

## Resolve: Week 2

**Takeaway:** The power of a pure church

**Read:** Revelation 2-3

*What stood out to you from this passage?*

### Things You Need To Know

- **Ephesus:** A wealthy province where Paul spent considerable time as a church planter (Ephesians was written to the church at Ephesus). This city was a strategic stop for commercial enterprise, no doubt contributing to the wealth of the people of the city. When Emperor Domitian came to power in the 90's AD, he gave the city political and commercial benefits which led to an increase of Emperor worship in the city. It is believed that John settled down in Ephesus in his later years, likely having written his three letters in the New Testament to the church there.
- **Smyrna:** Smyrna was a harbor city, roughly 35 miles north of Ephesus and was referred to by people of the day as "the ornament of Asia." It is estimated that roughly 100,000 people lived in the city. Polycarp, who was a disciple of John, was said to have been martyred in the stadium that was built in Smyrna. As with Ephesus, there was an increase in Emperor worship in the city brought about by the increase in Roman control.
- **Pergamum:** The city was built on the side of a mountain and was known for its altar to Zeus. Scholars believe Pergamum dealt heavily with Greek and Roman mythology and their gods, along with the imperial cult. It also boasted one of the greatest libraries of the day, rivaling the legendary one found in Alexandria.
- **Sardis:** Sardis was one of the most important agricultural cities of the first century. Because of its location and generous funding from Emperors Tiberius and Claudius after an earthquake devastated the city, Sardis became one of the wealthiest cities in the area. It was also home to the



Ionic temple of Artemis where pagan rituals were performed as well as rituals for the imperial cult.

- **Thyatira:** In relation to the previously mentioned cities, Thyatira was on the more minor side of the scale. It was located 35 miles southeast of Pergamum and was known for its textile industry. Purple cloth was the main export from the city which greatly enhanced its economy.
- **Philadelphia:** Philadelphia was in constant threat of earthquakes and was consistently ravaged by the tremors. Not too much is known about this city except for the frequent earthquakes and the flourishing vineyards due to the volcanic soil that was found in the city.
- **Laodicea:** Laodicea was an extremely well-to-do city based off of their being a banking center as well as their robust textile industry. They also had a renowned medical school which brought fame and wealth to the city. John alludes to this wealth in the letter, telling the Laodiceans to strive for spiritual wealth instead of monetary wealth. Another note of emphasis: Laodicea lay in an area where water had to be delivered by aqueducts in the ground from the surrounding water sources (hot springs on one side and mountainous sources on the other.) When John says that they are neither hot nor cold, but lukewarm, he is not referring to their spiritual temperature but their usefulness. Hot and cold water both had significant uses but lukewarm water, much like today, is bland and boring and not of much use. John's encouragement to be hot or cold is a call to be useful for Jesus and the gospel.

### Questions:

What is your takeaway or what did the Lord impress upon you as you read the words to each church? How does each encouragement or rebuke lead to a purer church?

*Ephesus (2:1-7)*





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

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

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

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

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

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***Laodicea (3:14-22)***

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