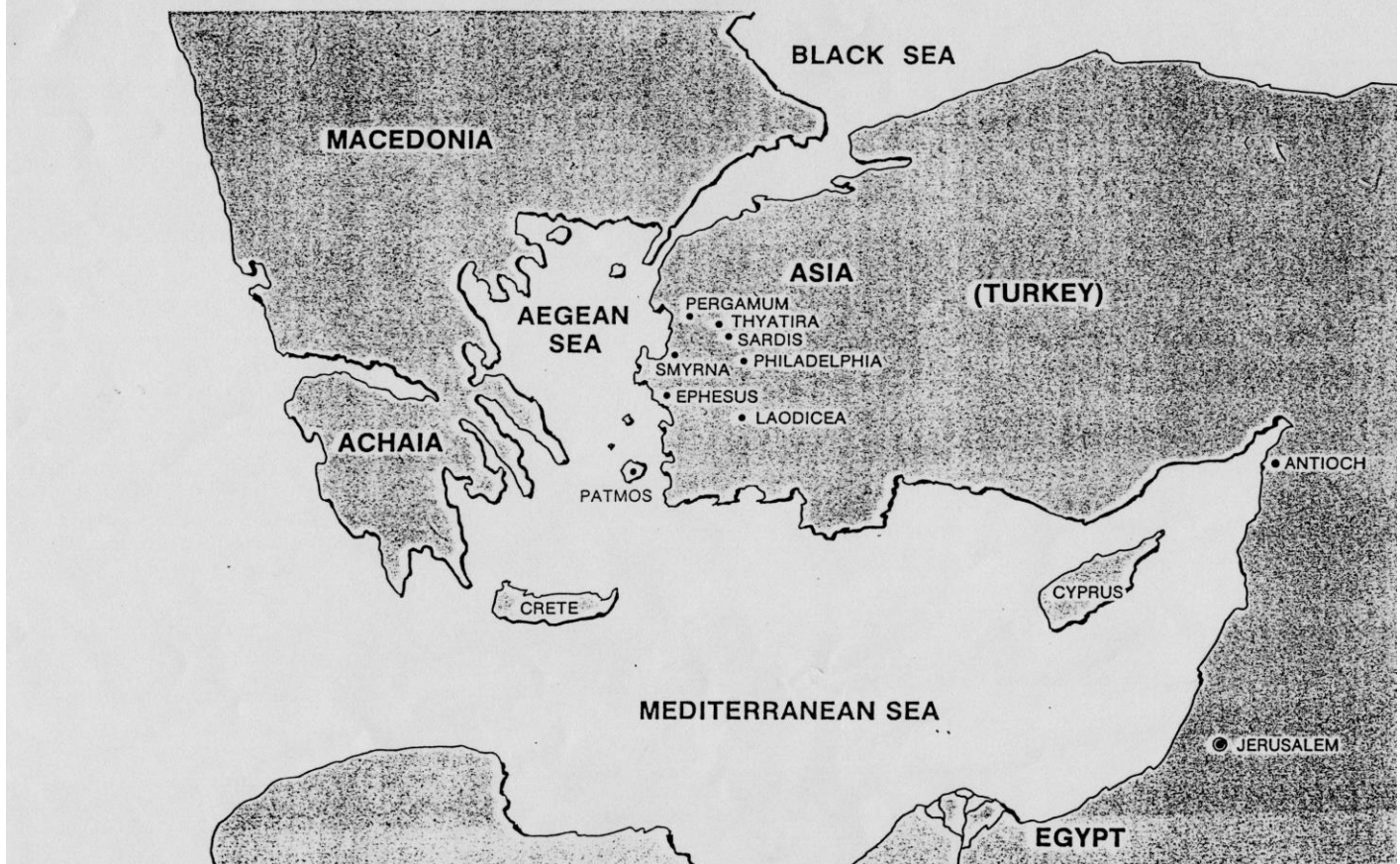


The Seven Churches



Revelation 1 v 1-7

The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show to His bond-servants, the things which must soon take place; and He sent and communicated it by His angel to His bond-servant John, who testified to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw. Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of the prophecy, and heed the things which are written in it; for the time is near. John to the seven churches that are in Asia: Grace to you and peace, from Him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne, and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To Him who loves us and released us from our sins by His blood - and He has made us to be a kingdom, priests to His God and Father - to Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen. Behold, He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him. So it is to be. Amen.

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Introduction

We shall look at each of the seven churches that are highlighted in the book of Revelation, these churches were not the most prominent churches of the day; Antioch, Alexandria, Corinth, Rome, Colosse and of course the church at Jerusalem might have been chosen, but they were not. There is something of the heart of God in this, the least and not the greatest are often given special tasks and this is an encouragement to us all.

Remember the wife of Manoah? She wasn't even named in the bible yet God used her in a significant way.

Judges 13 v 24

The woman gave birth to a boy and named him Samson. He grew and the Lord blessed him...

There are suggested church periods that theologians have said are applicable to each of these churches. However, we have no biblical way of proving or disproving this idea.

Note that each message is addressed to the angel of each church. Most of the letters contain the following:

- A description of Christ
- A commendation
- A condemnation
- A challenge or correction
- A promise

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The Church at Ephesus

Ephesus means desired one. Ephesus was a commercial centre and there was a temple of Diana which was one of the seven wonders of ancient times. The apostle Paul, Priscilla and Aquila, Apollos, Timothy and John, the author of Revelation all had pastoral ministry and input to the church at Ephesus.

Acts 19 v 1

It happened that while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul passed through the upper country and came to Ephesus, and found some disciples.

Acts 18 v 24-26

Now a Jew named Apollos, an Alexandrian by birth, an eloquent man, came to Ephesus; and he was mighty in the Scriptures. This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he was speaking and teaching accurately the things concerning Jesus, being acquainted only with the baptism of John; and he began to speak out boldly in the synagogue. But when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately.

1 Timothy 1 v 2-3

To Timothy, my true child in the faith: Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord. As I urged you upon my departure for Macedonia, remain on at Ephesus so that you may instruct certain men not to teach strange doctrines...

Revelation 2 v 1-7

The One who holds the seven stars in His right hand, the One who walks among the seven golden lampstands, says this: 'I know your deeds and your toil and perseverance, and that you cannot tolerate evil men, and you put to the test those who call themselves apostles, and they are not, and you found them to be false; and you have perseverance and have endured for My name's sake, and have not grown weary. But I have this against you, that you have left your first love. Therefore remember from where you have fallen, and repent and do the deeds you did at first; or else I am coming to you and will remove your lampstand out of its place — unless you repent. Yet this you do have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will grant to eat of the tree of life which is in the Paradise of God.'

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1. Christ is portrayed in verse 1

The One who holds the seven stars in His right hand, the One who walks among the seven golden lampstands...

2. The commendation, verse 2

I know your deeds and your toil and perseverance...

3. The condemnation, verse 4

But I have this against you...

4. A challenge, verse 5

Therefore remember from where you have fallen, and repent...

5 A promise, verse 7

He who has an ear...

They had many things right, but there was an important principle that they had lost. They were now doing things by routine; they were no longer dynamic in the Spirit. They knew the rules but had lost their relationship with the Ruler.

Deuteronomy 8 v 11-14

"Beware that you do not forget the Lord your God by not keeping His commandments and His ordinances and His statutes which I am commanding you today; otherwise, when you have eaten and are satisfied, and have built good houses and lived in them, and when your herds and your flocks multiply, and your silver and gold multiply, and all that you have multiplies, then your heart will become proud and you will forget the Lord your God who brought you out from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

The Church at Smyrna

Smyrna means bitter. It was a persecuted, suffering church, displaying the cost of discipleship. Smyrna was about 35 miles from Ephesus, there were many apostate Jews that constantly hounded the Christians. There was a temple that was built to honour the Emperor Tiberius and Smyrna was thought to be the birthplace of Homer.

Revelation 2 v 8-11

"And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write: The first and the last, who was dead, and has come to life, says this: 'I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich), and the blasphemy by those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, so that you will be tested, and you will have tribulation for ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes will not be hurt by the second death.'

1. Christ is described here in **verse 8**

The first and the last, who was dead, and has come to life...

2. The commendation appears in **verse 9**

I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich)...

3. There is no condemnation for the church at Smyrna, they are persecuted. Satan is waiting to destroy them and any other church that is sold out totally to Jesus.

4/5. A challenge and a promise is seen in **verse 10**

Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, so that you will be tested, and you will have tribulation for ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.

The Church at Pergamum

Pergamum means elevated or married. It was a church close to satan's throne (Revelation 2 v 13). Pergamum was believed to have a library, hospital, was a known seat of learning and a local Roman government centre.

Revelation 2 v 12-17

"And to the angel of the church in Pergamum write: The One who has the sharp two-edged sword says this: 'I know where you dwell, where Satan's throne is; and you hold fast My name, and did not deny My faith even in the days of Antipas, My witness, My faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells. But I have a few things against you, because you have there some who hold the teaching of Balaam, who kept teaching Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit acts of immorality. So you also have some who in the same way hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans. Therefore repent; or else I am coming to you quickly, and I will make war against them with the sword of My mouth. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, to him I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and a new name written on the stone which no one knows but he who receives it.

1. Christ is described in verse 12

The One who has the sharp two-edged sword...

2. The commendation appears in verse 13

...you hold fast My name, and did not deny My faith...

3. The condemnation is in verses 14 and 15

But I have a few things against you...

4. A challenge, verse 5

Therefore remember from where you have fallen, and repent...

5 A promise, verse 7

To him who overcomes...

Hidden manna is to have total sufficiency in Christ.

The exploration of the remaining Revelation churches appears in Study 4.

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