

Lesson 5 - Churches of Ephesus and Smyrna

John's vision is explained in Rev 1: ²⁰ As for the mystery of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand, and the seven golden lampstands, the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.

Question 1 : What is the significance of each church having an angel? (What is the ministry of angels?)

Question 2: Why do you think the churches are symbolized by a lampstand? (What is the purpose of a lampstand?)

Revelation 2 reveals the strengths and weaknesses of the seven churches along with God's promises to them.

I. To the Church in Ephesus

Rev 2:1 To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: 'The words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand, who walks among the seven golden lampstands.

Question 3: Who is it that walks among the churches?

² "I know your works, your toil and your patient endurance, and how you cannot bear with those who are evil, but have tested those who call themselves apostles and are not, and found them to be false. ³ I know you are enduring patiently and bearing up for my name's sake, and you have not grown weary.

Question 4: How do we as a God's children test for false prophets in a practical way?

⁴ But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first.

Question 5: What are some of the signs that a church is losing their first love for Christ?

⁵ Remember therefore from where 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.

Question 6: What evidence do we see in this verse that they have lost their first love?

Question 7: What will happen if a church's lampstand is removed? (Reference Question 2)

⁶ Yet this you have: you hate the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.

Question 8: Who were the Nicolaitans? What did they believe?

Nicolaitism.

1. The practice of priests in being married or having a mistress. It was one of the twin evils to be overthrown in the eyes of the reform movement of Rome, inspired by Pope Gregory VII. The second evil practice was simony.

2. The second evil practice (simony) was the act of selling church offices and roles. It is named after Simon Magus, who is described in the Acts of the Apostles 8:9–24 as having offered two disciples of Jesus, Peter and John, payment in exchange for their empowering him to impart the power of the Holy Spirit to anyone on whom he would.

Verse 7 directs ALL churches to listen up to what God is saying.

⁷ He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.

II. To the Church in Smyrna

⁸ “And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write: ‘The words of the first and the last, who died and came to life.

Question 9: Who is verse 8 talking about? (Alpha and Omega)

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.

Question 10: What is meant by the synagogue of Satan? (i.e. What is the purpose of a synagogue?)

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. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life.

Note: Expositor’s Bible Commentary on vs 10

For a faithful and suffering church, Christ offers further trial and suffering. The "ten days" may be ten actual days, or it may be an expression for an indeterminate but short period of time (cf. [Ne 4:12](#); [Da 1:12](#))

In the Roman world, prison was usually not punitive but a prelude to trial and execution; hence the words "Be faithful, even to the point of death."

¹¹ He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. The one who conquers will not be hurt by the second death.

Question 11: How does verse 11 infer that this pronouncement on Smyrna is prophetic to churches today?

Question 12: What is meant by the second death?

III. Application:

What relevance do the churches of Ephesus and Smyrna have to Valley View Baptist?