

TO THE SEVEN CHURCHES IN ASIA MINOR

What do all the letters have in common?

- Each is addressed to the *angel* of the church (2:1; 2:8; 2:12; 2:18; 3:1; 3:7; 3:14).
- Each contains, “These are the words ...” (2:1; 2:8; 2:12; 2:18; 3:1; 3:7; 3:14).
- Each contains a reference to John’s vision ...2:1 (1:16,13); 2:8 (1:17); 2:12 (1:16); 2:18 (1:15); 3:1 (1:4,16); 3:7 (1:1,18); 3:14 (1:5).
- Each contains, “I know ...” (2:2; 2:9; 2:13; 2:19; 3:1; 3:8; 3:15).
- Each shares a common conclusion (2:7a; 2:11a; 2:17a; 2:29; 3:6; 3:17; 3:22).
- Each letter shares a common threat 2:2; 2:9; 2:14; 2:20; 3:4; 3:9; 3:15.

What do all the letters *not* have in common?

- The content of their message.
- Each conclusion has its own variation (2:7b; 2:11b; 2:17b,c; 2:26-28; 3:4,5; 3:12; 3:21).

The substance of God’s message to all the churches

- He has the power to enter their situations, - even when uninvited.
- He is aware of the activities of their people.
- The church is answerable to Him.
- His Word is absolute and final.

The Church in Ephesus (2:1-7) ... The Backslidden Church

Started by Priscilla and Aquilla (Acts 18:18,19). Visited by Apollos (Acts 18:24-26). Paul’s visit near the end of his second missionary journey (Acts 18:19-21). Near the end of his third missionary journey, he bid farewell to the Ephesian elders (Acts 20:17-38). Timothy served as pastor (I Tim. 1:3). Onesiphorus and Tychicus’ home city (II Tim. 4:12). John and Mary, Jesus’ mother, lived there. They also received an epistle from Paul.

- *The revelation of Christ to the Church:* His constant presence, v.1 (cf. 1:16).
- *The commendation:* their faithfulness in word and deed, having confronted false apostles and liars, vv.2,3, also, ⁶ thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.
- *The condemnation:* a backslidden church, vv.4,5a.
- *The warning:* “Remember, Repent, Return, or have the candlestick removed” vv.4-6.
- *The promise:* the privilege of heaven, 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, cf. 22:2,14; Gen. 2:9.

The Church in Smyrna (2:8-11) ... The Suffering Church

No information of any visit during the Acts of the Apostles. Possibly evangelised from Ephesus (Acts 19:10).

- *The revelation of Christ to the Church:* His ‘eternality’, v.8, cf. 1:8,11,17.
- *The commendation:* their faithfulness against compromise and persecution, 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. 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.
- *The condemnation:* None.
- *The warning:* None.
- *The promise:* “a crown of life”, ¹⁰ 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 *Ieternal punishment*.

The Church in Pergamum (2:12-17) ... Tolerated false teaching

No information of any visit during the Acts of the Apostles. Possibly evangelised from Ephesus (Acts 19:10).

- *The revelation of Christ to the Church:* the sword (the Word of God), v.12, cf. 1:16. Christ, the Judge and Executioner. A threatening introduction.
- *The commendation:* faithfulness and perseverance, ¹³ thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan [*Zeus? Asclepius?*] dwelleth.
- *The condemnation:* they tolerated false teaching, ¹⁴ But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam ... ¹⁵ So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate.
- *The warning:* “Repent, ... otherwise *judgment* ...” ¹⁶ Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.
- *The promise:* Heavenly manna (Jn. 6:32-35), - Jesus Christ Himself, ¹⁷ 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 hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.

The Church in Thyatira (2:18-29) ... Tolerated sin

- *The revelation of Christ to the Church:* ¹⁸ These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet are like fine brass ... cf. 1:14,15. His deity, His piercing and all-seeing vision, His feet ...^{19:15} he

treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.

- *The commendation:* ¹⁹ I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last to be more than the first.
- *The condemnation:* spiritual promiscuity and adultery, vv. 20-23, ²⁰ thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants
- *The warning:* “I will repay ...”, ²² Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds. ²³ And I will kill her children with death ... and I will give unto every one of you according to your works.
- *The promise:* obedience is rewarded in the sharing of the eternal glory, ²⁴ unto the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak; I will put upon you none other burden. ²⁵ But that which ye have already *hold fast till I come.* ²⁶ And *he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations [Ps. 2:7-9].* ²⁷ And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father. ²⁸ And I will give him the morning star. ²⁹ He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches *1cf. 22:16l.*

The Church in Sardis (3:1-6) ... The dead church

* *The revelation of Christ to the Church:* the church, safely in the palm of His hand, cf. Jn. 10:28,29.

* *The commendation:* a faithful ‘remnant’, v.4.

* *The condemnation:* a ‘spiritual coma’, vv.1,2.

* *The warning:* “I will come like a thief”, v.3, cf. 16:15; I Thess. 5:2; II Pet. 3:10.

* *The promise:* “they will walk with Me”, vv.4,5.

The Church in Philadelphia (3:7-13) ... The faithful church

* *The revelation of Christ to the Church:* the only Entrance to Heaven, v.7, cf. Is. 22:22.

* *The commendation:* “You have kept My Word”, vv.8-10; their faithfulness honoured.

* *The condemnation:* None!!

* *The warning:* None!!

* *The promise:* eternal citizenship, vv.11,12.

The Church in Laodicea (3:14-22) ... The lukewarm church

* *The revelation of Christ to the Church:* the Sovereignty of Christ, v.14.

* *The commendation:* None!!

* *The condemnation*: Christ's disgust at their 'lukewarmness', vv.15-17.

* *The warning*: Christ demands refined gold, pure white clothes and new spiritual sight, vv.18,19.e

* *The promise*: the privilege of the eternal presence of the Saviour, vv.20,21.