

Revelation

His Glory in the Golden Candlesticks

Rev. 1:10 – 1:20

The Book of Revelation begins with the light of Christ. In chapter one, He is the light of and among the seven golden candlesticks, and in Revelation 22, He, as the Lamb, is the Light of the New Jerusalem (22:1-5). His glory is revealed to John on the Island of Patmos. For all John knew, he would die on this penal colony of Patmos, the Alcatraz of the Aegean Sea. Little did he know the Emperor Nirva would release him in 18 months.ⁱ

This is what Jesus meant in Mark 10:33-45 when He answered the request of John and James to sit beside Him on His throne in the Kingdom. Jesus asked, "Can you drink the cup that I drink of? And be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" "We can," they said. Jesus assured them that they indeed would endure the same things He would go through. James was killed with the sword at Herod's command, and Peter was imprisoned with the same purpose. (Acts 12). By the time John was writing this, Peter had already been crucified upside down. By this time, all of the Apostles had preceded John to the heavenly presence of their Lord Jesus. In his book, *The History of Jewish Christianity*, author Hugh J. Schoenfield wrote:

"The church continued under Jewish leadership at Jerusalem into the fourth century, and Jewish membership was significant into the fourth century. Iranius, who lived from about 120-200 AD an Apologist, a doctor of the church, and a leading Christian theologian of the 2nd century. In his work *Adversus Haereses (Against Heresies)*, written about 180 AD, which was a refutation of the heresy of Gnosticism, listed the names of the first thirteen Bishops of the Church at Jerusalem. We of course know of the prominence of James the half-brother of Jesus, the first Bishop, who was slain with the sword (Acts 2:12). Following him was Simon the son of Cleopas - the Cleopas whose wife Mary was at the foot of the cross (John 19:25; Luke 24:18) a second cousin to Jesus. Eusebius wrote, "Hegesippus states that this venerable disciple of the Messiah was tormented many days. He died as a martyr with such firmness under such tortures that all were amazed. He then, at last, was ordered under the reign of Emperor Trajan, to be crucified, when he was 120 years old."ⁱⁱ He was the last Bishop who was both a relative and a living eyewitness of Jesus. Following him, the Jerusalem mother Church was led by the Jewish believers, Justice, Zaccaeus, Tobias, Benjamine, John, Mattathias, Phillip, Seneca, Justus II, Levi, Ephraim, Joseph, and Judas."ⁱⁱⁱ

Despite the persecution, the Gospel had multiplied greatly and spread to 34 cities mentioned in the New Testament by 90 AD. There were seven key churches within a 100-mile radius, one of which John had pastored, the Church at Ephesus. Whether these letters were sent by post while he was on Patmos or dispersed after his release, we do not know. It is assumed they received the letter before the entire book of Revelation was complete, 18 months later. It seems more likely that each (Smyrna, Thyatira, etc.) received its epistle individually. Some claim that the entire book was a cyclical general epistle to the seven churches, only delivered to all seven after it was completed. Churches could have sent messengers to visit John and take their particular message with them, or it could have been disseminated to each after John left Patmos.

"In about A.D. 185, Irenaeus wrote that the book of Revelation was composed, "almost in our day, towards the end of Domitian's reign."¹⁰ Domitian reigned from A.D. 81-96. Thus, Papyrus 98 - P98 was likely copied within about 100 years of the original autograph. Papyrus P98 (P. IFAO inv. 237b [+a]) is a manuscript fragment that contains verses from the first chapter of the book of Revelation. It was copied circa 100-200 A.D., likely in Egypt."^{iv}

The only thing that would strengthen them during that dark day of persecution was not another prophetic book saying the worst is yet to come, but the **I AM** saying, "Fear not, little flock, **I AM** right here with you." They still remembered Him as the suffering servant who rose from the dead but was rejected. They were getting a computer update with a mega ram graphics card so they could see Jesus in 3-D. We still see Him as the meek and mild servant in dusty sandals who wouldn't "bruise a reed." Without this vision recorded in Revelation of Jesus in His glory, our hope would be deflated, and we would have reason to walk around with a martyr complex because they hate us just as they hated Him, without a cause. But now John saw Him with snow white hair, face shining like the sun and eye sockets of fire and burning brass feet and a booming voice, with a two-edged sword parting His lips and gripping in one hand seven blazing stars while walking in the midst of seven churches contemporary with the Apostle in the region of Asia minor/Modern

Turkey. Each of the churches had strengths and faults, but all were lacking the same key element. They were acting as headless, heartless bodies, disconnected from their very Head, Jesus, who said, “I will build my church.” They were like “Nah, we’re good.”

They had lost that resurrection day reverence for the glory of Jesus. Jesus had become all too commonplace for them, like the ark had become to Uzzah. He had gotten so used to the Ark of the Covenant in his house that he thoughtlessly touched the Ark of the Testimony without a reverent thought, much less obedience to the minimum requirements of transporting the earthly mercy seat of God (2 Sam. 6). Familiarity with the sacred is not only an occupational hazard to Levitical priests but to vocational ministers in the New Testament era. We have often heard that the method doesn’t matter as long as we keep the message right. That statement lacks understanding that just like the Tabernacle required operational methods in the Old Testament, there are Spirit-inspired operational methods for the New Testament local church. The “methods don’t matter” philosophy confuses the means with methods. The Ark and the golden candlestick, and furnishings were first housed in a tent, then in David’s palace, then at Shilo in a permanent tabernacle building for over 390 years, then later in Solomon’s Temple. The location and the materials of the structure varied and became more elaborate. Those changes did not change the prescribed method nor the message, but rather were a change of means and materials. So it is with the New Testament local church. It began on the southern steps of the Temple, then functioned both in the Temple courts and in synagogues. As they were gradually expelled from various local synagogues, the church met in homes. (John 9:22; 16:2; Philemon 1:2; 1 Cor 16:19; Rom. 16:5; Acts 8:3; Col. 4:15) Although there is scant record in scripture of a structure identified as a “church” building, they began to have meeting houses. Paul addressed proper behavior for when they come together “in the house of God” (1 Tim. 3:15).

Recent archaeology has identified the oldest known structure dedicated solely to that use. It is popularly known as the “Megiddo Church.” A well-preserved mosaic tile floor of a worship building was found in the courtyard of a prison in the Jezreel Valley. Our Israeli tour guide pointed that prison out, as our bus sat at an intersection. He told us that it was the oldest known



building dedicated to the worship of Jesus. It was excavated, and the floor was removed from the site until a new prison facility and a proper museum can be built. It was transported to the Museum of the Bible in Washington, D.C., for display through July 2025. A

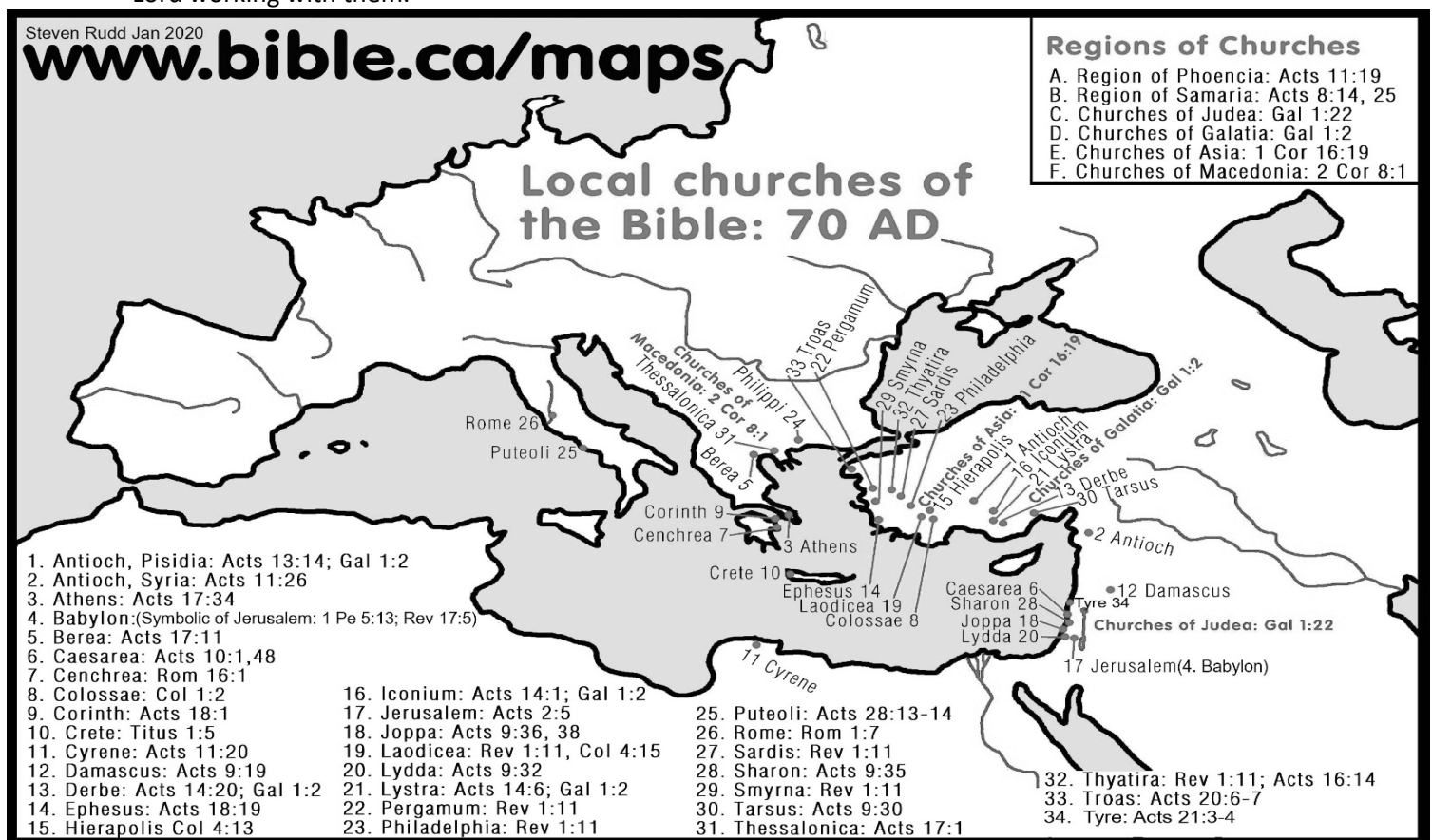
mosaic tile inscription contains the earliest description of Jesus as deity outside of the Gospels. It was dedicated to “the God Jesus Christ.” It dates to circa 230 AD. If this is the oldest “Christian” structure, then for a century and a half, there were no official church buildings. All this to say that the buildings are just means that have sadly become the means and the method, and museums that stand as monuments to formerly living organic local bodies of believers. They are rather like dinosaur skeletons housed for tourists to gawk at. Satan could defeat the Church, so he joined it, corrupted it, and controlled it.

It is valuable to get a glimpse of the first century through Jewish glasses instead of through Gentile Christendom glasses.

“There is a good number of archaeological evidences of Jewish communities and Jewish synagogues existing in every single city listed in Rev 2-3. There’s plenty of verifiable historical evidence that the 7 letters were addressed to the then-existing Jewish faith communities. In the Jewish Temple, there was one golden lampstand with 7 branches. In these letters, we see that there are now 7 golden lampstands instead of a single one. The metaphor poignantly predicts the dispersion of Jewish believers into diaspora. This exact term, “messenger of the assembly” (or “angel of the church”) was used to describe an actual Hebrew rabbinical synagogue position. The title was used at the time of Jesus, and it survives to this day. “Shaliach tzibbur” (lit., “messenger of assembly/congregation) is a synagogue official tasked with offering public prayers to God on behalf on the assembly. The word “shaliach” comes from the Hebrew verb “shalach”, which means “to send” (e.g., as a messenger). This role existed in rabbinic synagogues during the time of Jesus. This role (today) is also known as “chazzan” or “cantor.” Notice how

the position of Shaliach Tzibbur didn't exist in any of the New Covenant churches that any of the 12 apostles or Paul ever established. It's not mentioned even once in the New Testament before this occurrence. The number of New Covenant, predominantly Gentile churches to which Paul the apostle addressed his letters, you will see is also seven groups of churches: Roman, Corinthian, Galatian, Ephesian, Philippian, Colossian, and Thessalonian." Only two overlap, Ephesus where John had pastored and where Paul met Lydia at Thyatira/Philli, (the nearby capital city where He was imprisoned). Here's why it's important to see that there are actually two groups of 7 churches. If you put together all of the promises to the 7 churches of Revelation, the total of all of the promises to the believers of those churches is very similar to what Paul the apostle wrote in his church epistles, with one crucial difference. For the 7 churches of Revelation, all of the promises are stated in the future tense. In contrast, Paul's epistles state that all those blessings as present-tense realities of believers who are already "in Christ."

The book, *Jewish Christianity in the Early Church* by Kenneth W. Howard, traces the development of Jewish Christianity from its beginnings in the earliest Christian communities through its apparent disappearance in the fourth or fifth century. "Eusebius's comments certainly establish that at least two groups of Jewish Christians continued to exist in his time. If the second of these groups is taken to be the Nazarenes, as the idea suggests, and as many researchers believe, then Eusebius documents the existence of the Nazarenes into at least the early fourth century. Jerome listed Berea (Poreia) as a home for some of the Nazarenes, but noted that they could also be found "in all the synagogues of the East among the Jews." p187 Commenting on the beliefs of the Nazarenes, Jerome recorded that they used both the Old Testament and the New Testament, including the writings of Paul. p193 They were scattered abroad preaching the Gospel, "The Lord working with them."



They accepted Paul as an apostle, as well as his mission to the Gentiles, and did not believe that obedience to the Law was required of them. 194 In 404 C.E. he wrote, "they believe in Christ, the Son of God, born of Mary the Virgin, and they say about him that he suffered under Pontius Pilate and rose again" The second century was a time

of transformation in which Jewish Christianity rapidly became the exception rather than the rule, considered a valid, if archaic, expression of Christianity.

However, by the time of the third and fourth century, the Church Fathers appear to view any expression of Jewish Christianity, regardless of the theology behind it, as heretical. This change in attitude represented a massive reversal of opinion. Nonetheless, even such a provisional history may help understand how the Church could have moved from an exclusively Jewish Christian institution to an institution that excluded Jewish Christians. It is clear that at its beginning, the Church was a Jewish Christian phenomenon: all of its members were Jews. Paul's idea that the Gentiles not be required to observe the ceremonial law was a liberal, if not radical, concept. However, the Apostles evidently found Paul's arguments persuasive and agreed that the requirements of the Law would not be laid upon Gentile Christians. 347 The Jewish Christian church of Jerusalem had maintained relatively undisputed authority among Christians in "Palestine" (the land of Israel) until 135 C.E. 357.^v

In conclusion, when the church began excluding Jewish believers, it wasn't long before they excluded their Jewish Savior. Thus, the tragic scene of Rev. 3:20, where Jesus is outside the Church doors, knocking, pleading to be let back in, fell on deaf ears. Thus, the diseases of these seven first-century churches became emblematic of the history of the "era of Christendom." More than a few have seen these seven churches parallel the phases of spiritual decline throughout the entire Church Age.

	CHURCH	DATE (APPROX.)	MEANING OF NAME	COMPLAINT	COMPLIMENT	PROMISED REWARD
1	EPHESUS	A.D. 31–100	Desirable, Lovely	Lost first love	Hate deeds of Nicolaitans	Tree of Life
2	SMYRNA	A.D. 100–313	Sweet fragrance, Myrrh	None	Rich in good works	Crown of Life, Escape second death
3	PERGAMOS	A.D. 313–538	Height, Elevation, "By marriage"	Tolerance of Baalism, idolatry, and immorality	Not denied Christ's name or faith	Hidden manna, White stone, New name
4	THYATIRA	A.D. 538–1500s	Perfume of labor, Sweet savor of sacrifice	Tolerance of "Jezebel," idolatry, and immorality	Good works, love faith, and patience	Power over the nations
5	SARDIS	A.D. 1500s–1790s	Those escaping or remaining	Dead works	A few are not defiled	White raiment, Book of Life
6	PHILADELPHIA	A.D. 1790s–1840s	Brotherly love	Little strength	Kept Christ's Word; Not denied Him	Kept from the hour of trial, Pillar in temple, Name of God
7	LAODICEA	A.D. 1840s–Second Coming	Judging of the people or a just people	Lukewarm experience, Spiritually poor, blind, and naked	None	Sit with Christ on His throne, Sup with Christ

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ⁱ Revelation, David M. Levy, The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry, Belmawr, NJ, 1999. P 24

ⁱⁱ Hebrew Christianity, Arnold Fruchtenbaum, Canon Press, Washington, DC, 1974, P 44

ⁱⁱⁱ The History of Jewish Christianity, Hugh J. Schoenfield, London, 1936, ISBN 978-1442180604, P 41

^{iv} <https://biblearchaeologyreport.com/2019/02/15/the-earliest-new-testament-manuscripts/>

^v <https://www.bibleinfo.com/en/questions/seven-churches-revelation>

See my 55 lesson series Rediscovering Jesus in the Jewish Gospel of Matthew. www.jewishawareness.org/bible/study-notes.