

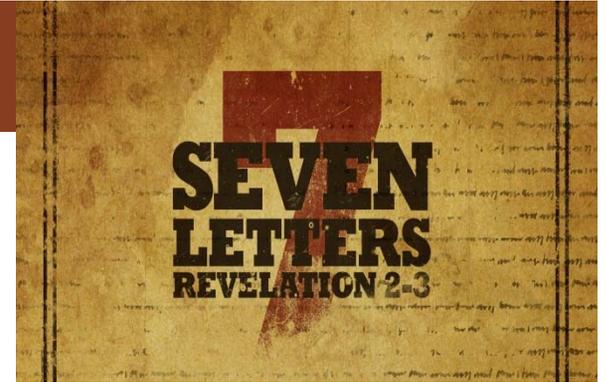


**SEVEN
LETTERS
REVELATION 2-3**

CRITICAL REVIEW:

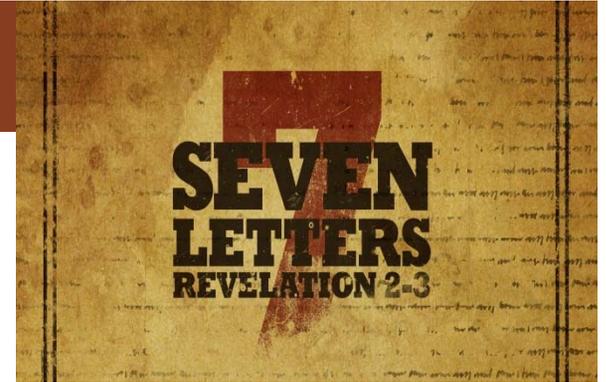
**Ancient letters with an urgent
message for today...**

The 7 Churches



- 7 Churches likely represents “perfectly complete” representation of all churches, and entire church throughout history.
- They represent the church and the *progression from zeal to apostasy* that has played out through history. We live in a time where we are able to track this.
- The letters (epistles) written to the various churches contained in the New Testament reveal an historical pattern – *the church was becoming institutionalized*, and was in trouble.

The 7 Churches



- These churches, and all churches throughout history, needed guidelines to keep them on the right track.
- So do we. Whether an entire church, or an individual, the letters to the seven churches in the book of Revelation are critical.
- When most study Revelation they gloss over these messages to get to “the good stuff” of the graphic images and prophecies of the end.
- ***We need to go back and fully understand what is in these letters.***

The 7 Churches

WHY these letters were written:

1. actual churches with real needs and concerns.
(Institutionalization leading to distraction from truth)
2. “hear... Churches” all seven letters apply to all seven churches.
3. personal: “he who has an ear” It applies to all of us personally.
4. Prophetic: lay out entire history of the church.
If in any other order, this would not work.

Be watchful for what God is saying to the churches today, and to each of us. As we study these letters, ask God to show you the message He has for you personally.

Ephesus



1: Ephesus

BACKGROUND ON THIS CITY

- Big city, “command central” for new church
- Important seaport, and place where several main roads converged
- Center of trading and commerce, an intersection of all peoples of known world (diversity!)
- Very pivotal political city for Roman Empire.
- A "free" city, one which Romans gave **right of self-government**; also an "assize" town, place where Roman governors came to dispense justice (*loved pomp and pageantry!*)

1: Ephesus

- Site of **Panionian Games**, ranked with Olympic Games, known for its Greek athletes
- more important than trade, government, or sports, was significance of Ephesus as keeper of the Temple of Artemis (Diana), one of the 7 wonders of the ancient world.
- Temple was pride of Ephesus, made it **one of the greatest "religious" cities in Empire**
- When most remember mythology, they think of Diana as a lovely goddess. Not the case.
- Image was black, short, and repulsive. She was covered with many breasts, symbol of fertility

1: Ephesus

- Strange writing, which no one understood, covered base where she stood
- Hard to believe this image was goddess who was so loved, served, and worshipped throughout Ephesus and the Roman world
- Worship to Diana hysterical and frenzied exhibition of abominable actions. Involved sexual perversions beyond belief, and occultic ritual
- ***This is what Ephesus was most known for.***

1: Ephesus

- “Safe Zone” - anyone who had committed a crime could find safety either in the temple, or within "one bowshot" (about 200 yards) all around the temple.
- Once reaching this area, **any criminal was immune from prosecution or punishment.**
- Imagine community atmosphere in closest proximity to temple. Greatest collection of worst criminals.
- *Nice setting for a church!*

1: Ephesus

- Yet, church in Ephesus probably "mother" church of all churches established in Asia.
- Started by Paul on third missionary journey. Most known and written about in scripture.
- Can trace history through Acts, Ephesians, Timothy and finally Revelation (*steady decline!*)
- Church at Ephesus ***began with great zeal***, as people turned readily from occultic and perverse thoughts and deeds to embrace the Messiah

1: Ephesus

- Ephesus famous as center of magic arts, known for its occultic books, incantations and charms.
- From this background original believers in Ephesus came to the Lord. Denounced their ways, even burned books and other materials that would have been worth a fortune then. When they came to Jesus, they came dramatically and completely.
- However, "**first love**" **gradually declined.** It is thought church here began around 55-60 AD, 30-40 years prior to warning in Revelation.

1: Ephesus

- Appropriate church at Ephesus addressed first in series to seven churches in Asia (region we now call Turkey, former province of Rome called "Asia" or "Asia Minor").
- Closest to John when he was on Patmos, and perhaps strongest established church in Asia, until its decline.
- **Ephesus** literally means "*desired one*" (like *darling*). In its original form, this church was what God desired in His saints. Perfect, zealous, sold out love for Him, and for each other

1: Ephesus

- What do we see today that relates to city of Ephesus?
- Any different than cities today?

When we think of the city of Ephesus, it easily brings to mind any modern, bustling world city today - filled with greed, crimes, corrupt politics, witchcraft and occultic practices, sexual perversions, all kinds of evil –

AND a faithful following of Christian believers who need to be reminded of their “first love.”

1: Ephesus 2:1-7

Symbolic Age	Apostolic Church 30-100 AD
Speaker	<i>“He who holds the seven stars in His right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands.”</i>
Praise	Works, labor, patience, non-toleration of evil, tested false teachers, perseverance, hated Nicolaitans
Problem	Left first love, passion and joy gone
Counsel Or Warning	<u>Remember from where you have fallen; repent; do first works</u> (heart!) OR ELSE I will come quickly and remove your lampstand...
Promise	Eat of the tree of life in Paradise (of God, with Him), (eternal life in Paradise)
Nutshell	No passion for Jesus, agape love missing

1: Ephesus

What do you think
Yeshua means
about “first love?”

For whom?



1: Ephesus

What does this kind
of love look like?

AGAPE

1: Ephesus

Aside from the historical aspects of this letter...

- What does this letter mean to you, personally?
- *What “directives” are here for you?*

1: Ephesus

What is **ONE**
thing you can do
from now on to
prevent losing
your “first
love?”





**The Church at Ephesus today.....
there is no candlestick here anymore.**