

THE SEVEN CHURCHES OF REVELATION

An integrated Bible study

PART I

Ephesus · Smyrna · Pergamum · Thyatira

PART II

Sardis · Philadelphia · Laodicea

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Reina Valera 1960

Nuevo Testamento Interlineal Griego-Español

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1 Purpose and reading approach

This study brings together the letters to the seven churches in Revelation 2 and 3. Its purpose is to understand what Christ says to historical communities and how his message guides our lives. The central conclusion is straightforward: the Lord knows his church, corrects it with authority, and sustains its hope. Reputation, wealth, and a congregation's size cannot replace faithfulness to him.

Direct texts: Revelation 1:9-20; 2:1-29; 3:1-22. These provide the setting and the letters describing the communities, their difficulties, and the promises. Complementary texts clarify concepts, background, and hope; they do not erase the differences between the letters.

Reading note: summaries are editorial paraphrases, not verbatim quotations. They help readers who do not have a Bible available. Scripture references allow each explanation to be checked. The interlinear text is distinguished from its commentary notes. No unverified Greek meanings are assigned.

The English and Portuguese editions translate this study's exposition and summaries. They are not presented as official Bible translations or as quotations from an English or Portuguese Bible. The bibliographic foundation remains the Reina Valera 1960 and Francisco Lacueva's Greek-Spanish interlinear.

2 The setting of the seven letters

Direct text and summary — Revelation 1:9-11. John is on Patmos because of God's word and the testimony of Jesus Christ. He shares in his fellow believers' tribulation, kingdom, and endurance. He is instructed to write and send the book to seven churches in Asia.

Direct text and summary — Revelation 1:12-20. John sees the glorified Lord among seven lampstands. Christ identifies himself as the living one who was dead and holds the keys of

death and Hades. The passage itself identifies the lampstands as the churches and the stars as their angels.

Textual explanation. These churches were contemporary communities in what is now western Turkey. Church here means a community of believers; it is not equivalent to later Christian buildings. Whether the angels are heavenly beings or human representatives is debated. The duty to listen to Christ does not depend on settling that question.

Complementary text and summary — Colossians 1:18. Christ is the head of the body, the church, and holds first place. Doctrinal connection and application: the letters are received under his authority. Before judging other communities, we should allow his word to examine our service, decisions, and hope.

3 Part I Ephesus and the love that must be restored

Historical context. Ephesus was a Roman harbor city and a center of the cult of Artemis [H1]. Acts 19 shows the gospel changing practices and meeting resistance. This setting helps explain the need for discernment; it does not by itself account for the church's entire condition.

Direct text and summary — Revelation 2:1-3. Christ knows the church's work, endurance, and rejection of evil. The community has tested those claiming to be apostles and exposed their falsehood. It has endured hardship for his name without giving up.

Direct text and summary — Revelation 2:4-7. Christ exposes the abandonment of the first love. He calls the church to remember, repent, and return to its earlier works. He warns of removing its lampstand if it does not respond. He acknowledges its rejection of the Nicolaitans' deeds and promises the victor access to the tree of life.

Textual explanation. Christ values discernment but does not accept it as a replacement for love. The first love should not be

reduced to emotional enthusiasm: a relationship with the Lord changes how others are treated. Removing the lampstand concerns the community's witness; it is not an automatic declaration that every member loses salvation. The letter does not fully describe the Nicolaitans.

Complementary texts and summaries. Acts 20:28–31: Paul calls leaders to care for the flock and warns of teachers who will harm it. First Corinthians 13:1–3: gifts and sacrifices cannot compensate for a lack of love. Ephesians 2:8–10: salvation is by grace through faith; good works flow from the life received. Revelation 22:1–5: the tree of life appears in the final restoration, free of the curse and in God's presence.

Doctrinal connection and application. Grace does not make love unnecessary; it makes love possible. Ephesus invites us to ask whether we serve from fellowship with Christ or from habit. Restoring love includes listening, praying, and caring for people; it does not require manufacturing an emotion or earning God's favor.

4 Smyrna and faithfulness under suffering

Historical context. Ancient Smyrna lies within modern İzmir and was a prosperous city [H3]. The congregation's poverty contrasts with its surroundings. The passage does not tell how the church began or require us to reconstruct a history John does not provide.

Direct text and summary — Revelation 2:8–9. Christ identifies himself as the first and the last, who died and lived again. He knows the tribulation, poverty, and hostility. Though poor in resources, the community is rich before him.

Direct text and summary — Revelation 2:10–11. Some will face imprisonment and testing. Christ calls them not to fear and to remain faithful even to death. The tribulation is limited to ten days. He promises the crown of life and that the victor will not be harmed by the second death. This church receives no rebuke.

Textual explanation. Suffering does not prove divine abandonment. Christ speaks as the victor over death and does not promise immunity from every affliction. The text does not identify the ten days with ten emperors or persecutions. The expression concerning a synagogue of Satan refers to opponents in that situation; it does not authorize condemning the Jewish people or encouraging hostility toward them.

Complementary texts and summaries. John 11:25–26: Jesus is the resurrection and the life; physical death does not destroy the believer’s life in him. Romans 8:35–39: affliction, persecution, and death cannot separate his people from God’s love in Christ. James 1:12: the one who endures testing receives the crown of life promised to those who love God. Revelation 20:14: the second death is identified as the lake of fire.

Doctrinal connection and application. Faithfulness responds to grace and does not purchase eternal life. Smyrna teaches us to support the persecuted and not measure blessing by possessions. Pastoral comfort acknowledges pain and offers companionship; it does not accuse those who suffer of having too little faith.

5 Pergamum and discernment in the face of error

Historical context. Pergamum, in modern Bergama, had important sanctuaries and participated in the imperial cult [H2]. This context helps explain the pressure on Christians. It does not prove that a specific archaeological structure is precisely the throne of Satan mentioned in the letter.

Direct text and summary — Revelation 2:12–13. Christ has the sharp two-edged sword. He knows where his disciples live. He acknowledges that they hold to his name and did not deny the faith, even when Antipas, his faithful witness, was killed among them.

Direct text and summary — Revelation 2:14–17. Some hold teachings associated with Balaam and the Nicolaitans, introducing idolatry and immorality. Christ calls for repentance

and warns that he will fight with the sword of his mouth. He promises the victor hidden manna, a white stone, and a new name.

Textual explanation. The courage of some does not excuse tolerating the error of others. Christ distinguishes faithfulness from deviation within the same community. The letter does not describe how Antipas died. Suggestions about the white stone—acceptance, access, or recognition—can aid reflection, but none should be presented as the passage’s explicit and exclusive meaning.

Complementary texts and summaries. Numbers 25:1–3: Israel participates in immorality and Baal worship, provoking judgment. Numbers 31:16: Balaam’s counsel is associated with the seduction that led to this unfaithfulness. First Corinthians 10:14–22: Paul calls believers to flee idolatry and distinguishes fellowship with the Lord from participation in rival worship. John 6:35: Christ identifies himself as the bread of life, directing the hope of spiritual provision toward him.

Doctrinal connection and application. Correction belongs to Christ’s authority and does not authorize human violence. Pergamum calls us to examine practices accepted for social or economic convenience. Discernment should combine truth with care for people, without treating every secondary disagreement as idolatry.

6 Thyatira and responsibility for what we tolerate

Historical context. Thyatira is identified with Akhisar and was associated with trade and textiles [H4]. Acts 16:14 mentions Lydia, a purple-goods merchant from that city. This does not prove that she founded the church. Commercial pressures can illuminate the setting, but the letter does not detail the decisions of every trade association.

Direct text and summary — Revelation 2:18–19. The Son of God has eyes like fire and feet like burnished bronze. He knows

the church's love, faith, service, and endurance. Its recent works exceed its earlier ones.

Direct text and summary — Revelation 2:20–23. The community tolerates Jezebel, who claims to be a prophetess and leads people into immorality and idolatry. Christ gave her an opportunity to repent, but she refused. He announces judgment on her and those involved, so that the churches will recognize that he examines the inner person and judges deeds.

Direct text and summary — Revelation 2:24–29. Christ calls those who did not accept that teaching to hold on to what they have until he comes. He promises the victor a share in his authority over the nations and the morning star.

Textual explanation. The name Jezebel recalls the promotion of idolatry in the Old Testament and may be symbolic. Growth in service does not make corrupt teaching harmless. The interlinear confirms the sense of allowing in 2:20; it does not add a denominational identification. The tribulation announced in 2:22 should first be read as judgment on those involved, without automatically equating it with the entire eschatological Great Tribulation.

Complementary texts and summaries. First Kings 16:31–33: Ahab marries Jezebel and promotes Baal worship. Psalm 2:7–9: God declares his Anointed One's authority over the nations. Revelation 22:16: Jesus identifies himself as the bright morning star. Doctrinal connection and application: the hope is to share in Christ's victory, not exercise independent dominion. Pastoral patience allows room for repentance, but does not require allowing a harmful influence to continue injuring others.

7 Part II Sardis and the need to awaken

Historical context. Sardis was the capital of Lydia and retained a tradition of wealth and urban importance. Its ruins include buildings from different periods [H5]. The first-century community should not simply be identified with later Christian structures.

Direct text and summary — Revelation 3:1-3. Christ holds the seven spirits of God and the seven stars. The church has a reputation for being alive, but its overall condition is death. It must awaken, strengthen what remains, remember what it received, keep it, and repent. Without vigilance, the Lord's intervention will come unexpectedly.

Direct text and summary — Revelation 3:4-6. Some have not soiled their garments and will walk with Christ dressed in white. The victor will receive white garments; Christ promises not to erase that person's name from the book of life and to acknowledge it before the Father and the angels.

Textual explanation. Reputation does not determine Christ's assessment. The presence of a faithful few shows that he distinguishes individuals within an unhealthy community. The seven spirits are commonly understood as an image of the fullness of God's Spirit, not seven gods. The promise concerning the book of life assures the victor; it does not report that a believer has been erased.

Complementary texts and summaries. Ephesians 5:14: the call to awaken points toward Christ's light. First Thessalonians 5:4-8: believers should live as children of light, alert and sober, clothed in faith, love, and hope. John 10:27-29: Christ's sheep listen to him; he gives them eternal life, and no one snatches them from his hand. Revelation 7:14: garments are cleansed by the Lamb's blood, grounding purity in his work.

Doctrinal connection and application. Assurance rests on Christ, not institutional prestige. A visible church can include people in different spiritual conditions. Sardis invites us to return to the gospel and strengthen what remains, without using shame or appearances to manufacture a false renewal.

8 Philadelphia and faithfulness with little strength

Historical context. Philadelphia is identified with modern Alaşehir [H3]. The letter supplies no membership or resource

figures. Its little strength is a condition acknowledged by Christ, not a measurement we can reconstruct precisely.

Direct text and summary — Revelation 3:7-9. Christ is holy and true and holds the key of David: he opens and no one shuts. He has placed an open door before the church. Although it has little strength, it has kept his word and has not denied his name. Its opponents will recognize that he has loved it.

Direct text and summary — Revelation 3:10-13. Christ promises to keep it from the hour of testing coming upon the world. He calls it to hold on to what it has so that no one takes its crown. He promises the victor a place as a pillar in God's temple and the names of God, the new Jerusalem, and the Lord's new name.

Textual explanation. The open door expresses Christ's sovereign authority and is associated with assured access; some readings emphasize an opportunity for witness. It does not promise financial success. The pillar conveys belonging and stability, not a physical transformation into stone. The opposition in 3:9 does not authorize hostility toward the Jewish people. The promise in 3:10 must be distinguished from interpretations of how it will be fulfilled.

Complementary texts and summaries. Isaiah 22:22: the key of David's house symbolizes authority to open and shut. First Thessalonians 4:13-18: the dead in Christ will rise and believers will be gathered to the Lord; this hope brings comfort. First Thessalonians 5:9-11: God appoints his people to salvation through Christ, not wrath. Revelation 21:2-3,22: the new Jerusalem expresses God dwelling with his people; God and the Lamb are its temple.

Doctrinal connection and application. The pretribulation rapture reading understands 3:10 as supporting evidence in connection with other passages. The letter alone does not set out the entire end-time sequence. Philadelphia teaches us to trust Christ and keep his word without equating faithfulness with size or influence.

9 Laodicea and the call to leave self-sufficiency

Historical context. Laodicea stood in the Lycus Valley near modern Denizli. Textile commerce and water infrastructure formed part of its prosperity [H6]. Colossians 4:13–16 confirms connections between its believers and neighboring communities. Later Christian ruins are not, by themselves, first-century meeting places.

Direct text and summary — Revelation 3:14–17. Christ is the Amen, the faithful and true witness, and the beginning of God’s creation. The church is neither cold nor hot: its lukewarmness is rejected. It considers itself rich and without need, but the Lord exposes its spiritual poverty, blindness, and nakedness.

Direct text and summary — Revelation 3:18–22. Christ counsels the church to receive refined gold, white garments, and eye salve from him. He rebukes and disciplines those he loves and calls for zeal and repentance. He stands at the door and knocks, offering fellowship to the one who hears and opens. He promises the victor a share in his throne, as he overcame and sat down with his Father.

Textual explanation. Lukewarmness exposes a condition Christ rejects; it does not require claiming that he prefers unbelief. Buying from him is language of dependence, not payment for salvation. The call at the door is addressed first to a church that needs to respond. The expression beginning of creation is read alongside texts affirming that all things were created through Christ; it is not used to make him a creature.

Complementary texts and summaries. John 1:1–3: the Word is God, and all things were made through him. Colossians 1:15–17: Christ has primacy over creation because all things were created through him and for him. Isaiah 55:1–3: God invites people to receive without money and listen in order to live. Hebrews 12:5–11: fatherly discipline can hurt, but seeks our good and a harvest of righteousness.

Doctrinal connection and application. Possessions are not condemned simply for existing; the danger is using them as a substitute for dependence on God. Christ's rebuke flows from his love. Laodicea invites us to acknowledge our need, listen, and recover fellowship without confusing visible success with spiritual approval.

10 The seven churches in God's time

Three horizons. Historical: the letters address real first-century churches. Pastoral: their conditions can recur and coexist in any generation. Prophetic: the promises point toward life, victory, judgment, and final fellowship with Christ. Recognizing that future horizon does not require turning each letter into a dated period.

Later historical interpretation. Some schemes associate Ephesus with the apostolic era; Smyrna with ancient persecutions; Pergamum with imperial alliances; Thyatira with medieval structures; Sardis with the Reformation and its developments; Philadelphia with renewal and missions; and Laodicea with modern self-sufficiency. These are interpretive associations. Revelation 2 and 3 neither name those movements nor assign dates to them.

Complementary texts and summaries. Acts 1:7: times and seasons belong to the Father's authority. Second Peter 3:8-9: God's perspective and patience are not confined to our perception of delay; his patience is connected with repentance. Matthew 24:36: the day and hour are not given to human knowledge. These texts guide expectation rather than provide a calculation formula.

Application. A community can have labor like Ephesus, suffering like Smyrna, and little strength like Philadelphia at the same time. The letters are a word to hear, not a labeling system for despising others. In God's time, the present response matters: restore love, persevere, discern, awaken, and depend on Christ.

11 Frequently raised objections and responses

Do works purchase salvation? No. Ephesians 2:8–10 affirms salvation by grace through faith and good works as its fruit. The letters examine the communities' lives; they do not teach payment for eternal life. Summary of First John 5:4–5: victory is connected with faith in Jesus as God's Son. Endurance expresses that relationship and does not replace the Savior's work.

Does Revelation 3:5 prove loss of salvation? The statement promises not to erase the victor's name; it does not report an erasure. This study understands the promise in harmony with Christ's lasting care. Other interpreters see a conditional warning. The discussion requires distinguishing the visible congregation from each person's spiritual condition and reading warnings alongside promises without concealing either.

Does Philadelphia by itself prove a pretribulation rapture? Revelation 3:10 is understood as support within that reading, but alone it does not describe resurrection, gathering in the air, and the entire sequence. Others understand protection during the trial. The promise of care is firm; the manner of fulfillment requires a broader argument. The interlinear does not settle the entire debate through one isolated word.

Does Jezebel identify a denomination, and are the ten days ten persecutions? The letters do not establish those equivalents. The first figure exposes seduction into idolatry and immorality; the ten days limit Smyrna's testing. Later comparisons should be recognized as interpretations, without collectively condemning people or turning variable proposals into revelation.

Does Christ prefer unbelief to lukewarmness? The contrast between cold, hot, and lukewarm exposes Laodicea's condition. It does not require saying unbelief is spiritually better. Does discipline deny love? Revelation 3:19 connects them: Christ corrects those he loves. Pastoral care must not confuse correction with humiliation or abusive control.

12 Conclusion and study questions

Christ does not assess his church by appearances. He knows its love, trials, faithfulness, and concessions to error. His promises lead to the tree of life, victory over the second death, recognition, and participation in his kingdom. His correction calls for a response while opportunity remains.

Summary of Ephesians 1:13–14: those who hear the gospel and believe are sealed with the Holy Spirit, the pledge of their inheritance. Doctrinal connection: hope rests on Christ's work and God's care. That assurance sustains a response of love and obedience; it does not make sin irrelevant.

Reflection questions. 1. What does Christ acknowledge in each church before correcting it? 2. How do service and fellowship differ? 3. How do we support those who suffer? 4. What practices do we allow for convenience? 5. How do we distinguish patience from tolerating harm?

6. What reveals our actual dependence on Christ? 7. Which promise brings the most comfort in our present situation? 8. Which statements come directly from the text and which are interpretive? 9. How does the hope of his coming change our lives? 10. What concrete response can we make this week?

Pastoral closing. We do not need to pretend to have strength we lack. We need to listen to the Lord who knows our reality. He calls us to return, sustains us through testing, and offers fellowship. Reading these letters begins with humility and ends with hope placed in Christ.

13 Bibliographic references and verification notes

Biblia Reina Valera 1960. Biblical foundation for references and exposition. Editorial summaries aid reading; the chapters are not reproduced in full. Francisco Lacueva, Nuevo Testamento Interlineal Griego-Español, supplied copy: Revelation 2 and 3, PDF pages 965–974, printed pages 959–968.

Specific verification. Revelation 2:20: the interlinear note explains tolerating as allowing or letting something happen (printed page 962).

Revelation 3:8–10: little strength, keeping the word, and the promise of protection from the hour of testing are checked (965–966).

Revelation 3:20: the note explains knocking as striking with the hand (967). Commentary notes are not presented as additional phrases of Scripture.

Compiler's source materials. Supplied narratives Churches of Revelation Part I corrected and Part II. They were reorganized into an integrated study with added complementary-text summaries, doctrinal connections, and objections. Historical information is documented below; doctrinal explanation is grounded in the Scripture references.

[H1] UNESCO — Ephesus

<https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1018/>

[H2] UNESCO — Pergamon and its Multi-Layered Cultural Landscape

<https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1457/>

[H3] GoTürkiye — Seven Churches of Revelation

<https://goturkiye.com/blog/seven-churches-of-revelation-in-turkiye>

[H4] GoTürkiye — Thyatira

<https://goturkiye.com/culturaljourneys/thyatira>

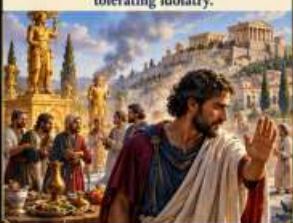
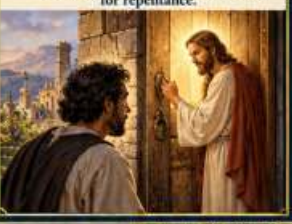
[H5] The Archaeological Exploration of Sardis — About Sardis

<https://sardisexpedition.org/en/essays/about-sardis>

[H6] UNESCO — Archaeological site of Laodikeia

<https://whc.unesco.org/en/tentativelists/5823/>

Appendix: infographic of the seven churches

THE SEVEN CHURCHES OF REVELATION An integrated Bible study PART I · Ephesus · Smyrna · Pergamum · Thyatira / PART II · Sardis · Philadelphia · Laodicea		
1 JOHN ON PATMOS Revelation 1:9-20 Christ knows his church and speaks with authority. 	2 EPHESUS · RESTORE LOVE Revelation 2:1-7 Service and discernment need love. 	3 SMYRNA · PERSEVERE Revelation 2:8-11 Affliction does not cancel hope in Christ. 
4 PERGAMUM · DISCERN Revelation 2:12-17 Faithfulness does not excuse tolerating idolatry. 	5 THYATIRA · HOLD TO THE TRUTH Revelation 2:18-29 Growth in good works requires rejecting corrupt teaching. 	6 SARDIS · AWAKEN Revelation 3:1-6 Reputation cannot replace spiritual life. 
7 PHILADELPHIA · KEEP HIS WORD Revelation 3:7-13 Christ sustains faithfulness with little strength. 	8 LAODICEA · ACKNOWLEDGE YOUR NEED Revelation 3:14-22 Self-sufficiency blinds; Christ calls for repentance. 	9 IN GOD'S TIME Acts 1:7 Real churches, enduring teaching, future promises. 
10 LISTEN AND HOPE IN CHRIST Ephesians 2:8-10 · Revelation 22:1-5 Salvation by grace through faith; good works as its fruit. 		

Personalized by: Raperto Bravo Bonaventura (R.B.B.) Reina Valera 1960 · Greek-Spanish Interlinear by Francisco Lacueva. Study summaries; not verbatim Bible quotations.

14 Compiler's professional profile



Ruperto Bravo Benavente (R.B.B.). Senior project developer and process engineering expert with more than 40 years of experience in the technical and financial structuring of industrial, agrifood, and critical infrastructure complexes.

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Compiler and editor of biblical and educational study materials. In this work, he serves as initiator, compiler, and the person responsible for editorial presentation. Doctrinal content should be examined in the light of Scripture and the stated references. Background information and photograph come from the supplied professional profile.