



Letters to the churches – week 1

Warm-up: Can you think of something that you did (or are doing) over a long period, maybe for a career or a hobby. How do you (did you) maintain enthusiasm for doing it?

READ Rev 1:1-8

Introduction- for a summary review of the first half of Revelation, see: <https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/revelation-1-11/>.

Although our series will look at the letters to the 7 churches, it will not get into the apocalyptic and symbolic descriptions of the coming of Jesus in triumph (but also in judgement). That will come later in the book.

The book of Revelation ('revelation' meaning uncovering of something hidden) was written just before a severe persecution that would affect the whole church but primarily believers directly under Roman rule in Asia Minor. This occurred during the reign of the emperor Domitian. Its purpose is to prepare them for what is to come and to call them to continue to burn brightly for Jesus. The message that Jesus is coming again and will be triumphant over all rulers, powers and authorities was to be a message of hope.

Q: Whose revelation is this and why it is important that we read it? (v1, v3).

Q: Throughout Revelation, the lampstands represent the churches. Why is that a good analogy for the church?

READ Rev 2:1-7

Letter to Ephesus

Ephesus was the largest of the cities of Asia Minor and a centre of Roman administration. The church in Ephesus was planted by Paul. Acts 19 describes Paul's coming to Ephesus, where he found some disciples of John the Baptist but who had not yet come to believe in Jesus. Paul preached for 2 years and stirred up great interest in the city, so that the name of Jesus was highly regarded, leading to people burning their idols and following Jesus. Paul left a church that was on fire for Jesus.

The letter to the church at Ephesus in Revelation was written 30 years after Paul's ministry there.

Q: What characteristics can you notice in the church that Jesus commended? What are examples of these characteristics?

Q: What is 'our first love' and why do you think they had lost their first love? Jesus had warned of this before – see Matt 24:12-13. It seems the church had become orthodox (small 'o') in its practices and legalistic in interpretation of scripture. Compare that situation with Paul's teaching to them in Eph 2:4-5.

Q: What did Jesus promise to those who continue to the end?

Q: What contrasts was Pastor Sam making when he described the church in Ephesus at the beginning with the church at the time of this letter as nursery v cemetery?

Application to us today

Q: What does Jesus want the most from us and His church? Read Matt 15:7-9

Q: How can we stay in love with Jesus? What practical things can we do? How can we make more time for Jesus?

Pray for each other to continue to burn for Jesus.