

The Book of Revelation addresses seven letters to seven churches in Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey) ([Revelation 2-3](#)). Each letter, as proclaimed by Jesus and recorded by John the Apostle, declares the triumphs and failings of the recipient churches and warns each congregation to repent.

The advice in these letters is **prophetic**, forewarning present-day Christian communities of the snares that can lure us away from our faith.

Who Wrote to the Seven Churches in Revelation?

Christian scholars from the **second century** have attributed Revelation's physical writing to John the Apostle, son of Zebedee ([Mark 3:17](#)), and author of the Gospel and Epistles of John.

Although John literally wrote Revelation, the Book makes it clear that the source of the revelations is Jesus ([Revelation 1:1-2](#)).

In the first century A.D., the Apostle John was exiled to the island of Patmos, a Roman penal colony near Asia Minor. John's “crime” was practicing Christianity. While in Patmos, John was seized by the Holy Spirit and received prophetic visions from Christ instructing him to:

“Write on a scroll what you see and send it to the seven churches:

1. ***Ephesus***
2. ***Smyrna***
3. ***Pergamum***
4. ***Thyatira***
5. ***Sardis***
6. ***Philadelphia***
7. ***Laodicea*** ([Revelations 1:1-2; 9-11](#)).

Why Did These Seven Churches Receive the Apocalyptic Message?

Revelation's seven churches were among several early Christian communities in Asia Minor. These particular seven churches may have been chosen to receive Christ's apocalyptic message because, geographically, the churches were located along an **established, circular trade route** that brought together the most populous and influential parts of the province.

Once the apocalyptic message was given to the churches in these prominent cities, the message would spread to the Christian communities in the rest of the province.

Although the seven letters in Revelation are tailored to the named churches, these churches, and their stated deficiencies can symbolize all churches in one respect or another. Therefore, the instruction given to Revelation's congregations is valuable to Christian congregations today.

The Seven Churches in Revelation & Their Symbolism

1. The Church of Ephesus ([Revelation 2:1-7](#))

The Church that Has Abandoned Its Love for Christ and His Teachings

Summary and Explanation: Ephesus was Asia's prominent commercial and cultural center. Christ's letter to the church of Ephesus praises the congregation for its "deeds...hard work...and perseverance," and for rejecting false [apostles](#) ([Revelation 2:2-3](#)).

Despite its hard work and doctrinal integrity, Christ faults the community for having "forsaken the love [they] had at first" ([Revelation 2:4](#)). This "forsaken love" can mean that the Ephesians had become less devoted to Christ or that the work they did was no longer motivated by love for one another. The letter to the church of Ephesus does offer the community hope if they repent and rekindle their love for Christian living ([Revelation 2:5-7](#)).

Significance Today: The lesson in the letter to Ephesus teaches that truth and love must go hand-in-hand. A church that upholds doctrinal [purity](#) at the expense of showing love is just as flawed as a church that upholds congregational harmony at the expense of truthful teachings. Instead, Jesus reveals that a church fashioned in His image must teach God's Truth in love.

2. The Church of Smyrna

The Church that Remains Faithful Amidst Persecution ([Revelation 2:8-11](#))

Summary and Explanation: Smyrna was home to a large Jewish community hostile to Christians. The Bible notes that slanderous accusations by Jews against Christians had led to Christian persecution by Roman authorities ([Acts 14:2](#), 19: [Acts 17:13](#)).

Christ's revelation to the church of Smyrna commends the community for its material poverty but its spiritual wealth, and acknowledges its wrongful persecution ([Revelation 2:9](#)). Christ does not reprimand this church but warns of impending imprisonment for some of its members, urging them to remain faithful "even to the point of death" and remember the promise of their "victor's crown" ([Revelation 2:10](#)).

Significance Today: Like the church of Smyrna, Christians are persecuted worldwide in obvious and insidious ways. This letter warns all Christians that although we may suffer greatly, the length of tribulation will be short compared to the promise of eternal life.