

The Book of Revelation

The Seven Churches – Part I

Introductory Notes

- These are messages from Christ to literal churches that existed as John wrote.
- It is believed that John ministered in Ephesus during his later years. It is therefore almost certain that he would have connections to all these churches.
- Just as we glean instruction from Paul's letters to churches in Ephesus or Corinth, we can learn from these churches' strengths and weaknesses.
- Some claim that these churches are examples of seven time periods in Church History, culminating in Christ's second coming.
 - I personally doubt this to be true, but I will be including that information.
- There is a basic structure to each of the messages:
 - Description of Christ
 - Commendation
 - Condemnation and Warning
 - Exhortation and Promise

Ephesus – A Backslidden Church – 2:1-7

- Ephesus was the principal city of the region. It featured the legendary Temple of Artemis (or Diana). Paul ministered here in Acts 19, wrote an epistle to them, and John himself ministered there in his later years.
- Description of Christ - vs. 1
 - Christ is described as active in the churches - note holding and walking.
- Commendation - vs. 2-3,6
 - This church is very active - they work, labor, possess patience, test false prophets.
 - Nicolaitans - the name translates roughly to "conquerors of people", suggesting that this was an early attempt to build an ecclesiastical hierarchy.
- Condemnation and Warning - The Challenge of Love - vs. 4-5
 - They left their "first love" - undoubtedly Christ.
 - "Remove thy candlestick" - No Christ, no church.
- Exhortation and Promise - vs. 7
- Church period possibly described - Pentecost to A.D. 100.
- Application for today: Being busy for Christ is not the same as loving Christ.

Smyrna – A Persecuted Church – 2:8-11

- Smyrna - situated on a harbor and known for its natural beauty.
- Description of Christ - vs. 8
 - Christ is described as eternal.
- Commendation - vs. 9
 - Problems faced: tribulation (trouble or suffering), poverty, false believers.
- Condemnation and Warning - The Challenge of Loyalty
 - There is no condemnation for the church of Smyrna.
 - Persecution purifies the church just as fire refines metal.
- Exhortation and Promise - vs. 10-11
 - There is little positive to say about the troubles this church will face except that they will survive and receive blessings on the other side.
- Church period possibly described - A.D. 100 - 313 (Constantine's legalization of Christianity.)
- Application for Today: Be faithful in the face of persecution.