

INTRODUCTION

^{1:1} The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave to Him to show to His servants the things which must happen in short order, and *which* He signified by dispatching *it* via His angel to His servant John, ^{1:2} who testified the full extent of what he saw *concerning* the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ.

^{1:3} Blessed be the reader and those listening to the words of *this* prophecy, and those keeping the things written in it, for the time is near.

JOHN'S SALUTATION

^{1:4} John

To the seven assemblies in Asia:

Grace to you and peace from the One Who is, Who was, and Who is coming; from the seven Spirits which *are* before His throne; ^{1:5} and from Jesus Christ, the Faithful Witness, the Firstborn *from* the dead, and the Ruler of the kings of earth.

To the One *Who* loves us, *Who* releases us from our sins by His blood, ^{1:6} and *Who* made us a kingdom, priests to His God and Father; to Him *be* glory and control into the ages of ages. Amen.

^{1:7} Behold! He comes with the clouds.¹ Every eye will see Him, including those who pierced Him. All the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him.²

Yes. Amen.

^{1:8} "I am the Alpha and the Omega," says Yahweh God, "The One Who is, Who was, and Who is coming; the Controller of all ["The Almighty" or *Yahweh Tsabaoth*]."

JOHN'S INTRODUCTION

^{1:9} I, John, your brother and associate in the tribulation, kingdom, and endurance *which are* in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos³ via the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.⁴ ^{1:10} I was in spirit-*form* on the Lord's Day, and heard behind me a loud trumpet-like voice ^{1:11} saying, "Write what you see in a scroll and send *it* to the seven assemblies: unto Ephesos, unto Smurna, unto Pergamos, unto Thuatira, unto Sardeis, unto Philadelphia and unto Laodikea."⁵

^{1:12} I turned to look *toward* the voice of whoever was speaking with me. Having turned, I saw seven golden lampstands,⁶ ^{1:13} and in the midst of the lampstands, one resembling a son of man,⁷ clothed in a full-length robe, and bound with a chest-high, golden belt.⁸ ^{1:14} His head and hairs *were* white like wool,⁹ and his eyes like a flame of fire. ^{1:15} His feet resembled white-hot bronze, as *when* it is being heated in a furnace.¹⁰ His voice *was* like the sound of many waters,¹¹ ^{1:16} having seven stars in His right hand, and a sharp, double-edged sword protruding from His mouth. His gaze *was* like the sun shining in its power.

^{1:17} When I saw Him I fell at His feet like a dead man. He laid His right *hand* on me, saying, "Don't be afraid. I am the First and the Last,¹⁸ and the Living One. I was dead, and behold, I am living into the ages of ages. I have the keys of Death and Hades. ^{1:19} Therefore, write the things which you saw, the things which are, and the things which are about to take place after these things.

^{1:20} "*This is* the secret of the seven stars which you saw in My right *hand*, and the golden lampstands: the seven stars are the messengers of the seven assemblies, and the seven lampstands are the seven assemblies.

¹ Daniel 7:13.

² Zechariah 12:10.

³ A small (10 x 6 miles) island located about 50 miles SW of Ephesus. It was used as a penal colony, isolating trouble-making citizens from society without having to resort to execution.

⁴ John had been exiled to Patmos at some point during the fifteen-year reign of Domitian (1 September 81 – 18 September 96). His exile ended when the Senate reversed all such decrees upon Domitian's death.

⁵ The order of these cities represents major trade centers located on the Roman highway from Ephesus north to Pergamum and then east to Laodicea.

⁶ Something similar to the original Menorah?

⁷ Obviously Jesus.

⁸ He is dressed like a priest.

⁹ Daniel 7:9. White (grey) hair is also considered a symbol of aged wisdom (Proverbs 16:31; 20:29).

¹⁰ His eyes and feet are like those of the supernatural messenger described in Daniel 10:6.

¹¹ Ezekiel 43:2.

JESUS' LETTER TO THE CHURCH AT EPHESUS

^{2:1} “To the messenger of the assembly in Ephesus¹² write, ‘This is what the One holding the seven stars in His right hand says; the One walking in the midst of the seven golden lampstands:

^{2:2} “I have seen your activities, hard work, and your endurance; that you are unable to bear evil *persons*. You evaluated those calling themselves Apostles (they are not) and found them *to be* liars. ^{2:3} You have endurance. You carried on via My Name and have not fatigued.

^{2:4} However, I have against you that you abandoned your initial loving commitment. ^{2:5} Therefore, remember from where you have fallen, change your frame of mind, and do your original activities. ¹³ But if not, I come to you and will move your lampstand out of its place, *that is*, if you do not change your frame of mind.

^{2:6} However, you have this: you despise the activities of the Nikolaitians¹⁴ which I also despise.”

^{2:7} “Let the one with an ear listen to what the Spirit says to the assemblies.

To the overcomer I will give *the right* to eat from the Tree of Life which is in the Paradise of God.

JESUS' LETTER TO THE CHURCH AT SMYRNA

^{2:8} “To the messenger of the assembly in Smyrna¹⁵ write, ‘This is what the First and the Last says; Who was dead and came to life:

^{2:9} “I have seen your tribulation, destitution (although you are rich), and the slander of those calling themselves Jews (they are not, but *are* instead the synagogue of Satan). ^{2:10} Let no one fear the things which you are about to suffer. Behold! Diabolos is about to throw some of you into prison, so that you might be evaluated. You will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful even to the point of death, and I will give you the victor’s wreath of life.”¹⁶

^{2:11} “Let the one with an ear listen to what the Spirit says to the assemblies.

The overcomer cannot be harmed by the Second Death.

¹² For all practical purposes, Ephesus was the “capital” of Asia.

¹³ See Acts 19.

¹⁴ An early (Gnostic?) heresy that excused Christian participation in sinful activities such as idolatrous feasts and immorality.

¹⁵ Modern day Izmir, located about 40 miles north of Ephesus, at another major road intersection. Polycarp (lived 70-156), the famous martyr, was Bishop of Smyrna.

¹⁶ Pliny [governor of Pontus/Bithynia from 111-113 AD] to the Emperor Trajan: “It is my practice, my lord, to refer to you all matters concerning which I am in doubt. For who can better give guidance to my hesitation or inform my ignorance? I have never participated in trials of Christians. I therefore do not know what offenses it is the practice to punish or investigate, and to what extent. And I have been not a little hesitant as to whether there should be any distinction on account of age or no difference between the very young and the more mature; whether pardon is to be granted for repentance, or, if a man has once been a Christian, it does him no good to have ceased to be one; whether the name itself, even without offenses, or only the offenses associated with the name are to be punished.

“Meanwhile, in the case of those who were denounced to me as Christians, I have observed the following procedure: I interrogated these as to whether they were Christians; those who confessed I interrogated a second and a third time, threatening them with punishment; those who persisted I ordered executed. For I had no doubt that, whatever the nature of their creed, stubbornness and inflexible obstinacy surely deserve to be punished. There were others possessed of the same folly; but because they were Roman citizens, I signed an order for them to be transferred to Rome.

“Soon accusations spread, as usually happens, because of the proceedings going on, and several incidents occurred. An anonymous document was published containing the names of many persons. Those who denied that they were or had been Christians, when they invoked the gods in words dictated by me, offered prayer with incense and wine to your image, which I had ordered to be brought for this purpose together with statues of the gods, and moreover cursed Christ--none of which those who are really Christians, it is said, can be forced to do--these I thought should be discharged. Others named by the informer declared that they were Christians, but then denied it, asserting that they had been but had ceased to be, some three years before, others many years, some as much as twenty-five years. They all worshipped your image and the statues of the gods, and cursed Christ.

“They asserted, however, that the sum and substance of their fault or error had been that they were accustomed to meet on a fixed day before dawn and sing responsively a hymn to Christ as to a god, and to bind themselves by oath, not to some crime, but not to commit fraud, theft, or adultery, not falsify their trust, nor to refuse to return a trust when called upon to do so. When this was over, it was their custom to depart and to assemble again to partake of food--but ordinary and innocent food. Even this, they affirmed, they had ceased to do after my edict by which, in accordance with your instructions, I had forbidden political associations. Accordingly, I judged it all the more necessary to find out what the truth was by torturing two female slaves who were called deaconesses. But I discovered nothing else but depraved, excessive superstition.

“I therefore postponed the investigation and hastened to consult you. For the matter seemed to me to warrant consulting you, especially because of the number involved. For many persons of every age, every rank, and also of both sexes are and will be endangered. For the contagion of this superstition has spread not only to the cities but also to the villages and farms. But it seems possible to check and cure it. It is certainly quite clear that the temples, which had been almost deserted, have begun to be frequented, that the established religious rites, long neglected, are being resumed, and that from everywhere sacrificial animals are coming, for which until now very few purchasers could be found. Hence it is easy to imagine what a multitude of people can be reformed if an opportunity for repentance is afforded.

Trajan to Pliny: “You observed proper procedure, my dear Pliny, in sifting the cases of those who had been denounced to you as Christians. For it is not possible to lay down any general rule to serve as a kind of fixed standard. They are not to be sought out; if they are denounced and proved guilty, they are to be punished, with this reservation, that whoever denies that he is a Christian and really proves it--that is, by worshiping our gods--even though he was under suspicion in the past, shall obtain pardon through repentance. But anonymously posted accusations ought to have no place in any prosecution. For this is both a dangerous kind of precedent and out of keeping with the spirit of our age.”

JESUS' LETTER TO THE CHURCH AT PERGAMUM

^{2:12} “To the messenger of the assembly in Pergamos¹⁷ write, ‘This is what the One possessing the sharp, double-edged sword says:

^{2:13} “I have seen where you live (where the throne of Satan *is*),¹⁸ *that* you hold firmly to My Name, and *that* you did not deny My faith even during the days of Antipas, my witness and my trustworthy one, who was killed among you where Satan lives.

^{2:14} However, I have against you the small matter that you have there those holding firmly to the teaching of Baalam, who was teaching Balak to toss snares before the Children of Israel so they would eat idol sacrifices and be sexually immoral. ^{2:15} Thus, in a similar way, you have those holding firmly to the teachings of the Nicolaitians.

^{2:16} Therefore, change your frame of mind. But if not, I come to you quickly and will fight with them by the sword of My mouth.”

^{2:17} “Let the one with an ear listen to what the Spirit says to the assemblies.

To the overcomer I will give from the hidden manna. I will also give him a white stone, and upon *that* stone *there will be* a new name written that no one knows except for the one receiving it.

JESUS' LETTER TO THE CHURCH AT THYATIRA

^{2:18} “To the messenger of the assembly in Thuatira¹⁹ write, ‘This is what the Son of God says; the One Whose eyes are like a flame of fire and Whose feet resemble white-hot bronze:

^{2:19} “I have seen your activities, loving commitment, faith, service, and your endurance; and that your latest activities are more plentiful than the initial ones.

^{2:20} However, I have against you that you tolerate the woman Jezebel who is calling herself a prophet. She teaches and misleads my servants to be sexually immoral and to eat idol sacrifices. ^{2:21} I gave her time to change her frame of mind, but she did not want to change her frame of mind *away* from her sexual immorality.

^{2:22} Behold! I throw her into a *sick*-bed and those who committed adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they change their frame of mind *away* from her activities. ^{2:23} I will also kill her children in an *epidemic of* death. All the assemblies will know I am the One Who examines kidneys and hearts, and I will give to each of you according to your activities.

^{2:24} But I say to the rest of you in Thuatira - those who do not have this teaching and who do not know the so-called deep things of Satan²⁰ - I put no other burden on you ^{2:25} than that you hold firmly to what you have until I come.”

^{2:26} “*As for* the overcomer and the keeper of My activities to the end, I will give him authority over the nations,^{2:27} and he will shepherd them with an iron staff, as pottery items are shattered,^{21 2:28} even as I also received from My Father. I will give him the morning star.

^{2:29} Let the one with an ear listen to what the Spirit says to the assemblies.

¹⁷ Pergamum was located on the Roman highway, about 65 miles north of Smyrna. It was the location of the second biggest library in the world of that time. It was also home to the Great Altar of Savior Zeus.

¹⁸ Probably a reference to Savior Zeus' Great Altar.

¹⁹ Thuatira was about 45 miles SE of Pergamum, on the Roman highway from Pergamum to Laodicea. It was famous for textile trade. Lydia's business was headquartered here (Acts 16:14).

²⁰ Probably a reference to the heresy of Gnosticism.

²¹ Psalm 2:9.

JESUS' LETTER TO THE CHURCH AT SARDIS

^{3:1} “To the messenger of the assembly in Sardis²² write, ‘This is what the One having the seven spirits of God and the seven stars says:

“I have seen your activities; that you have a reputation of being alive, although you are dead. ^{3:2} Get watching and reinforce the remaining things that are about to die, for I have not found your activities complete before My God.

^{3:3} Therefore, recall how you have received, and *how* you heard; keep it, and change your frame of mind.

If however, you do not watch, I will come like a thief, and you never know at what hour I might come upon you.

^{3:4} However, you have a few persons of repute in Sardis who have not stained their clothes. They will walk with Me in white because they are holy.”

^{3:5} “The overcomer shall in this manner be clothed in white clothing. I will never erase his name from the Scroll of Life, and will acknowledge his name before My Father and before His angels.

^{3:6} Let the one with an ear listen to what the Spirit says to the assemblies.

JESUS' LETTER TO THE CHURCH AT PHILADELPHIA

^{3:7} “To the messenger of the assembly in Philadelphia²³ write, ‘This is what the Holy One says; the True One, the One having the Key of David, the One Who opens and no one can lock, and Who locks and no one can open:

^{3:8} “I have seen your activities. Behold! I have put before you an open door which no one can lock, because you have little power, have kept My word, and did not deny My Name.

^{3:9} Behold! I give *to you* those of the synagogue of Satan who are calling themselves Jews (they are not, but lie). Behold! I will make them come and pay respect before your feet, that they might know that I lovingly committed *Myself* to you ^{3:10} because you kept the word of My endurance.

In addition, I will keep you out of the hour of evaluation that is about to come on all the inhabitants, to evaluate those living upon the earth. ^{3:11} I come quickly. Hold firmly to what you have so that no one takes your victor’s wreath.”

^{3:12} “As for the overcomer, I will make him a pillar in the sanctuary of My God and no longer will he have to go outside. I will write on him the Name of My God, the name of the city of My God (the new Jerusalem coming out of heaven from My God), and My new Name.

^{3:13} Let the one with an ear listen to what the Spirit says to the assemblies.

JESUS' LETTER TO THE CHURCH AT LAODICEA

^{3:14} “To the messenger of the assembly in Laodikeia²⁴ write, ‘This is what the Amen says; the faithful and true Witness, the source of God’s creation:

^{3:15} “I have seen your activities, that you are neither cold nor hot. If only you were cold or hot. ^{3:16} Thus, because you are tepid, neither cold nor hot, I am about to vomit you from my mouth, ^{3:17} since you say, “I am wealthy, have become rich, and have no need,” and have not seen that you are miserable, pitiable, destitute, blind, and naked. ^{3:18} I advise you to buy fire-refined gold from me so that you might be wealthy; white clothing that you might be clothed, and the shame of your nakedness not be visible; and eye salve to rub on your eyes that you might see.

^{3:19} Those whom I love I reprove and train. Therefore be zealous and change your frame of mind.

^{3:20} Behold! I have taken position at the door and knock. If one hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will eat with him and he with Me.

^{3:21} As for the overcomer, I will grant *the right* to sit with Me on My throne, even as I overcame and sat with My Father on His throne.

^{3:22} Let the one with an ear listen to what the Spirit says to the assemblies.

²² Sardis was located on the Roman highway, about 30 miles SE of Thuatira. It was a highly defensible position and only captured twice (by stealth) during its long history.

²³ Philadelphia was located on the Roman highway about 25 miles SE of Sardis. It is famous for resisting Islam until 1392.

²⁴ Laodicea was located about 45 miles SE of Philadelphia. It was only 7 miles from Hierapolis, where some famous hot springs were located.