

REVELATION

THE LETTERS TO THE SEVEN CHURCHES



JANUARY BIBLE STUDY 2019 • PERSONAL STUDY GUIDE

 **LifeWay**
Biblical Solutions for Life

REVELATION

THE LETTERS TO THE SEVEN CHURCHES



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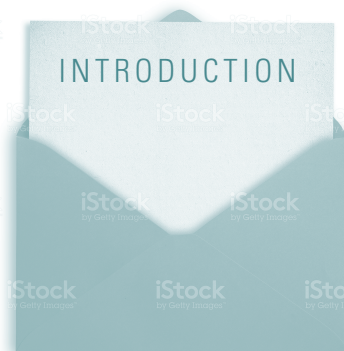
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MEET THE SETTING, SCRIBE, AND SUBJECT OF REVELATION

The very first word of this remarkable book is *apocalupsis*. It literally means a disclosure or unveiling. It declares that what is contained in these pages is truth that had been hidden until that time. This unveiling was sent “to show his servants what must soon take place” (Rev. 1:1). This unveiling was for the church. It was for their building up and to provide understanding of what lay ahead.

The persecution addressed in this unveiling was likely that under Domitian in the years AD 81-95. It was preceded by 25 years of persecution under Nero, whose persecution had been more irregular. The persecution under Domitian was much more intense and constant.

At the time of the writing, about AD 95, “Caesar is Lord” was the required confession of the Roman Empire. The reigning Caesar was Domitian and he controlled the empire. He demanded to be worshiped as the lord of the earth. Early believers refused to declare that Caesar was lord. After all, the great confession of their young faith was “Jesus is Lord.” Severe persecution erupted at their refusal to bow before Caesar. Hounding, ridicule, exile, and death were their lot. It was into that world of hatred and hostility that the Book of Revelation was delivered.

The greatest danger, however, was not physical. The most sinister and dangerous of all persecution was the heresy and its attendant evils. These things were deeply entwined in the cultural landscape of the first-century church through false teachers.

John the beloved apostle and pastor of the church in Ephesus wrote Revelation while exiled to the Isle of Patmos, which lay in the Aegean Sea about 45 miles from Ephesus. John was the son of Zebedee and Salome, and brother of James. Zebedee had been a fisherman successful enough to have hired workers to assist in the business (Mark 1:20). John and James were fishermen on the Sea of Galilee in partnership with Simon Peter (Luke 5:10). They were among the first disciples to leave all to follow Jesus Christ in their youth. These brothers were known for their quick temper and aggressive nature, being labeled by Jesus as “Sons of Thunder” (Mark 3:17) when they wanted to call down fire from heaven upon a Samaritan village that refused to receive Jesus and the disciples (Luke 9:52-54).

At one point in their companionship with Jesus, the brothers asked to have the honor of sitting on His right and left hand with Him in His glory (Mark 10:37). This request was met with a rebuke from Jesus. They were marked with both quick temper and desire for prominence.

John never lacked for courage to testify about the resurrected Lord. When he and Peter were confronted by Jewish leaders for preaching the gospel (Acts 4:5-7) they were described as “uneducated and untrained men” (v. 13). When commanded not to preach or teach in Jesus’ name, Peter and John courageously replied, “Whether it’s right in the sight of God for us to listen to you rather than to God, you decide; for we are unable to stop speaking about what we have seen and heard” (vv. 19-20). Now, as he penned this prophecy, John was the much-beloved, greatly mellowed patriarch, who served as pastor of the church in Ephesus.

John opened this remarkable book by declaring, “The revelation of Jesus Christ that God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place” (Rev. 1:1). From beginning to end, this is a book about the Lord Jesus Christ. It is a “testimony of Jesus Christ” (v. 2). Additionally, it contains an incomparable promise: “Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear the words of this prophecy and keep what is written in it, because the time is near” (v. 3). This promised blessing requires careful study to absorb this prophecy into our hearts. Such a study will be richly rewarding.

Immediately “the seven churches in Asia” (v. 4) are identified as the recipients of this prophecy. Jesus Christ is described as “the one who is, who was, and who is to come ... the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead and the ruler of the kings of the earth” (vv. 4-5).

This book is about the ultimate triumph of the Lord Jesus Christ over all evil. “Look, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn over him. So it is to be. Amen. ‘I am the Alpha and the Omega,’ says the Lord God, ‘the one who is, who was, and who is to come, the Almighty’” (vv. 7-8).

The synopsis of the book is found in 1:19: “Therefore write what you have seen, what is, and what will take place after this.” While the book occasionally looks on past events, the basic focus is on the future.

Revelation is filled with intriguing and significant symbols. As a teenage boy I was fascinated by the “beast coming up out of the sea” (13:1) and the “beast coming up out of the earth” (v. 11). Then, there was the challenge to understand the number of the beast—666. Symbols in pictorial language and specific numbers, in challenging complexity, are numerous throughout these chapters.



In Revelation, we get a unique view of the inner workings of the Godhead. The first chapter speaks of “Jesus,” “God,” and “the Spirit.” This first chapter also gives us the goal and the conclusion of the book. Revelation begins with Jesus Christ and ends with His triumphant return. It is written in the midst of unbridled persecution and ends with the establishment of His kingdom on earth, accompanied with believers of all ages who participate in the operation of His kingdom.

This prophecy has been received with awe, frustration, and skepticism over the centuries. It is one of the most difficult books of prophecy in Scripture. Some assert that Revelation deals predominantly with first-century events, including the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70.

Others see it as a wide sweep of history from John’s time until the second coming of Christ. They see it as a summary of the great periods or dispensations in the history of Christianity.

Below: Modern-day port of Patmos from the entrance to the cave of the Apocalypse.

ILLUSTRATOR PHOTO/ BOB SCHATZ (28/1/11)



Still others interpret the book as primarily symbols and allegories, not literal events, showing the ongoing battle between good and evil and pointing to the certain success of God's redemptive purposes and the establishment of His everlasting kingdom.

The view of this writer is that after the letters to the seven churches, the Revelation deals predominantly with the end times of our world. It is an undeniable word from God that sees the world coming to its divinely ordained conclusion in the victorious return of the Lord Jesus Christ and an eternity of peace for all of His people.

The future events described are vital and necessary. Our faith embraces the biblical expectation—indeed necessity—of the literal, bodily, visible return of the Lord Jesus Christ. God's faithfulness demands the climactic events described in this book.

The theme of this significant prophecy is the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the capstone of all Christology. It shows us that history is His story and He will bring this world to the conclusion of His choosing. It is in His hands and our part is to be ready. Jesus is the pre-existent and divine Son of God. He is our great High Priest who offered Himself upon the altar of God at the cross—He is the Lamb of God who brings forgiveness of sins and salvation to all who believe.

Revelation describes the Jesus of history who was crucified in Jerusalem as the sacrifice for our sins. He rose from the dead and ascended into heaven and will return as King of kings and Lord of lords. The drama unfolding is seen in two dimensions—heaven and earth. The obvious reason is that it is God's plan to have His will done on earth as it is done in heaven, as Jesus reminded us in teaching us to pray, "Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven" (Matt. 6:10-11). The culmination of the ages and the reality of His kingdom on earth will happen regardless of the intense opposition of Satan and evil forces described in Revelation.

Jesus will return as promised at His ascension: "This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come in the same way that you have seen him going into heaven" (Acts 1:11). Jesus Himself declared, "the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the peoples of the earth will mourn; and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory" (Matt. 24:30).

Revelation demonstrates the unity of the Bible. There are 404 verses in this book and 285 direct quotations out of the Old Testament. There are over 550 references to the Old Testament. In contrast the Book of Matthew has only 92 references to the Old Testament; and the Book of Hebrews, considered to be the most Jewish of all New Testament books, has only 102 references to the Old Testament. Revelation, like

no other New Testament book, has a distinctive Old Testament flavor.¹

And like no other book, Revelation points to the unity of both Old and New Testaments. In the pages of Revelation, it is as though God has brought all the threads of prophecy that run throughout Scripture and woven them into a beautiful tapestry for us to see. Revelation shows us that there is no power in heaven, on earth, or in hell itself that can cancel the plans of God. Herein is the bold declaration of the inevitability and invincibility of the purposes of God.

The crowning joy of heaven will be to see the face of our beloved Savior and Lord. The climax of God's creation will be the new Jerusalem. The climax of eternity will be coming face to face with Him, forever reigning, ruling, and living with Him.

1. James T. Draper, *The Unveiling*, (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1984) 12.



THE MAJESTIC GLORY OF FATHER AND SON

REVELATION 1:1-20

Sitting like a partially completed jigsaw puzzle in the midst of twelve islands, the island of Patmos is the setting for the Book of Revelation. It is a scraggly island of only 24 square miles with mountain peaks rising quickly, its highest peak nearly 900 feet above sea level. The island is 10 miles long and its widest spot is 6 miles. It has an extremely jagged coastline with some spots being less than a mile across. The island reveals sparse vegetation and rocky landscapes, yet it is one of the most beautiful settings in the Aegean Sea. Resting boldly in the scenic waters of the sea, it is 45 miles west of Miletus and Ephesus in Asia Minor.

A temple to the Greek goddess Artemis (Roman goddess Diana) was built on the island in the 4th century BC. Patmos became one of a number of islands used to exile accused criminals.

John the apostle was exiled there about AD 95 by the Roman Emperor Domitian. John's crime? Proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ! It is not known whether John was exiled to live there or placed there to work in the mines. Soon after Domitian's death, he was allowed to return to his beloved Ephesus for the remainder of his life.

The island was replete with inlets and harbors around its 25-30 mile circumference with most of the island falling abruptly into the sea. It boasted of magnificent scenery with its rocky crags resting in the clear blue waters of the Aegean.

It was while there that John received the prophecy found in the Book of Revelation. This prophecy deals with two places—heaven and earth. It deals with

two times—now and the future. It points to one inevitable, climactic event—the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ to establish His kingdom on earth.

The time of the writing was in a period of excessive cruelty and vicious carnage. This persecution is likely that which occurred under Domitian, AD 81-96, which was preceded by 25 years of violent tyranny under Nero. Under Nero the attacks were sporadic, but under Domitian they were more intense and orchestrated.



Living in a Hostile Culture

John lived and wrote during a time when there was great hostility toward believers and the gospel message—even to the point of physical persecution.

List some examples of ways that our culture today is hostile toward the gospel message.

1.

2.

3.

Commit to pray God's protection for those believers around the world who are suffering for their faith today.

Against that fierce backdrop this prophecy anticipates the day when the Lord Jesus Christ will return and bring His kingdom into literal reality, in a real place and among real people. The coming Day of the Lord will be the birth pains of the golden age of God's eternal kingdom. Everything in this universe will be destroyed and a new world will emerge. That was the living hope of the people of God in the time John wrote this prophecy.

John called this **the revelation of Jesus Christ that God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place** because **the time is near**. The expectation of the imminent return of Jesus Christ has always dominated the hope of believers. When the return of Christ is relegated to some distant future, we rob our faith of its vitality and our witness of its urgency. It is the anticipation of the soon return of Jesus Christ that creates passion and urgency within believers.

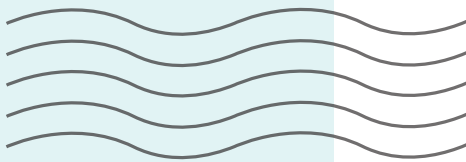
This opening chapter is all about the majestic glory of God and the Son of God. Divine authority shines dominantly throughout the entire book. The Godhead is clearly seen as God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. This revelation of Jesus Christ given by God the Father through an **angel** to John is called **the word of God** and is **the testimony of Jesus Christ**.

The prophecy confirms the certainty of our returning Lord. Great blessing is promised to those who hear or read **this prophecy**. The opening words, designating **the seven churches in Asia** as the recipients, contains a remarkable promise of **grace and peace** as the gift of the Lord Himself. Grace brings undeserved gifts from God. Peace is the result of grace.

The first verses present a unique description of the working of the Trinity. Jesus Christ and God are introduced in the first two verses. It is **the revelation of Jesus Christ that God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John, who testified to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, whatever he saw**.

Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is the dominant Person of the entire prophecy. Although John never used the title "Holy Spirit" in Revelation, his reference to the **seven spirits before his throne** (or "the seven-fold Spirit," understood by many Bible students to mean the Holy Spirit) and his frequent mention of the "Spirit" confirm that he is referring to the Holy Spirit.

Jesus Christ is described in three specific ways: **the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead and the ruler of the kings of the earth**. As the **faithful witness**, He is the One who is absolutely certain to tell the truth. The **firstborn from the dead** speaks of His resurrection. **Firstborn** indicates that there are more to follow, which speaks of our resurrection. As the **ruler of the kings of the earth**, it is clear that all earthly authorities are allowed by Him and can continue their rule only with His approval. He is our Sovereign Lord!



We Know How It Ends!

Have you ever read a novel or watched a movie for a second time? If so, you already knew the ending as the story unfolded that second time. In the very first chapter of Revelation, John told us how it will end! Read Revelation 1:7-8.

How can knowing that Christ conquers all in the end help you as you face challenges this coming week ...

At home?

At work?

At church?

In your neighborhood?

He is further described as the One **who loves us and has set us free from our sins by his blood, and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father—to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.** Saints are not only redeemed and forgiven—**set ... free from our sins**—but given great position and prominence in the kingdom. There are no insignificant people in His kingdom.

Revelation reveals that from the crushing violence, turmoil, and bloodshed, exceeding anything that this earth has ever seen, will emerge the kingdom age where all evil, hostility, and slaughter will be judged and destroyed by God Himself.

At the very beginning of Revelation, John told us how it will all end (vv. 7-8). He could not wait to tell that the Lord Jesus Christ conquers and establishes His kingdom. He did not tease readers by holding and concealing the ultimate result until the end. What is coming is so spectacular that he was compelled to declare, **Look, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him.** No doubt about the outcome. No one will miss seeing His visible return. His kingdom will be everlasting (v. 8). This echoes the apostle Paul's description of Him as "the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, [to whom] be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen" (1 Tim. 1:17).

God is pictured as the One who is above time, **the Alpha and the Omega ... the one who is, who was, and who is to come, the Almighty.** Past, present, and future are seen at the same time by God. That's why He can record our lives before we were ever born (Ps. 139:16).

He possesses all wisdom and knowledge. Alpha and omega are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. Everything able to be described in human words are perfectly known by God.

John described himself as **your brother and partner in the affliction** (Rev. 1:9). He was living through the devastation they all were experiencing.

John explained that he was on **Patmos**, but **in the Spirit on the Lord's Day**. This statement describes all believers in every age. We are in the world but not of the world. We must function in this present world, but our eternal home is in heaven. In Colossians 1:2 Paul described himself as "in Christ at Colossae." That is the crucial dynamic of the Christian life. In Christ, yet in the world.

Jesus then instructed John to **send [the scroll] to the seven churches: Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea** (Rev. 1:11). Describing Himself as **the First and the Last, and the Living One**, He knows the beginning and the end and all in between. He is the final source of wisdom and truth. He is the Almighty God!

We observe a phenomenal picture of the true spirit of worship: **When I saw him, I fell at his feet like a dead man.** This is a compelling illustration of the spirit of genuine worship. **I heard ... I turned ... I saw ... I fell at his feet.**

Whenever we are confronted with the Lord, our response must always be that of complete awe and reverence.

Jesus laid His right hand on John and said: **Don't be afraid. I am the First and the Last, and the Living One. I was dead, but look—I am alive forever and ever, and I hold the keys of death and Hades.**

The **seven stars** just seen in His hand are the angels, or pastors, of the seven churches. If the Lord holds the pastors of the churches in His hands, surely we can hold them in our hearts! The pastors hold a unique place in God's redemptive purposes. The **lampstands** represent the seven churches. Here is an incomparable picture of our Lord and our response to Him.

Now see the key verse in this chapter: **Write what you have seen, what is, and what will take place after this. What you have seen, what is** refers to chapters 2–3. **What will take place after this** is found in chapters 4–22. Revelation reveals the fulfillment of God's purposes when the Lord will return!

The Letters to the Seven Churches

These letters were prepared for seven real churches in a real place—Asia Minor. “The seven cities mentioned form an irregular circle, and are listed in the order in which a messenger might visit them if commissioned to deliver the letters.”¹ The time is near the end of the first century AD. These churches had been infiltrated by immoral practices, heresy, and all kinds of evil. These characteristics and qualities have been present in all churches throughout history.

EPHESUS was the largest city in the Roman Province of Asia. It was the commercial and political hub of the province. Located south of the Temple of Artemis (the Artemision) between Mt. Pion and Mt. Koressos, it was an ancient city and goes back into the second millennium before Christ.

Situated on the main highway that tied the Aegean Sea with the rich trade routes in the east, it was the major commercial city in Asia Minor. Paul first came into the city on his second missionary journey and settled there for at least two years on his third missionary journey. The seven churches of Revelation 2–3 came into existence through Paul's ministry in Ephesus.

Ephesus was located about 35 miles southeast of Smyrna and about 40 miles north of Miletus. The Cayster river flowed through Ephesus and the silt from the river gradually caused the city to be several miles up the river in the first century. It still had access to the Aegean Sea by the Cayster River, and had an adequate harbor on the river.

Ephesus was important in every way, politically, economically, and religiously. It was the *de facto* capital for the Roman province of Asia (though Pergamum was the official capital). It was a “free” city, which made it self-governing and exempt from having Roman soldiers stationed there. It was also an “assize” city which meant that it was a place where Roman justice was administered.

It had a major banking presence and the primary worship of Artemis was there. The massive marble temple of Artemis was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. It was built on a foundation 420 feet long and 240 feet wide and named for the Greek goddess Artemis. In later days the Romans named her Diana. The massive roof was supported by 127 pillars of Parian marble, each 60 feet tall, sculptured with mythological scenes, some overlaid with gold. Sitting a mile northeast of the city just beneath a high hill, it was the first thing seen when ships entered the harbor.

The temple itself had the right of asylum for individuals accused of crimes. This area extended various distances around the edifice at different times, and for a period was extended to include parts of the city itself. All kinds of fugitives poured into Ephesus.

The streets were lined with many significant buildings. There was a town council chamber, a town hall, an imperial temple dedicated to Augustus, along with many temples and places of business. The massive amphitheater seated 24,000 people.

At this time the city’s population of 250,000 was probably the fourth largest in the world. It was from Ephesus that John was exiled to the offshore island of Patmos. The church in Ephesus was an active church, but had abandoned its passion and love for Christ.

SMYRNA was a strong commercial city located 35 miles northwest of Ephesus. It was one of the most beautiful cities in the ancient world, called “The Glory of Asia” or “The Crown of Asia.” It had impressive paved streets lined with many temples. A public theater which claimed to be one of the largest in Asia, a famous stadium that held annual athletic games, and a magnificent library joined the temples along the way. Smyrna was known for its loyalty to Rome dating back to around 195 BC. Its population during New Testament times was between 100,000 and 200,000.

It had a landlocked and protected harbor. The city rose to the top of mount Pagus, some 600 feet above the inland harbor, as the eloquent, dynamic buildings and temples wrapped around its summit. The most famous street was the

Street of Gold, which ran diagonally just below the apex of Mount Pagus. The distinctive buildings at the top gave the appearance of a crown on the city. The Street of Gold ran like a necklace just below the crown of the city.

A large and influential number of Jews lived in Smyrna. They made life miserable for believers and led the attack on Polycarp, famous early Christian martyr, when he was executed there in AD 155.

PERGAMUM lay on a high hill just 16 miles from the coast. The city rose 1000 feet above the plains around the river Caicus. It was the city often credited with inventing and producing the parchment widely used in ancient days. It had been the capital city of the Attalid kingdom from 231-133 BC and was the capital of the Roman Province of Asia. The city contained many pagan centers, the most famous of which was dedicated to Asclepius, the god of medicine. The identifier of this god was a serpent wrapped around a pole, which became the symbol of the medical profession. Eumenes II built a massive altar to Zeus measuring 120 feet by 112 feet and resting on an 18-foot-high platform.

Pergamum expressed its loyalty to Rome with a temple for Caesar worship—the first such temple in Asia—which was mandatory for every Roman citizen. Each citizen received a certificate each year after offering worship to Caesar. It was obviously not a friendly place for Christians.

THYATIRA lay about 50 miles from the sea and was once a great military city. It was located 35 miles southeast of Pergamum. It was the smallest and least important of the seven cities. It emerged as a military outpost in 290 BC. It was the gateway to Pergamum with no natural defense, so was destined to be attacked, captured, destroyed, and rebuilt.

The main god was Tyrimnas, seen as a warrior welding a large two-headed axe. It was well known for the development of trade guilds, to one of which Lydia (Acts 16:14) may have belonged. The trade guilds consisted of clothiers, metal smiths, and others. The social activities of the guilds were attached to the worship of heathen gods. They became so popular and powerful that they took on political and religious importance.

SARDIS was about 30 miles southeast of Thyatira and was the chief city of the Hermus Valley, the most important of the major valleys. It was one of the most historic cities in Asia Minor, once capital of Lydia, home of the immensely wealthy King Croesus. The first coins to be minted of silver and gold were produced in Sardis.

The reputation of the city was tarnished by compromise and failure. It was considered impregnable because of its strong citadel, but was conquered twice by enemies because of the carelessness of its sentries regarding approaching enemies.

Sardis had become a name of contempt and a byword for decadent living, becoming the most notorious city of Asia Minor. It perhaps was more like a den of thieves than a civilized town.

PHILADELPHIA, situated 28 miles southeast of Sardis, was founded by Attalus, king of Pergamum, to become a center of Greek civilization. It was designed to spread the philosophy and language of Greece. Its purpose was to promote unity of customs, language, and loyalty to Greece. It was remarkably successful. By AD 19 Greek was the only language in the country.

Located on the Cogamis River, it was an area subject to volcanic eruptions and earthquakes. The most notable earthquake was in AD 17, which devastated the city. It was the epicenter of the earthquake, and aftershock tremors were felt for twenty years.

Few people actually lived in the city itself. Most spent their lives as farmers in the country. The city was undesirable because of the earthquakes and volcanic eruptions. But volcanic soil is extremely inviting for crops, especially grapes.

LAODICEA, 43 miles southeast of Philadelphia, was the key city in the wealthy province of Phrygia. Located in the narrow valley on the Lycus River at the strategic center of the Meander River Valley, it lay on a major trade route 99 miles from Ephesus. It was a fashionable city that was twice devastated by disaster and recovered without the aid of Rome.

Laodicean bankers were famous even in Rome. They were known for integrity in business, never diluting or cheapening the gold they used. The city boasted of its medical school and for producing a special eye ointment.

It was a very wealthy city of luxury and extravagance. It was also a place for Roman justice to be administered, and legal determinations made there were official Roman judgments.

An 8,000-foot mountain bordered the city on the south, and the mountains to the north, beyond Hierapolis, were topped with a white mineral formation that made it look like snow. Previously known as Diospolis and Rhodes, it was renamed around 261 BC by Antiochus II for his first wife Laodice.

Laodicea had such a large and powerful Jewish population that they were given freedom by Rome to observe the Sabbath and other Jewish rituals.

The seven letters were written to literal, historical churches. The churches were in near proximity, with the furthest distance between them being just over 100 miles. Some needed to be rebuked. Some needed to be encouraged. Each letter contained a word to the overcomer.

Many see these seven letters as representing various stages of the church historically. Some even conclude that the seven churches represent seven kinds of believers, both those who are true and those who are false. The conditions in these churches are always present in churches in all ages.

A CLOSER LOOK

Asia Minor

Asia Minor was first identified by that name around AD 400 by Christian historian Orosius. That designation was given for the region evangelized by the apostle Paul. It was the southwest part of Asia comprising most of modern Turkey. It was the link between the continent of Europe with the Near East.

Surrounded by high mountain ranges, its narrow passes connected the interior with the Near East. Deep channels brought numerous navigable rivers to the Aegean Sea.

Two of the seven wonders of the ancient world were found in Asia Minor: the Temple of Artemis (Diana) in Ephesus and the Tomb of Mausolus at Halicarnassus in Caria.

It was the home of the first western philosopher, Thales, from Miletus. Herodotus, famous Jewish historian known as the Father of History, was from Halicarnassus. The great philosopher and mathematician Pythagoras was born in Asia Minor as was the apostle Paul who was born in Tarsus.

The first coins used in trade were minted there. Under Roman rule Asia Minor was stabilized with roads and infrastructure being built. Coastal cities flourished with great prosperity.

Personal Reflection

1. Revelation 1:3 gives two blessings associated with the prophecy of the book, and a brief explanation for them. Based on your pattern of relating to this final book of the Bible, to what degree do you qualify for the blessings listed? Explain.

2. Review the descriptions of God the Father and God the Son in Revelation 1 and the explanations present in this chapter. Which stands out as most meaningful to you at this time? Why?

3. As we launch into this study of the seven churches of Revelation, what benefit do you expect to obtain?

1. John Stott, *What Christ Thinks of the Church* (London: Angus Hudson Ltd., 1990) 7.