

Revelation 1:12-16 “Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking to me, and on turning I saw seven golden lampstands, and in the midst of the lampstands one like a son of man, clothed with a long robe and with a golden sash around his chest. The hairs of his head were white, like white wool, like snow. His eyes were like a flame of fire, his feet were like burnished bronze, refined in a furnace, and his voice was like the roar of many waters. In his right hand he held seven stars, from his mouth came a sharp two-edged sword, and his face was like the sun shining in full strength.”

We start with the revelation of Jesus. John sees the one who is speaking and realizes this is not gentle Jesus.

Revelation 1:11 “Write what you see in a book and send it to the seven churches, to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamum and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea.”

Letter Structure:

- Description of Christ
- What He knows
- Diagnosis
- Prescription
- Promise

The analysis is not generic but precise, taking into account the:

- Economy
 - History
 - Pressures
 - Geography
- ▶ The word used here for churches is *Ekklesia*—“called out ones, a gathering of people summoned for a common purpose.” These are not buildings but communities of people.
 - ▶ The lampstand is important. It represents the churches. It is not the source of the light, it is simply the carrier. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.
 - ▶ Seven from a biblical standpoint represents completeness, 7 feasts, 7 days of creation, 7 lights in the lampstand, 7 seals, 7 trumpets and 7 bowls. These 7 churches are a complete portrait of the 7 conditions churches in general will face.





I. Ephesus

Revelation 2:1 "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.

Ephesus

- Housed the temple of Artimus
- Also served as a bank, asylum, religion and economy
- The theater where Paul preached stands today

Gateway city

- The largest in the province 200-250k
- Around the economy the silver industry employed many manufacturing figurines of the false god.

Revelation 2:2-3 "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. I know you are enduring patiently and bearing up for my name's sake, and you have not grown weary."

- Doctrinal precision
- Endurance
- Discernment
- Hard work

Revelation 2:4 “Nevertheless I have this against you, you have left your first love.”

- Their theology was right but their love had left.
- The remedy? Remember, repent, return.
- The consequence? The removal of their lampstand.

The loss of love usually starts with compromise:

1. Practice
2. Justify
3. Teach

They are promised the tree of life. The same tree of the original garden of Eden.

Revelation 22:2 “On either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.”

II. **Smyrna**

Revelation 2:8 “And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write: “The words of the first and the last, who died and came to life.”

Smyrna

Now we travel north 35 miles to Smyrna, modern day Izmir.

Price of Conviction

To be involved economically in these pagan cities one needed to belong to a guild. To belong to the guild required pagan rituals. Refuse the guild and you lose your trade, lose your trade and you lose your income. By following their conviction Jesus calls them RICH!

Revelation 2:10 “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.”



Revelation 20:14-15 “Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.”

III. Pergamum

Revelation 2:12 “And to the angel of the church in Pergamum write: ‘The words of him who has the sharp two-edged sword.’”

Pergamum

- Now we turn inland and climb about 40 miles to Pergamum.
- The church is being devoured by internal compromise. Repent or I come with the sword of my mouth.
- The promise, hidden manna and a white stone with a name no one knows but you, both are personal and private.

IV. Thyatira

Revelation 2:18 “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.’”

Thyatira

- We now turn inward and SE to Thyatira. This is the least prominent of the churches.
- Jesus introduces Himself as one whose eyes are like flames of fire and feet as burnished brass. But there is a cancer in the congregation—Jezebel. Likely a symbolic name that reflects king Ahab's wife.

Revelation 2:20-29 “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. I gave her time to repent, but she refuses to repent of her sexual immorality. 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, and I will strike her children dead. 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. Only hold fast what you have until I come. The one who conquers and who keeps my works until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations, 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. And I will give him the morning star. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.’”

The promise to them is Himself, the bright and morning star — **Revelation 22:16** “I, Jesus, have sent my angel to testify to you about these things for the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star.”

V. Sardis

Revelation 3:1 “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.’”

We continue SE about 30 miles to Sardis and the tone shifts. On the surface everything seems fine but underneath is only death.

Revelation 3:2-3 “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. 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.”

They have a name that they are alive but are actually dead. The promise to the faithful in Sardis is that their names are secure. In a city obsessed with having a reputation of a good name the only name that matters is your name in the book of life.

VI. Philadelphia

Revelation 3:7 “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.’”

Continuing 28 miles SE we come to Philadelphia, which means “brotherly love.” Jesus introduces Himself as holding the key of David. What He opens no one can shut and what He shuts no one can open.

Philadelphia receives no criticism. The two churches with the least worldly power and possessions and the most external pressure are the ones that receive no criticism. This is not a coincidence, it’s a pattern. Wealth and safety often breed complacency. Weakness and pressure produce faithfulness.



The promise is **Revelation 3:12** — “The one who conquers, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God.”

VII. **Laodicea**

Revelation 3:14 “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.’”

- The road ends here, about 45 miles SE. Geography made it a commercial crossroads.
- The defining characteristic is self sufficiency.

Revelation 3:15-18 “I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were either cold or hot! So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth. For you say, “I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing,” not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked. 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.”

Knowledge without transformation is just another form of wealth that produces nothing.

Revelation 3:19-20 “Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent. 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.”

And then comes the promise:

Revelation 3:21 “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.”



- 7 cities, 7 letters, 7 lampstands, and 1 Messiah walking amongst them.
- The seven promises together are the whole story, from **Genesis** to **Revelation**.
- Overcoming here is not a solo operation. He overcame therefore we can overcome.

When the book opens John is shown Jesus in many ways and is evident to the individual church's forming a full description of the ultimate High Priest.

1. He holds the 7 stars for Ephesus
2. He is the first and the last for Smyrna
3. He is a sharp two-edge sword for Pergamum
4. He has eyes of fire and bronze feet for Thyatira
5. He holds the 7 spirits for Sardis
6. He is the Key of David for Philadelphia, and
7. He is the faithful and true witness for Laodicea.

1. The Church losing their love is reassured He holds them in his hand.
2. The Church facing death is reminded He conquered death.
3. The Church battling compromise is exhorted to lean on the Word of Truth.
4. The Church inundated with false teaching is confronted with eyes that burn through lies.
5. The Church that is spiritually asleep needs the fullness of the Spirit.
6. The Church that is small and weak has The One who opens doors no one can shut.
7. The Church who thinks they are self-sufficient needs the Christ who is the final Word and only Truth.

- Two churches receive **no criticism**: Smyrna and Philadelphia.
- Two receive **no commendation**: Sardis and Laodicea.
- The remaining 3 receive both.

The churches with the most difficult circumstances have the cleanest internal condition. The ones with the most comfort and wealth receive the hardest diagnosis. It is a timeless warning, comfort is more dangerous to the soul than persecution.

The seven letters to seven churches are God's communication to His bride of His judgement and compassion. His correction demonstrated in love for restoration.

