

Introduction to Letters to 7 Churches

Introducing the Author of the Letters

The Setting of the Vision

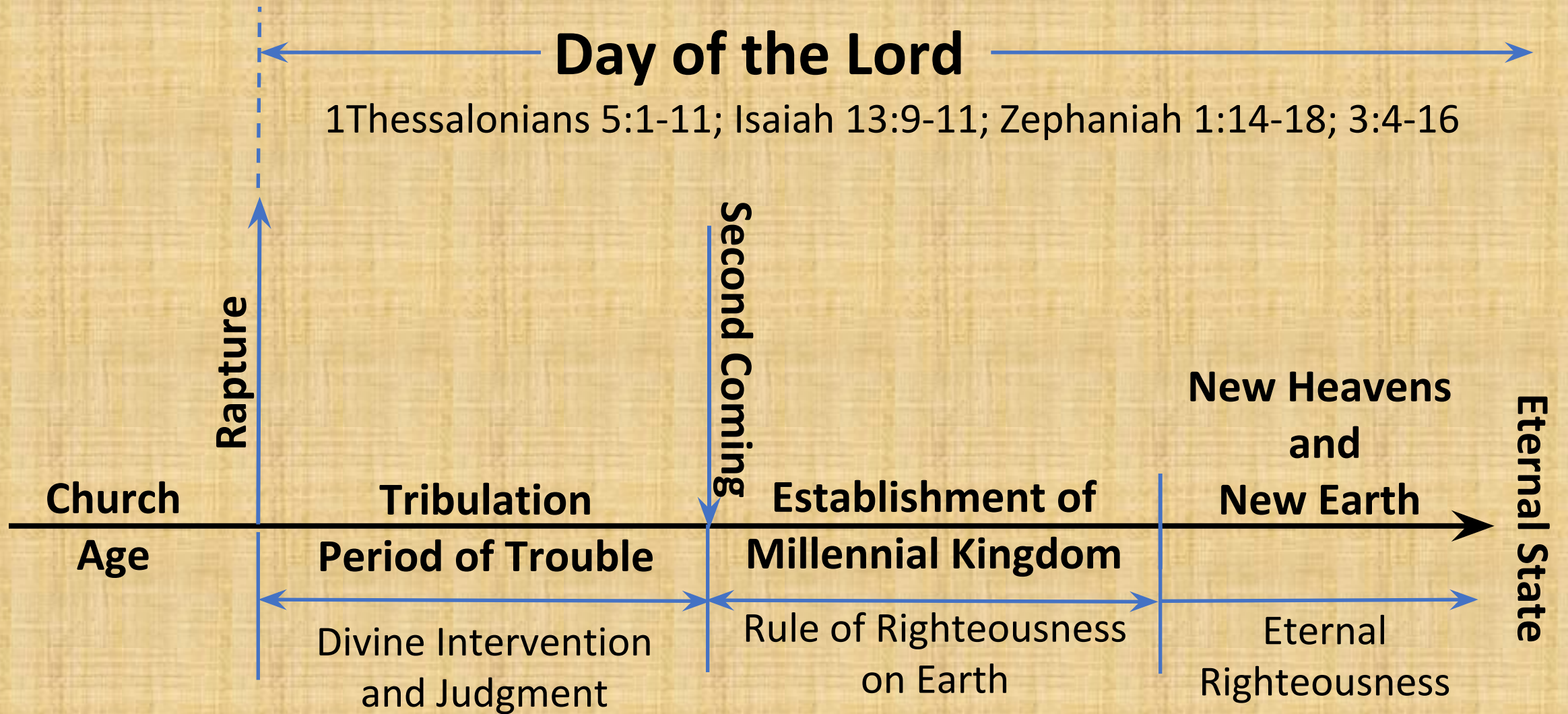
- From Nero to Domitian, persecution of Christians was empirewide. All apostles were dead and John has been exiled to Patmos. The persecuted believers desperately needed encouragement. They took comfort in the Lord Jesus' promise that one day He will return in glory (Revelation 1:7) to defeat His enemies. (But he that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and **comfort**, 1Corinthians 14:3.)
- John identifies with the churches as a fellow partaker in tribulation (severe persecution) and a fellow member of the kingdom (redeemed community of believers) and persevering (remaining under severe) under severe difficulties as an exile in the barren island of Patmos.
- Under this condition, John was "in the Spirit" (2Peter 1:21 – holy men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Ghost) on the Lord's day.

The Lord's Day vs the Day of the Lord

- The “Lord’s day” became customary to refer to the first day of the week (Sunday) when they come together to break bread, hear the word of God (Acts 20:7) and gather collection for the saints (1 Corinthians 16:1-2)
- The “Day of the Lord” (1Thessalonians 5:1-11) covers a larger teaching of the Scripture. This is a time of the Lord’s visitation and intervention bringing judgment on the world. After Paul taught the Rapture in 1Thessalonians 4, he wrote, “For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night.” (1Thessalonians 5:2) Without warning, the Rapture will occur and the day of the Lord will begin.
- The future period of the Day of the Lord begins at Rapture, will include Tribulation period the coming of the Lord and His millennial reign.

Day of the Lord

1Thessalonians 5:1-11; Isaiah 13:9-11; Zephaniah 1:14-18; 3:4-16



For God has not destined us for wrath but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us so that whether we are awake or asleep we might live with him. Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing.
1Thessalonians 5:9-11

A Vision of Christ's Ministry in the Church

- John's commission to write what he sees and send it to the 7 churches in Asia Minor (present day Turkey).



The Ministry of Jesus Among the 7 Churches

- John saw seven golden candlesticks. And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the son of man (Revelation 1:12-13a)...the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches (Revelation 1:20b).
- The meaning of the symbolic 7 golden lampstand are the 7 churches as described in verse 1:20b. Lampstands are symbolic of giving light to the world in darkness as Paul has written in Philippians 2:15, "...that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world.")
- Here we have a classical example of the Bible explaining itself. It uses plain ordinary words explaining the vision given symbolically. The interpretation is given in the passage itself or in other books of prophetic character in the Bible.

Parenthetical Illustration of Interpretation of Symbolic Language in Prophecy

Interpretation Through Other Prophetic Books in the Bible

- Who is the Son of man in the midst of the lampstands? The identification of the “Son of man” here is easy in the context of Chapter 1. It is the Lord Jesus Christ. But let us take this exercise to illustrate that symbolic passages can be interpreted in the context of the passage/s themselves or it may also be interpreted through cross-referencing with other prophetic books.
- The Old Testament is always interpreted in the light of the New with the Old often serving as a Type of the New. So while we may look to the Old for clues as to the initial meaning of something, the New will give us the complete answer. Answers to the question/s in the Old Testament can be interpreted according to the light of Christ’s revelation given to us.
- John saw the Son of man in a vision and so with Daniel. Who is the Ancient of days in Daniel 9:13 whom the Son of man, coming with the clouds, was presented to? Very often, many say that the Ancient of days is God the Father and the Son of man is the pre-incarnate Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Son of Man (in Revelation) is the Ancient of Days (in the Book of Daniel)

Daniel's Vision of the Ancient of days and the Son of man

Daniel 7:9-10a "...the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool: A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him."

Dan 7:10 thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him: the judgment was set, and the books were opened.

John's vision of the Son of man identified as Jesus

Revelation 1:13-14 "...he Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle. His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire;

Revelation 5:11 And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands. Revelation 20:11-15 "And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it...and the books were opened:

The Son of Man (in Revelation) is the Ancient of Days (in the Book of Daniel)

Daniel's Vision of the Ancient of days and the Son of man

Dan 7:14 And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion *is* an everlasting dominion.

Dan 7:22 Until the Ancient of days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the most High; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom.

Dan 7:13 I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven (and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him.)

John's vision of the Son of man identified as Jesus

Revelation 1:6 And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever.

Rev 1:6 And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen. Rev_11:15 The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever. Rev 20:6 and they shall reign with him a thousand years.

Rev 1:7 Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: (This is the vision of the God the Son taking unto Himself the form of a man in His incarnation.)

The Unfolding Vision of John

The Ministry of Jesus Among the 7 Churches

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- The meaning of the symbolic 7 golden lampstand are the 7 churches as described in verse 1:20b. Lampstands are symbolic of giving light to the world in darkness as Paul has written in Philippians 2:15, "...that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you **shine as lights in the world.**")
- These were actual churches in real places but are symbolic or types of churches that exist through all of church history.
- The son of man, Jesus Christ, in the midst of the lampstands, is the picture of His continued presence in His church as He promised, "I am with you always, even to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:20)

The Ministry of Jesus Among the 7 Churches

- Seven is the number of completeness. Some of the symbols in the Book of Revelation are in the use of numbers. While it is taken literally may also have symbolic meaning. Most common numbers mentioned is the number 7 which has taken the concept of perfection and completeness. Genesis tells us that God created the heavens and the Earth in six days, and, upon completion, God rested on the seventh day (Genesis 1; 2:1-2).
- Other 7's in the Book: 7 stars, 7 spirits of God, 7 seals, 7 trumpets, 7 bowls , 1 week of 7 years of tribulation, dragon with 7 heads, 7 hills, 7 kings. Numbers are always used in the literal sense. Ex: 7 stars is seven stars not 6, not 8.

The Ministry of Jesus Among the 7 Churches

- Revelation 1:13 and in the midst of the lampstands one like a son of man, clothed with a long robe and with a golden sash around his chest. “Robe” was frequently worn by the high priest. Jesus is biblically presented as Prophet and King, the robe with a golden sash manifests His role as our Great High Priest. (Exodus 28:4 These are the garments that they shall make: a breastpiece, an ephod, a robe, a coat of checker work, a turban, and a sash.)
- As our High Priest who once offered the perfect and complete sacrifice for our sins and now, Jesus is “able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.” (Hebrews 7:25)
- Jesus has unequalled capacity to sympathize with us. Hebrews 4:15-16 “For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” This offered great comfort and hope to the persecuted church at that time.

The Ministry of Jesus Among the 7 Churches

- Revelation 1:14-15 “The hairs of his head were white, like white wool, like snow. His eyes were like a flame of fire, his feet were like burnished bronze, refined in a furnace...”
- Christ’s head and hair being white like white wool like snow is a clear reference to Daniel 7:9 which we have studied that the Ancient of days that the prophet Daniel saw in a vision is also the Son of God who will come to judge the world not the Father because the One who shall come is the Son and all judgment has been given by the Father to the Son. We know also that the Son of God came in the flesh to be the Son of man to take our place in bearing the punishment for our sin unto death (Hebrews 9:22)
- His eyes like flame of fire reveals everything about His church and His feet like burnished bronze symbolizes His authority for everything has been placed under His feet. (Ephesians 1:22)

The Ministry of Jesus Among the 7 Churches

- Revelation 1:15b "...and his voice was like the roar of many waters." "And behold, the glory of the God of Israel was coming from the east. And the sound of his coming was like the sound of many waters, and the earth shone with his glory." Ezekiel 43:2 is a parallel of Revelation 1:15b affirming Jesus Christ's deity.
- When He speaks, the church must heed and obey. The Father said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him." Therefore, the Holy Spirit says, "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion." (Hebrews 3:7-8)
- Jesus says, "Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear, and who keep what is written in it, for the time is near." (Revelation 1:3)

The Ministry of Jesus Among the 7 Churches

- Revelation 1:16 “In his right hand he held seven stars” ...Revelation 1:20a “...the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches.”
- The seven stars are seven angels of the seven churches. Angels (aggelos) means envoy, one who is sent, an angel, a messenger from God. The angels are not angelic beings but leaders or elders of the churches because nowhere in the Bible teaches that the angels are involved in the leadership of the church.
- Spiritual leaders function as instruments through which Jesus Christ rules the churches. This why the standards for leadership in the New Testament are so high. (1Timothy 3:1-13 – Qualifications for Overseers and Deacons)
- Being held by the right hand of Jesus does not imply safety or protection but implies authority and control.

The Ministry of Jesus Among the 7 Churches

- Revelation 1:16b “...from his mouth came a sharp two-edged sword...”
- Revelation 19:15 And out of his mouth goes out a sharp sword which the King of kings and the Lord of lords shall strike the nations and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. In 2Thessalonians 2:8, the Lord Jesus will destroy the man of wickedness or the antichrist with the spirit of His mouth and the brightness of His coming.
- The Lord shall protect His church and His people with His two-edged sword such that the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. Satan thought he had done away with the church through COVID-19 preventing our gathering together. He is wrong, because the church has multiplied by the house churches.

The Ministry of Jesus Among the 7 Churches

- Revelation 1:16c “...and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength.”
- The glory of God in the face or countenance of Jesus Christ is shining in our hearts (2Corinthians 4:6). Paul encountered that glory brighter than the noon day sun that brought him to the ground on his way to Damascus to bind all that are of the Way. It was by that power that he met Jesus and suffered the loss of all things that he may fully gain Christ and be found in Him.
- This is the countenance of the Lord that gives us peace which the world cannot understand, that in the middle of the world’s turmoil and uncertainties, we have peace because the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father (Matthew 13:43).

The Ministry of Jesus Among the 7 Churches

- Revelation 1:17 And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last:
- Six decades ago, in the Mount of Transfiguration, John together Peter and James saw the glory of Jesus. “His face shone as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light.” (Matthew 17:2) When they heard a voice from above saying, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him,” they fell on their face, and were sore afraid. Jesus came, touched them, and said, “Arise, and be not afraid.” So it is still today. The Lord touches us always with His assurance when we are afraid. He knows we are battled by many fears. Jesus would often say, “Fear not” or “Be not afraid” or “Let not your hearts be troubled.”
- There is comfort for Christians overwhelmed by the threats of this world. The corona virus has sown fear in the hearts of the people of the world. But the Bible says, “Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 4:6-7)

The Ministry of Jesus Among the 7 Churches

- Revelation 1:18 *I am* he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.
- Jesus said, “I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. This is our assurance of the gospel. Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures. (1Corinthians 15:3-4)
- 1Co 15:54-57 “Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where *is* thy sting? O grave, where *is* thy victory? The sting of death *is* sin; and the strength of sin *is* the law. But thanks *be* to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Ministry of Jesus Among the 7 Churches

- Revelation 1:19 “Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter.”
- Like apostle John we have an obligation to share the lessons of truth from the word of God and (*kai*) the testimony of Jesus because...”All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.” (2Timothy 3:16-17)
- As we study and come to see more of God’s glory in the unveiled face of the Lord Jesus Christ (in this Book of Revelation), His glory shall shine in our hearts just as the glory of Jesus shone from the face of Moses coming from the Lord’s glorious presence. 2Corinthian 3:18 says that as we behold the glory of the Lord, “we all are changed into the same image from glory to glory by the Spirit of the Lord.”

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- Furthermore, John wrote, “Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, **when he shall appear, we shall be like him** (because we have been conformed and transformed to the same image as that of the Lord Jesus Christ by beholding the glory on His face); (therefore) **for we shall see him as he is.**”
- Come Rapture, we shall know Him. The hymn writer Fanny Crosby penned:
“I shall know Him, I shall know Him,
And redeemed by His side I shall stand;
I shall know Him, I shall know Him
By the print of the nails in His hand.”