

Chapter 2

Background: Setting the Scene

By the time Yochanan (John) received this vision, around 90 C.E., there were already more than 100 Assemblies spread throughout the known world. But Yochanan was led to write to just seven of them. Why?

These seven weren't chosen at random. Each Assembly represented a spiritual condition, something unique, something real, not only in their time but also for us today. These weren't just historical congregations; they symbolised the full body of Israel, the Lost Sheep scattered among the nations. And through these letters, we see messages that still speak powerfully to our hearts, even now.

These weren't letters to outsiders or pagans. These were messages to believers, followers of Yeshua, who needed to repent from compromise and return to the truth. These were our brothers and sisters... and in many ways, they are us. And so, as we read, each of us must ask: *Which Assembly do I reflect? Which condition matches my life, my faith, my walk?*

Each letter follows the same structure. You'll notice a beautiful rhythm:

- First, each letter is addressed personally to the Assembly.
- Then, there's a description of Yeshua, who He is to them.
- After that, Yeshua acknowledges the good they've done.
- But He doesn't stop there. He lovingly points out their shortcomings too.
- He then calls them to action. He tells them how to make it right.
- A challenge is given, to rise above, to overcome.
- And lastly, a promise, a reward for those who conquer.

This structure is repeated for each letter. And this shows us something important: Yeshua cares. He sees us. He knows our works. And He wants us to overcome.

Understanding the Letters: Four Theories

Now, before we dive into the actual letters, we need to take a step back and look at how people have understood these messages throughout history. There are four main views, or theories, about these seven letters:

1. The “Only in the Past” View (Preterism)

Some believe the letters were just for those seven Assemblies back then and have no message for us today. According to this view, all prophecy, including the battle of Armageddon and the destruction of the Temple, already happened in the first century. These people are called **Preterists**. They say everything in Revelation has already been fulfilled.

But if we accept this view fully, then Revelation loses all meaning for us today. And that's a dangerous path, because Scripture is alive and speaks across generations.

2. The “Timeline View”

Others believe these letters speak to different eras throughout history. Each Assembly reflects a time period that the Body of Messiah went through, starting from the early believers and moving through the ages until today. And indeed, we see how the House of Israel, especially the Ten Tribes, slowly drifted into paganism over time. The letters then become a prophetic timeline.

3. The “All at Once” View

Another perspective is that all seven Assemblies represent the whole Body of Messiah, not just back then, but even now. Each letter speaks to a type of believer or congregation, and all seven types have existed in every generation.

4. The Combined View (Midrashic View)

This is the view I believe aligns best with the Scriptures, especially from a Jewish, Hebraic mindset. It combines the timeline view and the “all at once” view. It recognises that prophecy works in patterns, not just in one straight line.

And this brings us to something very important to understand: **Midrashic Eschatology**.

Midrashic Eschatology: A Jewish Way of Seeing Prophecy

Let's slow down here. This may sound like a big term, but it's actually very simple.

Midrash means "to investigate" or "to search out." In Jewish thought, prophecy isn't always about predicting a single event and waiting for it to happen. It's about recognising **patterns** in Scripture and history, how the past repeats itself and teaches us about the future.

In the Western world, we often think of prophecy in this way: someone predicts something, and then it either happens or it doesn't. But in Yeshua's day, prophecy was much more layered. It was about seeing how similar things unfold again and again, on different levels, in different generations.

Yeshua Himself used this method. In **Mattithyahu (Matthew) 24:15**, He says:

“So, when you see the ‘abomination that lays waste,’ spoken of by Dani’el the prophet, set up in the set-apart place” he who reads, let him understand.

He was pointing back to an event in Jewish history, when Antiochus Epiphanes desecrated the Temple about 160 years earlier. But He was also pointing forward, because that same type of event would happen again.

This is the heart of **Midrashic Eschatology**: prophecy repeats. It unfolds in layers. And different interpretations can all be valid at the same time:

- **Preterism:** Yes, some prophecies have already been fulfilled.
- **Historicism:** Some prophecies are still unfolding throughout history.
- **Poemiscism:** Some give us hope and comfort, reminding us that Yeshua *will* return.
- **Futurism:** Some will be fulfilled literally in the future.

Midrashic Eschatology takes all these together and shows how they interweave. Each fulfilment is like a thread in a great tapestry that points us to the final redemption, the ultimate Revelation, the unveiling of Messiah.

This is how the early believers, Yeshua, Paul, and the apostles, understood the Scriptures. And if we want to understand Revelation properly, we need to come back to this Hebraic lens. We need to read it the way Yeshua would have taught it.