

The Seven Churches – Revelation Chapters 2 & 3

Bible Study Notes on The Letters to the Seven Churches

Index, Introductory Notes & Overview

Index to Bible Study on the Letters to the Seven Churches

Page(s)

2	Introductory Notes to Revelation Supplementary Notes:	4. The Sevens in Revelation'
3 - 4	Overview of Revelation Chapters 2 & 3 Supplementary Notes:	5. New Testament Churches 6. Chart – The Letters to the Seven Churches – Structure
Summary		7. Parallels between the Letters to the Seven Churches and the Kingdom
Parables		8. Parallels between the Letters to the Seven Churches and Paul's Church
Epistles		9. It Is The Last Hour – A Significant Sign – Apostasy ...a Message by Brian
Gemmell		
5 – 13	Letter to the Church at Ephesus Supplementary Notes:	10. Ephesus Maps
14 - 22	Letter to the Church at Smyrna Supplementary Notes:	11. Smyrna Maps 12. Polycarp's Prayer 13. The Flight to Pella
23 - 32	Letter to the Church at Pergamos Supplementary Notes:	14. History of Rome 15. Pergamos Maps
33 – 42	Letter to the Church at Thyatira Supplementary Notes:	16. Thyatira Maps 17. The Pagan Chronicles by James Herschel
Lyda		18. History of the Papacy
43 – 54	Letter to the Church at Sardis Supplementary Notes:	19. Sardis Maps 20. The Once & Future Church – Home
Fellowships		21. The Reformation – A Review

55 – 65 Letter to the Church at Philadelphia

Supplementary Notes: 22. Philadelphia Maps
23. Crowns

66 – 75 Letter to the Church at Laodicea

Supplementary Notes: 24. Laodicea and Hierapolis Maps
25. Inscription from a German Cathedral

Revelation – Introductory Notes to the Book

Revelation is the only book to say ‘read me, I’m special’ – in *Revelation 1: 3* it pronounces a blessing on its readers (and hearers...and those who keep the words of the prophecy)

‘Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; for the time is near.’ **Revelation 1: 3**

A book often overlooked: Said to be too difficult to understand

Said to be too controversial (many viewpoints)

Highlights any lack of OT insight because of its numerous OT references

Its title is singular, not plural – a singular revelation

The Greek name is *apokalupsis* which means to reveal, unveil or uncover

Revelation is in code – but the codes are explained elsewhere in scripture, either in Revelation itself or in the OT or NT – it leads us on a treasure hunt in the Word of God

The book’s Author is Jesus through John (the disciple)

Revelation was written either on Patmos 95AD, where John was imprisoned or in Ephesus soon after John’s release

Sevenfold Structure

7 Churches	<i>Chapters 2 & 3</i>	
7 Sealed Scroll	<i>Chapters 5-6 & 8:1</i>	6 then parenthesis (<i>Ch 7</i>)
7 Trumpets	<i>Chapters 8-9</i>	6 then parenthesis (<i>Ch 10 - Ch14</i>)
7 Bowls of Wrath	<i>Chapters 15-16</i>	6 then parenthesis (<i>16: 15</i>)
7 Beatitudes (Blessings)		
...and many others (see list)		

See Separate Note 4 ‘The Sevens in Revelation’

John is ‘In The Spirit’ in Revelation

On the day of the Lord (at Patmos) (*1: 10*) – transported to ‘the Day of the Lord’

In the Throne Room of Heaven (*4: 2*)

Carried away into the Wilderness (*17: 3*)

Carried to a Great and High Mountain (*21: 10*)

The Outline of the Book is given in *chapter 1, verse 19*

‘Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after this.’ **Revelation 1: 19**

The things which you have seen

Revelation 1: 12-18

The Vision of the Glorified Risen Christ

The things which are *Chapters 2 & 3*
The seven churches – which existed then and which set out ‘the church age’

The things which shall be hereafter (*meta tauta*) *Chapters 4 to 22*
Those end time events which come after the Rapture (Tribulation & Millennial)

Revelation Chapters 2 & 3 - Overview

The Things Which Are – The Seven Churches

In a sense this is the most important part of the book for us, today because it concerns the things which are, today

Chapters 2 & 3 deal with the church today...the things which are

Key to Chapters 2 & 3 is in chapter 1 verse 20

‘The mystery of the seven stars which you saw in My right hand, and the seven golden lampstands: The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands which you saw are the seven churches.’ **Revelation 1: 20**

Seven stars - the angels (messengers) of the seven churches

Seven lampstands – the seven churches – ‘lampstands’ because the churches are light bearers

In this chapter the lampstands are on the earth...in chapters 4 and 5 there are 7 lamps before the throne of God in heaven (i.e. the churches are in heaven...after the rapture (see 5: 9-10)

Seven Churches

Why these seven?

There were, of course, far more than 7 churches in NT times

See Separate Note 5 ‘New Testament Churches’

Each letter contains a common closing phrase:

“He that hath an ear let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches”

Each church was able to see what was written to all the churches

Levels of Application

1. Local
 - a. Relevant to the church addressed (evidenced by Sir William M Ramsay’s archaeological discoveries)
 - b. Each church was surprised by its ‘report’ *
2. Admonitory to all churches
 - a. The letters are report cards
 - b. Can profile churches in terms of these 7
3. Homiletic (Personal)
 - a. He that hath an ear...let him hear (in each letter)
 - b. We can all learn personal lessons of significance to us today
4. Prophetic
 - a. These letters map out church history - if the letters were in any other order, this would not be true

b. Each church has not only a history but a future, reflected in the letters

* Lesson: The church does not have the ability to properly assess itself - it is only Christ's opinion of the church which matters (this applies personally too)

The Letters - Seven Design Elements

1. Name of the Church – meaningful - tells us something about the nature of the church
2. Title of Christ Chosen – relevant to the church...a title from chapter 1
3. Commendation – report card...things for which the church is praised
4. Concern – report card...things for which the church is criticised
5. Exhortation – remedial work required...the church is given instruction by the Lord
6. Promise to the Overcomer - reward...different promises to the individual who overcomes
7. Common Phrase – common to all letters

Some interesting variations

Some churches have no commendation and some no concerns

The Common Phrase

Is in the body of the first 3 letters

Is the closing phrase in the last 4 letters

“He that hath an ear let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches”

occurs 7 other times elsewhere in scripture

The Promise to the Overcomer

Is a postscript in the first 3 letters

Is in the body of the last 4 letters

Hence – there is an interesting hint of a difference between the first 3 churches and the last 4 churches

In the last 4 letters there is a specific reference to Christ's second coming

See Supplementary Notes:

6 'Chart – The Letters to the Seven Churches – Structure Summary'

7 'Parallels between the Letters to the Seven Churches and the Kingdom Parables'

8 'Parallels between the Letters to the Seven Churches and Paul's Church Epistles'

The book of Acts charts church history only up to around 100AD...it is the letters to the seven churches in Revelation which prophetically lay out the next 2,000 years of the church

SEVEN CHURCHES MAP



We live in the age of the Laodicean Church

See: *Supplementary Note 9 'It Is The Last Hour – A Significant Sign – Apostasy ...a Message by Brian*

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