

SEVEN LETTERS TABLE

Revelation 2–3

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Elements for identifying the sevenfold literary structure are encoded into the grammar and style John has used to structure these seven letters. This grammatical and stylistic structure can be outlined in the following way:

Sevenfold Literary Structure:

1. ADDRESS: “To the angel of the church in . . . write”
2. IDENTIFICATION: “Thus says” with literary allusions to prologue, inaugural vision, etc.
3. ACCOUNT: “I know your works” or minor variation
4. ASSESSMENT: “But I” first person assessment, but with variations (imperatives, etc.)
5. EXHORTATION: “Remember . . .” (etc.) imperative mood verb (command)
6. PROMISE: “He who conquers” (or “To him who conquers”)
7. CALL: “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”

The exegetical significance of observing this literary structure is to understand that *John intends for the seven letters to be interpreted holistically as a literary unit*. Whereas the seven letters are written to seven distinct congregations in Asia Minor, the letters are meant mutually to interpret each other. Notice in each call section that concludes each letter, the plural is used: “what the Spirit says *to the churches*.” In the context of reading Revelation in an ancient worship setting, then, everyone would have been reading everyone else’s mail, so to speak. They are seven letters for the symbolic significance of application to the whole church.

	EPHESUS	SMYRNA	PERGAMUM	THYATIRA	SARDIS	PHILADELPHIA	LAODICEA
ADDRESS	2:1 “To the angel of the church in Ephesus write:	2:8 “And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write:	2:12 “And to the angel of the church in Pergamum write:	2:18 “And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write:	3:1 “And to the angel of the church in Sardis write:	3:7 “And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write:	3:14 “And to the angel of the church in Laodicea write:
IDENTIFICATION	“The words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand, who walks among the seven golden lampstands.	“The words of the first and the last, who died and came to life.	“The words of him who has the sharp two-edged sword.	“The words of the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and whose feet are like burnished bronze.	“The words of him who has the seven spirits of God and the seven stars.	“The words of the holy one, the true one, who has the key of David, who opens and no one shall shut, who shuts and no one opens.	“The words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of God’s creation.
ACCOUNT	2:2 ““I know your works, your toil and your patient endurance, and how you cannot bear evil men but have tested those who call themselves apostles but are not, and found them to be false; 2:3 I know you are enduring patiently and bearing up for my name’s sake, and you have not grown weary.	2:9 ““I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich) and the slander of those who say that they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan.	2:13 ““I know where you dwell, where Satan’s throne is; you hold fast my name and you did not deny my faith even in the days of Antipas my witness, my faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells.	2:19 ““I know your works, your love and faith and service and patient endurance, and that your latter works exceed the first.	““I know your works; you have the name of being alive, and you are dead.	3:8 ““I know your works. Behold, I have set before you an open door, which no one is able to shut; I know that you have but little power, and yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name.	3:15 ““I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were cold or hot!

	EPHESUS	SMYRNA	PERGAMUM	THYATIRA	SARDIS	PHILADELPHIA	LAODICEA
ASSESSMENT	2:4 But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first.	2:10 Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and for ten days you will have tribulation.	2:14 But I have a few things against you: you have some there who hold the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, that they might eat food sacrificed to idols and practice immorality. 2:15 So you also have some who hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans.	2:20 But I have this against you, that you tolerate the woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess and is teaching and beguiling my servants to practice immorality and to eat food sacrificed to idols. 2:21 I gave her time to repent, but she refuses to repent of her immorality. 2:22 Behold, I will throw her on a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her I will throw into great tribulation, unless they repent of her doings; 2:23 and I will strike her children dead. And all the churches shall know that I am he who searches mind and heart, and I will give to each of you as your works deserve.	3:2 Awake, and strengthen what remains and is on the point of death, for I have not found your works perfect in the sight of my God.	3:9 Behold, I will make those of the synagogue of Satan who say that they are Jews and are not, but lie— behold, I will make them come and bow down before your feet, and learn that I have loved you. 3:10 Because you have kept my word of patient endurance, I will keep you from the hour of trial which is coming on the whole world, to try those who dwell upon the earth.	3:16 So, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew you out of my mouth. 3:17 For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing; not knowing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked. 3:18 Therefore I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire, that you may be rich, and white garments to clothe you and to keep the shame of your nakedness from being seen, and salve to anoint your eyes, that you may see.

	EPHESUS	SMYRNA	PERGAMUM	THYATIRA	SARDIS	PHILDELPHIA	LAODICEA
EXHORTATION	2:5 Remember then from what you have fallen, repent and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent. 2:6 Yet this you have, you hate the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.	Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life.	2:16 Repent then. If not, I will come to you soon and war against them with the sword of my mouth.	2:24 But to the rest of you in Thyatira, who do not hold this teaching, who have not learned what some call the deep things of Satan, to you I say, I do not lay upon you any other burden; 2:25 only hold fast what you have, until I come.	3:3 Remember then what you received and heard; keep that, and repent. If you will not awake, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come upon you. 3:4 Yet you have still a few names in Sardis, people who have not soiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white, for they are worthy.	3:11 I am coming soon; hold fast what you have, so that no one may seize your crown.	3:19 Those whom I love, I reprove and chasten; so be zealous and repent. 3:20 Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any one hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me.

	EPHESUS	SMYRNA	PERGAMUM	THYATIRA	SARDIS	PHILDELPHIA	LAODICEA
PROMISE	<p>*To him who conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.’</p> <p>*[sic: comes <i>after</i> Call in Letters 1–3]</p>	<p>*He who conquers shall not be hurt by the second death.’</p> <p>*[sic: comes <i>after</i> Call in Letters 1–3]</p>	<p>*To him who conquers I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, with a new name written on the stone which no one knows except him who receives it.’</p> <p>*[sic: comes <i>after</i> Call in Letters 1–3]</p>	<p>2:26 He who conquers and who keeps my works until the end, I will give him power over the nations, 2:27 and he shall rule them with a rod of iron, as when earthen pots are broken in pieces, even as I myself have received power from my Father; 2:28 and I will give him the morning star.</p>	<p>3:5 He who conquers shall be clad thus in white garments, and I will not blot his name out of the book of life; I will confess his name before my Father and before his angels.</p>	<p>3:12 He who conquers, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God; never shall he go out of it, and I will write on him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem which comes down from my God out of heaven, and my own new name.</p>	<p>3:21 He who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, as I myself conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne.</p>
CALL	<p>2:7 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.</p>	<p>2:11 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.</p>	<p>2:17 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.</p>	<p>2:29 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.’</p>	<p>3:6 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.’</p>	<p>3:13 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.’</p>	<p>3:22 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.’”</p>