



These were seven outstanding churches (but there were other outstanding churches) this region was where the East met the West. This was the most important region for the Roman Empire. Letters were prevalent and the primary form of communication in that time. It is likely thousands read this letter in churches in that region in that day.

Ephesus marked the height of civilization with a population 200,000 featuring a 20,000 seat outdoor theater, and another a 100,000 amphitheater in the area. The city was complete with a resort area, political area, and the streets are made of marble. It was truly a rich city that was on a trade route with a large river. You would step on the pier and look down streets of white marble with shops, temples, and all you could desire. At times up to 1-2 million people would be in the city.

Steep in idolatry, Ephesus's most sacred idol temple was in honor of Diane or Artemis (many breasted one). This was the largest Greek Temple (418ft X 239ft) with over 100 columns. It was four times larger than the Parthenon. Excessive orgies that would make even Las Vegas blush were all done in the name of worship.

Paul preached there. John was a pastor there. Then, John came back as the pastor again after 10 years in exile and was buried there. Impact of their gospel message was later marked by the city where a great cross was constructed with four great pillars in the harbor of the city (pillars represented Matthew, Mark, Luke and John). In Luke's gospel, he quotes all heard the message of Christ in Asia both Greek and Jew. This statement reflects that up to 25 million people heard the gospel.

Rev 2:1 "To the angel of the church of Ephesus write, 'These things says He who holds the seven stars in His right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands:

1. Stars - The ministers of Christ are under his special care and protection. God knows the number of the stars, calls them by their names, and it is the honor of the Lord Jesus Christ that the ministers of the gospel, who are greater blessings to the church than the stars are to the world, are in his hand. He directs all their motions; he fills them with light and influence; he supports them, or else they would soon be falling stars; they are instruments in his hand, and all the good they do is done by his hand with them.
2. Lampstands - He walks in the midst of the golden candlesticks. This intimates his relation to his churches, as with the other his relation to his creation. Christ is in an intimate manner present and conversant with his churches; he knows and observes their state; he takes pleasure in them, as a man does to walk in his garden.

Where is Jesus today? Is this what you picture Jesus doing? How does knowing this change your perspective or priorities?

Rev 2:2-3 "I know your works, your labor, your patience, and that you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars; and you have persevered and have patience, and have labored for My name's sake and have not become weary.

Those that are stars in Christ's hand need to be always in motion, dispensing light to all about them. For my name's sake thou hast labored, and hast not fainted... Christ keeps an account of every day's work, and every hour's work, his servants do for him, and their labor shall not be in vain in the Lord. For their patience in suffering: Thy labor and thy patience. It is not enough that we be diligent, but we must be patient, and endure hardness as good soldiers of Christ.

Reflect on that statement "I know your works". Put your name in that sentence. **How do you feel knowing that Jesus knows all your works and he is keeping account?**

Do you or the world act today as if this is true?

Rev 2:4 "Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love."

Condemnation – You have lost that Lovin’ Feeling! Just like a happy healthy marriage takes effort and intimacy, God requires your love - verb. Don’t tell me you love me and deny me in public, only pray on Sundays and ignore my Word.

In what ways has your love for God changed since you became a Christian?

Rev 2:5 “Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place—unless you repent.”

What do you think it means that their lampstand would be removed from its place? Why do you think God thinks it is necessary to take it away unless they repent?

Rev 2:6 “But this you have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.”

The Nicolaitans¹ (means rule over laity) were a loose sect who sheltered themselves under the name of Christianity. They held hateful doctrines, and were guilty of hateful deeds, hateful to Christ and to all true Christians; and Jesus praises the church of Ephesus that they had a just zeal and abhorrence of those wicked doctrines and practices. A spirit of indifference between truth and error, good and evil, may be misrepresented as charity and meekness, but it is not pleasing to Christ.

NICOLAITANS (nīk’ō-lā’i-tānz, Gr. *Nikolaitai*). A group of persons whose works both the church at Ephesus and our Lord hated (Rev 2:6) and whose doctrine was held by some in the Pergamum church (2:15). Their doctrine was similar to that of Balaam, through whose influence the Israelites ate things sacrificed to idols and committed fornication (2:14–15). A sect of Nicolaitans existed among the Gnostics in the third century.

What do you do when confronted with bad doctrine? Can you discern it? Do you accept it, confront it or turn from it? What is the significance of the Lord hating the Nicolaitans?

Rev 2:7 “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God.”

The first stated promise to the overcomers is the Tree of Life. The tree of life is first mentioned in Genesis 3:22. This tree stood in the Garden of Eden. This tree was not initially forbidden to Adam and Eve. Whether they ate from it before the fall is not certain; however, after their sin, God forbid them from eating of it.

Sin as separated man ever since Adam and Eve bit into the forbidden fruit. Since you and I were not personally in the garden, we tend to not think of what was lost. However, God thankfully is ever mindful, and as his child, you and I are restored fully to the original design before the curse. God has no plan B. There is only plan A. He reminds by going back to the first thing that was lost.

Group: If Jesus were to write a letter to our Church or family or you, what would He commend? Condemn? What counsel would He give?

¹ Source: NIV Compact Dictionary of Bible, 1989, page 411.

Rev 2:8-11 Smyrna – Martyr Church

Smyrna (modern word Myrrh) means suffering. This city is still in existence. Today is called Izmir. Some say this city will be larger than Istanbul. Lovely ancient Harbor city many called a crown or flower. City was on top with flowers and myrtle trees. There was a Theater, music center and stadium. Polycarp student of John was burned alive for his faith in that very stadium in 155AD. Smyrna and Philadelphia received no condemnation and they have had continuous existence. Izmir (Smyrna) still has believers but they are underground due to persecution to this day in Turkey. Both are the only two churches that have not had their lamp stands removed.

Historical Time period – 100AD – 314AD (Began with the death of John and Edict of Tolerance by Constantine that ended persecution)

Smyrna Background:



Smyrna was a port city in Asia Minor, in what today is Turkey. In ancient times Smyrna contended with Ephesus and Pergamum for the honor of being called the foremost city of Asia. Streets and buildings extended from the bay up the sides of the surrounding hills. Fountains flowed with the water from the city's aqueducts. A theater on one of the highest slopes overlooked the lower city. Smyrna claimed to be the birthplace of the poet Homer and built a shrine in his honor. A library, gymnasiums, baths, and a stadium contributed to Smyrna's cultural life. The city attracted speakers like Apollonius of Tyanna in the first century and other renowned orators in the second century.

The broad harbor alongside Smyrna was the mooring ground for ships that plied the Aegean Sea. In the heart of the city there was also a smaller harbor or marina that could be closed with a chain. Ships would transfer their cargo from the waterfront to the agora or market place, which was the commercial center of the city. Smyrna was known for its fine wine, garments, perfumes, and goldsmithing.

Great Mother goddess, Cybele, whose temple was located on the eastern side of the city, was Smyrna's patron deity. Often pictured on Smyrna's coins, she was regarded as the divine being who was especially responsible for the well-being of the city. Fertility, health, and protection were among the benefits she was said to provide.



V8 “And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write, ‘These things says the First and the Last, who was dead, and came to life:”

Alpha and Omega – Creation to End – He is in charge. This speaks to Resurrection - up to 5 million died during this period professing faith in Christ. **Why would this characteristic of the Lord's Divine nature be important for Smyrna to hear? Why is it important to you in your time of suffering?**

V9-10 – “I know your works, tribulation, and poverty (but you are rich); and I know the blasphemy of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.

Commendation is for 7 things:

1. Tribulation (trouble)
2. Poverty
3. Jew externally (Jew by definition can be defined by faith proven by actions)
4. Fear nothing
5. Satan
6. 10 days (10 Periods – 10 emperors in the period – starting with Nero who killed Paul)
7. Faithful to the death

James 1:12 “Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him.”

Put your name in this section.

Will God be able to say, “_____, I know your afflictions and your poverty—yet you are rich! I know about the slander of those who say they are Christians and are not, but are a church of Satan. Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. I tell you, the devil will put may you in prison to test you, and you will suffer persecution for ten days. Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you life as your victor’s crown.”

What does it mean to you now? Despite your circumstances, are you found rich in your faith? Are you a true Christian? In the time of testing that will come, will you be found faithful?

V11 “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death.”

First Death is the body. The second death is the soul. No believer will have to go through the second death.

Moody said, “He who is born twice will only have to die once, but those who are only born once will have to die twice.”

How about you have you been born again?