 2021**

Comparisons of the Seven Churches

1. Each letter is addressed to the angel of the church.
2. Churches, to be church, must listen. At the end of every letter is the phrase: “He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.”
3. The churches are considered to have the same two hostile forces threatening their congregational life:
 - A) secret and internal power of the Nicolaitan heresy;
 - B) imperial power demanding worship of the emperor.
4. Two of the seven have succumbed to these powers: Sardis and Laodicea.
 - A) Laodicea receives no word of commendation;
 - B) Pergamos and Thyatira are condemned and praised;
 - C) Ephesus is condemned to lose its candlestick.
5. Two letters contain no unfavorable verdict: Smyrna, Philadelphia; but they both have to deal with the “synagogue of Satan.”
6. Sardis and Laodicea both mention white raiment.
7. Ephesus, Pergamum, and Thyatira must handle the false influence of the Nicolaitans.
8. Two are alerted about tribulation – Smyrna in a positive way; Thyatira in a negative way.
9. Philadelphia and Pergamos are promised a “new name” for overcoming.
10. There is a moral urgency about the letters – a call for repentance in five out of the seven letters: Ephesus, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, and Laodicea.
11. Each letter describes what happens to those who overcome.

Overarching Questions

What is the purpose of church according to these seven letters?

Since the number “seven” represents completeness in Scripture, what can we learn from these letters about God’s Church “universal and triumphant” (Mary Baker Eddy, *Manual of The Mother Church*, p. 19)?

What is the Greek meaning of the word *apokalypsis*?

Revelation 1:1 - Who is the author of the book of Revelation?

Why might Patmos deserve the title “Holy Land” as well as Israel?

Who is the audience that John is writing to?

Revelation 1:20 – Why is the menorah (the seven-branched candlestick) an appropriate symbol for church?

Why might there be a moral urgency about the messages in these letters?

What common pattern can be found in each letter?

Study Questions – Ephesus, Revelation 2:1-7

1. What famous temple was built in Ephesus? How might worship of its goddess affect the growth of the early Christian church?
2. Verse 1: Explain the description “he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks”?
3. Verse 2: Who does the church not tolerate in its membership?
4. Verse 6: Who are the Nicolaitans? Why would they be such a threat to the Christian church?
5. Verse 7: What does the “tree of life” symbolize? Why do we want to “eat of it”?

Study Questions – Smyrna, Revelation 2:8-11

1. Who is Polycarp? What is his association with Smyrna?
2. Why is it important to remain committed to knowing who the Founder is?
3. Verse 9: The Founder speaks of poverty to the church at Smyrna, yet he tells them “thou art rich”? Does this seem contradictory? What does the Founder want the church to see about its circumstances?
4. Why might conflict and persecution be “the truest signs that can be given of the greatness of a cause”? (Mary Baker Eddy, *Message to The Mother Church for 1900*, p. 10)
5. Verse 9: Who or what is the “synagogue of Satan”? Why is this a threat to the early Christian church?
6. Verse 10: Why does persecution bring a “crown of life”?
7. What does endurance mean for those who follow the Founder and Leader? We endure to the end of what?
8. Verse 11: What does “not be hurt of the second death” mean for us today?

Study Questions – Pergamos, Revelation 2:12-17

1. Verse 12: What is the “sharp sword with two edges”? Where in the Bible can we find other references to a sword?
2. Verse 13: What problems is Pergamos having in its city? How are the church members surviving under these challenges?
3. Verse 13: What is “Satan’s seat” referring to? How does it contrast with God’s throne as mentioned in Revelation?
4. Describe the cult of Asclepius? What is the god’s symbol?
5. What is the Hippocratic oath? Explain why the medical profession and mythology have never parted ways.
6. Verse 14: Why does the Founder mention “the doctrine of Balaam” in this letter? Explain the Old Testament story of Balaam and Balak.
7. When church members compromise the Founder’s teachings, why is this dangerous to the church’s survival?
8. Verse 16: Why does the Founder warn the church members that he will come quickly and “fight against them with the sword of his mouth”?
9. Verse 17: Explain the “hidden manna,” the “white stone,” and a “new name” which is given to those who overcome.
10. How is the letter to Pergamos relevant today?

Study Questions – Thyatira, Revelation 2:18-29

1. What are the weaknesses of this church?
2. Verse 18: What is the significance of the description of the speaker in this verse?
3. Verse 19: List the commendations this church receives from the Founder. Why are these qualities important in a church membership?
4. Verse 20: What does the church tolerate in its membership? Why is this a danger to its survival?
5. Regarding the church of Thyatira’s lack of staying awake to those who influence erroneously, how is our “Rule for Motives and Acts” (*Manual of The Mother Church*) relevant?
6. Who is Jezebel in the Old Testament? What might she symbolize in church today?
7. Verses 22, 23: Why does the Founder speak such harsh words to the church at Thyatira, referring to what will happen if they do not obey the Founder?
8. What is the only remedy for sin, according to these verses?
9. How do we remain faithful to the Founder when some in the church attempt to influence its members away from the Founder and his teachings?
10. Verse 27: What does it mean to “rule with a rod of iron”?

Study Questions – Sardis, Revelation 3:1-6

1. Verse 1: How can a church live and yet be described by the Founder as dead?
2. What happens to a church if it claims the name “Christian” but does not practice the Founder’s teachings?
3. Verse 2: What is the warning from the Founder?
4. How does the Founder measure the progress of church?
5. Verse 3: What does it mean to “come on thee as a thief”?
6. Verse 4: How does a church member show himself or herself worthy to be a follower of the Lamb?
7. Verses 5, 6: What does it mean to be “clothed in white raiment”?

Study Questions – Philadelphia, Revelation 3:7-13

1. Verse 8: Why does this letter reveal no condemnation from the Founder?
2. What does the Founder mean by setting “before thee an open door, and no man can shut it”?
3. Verse 9: What is the “synagogue of Satan”?
4. Verse 10: How will the Founder keep the members “from the hour of temptation”?
5. What does the Founder mean when he says, “No man take thy crown”?
6. Verses 12, 13: What might the word “pillar” imply to these church members?
7. What might the statement “I will write upon him my new name” mean to these church members?

Study Questions – Laodicea, Revelation 3:14-22

1. Verses 15, 16: What is the major issue with this church?
2. Verse 17: What are the church members blind to?
3. Verse 18: How do church members buy from the Founder “gold tried in the fire”?
4. Verse 18: Why does a rebuke indicate the Founder’s love?
5. Verse 20: Why is the Founder standing at his own church door knocking to enter?
6. Why is “overcoming” part of church’s mission?