



SAVED TO SERVE
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THE SEVEN CHURCHES: SMYRNA

1. In this Sabbath School Lesson, we will continue our series studying the seven churches of Revelation. We will focus on the church of Smyrna and find out how its message applies to us today.

"The names of the seven churches are symbolic of the church in different periods of the Christian Era. The number 7 indicates completeness, and is symbolic of the fact that the messages extend to the end of time, while the symbols used reveal the condition of the church at different periods in the history of the world." {AA 585.3}

2. Read Revelation 2:8. What does Smyrna mean? _____

"Like the smoke from the altar of incense in the sanctuary service, a life given for the Saviour becomes a sweet savor in the sight of Jehovah. Smyrna means "myrrh" or "sweet scent" This name is applied to those who willingly offered their lives for their faith. The mercy of God is shown in this message in a most wonderful way; for although some doubtless suffered needlessly, and brought persecution upon themselves, yet God does not condemn them for mistaken zeal. This is a message that contains no reproof, and it would seem that the tenderness of our Father causes Him to lose sight of the fact that death was sought; because He sees the earnestness in the heart of the one who offers his life." {SSP 52.1}

3. In the sanctuary services, what was offered to God as a sweet savor? Numbers 29:8, 13; Ezra 6:10 _____

4. What did the burnt offerings typify? Ephesians 5:1, 2; 2 Corinthians 2:15; Romans 12:1, 2 _____

5. How does Jesus present Himself to Smyrna? Revelation 2:8; 1:18 _____

"It was through one who declared himself to be a "brother, and companion in tribulation" (Revelation 1:9), that Christ revealed to His church the things that they must suffer for His sake. Looking down through long centuries of darkness and superstition, the aged exile saw multitudes suffering martyrdom because of their love for the truth. But he saw also that He who sustained His early witnesses would not forsake His faithful followers during the centuries of persecution that they must pass through before the close of time. "Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer," the Lord declared; "behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation: ... be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." Revelation 2:10. {AA 588.1}

6. Read Revelation 2:9. The church of Smyrna is described as going through tribulation and being in poverty. Yet, they were called rich. In what were they rich? James 2:5; 1 Peter 1:7

7. Why does God allow His people, in times past and presently, to have their faith tried? James 1:2-4; Job 1:8 to be perfected

"...Through affliction God reveals to us the plague spots in our characters, that by His grace we may overcome our faults. Unknown chapters in regard to ourselves are opened to us, and the test comes, whether we will accept the reproof and the counsel of God. When brought into trial, we are not to fret and complain. We should not rebel, or worry ourselves out of the hand of Christ. We are to humble the soul before God. The ways of the Lord are obscure to him who desires to see things in a light pleasing to himself. They appear dark and joyless to our human nature. But God's ways are ways of mercy and the end is salvation." {DA 301.1}

8. What else did the church of Smyrna have to endure while going through trials and poverty? Revelation 2:9

9. Is the term 'Jews' in Revelation 2:9, literally speaking about blood born Jews? Romans 2:28, 29; Romans 9:6, 7

10. Note: Contextually, Jesus said the false Christians of the church were of the synagogue of Satan for three primary reasons: 1) many who claimed to be a part of the true Christian church thought that a mere profession would save them, 2) they

manifested the character of Satan and not the character of God, and 3) they brought in false doctrines into the ranks to confuse and deceive the brethren. There are false brethren of the synagogue or church of Satan that are doing the same work in the church today. We will confirm these points in the follow questions. Let us now dissect the conversation Jesus had with the Jews in John 8.

11. Who did the Jews trace their lineage to which they believed would automatically save them? John 8:33 _____

12. While the Jews were Abraham's seed, how did Jesus respond which showed that a mere bloodline connection or affiliation cannot save anyone? John 8:37, 39

"Let church members bear in mind that the fact that their names are registered on the church books will not save them." {9T 48.1}

"So there may be an apparent connection with Christ without a real union with Him by faith. A profession of religion places men in the church, but the character and conduct show whether they are in connection with Christ." {DA 676.5}

13. Whose character did the majority of the Jews have even though they professed to be followers of God? John 8:41, 42, 44, 47; Matthew 7:16-23

14. Who must we be connected to which alone can bring salvation and truly make us 'Abraham's seed'? Galatians 3:26, 28-29

15. How else may we know false brethren who are really of the synagogue of Satan? 2 Peter 2:1; Acts 20:29-30; Matthew 7:15

"But are of the synagogue of Satan." [Verse 9.] Here is a warning coming to our people, of assertions from those who claim to be Jews and are not. They claim to stand as believing present truth when they have brought in sentiments that have falsified the truth and have so mingled these pretentious, superior beliefs with the truth that, through their erroneous suppositions, the soul will in future test and trial give up the foundation of the faith for fables. God says to every man, "Watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into temptation." [Mark 14:38.] There is a class that will be prominent who will give up the faith, and the seducing spirits of satanic agencies will overcome them through specious temptations. It is plainly stated of this class that they claim "they are Jews, and are not, but are of the synagogue of Satan." [Revelation 2:9.]" {19LtMs, Ms 149, 1904, par. 3}

16. Jesus warned that persecution was coming for the church of Smyrna and secondarily, for all His people down through the end of time. How long was the church of Smyrna to suffer persecution? Revelation 2:10

17. Note: Since this is prophetic, this would not be ten literal days but ten literal years (Ezekiel 4:6; Numbers 14:34). History shows us that under the reign of Emperor Diocletian, there was a severe ten year period of persecution for God's church from 303 A.D. to 313 A.D.

"The reign of the emperor Diocletian (284–305) marked the final widespread persecution of Christians in the Roman Empire. The most intense period of violence came after Diocletian issued an edict in 303 more strictly enforcing adherence to the traditional religious practices of Rome in conjunction with Imperial cult. Modern historians estimate that during this period, known as the Diocletianic or Great Persecution and extending several years beyond the reign of Diocletian, as many as 3,000–3,500 Christians were executed under the authority of Imperial edicts. [1]"
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Christians_martyred_during_the_reign_of_Diocletian

"The Diocletianic or Great Persecution was the last and most severe persecution of Christians in the Roman Empire.^[1] In 303, the Emperors Diocletian, Maximian, Galerius, and Constantius issued a series of edicts rescinding Christians' legal rights and demanding that they comply with traditional religious practices. Later edicts targeted the clergy and demanded universal sacrifice, ordering all inhabitants to sacrifice to the gods. The persecution varied in intensity across the empire—weakest in Gaul and Britain, where only the first edict was applied, and strongest in the Eastern provinces. Persecutory laws were nullified by different emperors (Galerius with the Edict of Serdica in 311) at different times, but Constantine and Licinius' Edict of Milan (313) has traditionally marked the end of the persecution."
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diocletianic_Persecution

18. In the latter half of Revelation 2:10, what does Jesus encourage His people to do? _____

19. Since Jesus' words are also for us today, we know that we must have faith to endure martyrdom and persecution. Whose experiences should we study and meditate upon to have the strength and faith to be martyrs for Jesus? Hebrews 11:35-40

20. What must we lay aside to prepare us to live or die for Jesus? Hebrews 12:1-4 _____

"I have seen a device representing a bullock standing between a plow and an altar, with the inscription, "Ready for either"—willing to swelter in the weary furrow or to bleed on the altar of sacrifice. This is the position the child of God should ever be in—willing to go where duty calls, to deny self, and to sacrifice for the cause of truth. The Christian church was founded upon the principle of sacrifice. "If any man will come after Me," says Christ, "let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me." He requires the whole heart, the entire affections. The exhibitions of zeal, earnestness, and unselfish labor which His devoted followers have given to the world should kindle our ardor and lead us to emulate their example. Genuine religion gives an earnestness and fixedness of purpose which molds the character to the divine image and enables us to count all things but loss for the excellency of Christ. This singleness of purpose will prove an element of tremendous power." {5T 307.1}

21. What closing encouragement does Jesus give us in Revelation 2:11? Hebrews 11:35; Matthew 10:28

"The crown of righteousness is for the overcomer. Every one of you think of this. In the morning think of it, now, today, I must look at that crown; I must run for it; I must run the race for it, and that crown is mine if I overcome, but if I do not overcome and am overcome of Satan I lose that crown; another gets it. Shall we not try to win the crown of everlasting life? If we lose heaven, we lose everything. If we gain heaven, we gain everything." {7LTMs, Ms 35, 1891, par. 57}