



Overview

Author: John

Date: c 95 AD

Purpose: John writes these letters to continue the pastoral care to the congregations established by St. Paul. He writes to bring the words of His vision of the exalted Jesus Christ to the churches.

Outline: A. Vision of the Exalted Christ (Revelation 1:9-20)

- B. Letters to the Seven Churches
Letter to Ephesus (2:1-7)
Letter to Smyrna (2:8-11)
Letter to Pergamum (2:12-17)
Letter to Thyatira (2:18-28)
Letter to Sardis (3:1-6)
Letter to Philadelphia (3:7-13)
Letter to Laodicea (3:14-22)

Key Terms: the exalted Christ, epistle, one literal sense, 'One like a Son of Man', first love, Nicolaitan heresy, libertine, legalist, antinomian, syncretism

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Around the Word Bible Study

Trinity, 2015

The 7 Churches of the Revelation Introduction

Introduction "Early tradition from Irenaeus attributed Revelation to the apostle John, "who beheld the apocalyptic vision... towards the end of Domitian's reign" (AD 81-96; Ante-Nicene Fathers: 1:559-60). ...Readers should know that some scholars propose an earlier date for Revelation, c AD 68, during the persecution that took place under Emperor Nero (AD 54-68). Both explanation are defensible..." (The Lutheran Study Bible, 2198). This study assumes Irenaeus' dates and authorship of Revelation.

Revelation contains the words of the risen and exalted LORD Jesus Christ. He is the God who has conquered His enemies by His suffering, death, and resurrection for you. He is the author of these letters. These letters should be printed in "red letters" because they are the words of Christ. The exalted Christ has a unique concern and view of the life of His churches.

Opening: Psalm 110

1The LORD says to my Lord: "Sit at my | right hand,* until I make your enemies your | footstool."

2The LORD sends forth from Zion your mighty | scepter.* Rule in the midst of your | enemies!

3Your people will offer themselves freely on the day of your power, in holy | garments;* from the womb of the morning, the dew of your youth | will be yours.

4The LORD has sworn and will not | change his mind,* "You are a priest forever

after the order of Mel- | chizedek."

5The Lord is at your | right hand;* he will shatter kings on the day | of his wrath.

6He will execute judgment among the na- tions, filling them with | corpses;* he will shatter chiefs over the | wide earth.

7He will drink from the brook | by the way;* therefore he will lift | up his head.

Glory be to the Father and | to the Son* and to the Holy | Spirit; as it was in the be- | ginning,* is now, and will be forever. | Amen.

The Seven Churches of Revelation



Source: Brighton, Louis. Revelation. Concordia Commentary. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1999 (60).

Real Letters: The Exalted Lord Jesus Christ's Letters to the Churches

Our Lord Jesus Christ sends His words by letters to His Churches. He has long kept His Churches by means of letters. He did it through the letters of St. Peter, St. Paul, and St. John, as we see in the New Testament. Now He continues this pattern of letter-writing which we find in Revelation.

Each of these letters is a short sermon to the Church. The form of each letter is noteworthy. They include words of the Lord in both the Law and the Gospel. The letters include a commendation, a word of praise, and an admonition leading to a call to repent. The letters conclude with a call to hear and a promise from the exalted Christ. These cover the full use of language to kill and make the Churches alive again. These letters are solid, Biblical theology with much relevance for the contemporary church.

The following study takes a simple, realistic approach to the seven letters of Revelation. This study assumes that the *one literal sense* of the Scriptures is a sound way to read the Bible. In Revelation, that one literal sense is at times figurative and calls for a reading which recognizes the Old Testament's Mosaic and Prophetic imagery. These letters are real letters to real churches bound in a unique context in time and space. This is conscientiously in contradiction to the pre-millennial dispensationalist error, which hold that each church is a historical epoch that the broader Christian Church will go through (e.g. an Ephesian epoch, the Smyranean epoch, etc.) The issues and sins threatening each church are the same faced by the militant church until our Lord Jesus returns. John sends real, circular letters to real congregations to tell them how Christ sees each one. The study begins by fixing our eyes on a vision of our exalted Lord, Jesus Christ.

John's Vision of the Exalted Christ: Revelation 1:9-20

Read Revelation 1:9-11; 12-16; 17-20.

Bible Study

The 7 Churches of the Revelation Introduction

+ John is a brother and partner in tribulation and the kingdom and the patient endurance in Jesus. He is on an island called Patmos. Church tradition locates John on Patmos because of the first century AD Roman persecution of the Church under Domitian, who ruled Rome from AD 81-96.

+John was "in the Spirit on the Lord's day..." John had an experience of the Holy Spirit speaking through God's Word. It was on the Lord's Day, which was a Sunday, the day of the Lord's resurrection. His prophetic imagination was filled with images of the Lord's immanent coming.

+Who had a voice "like a trumpet," and tells John to write down His vision? John is made a Spirit-inspired writer of Jesus' words. Can the Church trust the testimony of this New Testament book of prophecy?

+Who is the "One like a Son of Man"? See Daniel 7:13-14. What does this One like the Son of Man look like? How is He dressed? What is John's posture before him?

+ What does the One like the Son of Man say about Himself?

+ How does the vision of the exalted Christ prepare us for the seven letters to come?



+The artist Albrecht Dürer (1471-1528), a contemporary of Martin Luther (1483-1546), tried to capture the words of John's opening vision in a drawing (see center image). What does Dürer capture well? What things could Dürer have portrayed better? How does this compare with more common images of Jesus Christ?

Closing: O Word of God Incarnate (LSB, 523)

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