

Revelation 1:4-8

4 John to the seven churches that are in Asia:

Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before his throne, 5 and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth.

To him who loves us and freed us from our sins by his blood, 6 and made us to be a kingdom, priests serving his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

7 Look! He is coming with the clouds;

every eye will see him,

even those who pierced him;

and on his account all the tribes of the earth will wail.

So it is to be. Amen.

8 “I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.

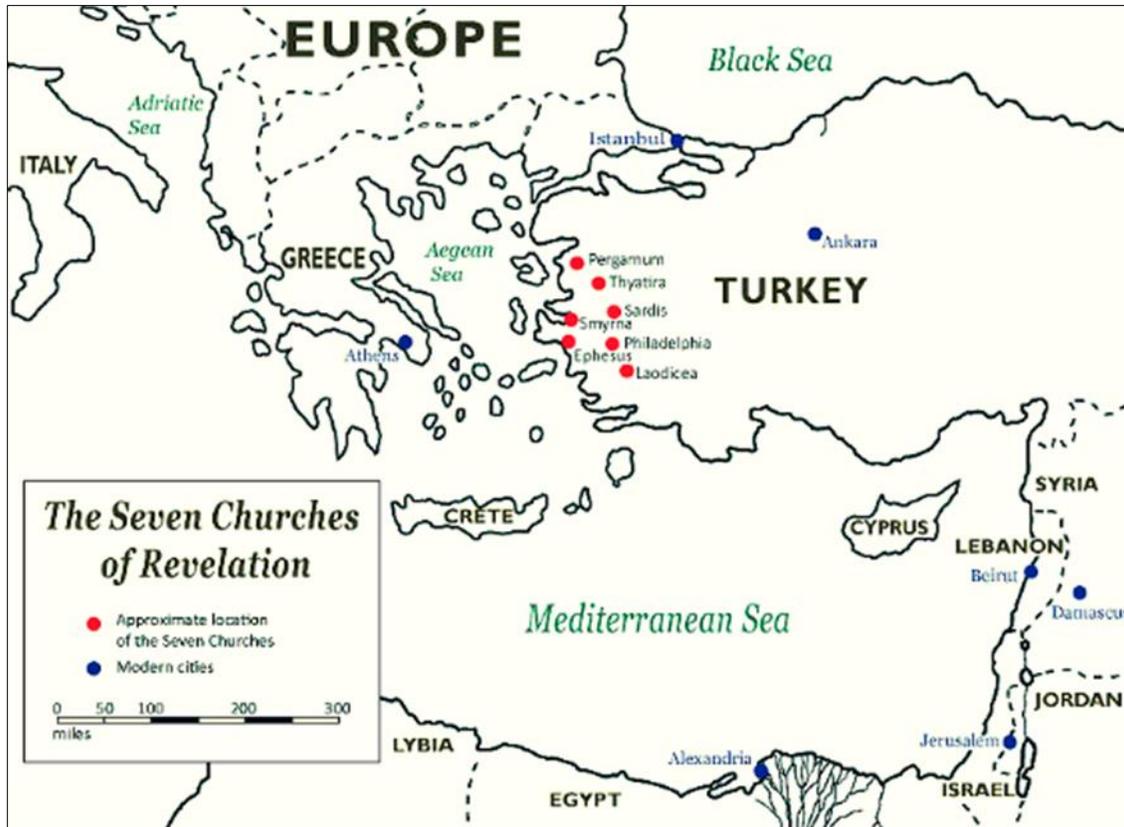
NOTES:

“The Revelation to John” is a letter to seven churches in present-day western Turkey written by John, who in the letter describes himself as living on the isle of Patmos. He shares in the “persecution” (1:9) that the churches are experiencing.

These churches had been founded by Paul and his friends several years before. The word “revelation” comes from the Greek *apokalupsis*, meaning an uncovering, or disclosure. The letter was probably written around 95 AD.

“John” is traditionally thought to be the apostle John, son of Zebedee, who was also thought to be the author of the fourth gospel. However, “John” was probably an anonymous author who wrote under that name. Though he names himself John, nowhere does he mention that he was an apostle, nor that he knew Jesus.

- 1:4 – The seven churches are Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea (see 1:11 and map below).



- 1:4 – “Grace to you and peace...” – Paul started almost all of his letters this way. “Grace” from Greek *charis*, meaning joy, pleasure, delight, and also the loving-kindness of God. “Peace” from Greek *eirene*, meaning tranquility or harmony, from the root *eiro*, meaning to join together, implying wholeness.
- 1:4 – “him who is and who was and who is to come” – a description of the eternal God, alluding to God’s revelation to Moses in the burning bush in Exodus 3:14 (“I am who I am,” often translated as Yahweh.)
- 1:4 – “seven spirits” – perhaps the seven horns and the seven eyes of the slaughtered Lamb mentioned in 5:6? Seven is symbolic throughout this letter as a number of completion, alluding to the seven days of creation. Also, the book of Tobit spoke of seven angels that “stand and enter before the glory of the Lord”; one of these was Gabriel.
- 1:5 – “ruler of the kings of the earth” – maybe an allusion to Psalm 89:27: “I will make him the firstborn, the highest of the kings of the earth.”
- 1:6 – “made us to be...priests” – significant in that only priests had direct access to God; this text says everyone has direct access to God.
- 1:7 – perhaps an allusion to Daniel 7:13-14
- 1:8 – “alpha and omega” – the first and last letters of Greek alphabet. God is beyond time.