

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

Section Two: Historical Prologue

“The Letters to the Seven Churches”





What to Take From This Lesson

1. Revelation takes the form of a Covenantal Treaty
2. Chapters 2-3 are the Second Section of the Covenantal Treaty
3. The individual letters to each church reflect and reinforce the Covenantal Treaty Structure
4. The individual letters reflect a recapitulation of Old Testament history
5. The individual letters reflect the actual condition of these churches
6. The letters foreshadow the judgements in Revelation

- The book of Revelation is structured as a Covenant Treaty or Covenant Lawsuit

PART ONE: THE UNFAITHFUL WIFE (1:1 – 11:19)

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| I. | THE PREAMBLE: JOHN'S VISION OF THE SON OF MAN | 1:1-20 |
| II. | HISTORICAL PROLOGUE: LETTERS TO THE SEVEN CHURCHES | 2:1-3:22 |
| III. | STIPULATIONS: THE SEVEN SEALS | 4:1-7:17 |
| IV. | SANCTIONS: THE SEVEN TRUMPETS | 8:1-11:19 |

PART TWO: THE BRIDE, THE LAMB'S WIFE (12:1 – 22:21)

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| I. | SANCTIONS: THE SEVEN TRUMPETS (CONTINUED) | 12:1-14:20 |
| II. | SUCCESSION ARRANGEMENTS: SEVEN BOWLS OF WRATH | 15:1-22:21 |

THE SECONDARY OUTLINE

The Covenantal Treaty Structure

SECTION	NAME	PURPOSE
1.	PREAMBLE	To identify and establish the authority of the Suzerain
2.	HISTORICAL PROLOGUE	To review the historical relationship between the Suzerain and the Vassal
3.	ETHICAL STIPULATIONS	To explain the conduct expected of the Vassal and the benefits which accompany obedience to the covenant
4.	SANCTIONS	To define violations of the covenant and the consequences of disobedience to the covenant
5.	SUCCESSION ARRANGEMENTS	To warn of the grave consequences of succeeding the covenant

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PART TWO: THE BRIDE, THE LAMB'S WIFE (12:1 – 22:21)

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THE SECONDARY OUTLINE

- The book of Revelation is structured as a Covenant Treaty or Covenant Lawsuit
- Chapter two begins the second part of that structure: The Historical Prologue¹
- ¹“Which recounts the history of the Great King’s relationship with the vassal, reminding him of his lord’s authority and covenant faithfulness, listing the benefits that have been provided, enumerating the vassal’s transgressions of the law, commanding the vassal to repent and renew his obedience, and promising future rewards. An important aspect of the Prologue is the *covenant grant*,² the command to take possession over the land, conquering it in the name of the Great King (c.f. Deut. 2:24-25, 31; 3:18-22; 4:1, 14; 37-40).³

¹ Chilton, *Days of Vengeance*, pp. 85

^{2,3} Kline, *Treaty of the Great King*, pp. 52-61; 56ff

#	DESCRIPTION	SECTION
1	Christ's Lordship over the Churches	Preamble
2	Each Churches Record of Faithfulness or Disobedience	Historical Prologue
3	Promises for Blessings for Obedience	Ethical Stipulations
4	Warnings of Punishments for Disobedience	Sanctions and Succession Arrangements
5	A Command to Conquer or Overcome	Covenant Grant

Note: While the NKJV paragraphs do not reflect this structure, these features are clearly identifiable in each of the letters.

THE INDIVIDUAL LETTERS TO EACH CHURCH REFLECT AND REINFORCE THE COVENANTAL TREATY STRUCTURE

II.	HISTORICAL PROLOGUE: LETTERS TO THE SEVEN CHURCHES 2:1-3:22	
A.	The Letter to Ephesus	2:1-7
1.	Address to the Angel of Ephesus	2:1a
2.	Message to Ephesus	2:1b-6
3.	Exhortation to Ephesus	2:7
B.	The Letter to Smyrna	2:8-11
1.	Address to the Angel of Smyrna	2:8a
2.	Message to Smyrna	2:8b-10
3.	Exhortation to Smyrna	2:11
C.	The Letter to Pergamum	2:12-17
1.	Address to the Angel at Pergamum	2:12a
2.	Message to Pergamum	2:12b-16
3.	Exhortation to Pergamum	2:17
D.	The Letter to Thyatira	2:18-29
1.	Address to the Angel at Thyatira	2:18a
2.	Message to Thyatira	2:18b-23
3.	Message to the Faithful in Thyatira	2:24-28
4.	Exhortation to Thyatira	2:29
E.	The Letter to Sardis	3:1-6
1.	Address to the Angel in Sardis	3:1a
2.	Message to Sardis	3:1b-5
3.	Exhortation to Sardis	3:6
F.	The Letter to Philadelphia	3:7-13
1.	Address to the Angel in Philadelphia	3:7a
2.	Message to Philadelphia	3:7b-10
3.	Commendation to Philadelphia	3:11-12
4.	Exhortation to Philadelphia	3:13
G.	The Letter to Laodicea	3:14-22
1.	Address to the Angel in Laodicea	3:14a
2.	Message to Laodicea	3:14b-18
3.	Encouragement to Laodicea	3:19-21
4.	Exhortation to Laodicea	3:22

	The Seven Churches	Seven Historical Periods
2:1-7	Ephesus	Paradise in Eden
2:8-11	Smyrna	The Age of the Patriarchs
2:12-17	Pergamum	Israel in the Wilderness
2:18-29	Thyatira	The Kingdom of Israel
3:1-6	Sardis	Israel in Rebellion
3:7-13	Philadelphia	Israel Following Her Exile
3:14-21	Laodicea	Israel in the “Last Days”

A Recapitulation of Old Covenant History

II. HISTORICAL PROLOGUE: LETTERS TO

THE SEVEN CHURCHES	2:1-3:22
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C. The Letter to Pergamum	2:12-17
D. The Letter to Thyatira	2:18-29
E. The Letter to Sardis	3:1-6
F. The Letter to Philadelphia	3:7-13
G. The Letter to Laodicea	3:14-22

FOUR SETS OF JUDGMENT

PART ONE: THE UNFAITHFUL WIFE (1:1 – 11:19)

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PART TWO: THE BRIDE, THE LAMB’S WIFE (12:1 – 22:21)

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- II. SUCCESSION ARRANGEMENTS: SEVEN BOWLS OF WRATH 15:1-22:21

- 1. Judgment on False Apostles
- 2. Judgment on False Israel
- 3. Judgment on the Evil King and False Prophet
- 4. Judgment on the Great Harlot

The Structure of Revelation Foreshadowed

(These judgments correspond to the four seven-fold curses of the Covenant, set forth in **Leviticus 26:18, 21, 24, 28**)

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THE SEVEN CHURCHES 2:1-3:22

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A. The Letter to Ephesus 2:1-7

2. Judgment on False Israel



B. The Letter to Smyrna 2:8-11

3. Judgment on Evil King and False Prophet



C. The Letter to Pergamum 2:12-17

4. Judgment on Great Harlot



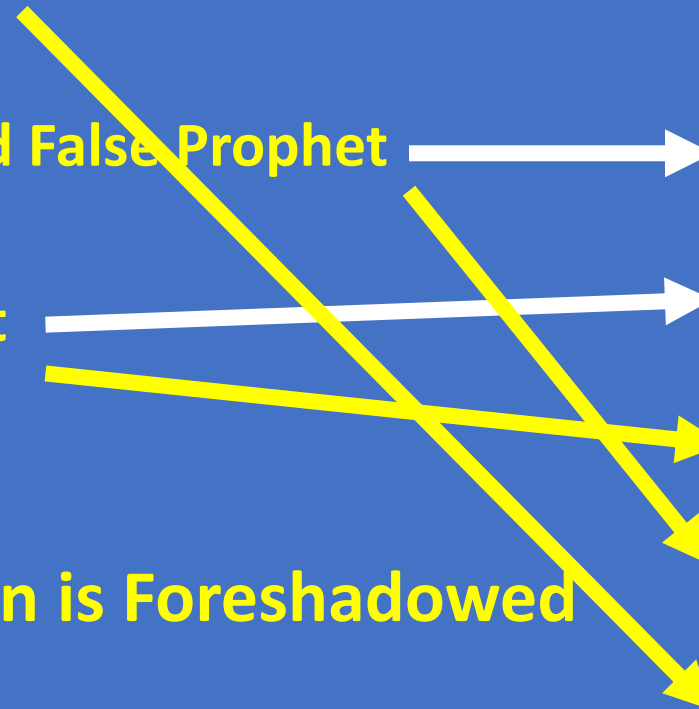
D. The Letter to Thyatira 2:18-29

E. The Letter to Sardis 3:1-6

F. The Letter to Philadelphia 3:7-13

G. The Letter to Laodicea 3:14-22

**The Structure of Revelation is Foreshadowed
in Each of the Letters**



CHIASTIC STRUCTURE IN SCRIPTURE

(17) "So you shall know that I *am* the LORD your God, Dwelling in Zion My holy mountain. Then Jerusalem shall be holy, And no aliens shall ever pass through her again." (18) And it will come to pass in that day *That* the mountains shall drip with new wine, The hills shall flow with milk, And all the brooks of Judah shall be flooded with water; A fountain shall flow from the house of the LORD And water the Valley of Acacias. (19) "Egypt shall be a desolation, And Edom a desolate wilderness, Because of violence *against* the people of Judah, For they have shed innocent blood in their land. (20) But Judah shall abide forever, And Jerusalem from generation to generation. (21) For I will acquit them of the guilt of bloodshed, whom I had not acquitted; For the LORD dwells in Zion."

Joel 3:17-21 NKJV

A - God dwells in Zion (vs. 17a)

B - Jerusalem is holy (vs. 17b)

C - Foreign invaders are banished (vs. 17c)

X - The blessings of the Kingdom (vs 18)

C - Foreign enemies are destroyed (vs. 19)

B - Jerusalem and Judah are preserved (vss. 20–21a)

A - God dwells in Zion (vs. 21b)

A. His Eyes were like a flame of fire – 1:14-15

B. Out of His mouth came a sharp two-edged sword – 1:16

C. I AM the first and the last, was dead and am alive

D. The mystery of the seven stars in My hand – 1:17-18

D. The One who holds the seven stars in His hand – 2:1

C. The first and the last, who was dead and came to life – 2:8

B. The one who has the sharp two-edged sword – 2:12

A. Who has eyes like a flame of fire – 2:18

D. Who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars

C. He who is holy, He who is true – 3:7

C. The Amen, the Faithful Witness, the Beginning of – 3:14

The Structure of Revelation Foreshadowed

CHIASTIC ORDER IN REVELATION

A

B

C

D

D

C

B

A

A

B

C

D

D

C

C

*





What to Take From This Lesson

1. Revelation takes the form of a Covenantal Treaty
2. Chapters 2-3 are the Second Section of the Covenantal Treaty
3. The individual letters to each church reflect and reinforce the Covenantal Treaty Structure
4. The individual letters reflect a recapitulation of Old Testament history
5. The individual letters reflect the actual condition of these churches
6. The letters foreshadow the judgements in Revelation

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

Section Two: Historical Prologue

“The Letters to the Seven Churches”

