

## The First Vision: The Letters to the Seven Churches Revelation 2:1-16

### Introduction

1. The 7 churches are historical.

2. There is a pattern in the letters.

Church	Command to write	Desc. of speaker	Commendation	Criticism	Admonition	Call to hear	Promise
Ephesus	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Smyrna	1	2	3	X	5	6	7
Pergamos	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Thyatira	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Sardis	1	2	5	3	4	7	6
Phily	1	2	3	X	5	7	6
Laodicea	1	2	X	4	5	7	6

### Ephesus

1. History

2. Jesus, the powerful protector is in your midst. John 10:28-29, John 14:16-20

3. Commendations

1. Enduring suffering, hardship, and persecution pleases Jesus, but not enduring wicked men.
  1. The church was effective despite their hardships and opposition.
  2. They detected and corrected false teachers. Matt. 7:13-23. 1 Jo. 2:18-19; 4:1-2

2. Hating what Jesus hates glorifies Jesus.

4. Criticism: Taking the gospel promises for granted leads to decreased love.

1. When a sinner comes to see their desperate need and the fulfillment of that need in Jesus' death and resurrection, he can't help but be overcome with love for Christ.

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2. However, eventually, in their search for more truth, dedication to service, and fulfillment of their earthly responsibilities, the gospel promises and the primacy of intimate fellowship with Christ become familiar and “old hat.” The effect is a loss of love for Christ.
3. Jesus provided an answer for this unpleasing condition:
  1. Remember -
  2. Repent -
  3. Return -
  4. Daily repentance leads to faithful loving and living-without it the world has no light.
5. Call to hear: Listening to Jesus is the same as listening to the Spirit of God.
6. Promise: He who overcomes pride of knowledge and doctrinal truth with enduring love for Jesus will live with Him forever.
  1. The word for “paradise” is the word for “park” or “garden” and thus is a clear reference to the Tree of Life in the Garden of Eden.
  2. The promises given in the 7 letters are echoed in the vision of the reign of martyred souls and the new Jerusalem.

Congregation	Promise	Fulfillment
Ephesus	“the right to eat from the tree of life. (2:7)	“the tree of life...for the healing of the nations” (22:2)
Smyrna	“He...will not be hurt by he second death” (2:11)	“The second death has no power over them” (20:6)
Pergamos	“a new name” (2:17)	“his name will be on their foreheads” (22:4)
Thyatira	“I will give authority over the nations...I will give him the morning star” (2:26-28)	“They will reign forever and ever...I am...the bright Morning Star” (22:5, 16)
Sardis	“I will never erase his name out of the book of life” (3:5)	“only those whose names are written in the book of life” (21:27)
Philadelphia	“the temple of my God...the new Jerusalem, which is coming...I will also write on him my new name” (3:12)	“the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple...new Jerusalem...his name will be on their foreheads” (21:22, 2; 22:4)
Laodicea	“I will give the right to sit with me on my throne” (3:21)	“They...reigned with Christ 1000 years...they will reign forever and ever” (20:4; 22:5)

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### **Smyrna**

#### 1. History

#### 2. Jesus is the everlasting One who became dead and sprang to life.

1. Rom. 1:4; 6:4; 8:11
2. Eph. 1:20
3. Col. 1:18
4. 1 Peter 1:3

#### 3. Commendation: Enduring testing - hardship and persecution for your faith - pleases Jesus. The church suffered confiscation of possessions due to their identification with Jesus. Heb. 10:32-36.

1. Satan had planted his religious assembly in Smyrna. These were national Jews who had been dispersed, but had returned to trusting in their Jewish traditions.
2. What is a true Jew? Someone who has faith in Jesus Christ. Gal. 3:7, 6:16; Rom. 2:28-29
3. What is a synagogue of Satan? An assembly composed of Jewish inhabitants who refused to believe that Jesus was their Messiah..
  1. Today, Satan also plants his "churches". Matt. 3:9
  2. Jesus considered the Jews who persecuted Him to have Satan as their father. John 8:44 Apparently they had relatives in Smyrna!

#### 4. Criticism: None!

#### 5. Admonition: God purposes the suffering of believers because He desires them to experience the fullness of joy and eternal life.

1. Satan will be permitted to cast some into prison for a period of time He controls. Ten and multiples of 10 represent God's total control.
  1. Ten is commonly used in the NT to communicate God's sovereign control. 10 virgins - Matt. 25:1, 10 talents - Matt. 25:28, 10 silver coins - Luke 15:8, 10 slaves - Luke 19:13, 10 minas - Luke 19:13, 10 cities - Luke 19:17, 10 lepers - Luke 17:12
  2. Ten - 2 Kings 20:9, Amos 5:3, Rev. 12:3, 13:1, 17:3, 7, 12, 16.
  3. Thousands/Ten thousands - Deut. 32:2, Ps. 50:10, 84:10, 90:4, 105:8, 2 Pet. 3:8, Rev. 7:4, 20:1-7.
2. The crown of life is the reward for faithfulness.
3. Joy when suffering shows Jesus is your treasure - you are rich! Matt. 5:3, 10-16.
4. You are safe from Satan's damnation in God's purposeful suffering. Col. 2:13-15. Satan may kill you but he cannot damn you before God. All his weapons have been silent.
5. When you treasure Jesus more than life, Jesus is glorified. Matt. 10:28, Phil. 1:20-21, 1:28-29. When you cry in the face of death, "Gain!" you display the power and glory of Jesus' victory at the cross.

#### 6. Call to hear. Hearing the one God sends is equal to hearing the Spirit of God.

#### 7. Promise: He who overcomes fear and joyfully endures suffering will live with Jesus forever.

### **Review**

#### 1. Lessons from the letter to Ephesus.

1. Jesus, the powerful protector, is in your midst.
2. Enduring suffering, hardship, and persecution pleases Jesus, but not enduring wicked men.
3. Hating what Jesus hates glorifies Jesus.
4. Taking gospel promises for granted leads to decreased love.

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5. He who overcomes pride of knowledge and doctrinal truth with enduring love for Jesus will live with Him forever.
2. Lessons from the letter to Smyrna.
  1. Jesus is the everlasting One, who became dead and sprang to life.
  2. Enduring testing - hardship and persecution for your faith - pleases Jesus.
  3. God purposes the suffering of believers because He desires them to experience the fullness of joy and eternal life.
  4. Joy when suffering shows Jesus is your treasure - you are rich!
  5. Satan may kill you, but he cannot damn you before God. All his weapons have been silenced!
  6. When you cry in the face of death, "Gain!" you display the power and glory of Jesus' victory at the cross.
3. Questions
  1. Have you taken the gospel promises for granted?
  2. Is life in Jesus your greatest treasure?