

THE SEVEN LETTERS OF REVELATION 2 & 3

The letters follow the same formula

- each letter begins with the words 'To the angel of the church in write ...' followed by
- a description of Jesus
- words of commendation, criticism and challenge
- a challenge
- a threat
- a promise
- each letter closes with the words: 'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches'

	Jesus	commendation	criticism	challenge	threat	promise
EPHESUS 2:1-7	he who holds the seven stars in his right hand, who walks among the seven golden lampstands	works, endurance, hatred of the practices of the Nicolaitans	forsaken your first love	Repent (twice)	lampstand will be removed	Eat of the tree of life which is in the paradise of God
SMYRNA 2:8-11	the first and the last, who died and came to life	tribulation, poverty		Do not fear, be faithful, even to the point of death		Crown of life, Deliverance from the second death
PERGAMUM 2:12-17	who has the sharp two-edged sword	holding fast in faith, martyrdom of Antipas	tolerance of the teaching of Balaam and the Nicolaitans	Repent	Jesus will fight against false teaching with sword of his mouth	Hidden manna, White stone, New name
THYATIRA 2:18-29	the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and whose feet are like burnished bronze	love, faith, devotion, endurance	tolerance of Jezebel (? leader of a mystical cult centred on pagan sacrifice and sexual license)	Only hold on until I come (? get Jezebel to repent)	intense suffering, death of children	Power over the nations, Morning star
SARDIS 3:1-6	he who has the seven spirits of God and the seven stars	faithfulness of some	dead	Wake up! Strengthen what remains, Remember, obey & repent	Jesus will come like a thief if they don't wake up	White garments, Name in the book of life
PHILADELPHIA 3:7-13	the holy one, the true one, who has the key of David	faithfulness to the word and the name of Christ	Little strength	Hold on to what you have		Pillar in the temple, Name of God, New Jerusalem, New name
LAODICEA 3:14-22	the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of God's creation		lukewarm, consider yourselves rich when in fact you are poor	Be earnest and repent	Jesus will spit them out	Eat with Christ, Sit with Christ on his throne

THE SEVEN CITIES OF REVELATION 2 & 3

	Imperial & Pagan Cult	Social & Economic	Synagogues	Textual Details
EPHESUS 2:1-7	Enormous Temple of Artemis was the life-blood of the city Under Domitian, this Temple was extended and a pretentious temple to the emperor was also built	Longed to be the first city in Asia, though always fighting a losing battle with the silting of the harbour Therefore relied heavily on pagan worship	Very strong Jewish population, with special privileges Also long-standing bitterness between Jew and Gentile	Tree of life may refer to the Cross Paradise of God (a safe place) contrasts with the Asylum of Artemis, which was safe for criminals only
SMYRNA 2:8-11	Strongly pro-Roman Temple of Augustus followed by new Temple dedicated to Tiberias in AD 26	Fidelity to allies, in this case Rome, was a hallmark of Smyranean culture	Imprisonment on account of the slander of local Jews	'Synagogue of Satan' could indicate opposition from Jewish community Crown of life could contrast with posthumous crowns awarded by civic authorities
PERGAMUM 2:12-17	Long history of ruler worship Augustus allowed temple to himself in 29BC Several inscriptions of deity of emperors Centre of Imperial cult in Asia	Dominates the landscape Considered the First City of Asia	Little evidence of Jewish settlement Antipas put to death here	Place where Satan has his throne could refer to the Imperial cult Hidden manna contrasts with the idol food which was visible and available in the here and now White stone could refer to the civic inscriptions set against the dark granite rock
THYATIRA 2:18-29	Little evidence remaining	Large and varied number of trade guilds, with their various pagan rituals and influence	Little evidence, but possibly a syncretic magical Judaism by the time of Revelation	Jezebel ? leader of a mystical cult centred on pagan sacrifice and sexual license
SARDIS 3:1-6	Primary divinity Artemis; temple to Augustus and another to Vespasian	Illustrious history Rebuilt itself within 10 years of the earthquake in AD17	Ancient Jewish community Large synagogue complex, suggesting the community was well accepted	The fact that the Christian's name will never be erased from the book of life contrasts with the possibility that it might be erased from the magistrate's book while awaiting the death sentence
PHILADELPHIA 3:7-13	After earthquakes earlier in the century, the city took on Roman names of Neo-Caesarea and Philadelphia Flavia to express their gratitude and loyalty for help given	People very edgy about living in an earthquake city Loyalty to Domitian waned after his order in AD92 to cut down the vines	Little external evidence, though we have the phrase here again, 'Synagogue of Satan'	God's faithfulness to his temple contrasts with the Roman dynasty's unfaithfulness to Philadelphia
LAODICEA 3:14-22	Good evidence of plenty of help after earthquakes, though in the AD60's they went alone	Renowned banking centre with important library, medical school and famous black wool trade	Large Jewish population, who were probably among the important citizens	Lukewarm parallels the city's water supply in contrast with Hieropolis (hot) and Colossae (cold) Wealth, eye-salve and white clothes pick up on local banking, ophthalmic and wool trades 3:20 contrasts with Roman soldiers being billeted by force