

Lesson 17

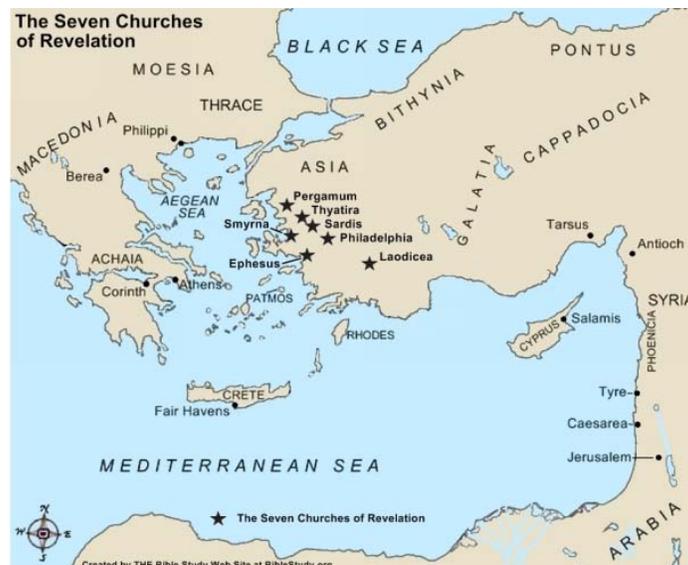
Prologue and letters to Seven Churches: Chapters 1-3

STUDY GUIDE

1. The first vision of the book of Revelation is given in 1:9-3:22. What is it about (see 1:11, 1:20, 2:1, 2:8, etc.)? Locate the churches on a Bible map. Can you see from the map why the churches are given in the order that they are? Do you see any prominent church (town) in the same area that is not included in the list?
2. 1:10-20 is the introductory part of the vision. Read these verses. How do the seven churches appear here? What is the meaning of this symbol? Do you think that the fact that there were seven churches is symbolic? Did you see anything in the study of question #1, which might indicate that it is a symbol?
3. What is seen in the midst of the churches in this introductory vision? Who is it? What proves this? List the various symbolic descriptions (as white hair) and besides each, indicate what you consider to be the meaning of the symbol.
4. In Chapters 2 and 3, are given the messages for the churches. Each of these letters follows a certain pattern. Read through the four letters of Chapter 2 to get this pattern. What five points are covered in each letter? For example, how does each letter begin? How does each one close?
5. Now study each of these letters (Chapters 2-3) and put down in parallel columns (somewhat like the Daniel chart) what is said to each church on these five points. Are any of the churches without a word at any point?

NOTES

The first vision in 1:9-3:22 is a letter to the seven churches: Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea. As we look at the churches on a map, we see the churches are all in the same area with the order in which they are given forming a type of arrow going up one side and down the other. We note that the church of Colossae is close by, but is not included in the list.



In the vision revealed to John, the churches are symbolized as seven golden lampstands. The function of a lampstand is to hold the light, which is the function of the church to bear the light of Christ. Gold suggests purity or preciousness. The number seven is a number of perfection. The seven numbers are representative churches and as a whole ideally complete, embody the chief spiritual characteristics of the church. The selected churches are not taken at random, but show all sides of problems and victories of ministry.

In the midst of the lampstands is Jesus, described very much the same way that Daniel described Him in the seventh chapter of his writing. His clothing (long garment down to the feet) illustrates His royalty, His hair (white as snow) illustrating age and wisdom, and His eyes (flaming fire) are piercing, seeing all and knowing all. His feet (burnished brass) are shown here as being bare as were the priest when they ministered in the tabernacle, His voice (as of many waters) speaks with great authority as rivers, which control the land over which they flow. He is holding seven stars in His right hand, which we would think is an illustration again of the seven churches. Perhaps the stars are the angels or messengers to these churches. From His mouth is a sharp two-edged sword, which is the Word of God and His face shined like the sun in its strength, which really speaks for itself.

The letters to the churches all contain a pattern:

1. He says something about Himself - addressed to the angel of the church, connecting link between Christ and the church.
2. Jesus knows your works and He starts by perceiving something good. He appreciates a work or works and lets them know (commendation and encouragement)
 - a) your works
 - b) your tribulation and suffering
 - c) your poverty
 - d) your patience
 - e) your commitment to pure doctrine
3. He then lets them know of a problem He would like to see corrected. "But" I have this against thee...
 - a) false doctrine, teaching, teachers
 - b) lukewarmness
 - c) turning away from their first love for Him
4. He warns them to repent or the lampstand will be removed.
5. He tells them to remember their first works of love and to walk again in these ways
6. He tells them to hear or act upon what He is saying. Have eyes to see and ears to hear.
7. He tells them to overcome - His promise
 - a) a pillar in the church of God
 - b) eat of the tree of life
 - c) to sit on a throne as He sits.
 - d) shall not be hurt in the second death.
 - e) a white stone on which a new name will be written
 - f) authority over the names and the morning star
 - g) Your name in the book of life and be arrayed in white

The church addressed	Who addresses it	"I know"	Admonitions	To the overcomer
Ephesus	He that holds the 7 stars and walks in the midst of the 7 candlesticks	Your works, your toil, your patience, you cannot bear evil men	You have left your first love. Repent and do the first works	I will give to eat of the tree of life.
Smyrna	The first and the last, who was dead and who is alive again.	Your tribulation, your poverty, the blasphemy of so-called Jews who follow Satan	Fear not suffering and tribulations. Be faithful unto death and I will give a crown of life.	You shall not be hurt in the second death.
Pergamum	He that has the sharp two-edged sword	You dwell where Satan's throne is, you hold fast my name, did not deny the faith	You hold the teaching of Balaam and cast a stumbling block. Repent!	I will give of hidden manna, I will give you a white stone on which a new name is written.
Thyatira	He has eyes like a flame of fire and feet like burnished brass.	Your works, your love, faith, ministry and patience.	You have been seduced by "Jezebel", do not have these deep things of Satan!	I will give authority over nations and the morning star.
Sardis	He has the 7 spirits of God and the 7 stars	Your works, you have a name that you love but are dead	Remember what you have received and repent	You shall be arrayed in white and shall have your name in the book of life.
Philadelphia	He that is holy, He that is true, and He that has the key of David	Your works, you have little power, have kept my Word and did not deny my name.	I will keep you in the hour of trial, hold fast what you have. I come quickly.	I will make you a pillar in the temple of God. I will write upon you the name of God and the new Jerusalem.
Laodicea	The Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God.	Your works, that are neither hot nor cold, you say "I am rich... need nothing".	You are poor, wretched, naked and blind. Buy gold of me, and white garments and eye salve. Be zealous and repent.	I will give to you to sit down with me in my throne, as I have in my father's.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
EPHESUS	YES	TOIL, PERSEVERANCE, DOES NOT TOLERATE EVIL, TESTING FALSE APOSTLE, ENDURANCE, HAVE NOT GROWN WEAR Y	LEFT YOUR FIRST LOVE, DO THE DEEDS YOU DID AT FIRST	YES	YES	YES	YES
SMYRNA	YES	THEY HAVE ENDURED TRIBULATION AND THERE IS GREAT POVERTY, THEY HAVE REBORN! FALSE TEACHING	NO	NO	YES	YES	YES
PERGAMUM	YES	STANDING FIRM FAITHFUL	~ HOLD TEACHING OF NICOLOITANS, SOME HOLD THE TEACHING OF BALAAM, TEACHING, BALAK, EATING SACRIFICED FOODS CAUSING OTHERS TO STUMBLE, COMMITTING ACTS OF IMMORALITY	YES	YES	YES	YES
THYATIRA	YES	LOVE, FAITH, SIERVILE, PERSEVERANCE, DEEDS OF LATS ARE GREATER THAN AT FERST	TOLERATES JEZEBEL, ACTS OF IMMORALITY, EATS FOODS OFFERED TO IDOLS	YES	YES	YES	YES
SARDIS	YES	ONLY A FEW HAVE NOT SOILED THEIR GARMENTS	YOU'RE DEAD	YES	YES	YES	YES
PHILADELPHIA	YES	YOU HAVE A LITTLE POWER, HAVE KEPT MY WORD, HAVE NOT DENIED MY NAME PERSEVERANCE	NO	NO	YES	YES	YES
LAODICEA	NO	NO	YOU ARE NEITHER HOT NOR COLD, I SPIT YOU OUT OF MY MOUTH	YES	YES	YES	YES