

**“TO THE CHURCHES, WRITE . . .”**

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# **THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST**

**THE LETTERS OF CHRIST TO THE CHURCHES**

# THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST

*This is a revelation from Jesus Christ,*

*which God gave him to show his servants the events that must soon take place.*

*He sent an angel to present this revelation to his servant John,*

*who faithfully reported everything he saw.*

*This is his report of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ.*

REVELATION 1.1-2

- ▶ “revelation” (apokalypsis): disclosure, appearing, be revealed  
from *apokalupto*: to take off the cover

*God blesses the one who reads the words of this prophecy to the church,  
and He blesses all who listen to its message and obey what it says,  
for the time is near.*

REVELATION 1.3

- ▶ This blessing is unique in that no other book in the Bible begins with a promise for those who read it. Every word of Scripture, however, is essential and critical for becoming who we are to be as true disciples of Christ (cf. 2 Timothy 3.16-17). No believer can afford to neglect God’s word or give minimal attention to it.
- ▶ There are seven blessings (or beatitudes) in Revelation; three are directly related to obedience; all of them involve action on our part that results in being in the place to receive the blessing.

## A TRINITARIAN BLESSING

*Grace and peace to you—*

*from the One who is, who always was, and who is still to come;*

*from the sevenfold Spirit before his throne; and*

*from Jesus Christ.*

*He is the Faithful Witness to these things,*

*the First to rise from the dead, and*

*the Ruler of all the kings of the world.*

*All glory to him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by shedding his blood for us.*

REVELATION 1.4

- ▶ The full Godhead is invested in the work of salvation: grace and peace.

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## TO THE SEVEN CHURCHES

*This letter is from John to the seven churches in the province of Asia.*

*It was the Lord’s Day, and I was worshiping in the Spirit. Suddenly, I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet blast. It said,*

*“Write in a book everything you see, and send it to the seven churches in the cities of Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea.”*

*When I turned to see who was speaking to me, I saw seven gold lampstands. And standing in the middle of the lampstands was someone like the Son of Man. . . . I fell at his feet as if I were dead.*

REVELATION 1.4a, 10-13a, 17a

► Why seven churches and why these seven churches?

“TO THE CHURCHES, WRITE . . .”

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*“Write down what you have seen—*

*both the things that are now happening and the things that will happen.*

*This is the meaning of the mystery of the seven stars you saw in my right hand  
and the seven gold lampstands:*

*The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches,  
and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.”*

REVELATION 1.19-20

- ▶ What are the things that are now happening? In the immediate context, it is those things that Jesus will address in the next two chapters.
- ▶ What is the mystery of the stars and lampstands and where is Christ in relation to them and where are they in relation to him?

- ▶ The number “seven” appears frequently in Revelation. In Scripture, it represents perfection, completion, comprehension (see v. 4).
- ▶ Since there were more than seven churches in the province of Asia, we must conclude that Jesus chose these seven churches for specific reasons. Since “seven” represents comprehension, these churches, then, represent what Jesus sees when he looks at all his churches.
- ▶ Although the symbolism is extensive, we will also find many insights; here we are told that the lampstands represent the churches and the stars represent the angels of those churches, which are understood to be the shepherds of the churches, Christ being the Chief Shepherd.

## HE KNOWS HIS CHURCHES

*“I know your deeds . . .”*

- ▶ “know” (eido): to perceive, be aware of, understand. As it is used here (and elsewhere) of God or the Lord Jesus Christ, it refers to His absolute knowledge; i.e. omniscience: God knows everything actual and possible in every moment of eternity.
- ▶ Jesus Christ, the Master,<sup>1</sup> Chief Shepherd,<sup>2</sup> and Head of the Church,<sup>3</sup> knows each of his churches intimately and comprehensively—and he knows what we don’t know or don’t want to know about ourselves.

<sup>1</sup> Matthew 25.45-46, etc.; <sup>2</sup> Timothy 2.21; <sup>3</sup> 1 Peter 5.2-4; <sup>3</sup> Ephesians 1.22; Colossians 2.19

- ▶ He knows who is faithful and who is not, who is working hard for him and who is doing little, who is fully committed and who is half-hearted. He knows how well we listen to his word and what we do with what we've heard. He knows how obedient we are to his “ultimate command” and his “absolute mission.”
- ▶ He knows *every* detail about *every* person and it *all* matters to him.

*For we must all stand before Christ to be judged. We will each receive whatever we deserve for the good or evil we have done in this earthly body. Because we understand our fearful responsibility to the Lord, we work hard . . .*