

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

An open scroll with Hebrew text, likely the Book of Revelation, is the central focus. The scroll is unrolled, showing two pages of dense, handwritten text in a cursive script. The background is a dramatic, fiery landscape with a bright orange and yellow glow, suggesting a sunset or sunrise over a rugged, rocky terrain. The overall atmosphere is one of divine revelation and spiritual significance.



**THE SEVEN CHURCHES OF
THE BOOK OF REVELATION
Rev. 2-3**

The Seven Churches

Four levels of meaning

- Local
- Personal
- Message to all Churches
- Prophetic – 7 church ages

Rev 1:3

“.....the words of this prophecy”

The Seven Churches

- Each letter adopts the same basic structure and outline.
- There is some feature of the glorified Christ (whom John saw in chapter 1) that is emphasized in addressing each church.
- A particular characteristic is emphasized that is fitting to the particular church.

The Seven Churches

- After the introduction Jesus begins each letter by stating: “*I know thy works.....*,”
- He first gives a word of commendation and encouragement,
- Followed by a word of condemnation and rebuke.

The Seven Churches

- Exceptions that should be noted:
- There is no word of rebuke to Smyrna or Philadelphia.
 - Smyrna was the martyr church that was faithful unto death,
 - Philadelphia was the faithful 'missionary' church that was preaching the Word.
- There is nothing good said about the church at Sardis (the dead church) or Laodicea (the apostate church).

The Seven Churches

- Each letter ends with:
- 1) a call to understand and
- *“He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith....”*
 - This phrase is only used in scripture in connection with a believer
 - Only a Holy Spirit filled believer is able to understand the things of God - 1 Cor 2:9-16
- 2) a promise to the overcomers.

An open scroll with Hebrew text, illuminated by a warm light, set against a dark, textured background. The scroll is unrolled, showing two pages of text. The lighting is dramatic, with the scroll glowing in the center and the background in deep shadow. The text on the scroll is in Hebrew, and the overall scene suggests a historical or biblical context.

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Chapter 2

Letters to Ephesus



Ephesus



- ‘The loveless church’
- Yet ironically the name Ephesus means ‘darling / desired’ as it has to connotation of the love of espousal

Ephesus

- Ephesus was founded about 2000 B.C. by the Hittites (around the time of Abraham)
- It became the capital of Asia Minor
- Population: c. 200,000
- It was both the religious and commercial center of that entire area which influenced both East and West—Asia and Europe
- It was the gateway from Rome to Asia and the East.

Ephesus

- It was a major seaport and trade route.
- The road to the harbor was wide and lined with impressive marble columns with shops and trading stalls.



Ephesus

- It was a place of resorts, where Roman emperors came for rest and relaxation
- The city was constructed almost entirely of white marble, a beautiful place.

Ephesus

- Just away from the harbor there was a huge outdoor theater that could seat about twenty thousand people.



Ephesus



Ephesus

- In the centre was the temple to Diana, one of the wonders of the ancient world!
- 4x Larger than the Parthenon in Athens



Ephesus

- In the midst of this pagan excess come the Gospel of Jesus Christ!
- Paul came to Ephesus on his third missionary journey to begin a ministry.
- For two years the Word of God went out from the school of Tyrannus.
- Of this experience Paul wrote, *“For a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries”* (1 Cor. 16:9).

1 Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks;

Revelation 2:1

- “To the pastor of the church of Ephesus – the love of espousal;
- These things says Jesus who holds the pastors in his right hand

Pastors

- Jesus has given pastors to serve the church
Eph 4:11
- They are not to be 'Lords' *Gr. katakurieuo'*
lit, to exercise dominion – 1 Peter 5:3
- They are to be *Gr. 'poimen'* lit. shepherds
that tend & feed His sheep – John 21:15-17
- Pastors & teaches will receive a stricter
judgment because of the influence they
have over His people James 3:1

Pastors

¹ Woe be unto the pastors that destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture! saith the LORD

Jeremiah 23:1

Pastors

²¹ For the pastors are become brutish, and have not sought the LORD: therefore they shall not prosper, and all their flocks shall be scattered.

Jeremiah 10:21

Pastors

¹⁵ And I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding.

Jeremiah 3:15

1 Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars **in his right hand,** who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks;

Revelation 2:1

- *“Christ holds the seven messengers of these churches in His right hand, a place of sovereign protection as well as divine authority over them”* – John Walvoord

¹ Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks;

Revelation 2:1

- Christ is walking in the midst of the churches,
 - To encourage the downhearted
 - To lift the fallen
 - To rebuke the proud
 - To prune and cultivate
- Remember it is His Church – He paid for it!

2 I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars:

Revelation 2:2

- Evidently, individuals had creped in who were trying to bring in their own teaching.
- The Ephesian church had withstood this spiritual attack (labouring to the point of exhaustion)
 - Probably partly due to the encouragement of Paul

Paul's Warning

- 29 For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock.
- 30 Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.

Acts 20:29-30

Things Jesus Commends

- #1 Work, labour, patience
- #2 Not bearing with those who are evil
- #3 Trying those who make a false profession
 - We are to be fruit inspectors – Matt 7:16-20
 - We are to judge those inside the church regarding their outward conduct – 1 Cor 5:12
 - We are not to tolerate disruptive, abusive individuals or worldly believers
- At Ephesus there was a desire to protect the body from infection!

3 And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted.

Revelation 2:3

Things Jesus Commends

- #1 Work, labour, patience
- #2 Not bearing with those who are evil
- #3 Trying those who make a false profession
- #4 Having patience in the face of persecution

4 Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.

Revelation 2:4

- The church so intent on getting it right had got it wrong!
- This is the difference between *knowing* and *doing*!
- Martha tried hard to serve; Mary did
- Jesus must be before our ministry.
- All that we do should come out of our relationship with Him

Jesus First

*“Be careful about one thing only,” says our Lord—
“your relationship to Me.” Common sense shouts
loud and says—“That is absurd, I must consider how
I am going to live, I must consider what I am going to
eat and drink.” Jesus says you must not. Beware of
allowing the thought that this statement is made by
One Who does not understand our particular
circumstances. Jesus Christ knows our
circumstances better than we do, and He says we
must not think about these things so as to make them
the one concern of our life. Whenever there is
competition, be sure that you put your relationship to
God first”* - Oswald Chambers,

Jesus First

“If we undertake work for God and get out of touch with Him, the sense of responsibility will be overwhelmingly crushing; but if we roll back on God that which He has put upon us, He takes away the sense of responsibility by bringing in the realisation of Himself”

- Oswald Chambers

5 Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.

Revelation 2:5

- Think back to the beginning!
 - If Jesus were removed from you life this coming week, how different would it be?
- Turn around and fall in love with Jesus all over again!

Things Jesus Hates

- #1 Something becoming more important to us than Himself

6 But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.

Revelation 2:6

- Jesus hates this!
- Imagine what it would be like if you found that somebody was trying to come between you and your husband/wife.
- The Ephesians hated it and so did Jesus.
 - NB: In this letter we see the *deeds* of the Nicolaitans, by the time we reach Pergamos it has become the *doctrine* of the Nicolaitans.

Things Jesus Hates

- #1 Something becoming more important to us than Himself
- #2 Those who exult themselves above the congregation

7 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.

Revelation 2:7

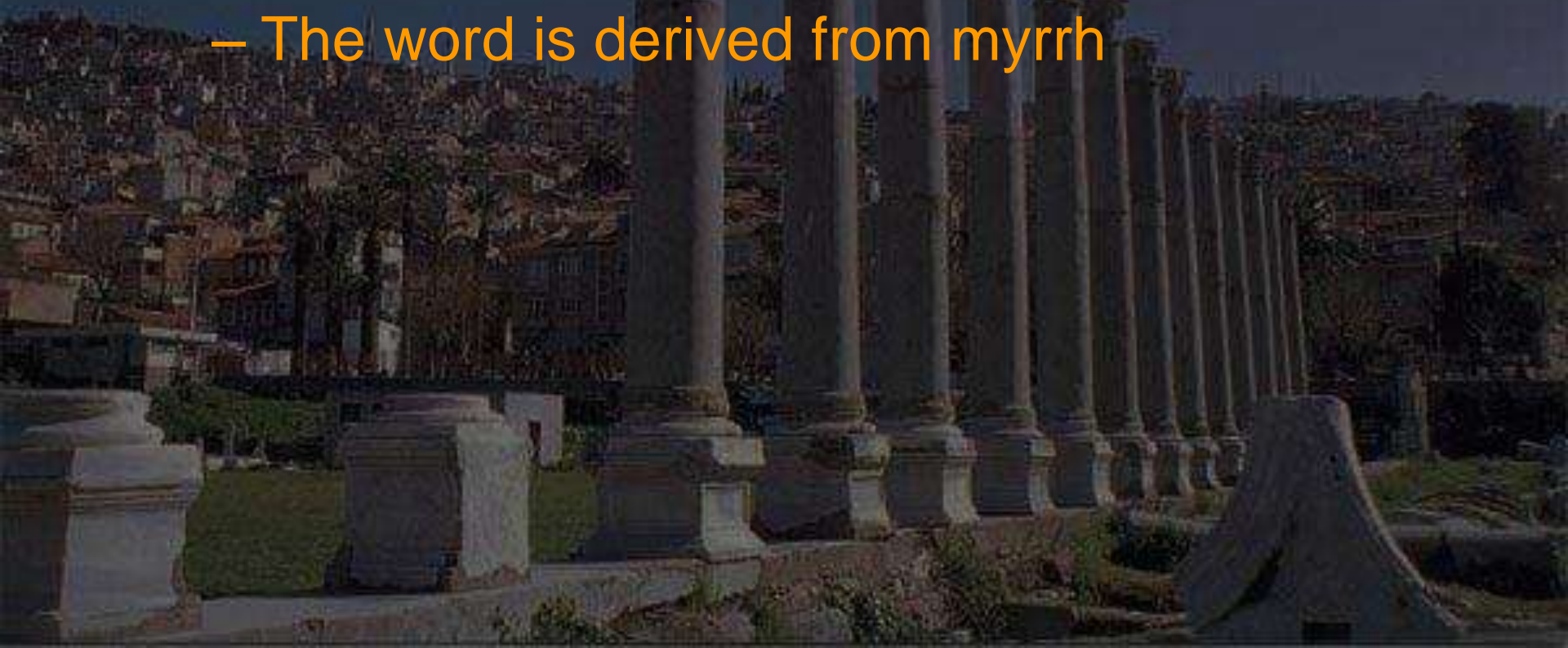
- This letter is applicable to individual believers and whole churches.
- What is the Spirit saying to you today?
- Cherubim guarded the tree before...
- ...now the way is open

Letters to Smyrna



Smyrna

- Smyrna – ‘The Persecuted Church’
- Prophetically taking us from 100-313 A.D.
- Smyrna means bitterness or suffering
 - The word is derived from myrrh



Smyrna

- Smyrna is about 35 miles north of Ephesus
– on the coast of the Aegean Sea.
- Today, with a population of over 200,000, it is now known as Izmir.
- The city goes back to about 2000 BC when a Hittite city was built around the slope of Mount Pagos.
- Later Alexander rebuilt it into the beautiful city that it became.

Smyrna

- About 200 BC the people became allied to the Rome
 - it was where the Roman republic began to form
- Romans called the city “The Beauty of Asia”
- A statue to the Roman goddess was located at Smyrna.
- In 26AD they were awarded the honour of having the temple of Emperor Tiberius built there.
- Eventually it became a place of Emperor worship.

Smyrna

- The city was built on the slopes of Mount Pagos...
- ...On top of which was an acropolis which led to the name of 'the crown city'
- The city had buildings and many beautiful temples such as the temple of Zeus, the temple of Cybele (Diana), the temple of Aphrodite, the temple of Apollo, and the temple of Asclepius.

Smyrna

- Smyrna also had a theater and an ‘odeum’ which is a music center—it was regarded as the home of music.
- In addition to this, there was a famous stadium, and it was at that stadium that Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna and student of the apostle John, was martyred by being burnt alive in A.D. 155.

Smyrna

- The people of Smyrna had for some time worshipped dead emperors, and it wasn't long before they started to worship the living emperors as well.
- Emperor worship became enforced with each citizen being required to obtain a certificate as proof that they had burned incense on the altar to Cesar.
- Needless to say, the Christians refused.

Smyrna

- The Jews were exempt from emperor worship
- But saw this as a way of getting rid of their 'enemies'
- So they stirred up the people against the Christians,
- Tetulien (an early church leader who was a lawyer converted from paganism) famously said that: *"The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church."*

Smyrna

- Tertulien records that the church became the scapegoat if anything went wrong.
- *“If the Tiber river overflows it’s banks, or if the Nile has remained in it’s bed, if the sky has become still, or if the earth in commotion, if death has made it’s devastations, or famine it’s afflictions, the cry of Rome is always: this is the fault of the Christians!”*

Smyrna

- The name Smyrna comes from the same root as Myrrh
 - ...which gives off a sweet smell when it is crushed, and it is used for embalming.
- What a sweet smell it must have been for the Lord as His servants chose Him even at the cost of their lives.
- When you crush a lemon you get lemon juice; an apple, apple juice – so when you crush a Christian you should get Christ!

8 And unto the angel of the church in Smyrna write;
These things saith **the first and the last,** which was
dead, and is alive;

Revelation 2:8

- What an appropriate revelation of Himself for this church!
- The reminder that He has overcome death
- According to *Fox's Book of Martyrs*, five million believers died for Christ during this period.

9 I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan.

Revelation 2:9

- Jesus doesn't promise to deliver us from trials and temptations, but in the midst of them He says 'I know'. He knows the pain we experience.
- He understands the pain of loss.
 - See John 11:35 "Jesus wept"

9 I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan.

Revelation 2:9

- “In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world”
– John 17:33

9 I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan.

Revelation 2:9

- Their treasure was in heaven, where it will not decay but awaits them.
- 2 Greek words for poverty: The one used here denotes abject poverty
- They had lost everything on account of their faith in Jesus: their jobs, homes, because they would not bow the knee to Cesar.

9 I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan.

Revelation 2:9

- Two possible understandings:
- 1) Jews in a biological sense, but not spiritually (**Luke 3:8 / Rom 9:6-9**)
- 2) 'Replacement theology' – those who reject Israel and claim the blessings for themselves – (this would include Islam)

10 Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.

11 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.

Revelation 2:10-11

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To be continued...