

| | A.D. | 30 | 35 | 40 | 45 | 50 | 55 | 60 | 65 | 70 | 75 | 80 | 90 | 95 |
|--|------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| John becomes disciple of Jesus (A.D. 28/30) | | █ | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Death, resurrection of Jesus (33 [or 30])† | | █ | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Nero's reign (54–68) | | | | | | █ | █ | █ | █ | █ | | | | |
| Destruction of Jerusalem temple (70) | | | | | | | | | | ● | | | | |
| Domitian's reign (81–96) | | | | | | | | | | | | | █ | █ |
| Gospel according to John written (89–95*) | | | | | | | | | | | | | █ | █ |
| John, in exile on Patmos, writes Revelation (95–96*) | | | | | | | | | | | | | | █ |

* denotes approximate date; / signifies either/or; † see *The Date of Jesus' Crucifixion*, pp. 1809–1810

Basic structure of Revelation: (1:19)

“the things you have seen” 1:12-16

“The things that are” 2:1 – 3:22

“The things that are to take place after this” 4:1 – 22:5

Structure in literary terms:

Revelation is composed of a **prologue** (1:1–8), a **body** (1:9–22:5), and an **epilogue** (22:6–21). The prologue and epilogue are linked by repeated themes: an angel sent to show God's servants what must soon take place (1:1; 22:6, 16), blessings on those who keep the prophecy (1:3; 22:7, 9), John's self-identification (1:1, 4; 22:8), and the designation of God as Alpha and Omega (1:8; 22:13). The body contains four enumerated series of seven messages or visions: letters to churches (chs. 2–3), seals on a scroll (4:1–8:1), trumpets (8:2–11:19), and bowls of wrath (chs. 15–16). (For further discussion of structure see Poythress 57-66.)

Structure in terms of thematic content:

“**Progressive Parallelism**” – The structure of Revelation is not a linear timeline of future events. Instead, the book contains seven cycles of judgment, each leading up to the Second Coming, which is described in greater details as we move through the book. The seven cycles parallel each other and cover essentially the same period but each from its own distinct vantage point.

In Revelation, **recapitulation** means that the order in which John received visions does not necessarily indicate the order of the events they symbolize.

A Summary of the focus of the different cycles: (Poythress page 61)

Seven Seals (4:1-8:1) – Commission of covenant judgment in heaven

Seven Trumpets (8:2-11:19) – Effects on the earth

Seven Symbolic Histories (12:1-14:20) – Depth of conflict

Seven Bowls (15:1 – 16:21) – Effects on earth, further intensity

Seven Messages of Judgment on Babylon (17:1-19:10) – Elimination of the seductress

White Horse Judgment (19:11-21) – Elimination of the power source (beast and false prophet)

White Throne Judgment (20:1-21:8) – Elimination of all evil

Christ's Edict-letters to His Seven Churches

p.8

The seven churches are addressed in the order of how a circular letter would be carried to them. The number seven stands for completeness, and so the seven represent all the churches of that time and ours. "Christ shows care for the churches by addressing each one according to its needs, with encouragement, rebuke, exhortation, and promise."

Structure of messages: Address ("To . . ."), Identification (Alluding back to 1:12-20), Claim of knowledge ("I know"), Evaluation, Promise or Threat, Promise to him who overcomes, Call to hear.

| Church | Reference | Description of Christ | Commendation | Rebuke | Solution | Consequence of Disobedience | Promise for Conquerors |
|--------------|----------------|--|---|--|--|---|---|
| Ephesus | <u>2:1-7</u> | holds the seven stars in his right hand; walks among the seven golden lampstands | doctrinal vigilance and endurance | loss of first love | remember, repent, and do the works done at first | removal of their lampstand | will be given the tree of life in paradise to eat |
| Smyrna | <u>2:8-11</u> | the first and the last, who died and came to life | spiritually rich, enduring persecution | — | be faithful unto death | — | will be given the crown of life and will not be hurt by the second death |
| Pergamum | <u>2:12-17</u> | has the sharp two-edged sword | holding fast Christ's name, not denying their faith | false teaching | repent | war against them with the sword of Christ's mouth | will be given hidden manna and a white stone with a new name on it |
| Thyatira | <u>2:18-29</u> | has eyes like a flame of fire, feet like burnished bronze | growing love, evidenced in deeds of service | lack of discernment; toleration of heresy | hold fast and keep Christ's works till the end | each given as their works deserve | will be given the morning star and authority over the nations |
| Sardis | <u>3:1-6</u> | has the seven spirits of God and the seven stars | a few remain pure and loyal | dead works | keep the Word and repent | Christ will come like a thief | will be clothed in white garments; name never blotted out of the book of life; name confessed before God and angels |
| Philadelphia | <u>3:7-13</u> | the holy one, the true one, who has the keys of David | patiently enduring, keeping God's word and not denying his name | — | hold fast what you have | — | will be made a pillar in the temple of God, inscribed with the names of God, the new Jerusalem, and Christ |
| Laodicea | <u>3:14-22</u> | the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of God's creation | — | spiritually blind, bankrupt, naked, lukewarm | buy gold, white garments, and salve from Christ; be zealous and repent | will be spit out of Christ's mouth | will dine with Christ; will be granted to sit with Christ on his throne |

Note that the fact that Jesus addresses local churches indicates how absolutely vital it is for believers to be committed and actively involved in a local, visible expression of the body of Christ. Note also that Jesus gives both encouragement and rebuke. He is loving but thorough in his wisely balanced dealings with his people!

Ephesus – A large port city; crossroads for trade and famous for its shrine to Diana/Artemis. Paul ministered there in his longest resident pastorate (Acts 18-20). John was there after Paul and may have been regarded as bishop of Ephesus for a time. A heretical group there was called the “Nicolaitans.”

Application:

Smyrna -- Second greatest city of the region; known for the beauty of its setting on a hill and wonderful buildings. It had a strong Emperor cult; Rome itself was considered as a “goddess.” Many Jews lived there, loyal to Rome but not sympathetic to Christians. In AD 155 Polycarp, who was John’s direct disciple, was martyred there.

Application:

Pergamum – The Roman governmental capital for the region. If Ephesus was like New York City, Pergamum was Washington, DC. Political power and the affairs of the state were central and emperor worship was strong. Antipas was apparently a famous Christian martyr there, who is not mentioned elsewhere.

Application:

Thyatira – Located in a valley without natural defenses. A manufacturing center for weavers, tanners, metal-workers, potters. Lydia (Acts 16:14) was from here. It had many trade guilds, like unions, which took on quasi-religious functions somewhat like Masonic orders. It had a deviant group led by “Jezebel.”

Application:

Sardis – A fortress-like city on a steep hill that seemed impregnable to any attack. Its reputation for strength of its geography and outer walls did not carry over to the spiritual condition of the church, which was all reputation but little substance.

Application:

Philadelphia – Not too much is known about the city or how the church began there, but real strength of faith in Christ seems evident.

Application:

Laodecia – An area with warm springs for mineral baths of Hierapolis. A commercial center for woolen goods, banking and the medical arts. Many there were very wealthy and arrogant about their secure lifestyle.

Application: