

Revelation: Lesson #96 – Letters to the Seven Churches -1

Notes for Parents to Study With Their Children

For Sunday , May 10th

Read Revelation 2:1-17 (a simplified explanation of the text will be supplied at the end of these notes.)

Memory Verse: Rev. 2:4 “Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love.”

The Seven Letters

We remember that Jesus told John to write to the seven churches of Asia. In Revelation chapters 2 and 3 we have a letter given by Jesus to each congregation. Most of the letters have several things in common.

- In each one Jesus introduces Himself with one of the things John saw in the vision in chapter one.
- In each Jesus says what He knows about the church, both good and bad.
- Each group is told, “He that has an ear let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”
- In each letter they are promised a reward if they win the victory of staying faithful to Christ.

In this lesson we will look at the first three letters.

Jesus’ Letter to the Church at Ephesus

- Jesus introduces Himself as “He who holds the seven stars in His right hand and walks among the seven golden lampstands.”
- Good Things About This Church: Jesus said that the church at Ephesus had worked hard for His cause. They had not given up, but had stayed steadfast. They had not been deceived by false apostles. They hated false teaching.
- Bad Things About This Church: They had left their first love. This likely means that they still served the Lord, but they didn’t serve Him out of love. We should serve the Lord because He has loved us and done so many good things for us. But sometimes we forget about all those good things He has blessed us with. We may still go to church and study our Bibles, but we do it just because we think we have to, not because we love the Lord and want to do it for Him.
- The Ephesian church needed to repent and go back to working for the Lord the way they once had done. If they didn’t the Lord would remove His lampstand. The purpose of a lampstand was to hold up a light where it could be seen (Matt. 5:15). Jesus and His teaching are what the church holds up for the world to see. But if we aren’t serving the Lord the right way with the right attitude, we don’t deserve to have a lampstand. The Lord will remove it.
- **The Lord’s Reward:** Jesus reminded this church that they must overcome the world, they must win a victory over it. He would reward those who won their victory with the right to eat from the Tree of Life. We remember reading about that tree at the beginning of the Bible in the Garden of Eden. It would have given Adam and Eve the

right to live forever. But when they sinned the way to it was blocked and it was removed from the earth. Now it exists in God's Heavenly Paradise and Jesus has promised that if we faithfully serve Him, we can eat from that tree.

Jesus' Letter to the Church at Smyrna

- Jesus introduces Himself as “the first and last which was dead and is alive.” Jesus obviously was the One who had died and resurrected from the dead.
- Good Things About This Church: Even though the members of the church at Smyrna did not have much money, they were truly rich spiritually. They had been through many troubles, but had obviously been faithful through it all.
- Bad Things About This Church: The Lord offers no criticism of this church.
- The church would experience even more difficult days ahead. The devil were try to do them harm and some would be put in prison because they served Jesus Christ. The Lord only asked that they continue to be faithful to Him.
- **The Lord's Reward:** Those who won their victory would never be hurt by the second death. The second death is punishment in Hell.

Jesus' Letter to the Church at Pergamum

- Jesus introduces Himself to this church as “He who has the sharp two-edged sword”. We know that Hebrews 4:12 says that God's Word is sharp like a two-edged sword.
- Good Things About This Church: The town of Pergamum was evidently a very sinful place. Jesus said it was where Satan's throne was. Of course, Satan didn't literally have a throne there, but he evidently ruled over a lot of people's lives there. The Devil influenced a lot of people to do evil. Even though Pergamum was that kind of place, the church there had not denied the faith. A Christian named Antipas had been put to death there, but still they had stayed faithful to Christ and not given up.
- Bad Things About This Church: Jesus was unhappy that some people at Pergamum were acting like the Old Testament character Balaam. Balaam used his influence to get God's people to do worship idols and do other sinful things. Evidently some at the church at Pergamum were teaching that Christians could compromise and do these bad things. Faithful Christians must stand up against those who would corrupt the church and teach it to do evil things.
- **The Lord's Reward:** Those who would stand up for Jesus and what was right would win the victory. They were promised that they could eat of the hidden manna. The manna of the Old Testament fed and sustained the children of Israel through their difficult times, so this “hidden manna” might be the Lord's promise to given them what they needed through their difficult times. Jesus once said He was the true manna from heaven (John 6:33-35,50-59). Jesus also promised them a “white stone and a new name written on the stone.”

Simplified Explanation of the Text

Letter to the Church at Ephesus

2:1 Write this to the angel of the Ephesus church: He who holds the seven stars in His right hand and walks among the seven golden lampstands says this –

2 I know the work you do and how difficult its been. Even so, you have endured through it all. You cannot bear those who are evil, and you have tried those who claim they are apostles (who really aren't) and found that they were lying.

3 You have held up and been steadfast without becoming tired.

4 But I do have something against you – you have left your first love.

5 So remember where you have fallen from and repent, and do the first works. If you don't repent, I will have to come and remove your lampstand out of its place.

6 But you do have this – you hate the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.

7 If you have an ear, hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To those who win the victory, I will give them the right to eat from the Tree of Life which is in the Paradise of God.

Letter to the Church at Smyrna

8 And write to the angel of the Smyrna church: The first and last which was dead and is alive says this –

9 I know your works and the troubles that have been pressed upon you, and that you are poor, but really you are rich. I know how some who claim to be Jews (who really belong to the synagogue of Satan) have slandered you.

10 Don't be afraid of anything you will suffer. Be aware that the devil will throw some of you in prison to try you and for ten days you will have trouble pressing down on you. Be faithful until death and I will give you the victory crown of life.

11 If you have an ear, hear what the Spirit says to the churches. Those who win the victory will not be hurt by the second death.

Letter to the Church at Pergamum

12 And write to the angel of the Pergamum church: He who has the sharp two-edged sword says this –

13 I know that you dwell where Satan's throne is, yet you have held on to My name and have not denied the faith. You held on even through the time when Antipas, my faithful witness, was killed there where Satan dwells.

14 I do, however, have a few things against you because you have some there holding the teaching of Balaam who taught Balak to throw a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols and to do sexually immoral things.

15 And in the same way you also have some who hold to the teaching of the Nicolaitans.

16 So repent or I will come quickly and fight a war against them with the sword of My mouth.

17 If you have an ear, hear what the Spirit says to the churches. Those who win the victory, I will give them the hidden manna and I will give them a white stone and a new name written on the stone which no one will know but those who receive it.