

De brieven aan de 7 gemeenten

Overzicht en Samenvatting

Van Yochanan aan de zeven Messiaanse geloofsgemeenschappen in de provincie Asië:

Genade en sjaloorn is er voor u

- Van Hem die is, die was en die komt,
- van de zevenvoudige Geest voor zijn troon,
- en van Jeshua de Messias, de getrouwe Getuige, de eerstgeborene uit de doden en de Heerser over de koningen der aarde.

Aan Hem, die ons liefheeft, die ons van onze zonden verlost heeft ten koste van Zijn bloed, die ons gemaakt heeft tot een koninkrijk voor God, Zijn Vader;

Aan Hem zij de heerlijkheid en de heerschappij voor eeuwig en eeuwig! Amen.

De zeven gemeenten

1. Efese (2: 1-8)
2. Smyrna (2: 9-11)
3. Pergamos (2: 12-17)
4. Thyatira (2: 18-28)
5. Sardis (3: 1-6)
6. Philadelphia (3: 7-13)
7. Laodicea (3: 14-22)

Geen goed woord over Laodicea

Geen kwaad woord over Smyrna

Bouwstenen van de brieven:

1. Dit zegt Hij die...
2. Evaluatie van de gemeente
 1. Positieve bevindingen
 2. Zonden
3. Gezaghebbende adviezen:
 1. Waarschuwingen over zonden
 2. Bevelen om te gehoorzamen
 3. Beloften over zegeningen
4. Slotwoord en zegen

Waarover is Jezus positief?

1. Volharding 5x
2. Geduld 3x
3. Dienen 3x
4. Onderscheiding en intolerantie tov de boze 3x
5. Geen ontkenning 2x (geloof / Zijn naam)
6. Geestelijke groei
7. Liefde
8. Geloof
9. Heiligheid

Wat ziet Jezus hier als zonde?

1. Eerste liefde verlaten (het eerst genoemd)
2. Valse leerstellingen (3x genoemd!)
 1. Balaam – Materialisme → afgodendienst en immoraliteit
 2. Nicolaiten – Secularisatie → compromissen sluiten met omliggende cultuur / praktijken
 3. Izebel – Rebelleie → afgodendienst en immoraliteit
3. Op papier levend zijn, maar in het echt niet
4. Slappe dienstbetoon (uw werken niet volmaakt voor God)
5. Lauwheid
6. Geestelijke hoogmoed
7. Geestelijk blind zijn tov eigen zondigheid

Twaalf bevelen van Jezus:

1. Bekeer jullie 5x
2. Houd vast 3x
3. Onthou 2x
4. Vrees niet 2x
5. Doe de eerste werken
6. Wees trouw tot in de dood
7. Wees waakzaam
8. Versterk wat er nog is
9. Koop van Mij gelouterd goud en witte kleden
10. Zalf jullie ogen om te zien
11. Wees ijverig
12. Doe de deur open voor Mij

Bekeer: metanoueo = anders denken

1. Denk anders over zonde:

1. Keer je rug op zonde
2. Beweeg weg van de zonde
3. Stop met zonde

2. Denk anders over God

1. Keer je gezicht naar God
2. Beweeg naar God
3. Begin met het goede

3. Denk anders over jezelf en over je naaste

1. Keer je rug op je zondige natuur
2. Beweeg naar de ander
3. Begin met een zegenend levenswijze

4. Denk anders over de schepping/milieu

Indien geen bekering:

1. Ik zal je menorah verwijderen
2. Ik zal tegen je vechten met het zwaard van Mijn mond
3. Ik zal je in grote verdrukking werpen
4. Ik zal je de gevolgen van je zonden laten ervaren
5. Ik zal je treffen als een dief in de nacht
6. Ik zal je uitbraken

Gehoorzaam volharden → 19 beloningen

1. Boom des levens
2. Kroon des levens
3. Verborgen manna
4. Witte naamsteen
5. Veilig tegen 2e dood
6. Gezag over natieën
7. Morgenster
8. Samenwandelen
9. Schaamte bedekt
10. Naam in boek des levens
11. Naam vóór Vader
12. Open deur
13. Erkenning
14. Bescherming
15. Jy een steunpilaar
16. Gods naamdrager
17. Nieuwe naam
18. Fellowship met Hem
19. Regeren met Hem

Hij die zegt... = Koning der koningen

1. Hij heerst over Zijn lichaam
2. Hij heerst over de geschiedenis
3. Hij heerst over de dood
4. Hij heerst over de schepping
5. Hij is de Soevereine Heerser
6. Hij is de ultieme Krijger
7. Hij is de ultieme Liefde-schenker
8. Hij is Absoluut Heerlijk
9. Hij is Absoluut Volmaakt
10. Hij is Absoluut Heilig
11. Hij is Absoluut Waarachtig

Einde

Reference works used

- Interlinear Bible
- Jewish New Testament Commentary
- New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology
- Wycliffe Historical Geography of Bible Lands
- The Classic Bible Dictionary

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Jesus Christ King of kings

Overview studies on Revelations 2 and 3
focusing on Jesus Christ and what He has to say
to Christians in healthcare globally

Revelations: 4 schools of interpretation

1. Historical: it was for the seven Messianic communities only
2. Prophetic: overview of all (church) history
3. Futurist: referring to the end times only
4. Symbolic: to be interpreted figuratively not necessarily in connection with world history

From Yochanan to the seven Messianic communities in the province of Asia:

Grace and shalom to you

- From the One who is, who was and who is coming;
- from the sevenfold Spirit before his throne;
- and from Yeshua the Messiah, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead and the ruler of the earth's kings.

To Him, the One who loves us, who has freed us from our sins at the cost of his blood, who has caused us to be a kingdom, that is, cohanim for God, his Father – to Him be the glory and the rulership for ever and ever.
Amen.

Why letters to only seven Messianic Communities and why study them?

1. Number 7 → perfection / completeness
2. All 7 cities were on the important circular road that brought together the most populous and prosperous region of Asia Minor (west central)
3. The order in which they are in Rev 2 and 3 is the order in which they lay on this route
4. The seven messianic communities are representative of the entire Body of Christ in all of history

Our assumptions about the 7 letters

1. These seven letters are relevant to:
 1. The seven named Messianic communities
 2. Messianic communities throughout history
 3. Messianic communities in the end times
 4. All believers in all areas of society throughout history, including those in healthcare
2. This is a global prayer summit: we need the Big Picture from our Lord's perspective
3. If we study the seven letters as a whole, we get a better understanding of the Author and His ways

The letters to the 7 messianic communities reveal more about:

1. Jesus Christ Himself
2. His way of evaluating and exhorting His people
3. His view of how Christians ought to influence history

The 7 Messianic Communities

1. Ephesus (2: 1-8)
2. Smyrna (2: 9-11)
3. Pergamos (2: 12-17)
4. Thyatira (2: 18-28)
5. Sardis (3: 1-6)
6. Philadelphia (3: 7-13)
7. Laodicea (3: 14-22)

Nothing good is said about Laodicea

Nothing bad is said about Smyrna

General layout of the letters

1. Message from the One who...
2. Evaluation of the situation
3. Response to the situation:
 1. Warnings about sins
 2. Promises of good things
4. Closing admonition and blessing

1. Message from the One who...

1. Holds the 7 stars in his right hand and walks among the 7 menorahs
2. Is the Alpha and the Omega, who died and came alive again
3. Has the sharp double-edged sword
4. Is the Son of God, whose eyes are like a fiery flame and whose feet are like burnished brass
5. Has the sevenfold Spirit of God and the seven stars
6. Is HaKadosh, the True One, the One who has the key of David, who, if he opens something, no one else can shut it, and if he closes something, no one else can open it
7. Is the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the Ruler of God's creation

Implications of statements about “the One who...”

1. **He rules over His body** (Holds the 7 stars in his right hand and walks among the 7 menorahs)
2. **He rules over history** (Is the Alpha and the Omega)
3. **He rules over death** (who died and came alive again)
4. **He rules over creation** (Is the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the Ruler of God's creation)
5. **He rules sovereignly** (the One who has the key of David, who, if he opens something, no one else can shut it, and if he closes something, no one else can open it)
6. **He is the ultimate Warrior** (Has the sharp double-edged sword)
7. **He is the ultimate Love-giver** (Is the Son of God)
8. **He is Absolutely Glorious** (whose eyes are like a fiery flame and whose feet are like burnished brass)
9. **He is Absolutely Perfect** (Has the sevenfold Spirit of God and the seven stars)
10. **He is Absolutely Holy** (Is HaKadosh)
11. **He is Absolutely Truthful** (the True One)

Conclusion about the statements
regarding “the One who...”

1. Jesus Christ deserves to be in the centre of:

- Individual lives, families, local faith communities, healthcare institutions, healthcare practice, healthcare theories, healthcare education

2. Therefore:

1. Repentance wherever that is not the case
2. Pray and work to restore Him to His rightful place
3. Go for the maximum possible in a broken world

2. I know your works

- Used in every one of the seven letters
- **Not** your motives, promises, ideas, commitments, intentions, wishes, dreams, visions
- **But your works**
→ your works
reveal what you
really believe

3. I know your circumstances

- Tribulation
- Poverty
- Social situation (Where you dwell - Satan's throne)
- Weakness

“I know your works and I know your
circumstances...”

- Encouragement: He understands
- Exhortation: He inspires
- Correction: He calls to repentance

4. The positives: What is really important to Jesus?

- Perseverance 5x
- Patience 3x
- Service 3x
- Intolerance of evil and discernment 3x
- No denial 2x (faith / His name)
- Spiritual growth
- Love
- Faith
- Holiness

5. The sins to repent of – which sins really trouble our Lord?

- You have left your first love (the first sin mentioned)
- False doctrine – the only sin listed three times!
 - of Balaam - put stumbling block → idolatry + immorality
 - of Nicolaitans – compromise with pagan culture and practice
 - Jezebel → immorality + idolatry with Gnostic background
- Alive in name only
- Shoddy service (your works not perfect before God)
- Lukewarmness
- Spiritual pride
- Spiritual blindness about own condition

Major idols of the 7 cities

<i>City</i>	<i>Idol</i>	<i>Significance</i>
Ephesus	Artemis	Worship of magic
Smyrna	Emperor	Worship of power
Pergamos	Polytheism	Worship of own god(s)
Thyatira	Guild gods	Worship of profession
Sardis	Prosperity	Worship of luxurious life
Philadelphia	Brotherhood	Worship of human love
Laodicea	?Man	Worship of self

Ephesus: Artemis / Diana worship

- Greeks: Artemis; Romans: Diana; Asia Minor: Cybele
- A nature divinity of Asiatic conception: the queen of heaven
- The mother-principle of nature (think Gaia)
 - Reproductive power / mother of life
 - Sustaining power / nourisher of all creatures
- Ephesus was the 'temple-keeper' of Diana. Not only the big temple, also her statue in shrines at home and in graves (a many-breasted figure)
- Worshiped in Asia Minor, Greece, Italy, the Crimea, France and Spain

Worship of magic in healthcare (Ephesus)

- Divination: use of unauthorized unusual powers to make a diagnosis or to decide which therapy to give
- Magic: use of unauthorized unusual powers to bring about healing
- Curses: use of unauthorized unusual powers to harm another / make them ill
- Examples: witchdoctor's use of divination, magic and/or curses, magnetism, use of pendulum, reading hand palms, astrology, ancestor worship, animism, idolatry; mind over matter practices involving spiritual beings etc.

Smyrna → Emperor → worship of power

- The main centre of emperor worship at the time Revelations was written
- Worshiped the emperor for several centuries
- Also famous for its medical school

Worship of power in healthcare (Smyrna)

- The Big Boss is always right
- The Big Boss can make no mistakes
- The Big Boss is not be criticized
- The Big Boss is above the law / rules and can therefore do whatever he/she wants
- The Big Boss does not have to set a good example
- The Big Boss: domination, not inspiration
- For Big Boss, read:
 - Doctor, Administrator, Matron, Director, Minister of health, Chairman of the Board, Ward sister, Myself³⁵

Pergamos → polytheism

- Massive library (second to Alexandria)
- Asclepion (health resort): Treatment by suggestion, sun and water baths, music, prayer, interpretation of dreams. Galen practiced medicine there later on.
- Satan's throne – 3 possibilities:
 - Great Altar of Zeus (one of the wonders of the ancient world)
 - Emperor cult
 - Heathen worship in general (polytheism)

Pergamos → Polytheism → Worship of own god(s)

Major gods in Pergamos:

- Zeus: Massive Great Altar of Zeus visible from afar
- Asclepius, the “saviour”: international medical / healing centre with snake symbol (?Satan)
- Was the official centre of emperor worship before Smyrna and Ephesus with three temples
- Athena
- Dionysus
- Demeter

Worship of own god(s) in healthcare (Pergamos)

- Materialistic / mechanical view of human
 - Neglect of spiritual dimension
 - Christian alternative: Whole person healthcare
- Socialism / capitalism
 - Statism versus liberalism
 - Christian alternative: Relationism
- Pluralism
 - Fragmented lives and societies
 - Christian alternative: Biblical Christian world view

Thyatira → Guild gods → Worship of profession

- A trading city
- More trade guilds found here than any other Asia Minor city, including wool workers, linen workers, tailors, dyers, leatherworkers, tanners, bronze-smiths
- Each trade guild had its own patron deity

Worship of profession in healthcare (Thyatira)

- The 'god' in the white coat
- The big-shot hospital administrator
- The super-professional nurse
- The almighty bureaucrat in the ministry of health
- Building careers on the ruins of family life
- Disdain for anything not believed by reductionistic medical science
- Believers allowing spirituality and faith to be excluded from healthcare or to be marginalized

Sardis → Prosperity → Worship of luxurious life

- Very wealthy city. Wealth came from gold (king Croesus), agriculture, trade, communication
- City was an almost impregnable fortress
- Temple of Artemis (the Asiatic mother goddess)

Worship of luxurious life in healthcare (Sardis)

- In it for the money
- Inordinate inequality in salaries
- Ministry of health officials well-paid and good benefits, hospital staff underpaid
- Inordinate profits: if it is medical it is more expensive

Philadelphia → Brotherhood → Worship of human love

- Named in honour of Attalus, called 'Philadelphous' (brother lover) because of his loyalty to his brother
- Established to become a centre for the spread of Greco-Asiatic civilization – a 'missionary' city...

Worship of human love in healthcare (Philadelphia)

- Human love: sturgos, philos, eros
- God's love: agape
- Compassion without Christ is fine, but not enough
- Empathy without Christ is fine, but not enough
- Sometimes we Christians can learn a lot about compassion and empathy from not-yet Christians

Laodicea → ?Man → Worship of self

- People were known as pliable and accommodating, full of the spirit of compromise → pluralism
- People trusted in their riches → love of Mammon

Worship of self in healthcare (Laodicea)

- Me, myself and I = the evil human trinity
- My career / interests come first
- Seeing situations only from own perspective
- Hardness / lack of compassion
- Building kingdoms of self all over the place
- Saint in the church and a devil at home
- Prays like the pope and curses like a sailor in the operating room
- All smiles when it suits him, all grumpy when he is himself

Four areas of prayer:

- Thyatira → Guild gods → Worship of profession
- Sardis → Prosperity → Worship of luxurious life
- Philadelphia → Brotherhood → Worship of human love
- Laodicea → ?Man → Worship of self

6. Words of advice from our Lord - 1

1. Repent 5x
2. Hold fast 3x
3. Remember 2x (from where you have fallen / how you have received and heard)
4. Do not fear 2x (suffering / tribulation to come)
5. Do the first works
6. Be faithful unto death

6. Words of advice from our Lord - 2

7. Be watchful

8. Strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die

9. Buy from Me

- gold that is refined in the fire that you may be rich
- white garments that you may be clothed

10. Anoint your eyes with salve that you may see

11. Be zealous

12. If you hear My voice, open the door

7. Warnings from our King

- **If you do not repent:**
 - I will remove your menorah
 - I will fight against you with the sword of My mouth
 - I will cast you into great tribulation
 - I will give to each one of you according to your works
 - I will come upon you as a thief unexpectedly
 - I will vomit you out of My mouth

8. His rewards for those who obey... 1

1. You will eat of the tree of life
2. You will receive the crown of life
3. You will eat hidden manna
4. You will receive a white stone with secret new name
5. You will not be hurt by second death
6. Receive power/authority over the nations
7. Receive the morning star
8. You shall walk with Me for you are worthy
9. Be clothed in white garments

8. His rewards for those who obey... 2

10. Name not blotted out of Book of Life

11. I will confess your name before My Father and before His angels

12. I have set before you an open door and no one can shut it

13. Deceivers will be made to worship at your feet and to know that I have loved you

14. I will keep you from the hour of trial that shall come upon the whole world as a test

8. His rewards for those who obey... 3

15. I will make you a pillar in the temple of My God and you shall go out no more

16. I will write on you the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem which comes down out of heaven from My God

17. I will write on you My new name

18. I will come in to you and dine with you and you with Me

19. You will sit with Me on My throne

Reference works used

- Interlinear Bible
- Jewish New Testament Commentary
- New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology
- Wycliffe Historical Geography of Bible Lands
- The Classic Bible Dictionary

The wages of sin is death but the gift of God is eternal life in Jesus Christ our **Lord** (Romans 6: 23)

wages
sin
death

Jesus Christ

but

gift
God
eternal life