

3 – WHAT IS NOW – PART 1 (REVELATION 2:1-7)

Review:

A. The key verse (1:19)

- The key to understanding the book is found in Revelation 1:19

B. A basic outline

1. What You Have Seen (Chapter 1)
2. What is Now (Chapters 2-3)
3. What will take place later (Chapters 4-22)

C. A Basic Mindset

1. Don't be dogmatic about your interpretations.
2. Biblical prophecy only gives us a partial picture.

I. Introduction to the Letters to the Seven Churches

A. Approaching the Letters

- How you approach the letters will determine your understanding of them.
- It is best to approach them as letters to distinct churches addressing the issues that they faced.
- The Letters clearly show that these churches were distinct from each other.
- Therefore, we can learn from them just as we learn from the other New Testament epistles.

B. Basic Outline of the Letters

1. The Recipient
2. The Author
3. The Commendation
4. The Condemnation / Rebuke
5. The Exhortation
6. The Promise

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II. The Church at Ephesus (2:1-7)

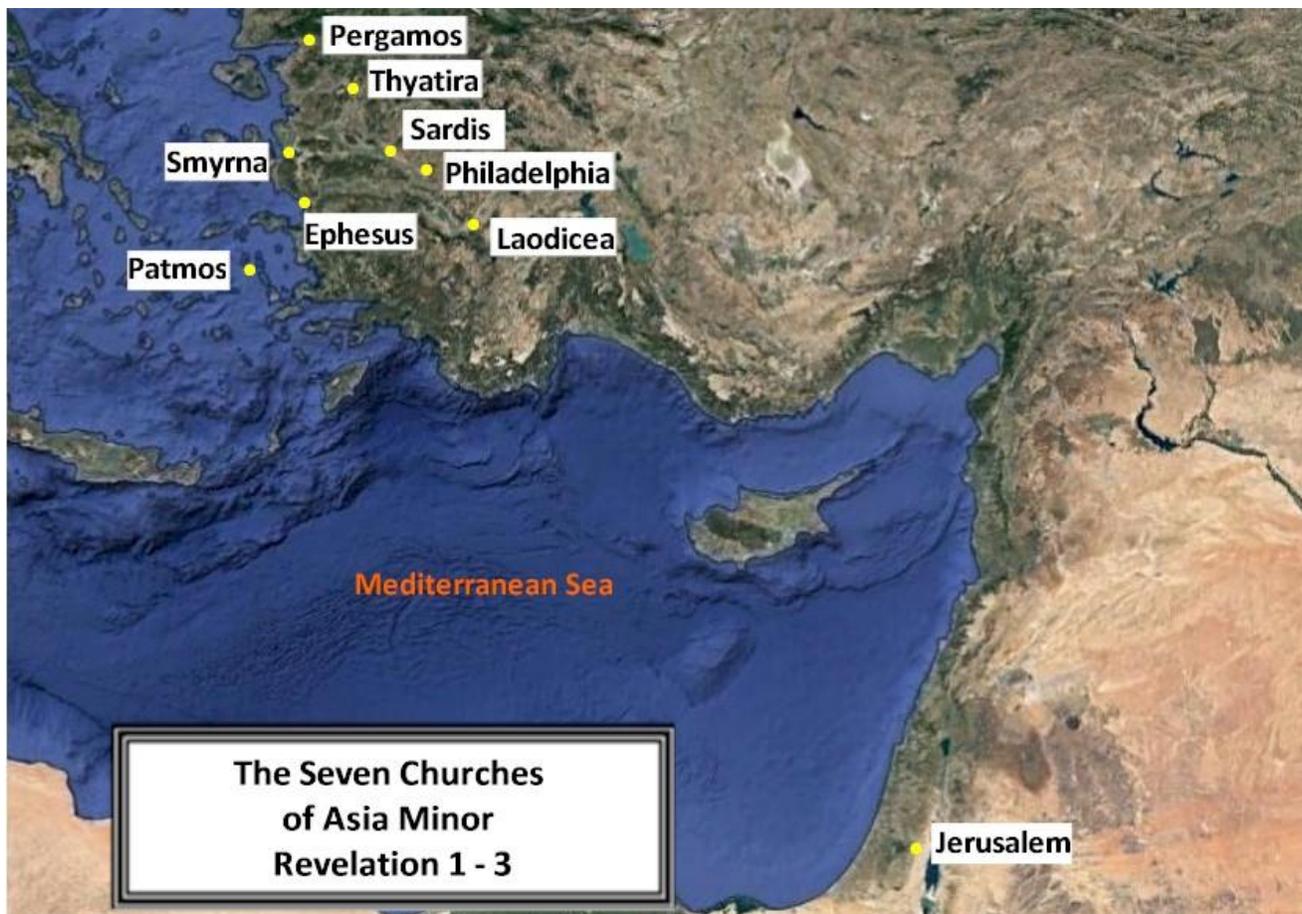
A. The Recipient (2:1a)

- The letter is addressed to the pastor or messenger of the church in Ephesus.

Historical Note: Ephesus

Ephesus was an ancient Greek city on the coast of Western Asia Minor. It was built in the 10th century BC. During the Greek era it was one of the twelve cities of the Ionian League. The city flourished after it came under the control of the Roman Empire in 129 BC. The city was famed for the nearby Temple of Artemis, which was one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World. The Library of Celsus was located in Ephesus and a theatre capable of holding 25,000 spectators. When Augustus became emperor in 27 BC, he made Ephesus the capital of the province of Asia in western Asia Minor instead of Pergamum. Ephesus then entered an era of prosperity, becoming both the seat of the governor and a major center of commerce.

See: Acts 18:19,21,24; 19:1,17,26,35; 20:16,17; 1 Corinthians 15:32; 16:8; Ephesians 1:1; 1 Timothy 1:3; 2 Timothy 1:18; 4:12; Revelation 1:11; 2:1.



B. The Author (2:1b)

Scripture: Revelation 1:20

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1. Holds the Seven Stars

- Christ proclaims himself as having authority over the pastors of the church.
- This description proclaims Christ's authority in the Churches.

Biblical Note: In His Right Hand

The phrase "right hand" signifies strength. It symbolizes authority and power. To hold something in one's right hand is to symbolize that the holder has authority and power over what is being held. To sit at one's right hand was to have a place of prominence.

See: Matthew 20:21,23,44; 26:64; Mark 10:40; 12:36; 14:62; 16:19; Luke 22:69; Acts 2:25,33,34; 3:7; 5:31; 7:55,56; Romans 8:34; Colossians 3:1; Hebrews 1:3,13; 8:1; 10:12; 12:2; 1 Peter 3:22, Revelation 1:16,17,20; 2:1; 5:1,7

2. Walks in the midst of the Seven Golden Lampstands

- Christ proclaims that He dwells in the midst of the churches.
- The description proclaims Christ's presence among the churches.

C. Commendation (2:2-3)

1. Christ's Knowledge of the church (2:2a)

- Christ has an intimate knowledge of the church.

2. Christ commends them (2:2b-3)

a. Their hard work

- Christ commends them for their hard work.

b. Their condemnation of the wicked

- Christ commends them because they did not tolerate sin in the church.

c. Their intolerance of false teachers

- Christ commends them because they tested and dealt with false teachers.

d. Their perseverance

- Christ commends them for continuing to persevere in spite of hardship.

Scripture: Acts 20:17, 28-36

¹⁷From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called for the elders of the church.

²⁸Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own

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blood. ²⁹For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. ³⁰Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves. ³¹Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears. ³²“So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified. ³³I have coveted no one’s silver or gold or apparel. ³⁴Yes, you yourselves know that these hands have provided for my necessities, and for those who were with me. ³⁵I have shown you in every way, by laboring like this, that you must support the weak. And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’” ³⁶And when he had said these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all.

D. Rebuke (2:4)

- Christ rebukes the church for forgetting their love for Him in the midst of their labors.

E. Exhortation (2:5-6)

1. Remember (2:5a)

- Christ calls them to remember when they came to faith.

2. Repent (2:5b)

- Christ calls them to acknowledge and turn from their sin.

3. Do the first works (2:5c)

- Christ calls them to do their works out of love for Him.

4. The warning (2:5)

- Christ warns them that unless they repent they will no longer be useful.

5. Further commendation (2:6)

- Christ commends them for not embracing those who stressed compromise.

Historical Note: The Nicolaitans

The exact identity of the Nicolaitans is unclear. They appear to be a group that corrupted God’s people by suggesting compromise with the culture of the day. Rather than worship God and him alone, they suggested that it was appropriate to engage in patriotic ceremonies such as feasts associated with the worship of the emperor. They also suggested that it was appropriate to engage in cultural institutions like trade guilds and the pagan worship associated with such guilds.

See: Revelation 2:15

F. Promise (2:7)

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1. The exhortation (2:7a)

- We are called to acknowledge what the Holy Spirit reveals to us.

2. The Tree of Life (2:7b)

Scripture: Genesis 3:22

Then the Lord God said, “Behold, the man has become like one of Us, to know good and evil. And now, lest he put out his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever”

- Those that persevere in their faith are promised eternal life.

Biblical Note: Tree of Life

The Tree of Life was a special tree in the Garden of Eden. The tree appears again in the Book of Revelation as a fruit bearing tree with leaves that bring healing. Those who eat of this tree will never die.

See: Genesis 2:9; 3:22,24; Revelation 2:7; 22:2,14

Biblical Note: Paradise of God

Paradise is only mentioned three times in the Bible. It refers to heaven each time that it is mentioned in the scripture. The exact location of Paradise is not certain. The apostle Paul refers to it as the third heaven.

See: Luke 23:43; 2 Corinthians 12:4