

Introduction To The Son of Man's 7 Letters To The 7 Churches

I. John's Encounter With The Son of Man

- a. While John was exiled on the Island of Patmos, he saw Jesus appear as the “glorious Son of Man” standing in the midst of 7 golden lampstands, which Jesus revealed to be the 7 churches in Asia Minor (***Revelation 1:11, 20***). Each description of Jesus' appearance speaks to aspects of His character related to His leadership over His church. It is vital to have experiential understanding related to Jesus' perfect leadership in light of the severe dynamics of the end time drama.

(Revelation 1:12-16 NASB) “Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking with me. And after turning I saw seven golden lampstands; 13 and in the middle of the lampstands I saw one like a son of man, clothed in a robe reaching to the feet, and wrapped around the chest with a golden sash. 14 His head and His hair were white like white wool, like snow; and His eyes were like a flame of fire. 15 His feet were like burnished bronze when it has been heated to a glow in a furnace, and His voice was like the sound of many waters. 16 In His right hand He held seven stars, and out of His mouth came a sharp two-edged sword; and His face was like the sun shining in its strength.”

- b. In the middle of the lampstands – Jesus is intimately involved the church. He is the one who manifests himself in the midst of the assembly of believers.
- c. Son of man – John see's Jesus and refers to him with the title “*Son of Man*”. About 500 B.C. the prophet Daniel, had a vision of the Messiah coming on heavenly clouds to rule nations as the “*Son of Man*”. Jesus referred to himself as the “*Son of Man*” more than any other title. Here, John identifies Jesus as Daniel's “*Son of Man*”, who the Jews would had been longing for throughout the centuries.

(Daniel 7:13-14 NASB) “I kept looking in the night visions, And behold, with the clouds of heaven one like a son of man was coming, And He came up to the Ancient of Days And was presented before Him. 14 And to Him was given dominion, honor, and a kingdom, So that all the peoples, nations, and populations of all languages might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion which will not pass away; And His kingdom is one which will not be destroyed.”

- d. A robe reaching to his feet...golden sash wrapped around his chest – A robe is a very “*priestly*” description of Jesus. This is a reference to the Son of Man being our great High Priest. He is unlike any other human and is the perfect representation of mankind to God. The golden sash around his chest is a reference to His kingship (or royalty), purity, and superiority in leadership (***Gen 13:2; 41:42; Matthew 2:11; 2 Samuel 12:30; Esther 4:11; 8:15***).
- e. Head and His hair were white like white wool, like snow – This is a reference to His infinite wisdom and righteousness (***Job 12:12-13; Proverbs 16:31; Proverbs 20:28-29***).
- f. Eyes were like a flame of fire – John describes Jesus' eyes by their warmth and ability to captivate attention. Jesus see's everything with a refining fiery gaze. The fire in His eyes removes all that hinders love and produces righteousness within those that stare into His eyes.
- g. His feet were like burnished bronze when it has been heated to a glow in a furnace – The appearance of His feet was white hot, shining in radiance. Bronze or brass is often associated with judgment in scripture. Bronze is better at resisting the heat of fire than gold or silver, which could also be a reference to His endurance too. Though his judgments seem severe, they are the least severe means He uses in His perfect patience to bring the most amount of people to mature love.
- h. His voice was like the sound of many waters – like raging waters that drown out all other voices. Near a waterfall or raging sea, it is hard to hear anything other than that of the rushing water.

- i. In His right hand He held seven stars – The seven stars are the angles or messengers of the seven churches (**Revelation 1:20**). With His right hand He tenderly holds the messengers in His hand. As the bridegroom He hold His bride close to Him.
- j. Out of His mouth came a sharp two-edged sword – His words are like a sharp two-edged sword that is effective at cutting. His word is effective at exposing all things before him. The truth of His word will always expose the lies of the enemy.
- k. His face was shining like the sun in its strength – This is His dazzling appearance that radiates the glory and brilliance of the Father.

II. God's Plan For The Maturity of the Bride

- a. At the time of His return, Jesus will have a bride fully mature in her love for Him and willing to partner with Him even unto death. This won't just be a few in the body of Christ, but will consist of the vast majority of believers worldwide. During the Great Tribulation, the global body of Christ will endure unprecedented pressure and opposition which will result in her walking in the highest degree of righteousness and partnership with Jesus that she ever has throughout all of history.

(Revelation 19:7-8 NASB) "Let's rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, because the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His bride has prepared herself." 8 It was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints."

(2 Thessalonians 1:10-12 NASB) "When He comes to be glorified among His saints on that day, and to be marveled at among all who have believed—because our testimony to you was believed. 11 To this end also we pray for you always, that our God will consider you worthy of your calling, and fulfill every desire for goodness and the work of faith with power, 12 so that the name of our Lord Jesus will be glorified in you, and you in Him, in accordance with the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ."

(James 1:2-4 NASB) "Consider it all joy, my brothers and sisters, when you encounter various trials, 3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. 4 And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing."

- b. Though it might seem like the church (as a whole) is far from this level of maturity, God has a plan that we can be confident will be accomplished. His strategy to bring the church to maturity is to raise up apostolic leaders that will function as shepherds after His own heart to lead the bride to maturity. God is commissioning forerunner messengers to be voices of influence that would call the bride into her full identity.

(Ephesians 4:11-13 NASB) "And He gave some as apostles, ...prophets, ...evangelists, ...pastors and teachers, 12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the building up of the body of Christ; 13 until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ."

(Acts 20:28 NASB) "Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood."

(Jeremiah 3:15 NASB) "Then I will give you shepherds after My own heart, who will feed you knowledge and understanding."

- c. Through the word of God, the church will be renewed, sanctified, and brought into full partnership with His heart. Therefore, it's necessary for us to have "ears to hear" what the Spirit is saying, in order to walk in the fullness of our destiny and call others to do the same.

(Romans 12:2 NASB) “And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

(Ephesians 5:26-29 NASB) “So that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, 27 that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless...29 for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church”

- d. This leads us to understand the significance of Jesus 7 letters to the 7 “lampstand churches” in Revelation. Each message was written to the apostolic leader(s) over each church. These “lampstand churches” we’re cities set on a hill (Matthew 5:14) that functioned as influential “revival centers”.
- e. The messages Jesus gave to each of these apostolic leaders had historical relevance (they actually meant something to those 7 churches) but also are relevant for the global church throughout history and today. In His letters to the 7 churches, Jesus gave instructions intended to be instrumental in maturing the bride. These messages are for you, your spiritual family, and for those God has entrusted to you.

III. The 7 Churches Map

- a. The Seven Church of Revelation – Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum (Pergamos), Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, Laodicea.



IV. Ways To Approach & Apply The 7 Letters

- a. **Historically** – Each letter was written to a specific local church and it had relevant practical application to that church. It’s helpful to observe the historical relevance of each letter because this helps us approach these letters in light of the original cultural context. These scriptures cannot mean something they wouldn’t have meant to these historical churches.
- b. **Universally** – Romans, Galatians, and Philippians were written to actual historical churches yet their messages transcend culture and generation, thus we’ve applied them to the “Universal Church” now and throughout history. Jesus’ 7 letters to these 7 churches should also be applied to the “Universal Church” now and throughout history.
- c. **Individually** – The 7 letters we’re written to apostolic leaders of the churches and were to be disseminated among individual believers. Each letter intends to provoke a wholehearted response in the lives of individual believers despite their age, gender, financial status, cultural setting, etc.

- d. **Corporately** – When local churches, and spiritual families embrace these letters and respond to their contents, not only is there a breakthrough for individuals but for the corporate body. These letters can challenge, exhort, and unify local churches in various places throughout the earth today.
- e. **Eschatologically** – The primary application with the greatest fulfillment is found in the eschatological (eschatology – study of the end times) application. These 7 letters prepare the church in the generation of the Lord's return to prevail in the midst of the unique dynamics at the end of the age.

V. Common Elements In Each Letter

- a. **The Formal Address** – Each letter begins with the statement “**To the angel [apostolic messenger] of the church in...**”. The Word “angel” in Greek is “angelos” meaning, “messenger”. While I believe that this term can refer to both a “heavenly angel” over the city and a human apostolic leader/messenger in the church, I believe it's more relevant to the apostolic leader of each church based on **Revelation 1:1** (*Why would God give a message to an [heavenly] angel to give to John, to give back to an [heavenly] angel*).

(Revelation 1:1 NASB) “The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God [The Father] gave Him [Jesus] to show to His bond-servants, the things which must soon take place; and He sent and communicated it by His angel to His bond-servant John”

- b. **Specific Revelation of Jesus** – Each letter then begins with Jesus highlighting a specific aspect of His eternal identity (*most of them from Revelation 1*) that had special significance for each local church based on what they were experiencing and what Jesus communicated to them in His letter to them. Laying hold of Jesus' eternal identity strengthens us to be whole-hearted in each season.
- c. **Affirmation & Recognition “I know your deeds...”** – (*In most of the 7 letters*) Jesus pointed out that He sees, He knows, and He cares about what they are doing related to their deeds (and other characteristics of each church). Two churches did not receive a corporate affirmation (*Sardis, Laodicea*), instead He communicated what moves His heart and how He wanted them to process in those things.
- d. **Correction or Rebuke “But I have this against you...”** – Jesus rebuked 4 of the churches because He loved them (**Proverbs 3:11-12; Hebrews 12:5-11; Revelation 3:19**). It's important to understand that His rebuke is not rejection; He wants the best for His bride. Jesus highlighted 3 main practices that He was against in these churches: Immorality, idolatry, and passivity. Two churches did not receive a correction, but were admonished to endure and be faithful (*Smyrna, Philadelphia*).
- e. **Call To Repentance or to Respond** – Jesus called each church to repent or respond to His correction or admonition. There was a necessary action for each church in order to be victorious in the season they were in. There was also an element of “warning”, where Jesus said “*if you don't repent [do these things I'm telling you to do] then there's a consequence*”.
- f. **Overcomers Promise** – To each church, Jesus gives an “overcomers promise” meaning, there's a promise for the one who responds rightly to His message. The primary fulfillment of these promises takes place in the age to come, however they may also have present partial fulfillments. The idea of “Eternal Rewards” is huge throughout these letters.
- g. **Inclusive Appeal for Wholeheartedness “The One who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the Churches”** – This phrase communicated the importance of the message and its invitation with “*all with ears to hear*” to respond rightly. The messages within these letters would have been passed around to different local churches, thus inviting the hearer (*regardless of age, gender, financial status, cultural setting, etc...*) to respond rightly.