



Go for God!

MYSTERIES OF THE BIBLE SERIES (Part 10) **“The Mystery of the Seven Stars & Golden Lampstands”**

A “mystery” in Scripture is a previously hidden truth now divinely revealed. Within the *Mysteries of the Bible* we find the “**The Mystery of the Seven Stars & Golden Lampstands**” is found in **Revelation 1:20** - *The mystery of the seven stars which 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 which you saw are the seven churches.*

> **Each of these seven churches can be framed with historical reference:**

(2:1-7) Ephesus- The Apostolic Church (1st Century)

(2:8-11) Smyrna- The Martyr Church (A.D. 100 – A.D. 314)

(2:12-17) Pergamum - The Worldly Church (A.D. 314 – A.D. 590)

(2:18-29) Thyatira- Church of the Dark Ages, “Romanism” (A.D. 590 – A.D. 1000-continues today)

(3:1-6) Sardis- The Protestant Church, “Reformation” (A.D. 1517 – A.D. 1800)

(3:7-13) Philadelphia- The Revived Church (A.D. 1800 to Rapture)

(3:14-22) Laodicea- The Apostate Church (Last Days & into the Great Tribulation)

> **(2:8-11) The Church of Smyrna– “The Martyr Church” (A.D. 100 - 314)**

- Smyrna means “myrrh” that which represents suffering & bitter persecution.

- **When Jesus was a small babe in Bethlehem the wise men arrived presenting to Him gold, frankincense, and myrrh.** Gold for Jesus as the King of kings, frankincense for Jesus as our great High Priest, representing the incense of prayer. **Myrrh was for His suffering on the cross for our sins.** When the myrrh substance is crushed it yields a fragrant aroma. Smyrna will be persecuted and will suffer greatly at the hands of Jews and Romans, yet it will perfume the heavenlies for centuries to come!

Smyrna is located on the coast of Turkey and it had a beautiful harbor. Smyrna was known as one of the most beautiful cities in Asia. It was called a flower, an ornament, and it has been called the crown of all Asia. The acropolis is located on Mount Pagos. In fact, the early city that goes back to about 2000 B.C., a Hittite city at that time was built around the slope of Mount Pagos. Later Alexander the Great had a great deal to do with building it into the beautiful city that it became. There were wide boulevards along the slopes of Mount Pagos. Smyrna was called the crown city because the acropolis was encircled with flowers, a hedge, and myrtle trees. The city was adorned with noble buildings and beautiful temples—a temple of Zeus, a temple of Cybele (Diana), a temple of Aphrodite, a temple had a theater and an odium, that is, a music center—it was the home of music. Also, it had a stadium, and it was at that stadium that Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna and student of the apostle John, was martyred, burned alive in A.D. 155. Today Smyrna is called Izmir and is a major commercial center in Turkey. ¹

- **Two of the seven churches listed in Revelation chapters 2 & 3 received no word of condemnation. The two churches are *Smyrna and Philadelphia.***

(v8a) “*First & Last*” - Jesus is *eternal!*

- “*First & Last*” is also an Old Testament title of God (Isa. 44:6; 48:12; cf. 41:4), and its application here (and in 22:13) to Christ affirms His equality of nature with God. He is the eternal, infinite God, who already existed when all things were created, and who will continue to exist after they are destroyed. Jesus Christ transcends time, space, and the creation.

¹ J. Vernon McGee, *Thru the Bible Commentary*, pg. 904

- In Halley's Bible Handbook, the author writes, "In a world where empires rise and fall, where all things die and pass away, we are reminded that God is Changeless, Timeless and Eternal, and promised by Him that His Nature may be imparted to us, and that we, like Him, and by His Grace, unhurt by Death, may Live On and On. Alive Forevermore! Immortal Youth! What a meaning it gives to Life! And what a comfort to saints then facing Martyrdom!"

(v8b) Jesus conquered "*death, and came to life*"

- Remember what Jesus told the woman at the well, "*Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father. You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."* The woman said to Him, "*I know that Messiah is coming (who is called Christ). "When He comes, He will tell us all things."* Jesus said to her, "*I who speak to you am He.*" (John 4:21-26)

– Paul gives testimony of Christ death and resurrection with indisputable evidence in 1 Corinthians Ch. 15, let's read.

(v9a) "*Tribulation*" - literally means "*pressure*"

- All citizens in Smyrna were called to willingly offer worship to the Roman Emperor, which at that time was Domitian. The city had worshiped Rome as a spiritual power since 195 B.C.; hence Smyrna's historical pride in her Caesar-cult. Christians would submit to the civil authority, but they refused to offer sacrifices and to worship the Emperor, thus the Smyrna Christians were branded as rebels and faced the wrath of the Roman government. Christians also refused to participate in the pagan rituals, festivals, and worship in the many temples of gods and goddesses. Thus, they were viewed as antisocial.

(v9b) "*Poverty (yet rich)*" - Materially poor—Spiritually rich!

- Warren Wiersbe writes, "The church at Smyrna was not having an easy time of it! The members were persecuted, probably because they refused to compromise and say, "Caesar is Lord." Smyrna was an important center of the Roman imperial cult, and anyone refusing to acknowledge Caesar as Lord would certainly be excluded from the guilds. This would mean unemployment and poverty. The word used here for poverty means "abject poverty, possessing absolutely nothing."

A large Jewish community also thrived in Smyrna. The Jews, of course, did not have to patronize the imperial cult since their religion was accepted by Rome; but they certainly would not cooperate with the Christian faith. So, from both Jews and Gentiles, the Christians in Smyrna received slander and suffering, but they were rich! They lived for eternal values that would never change, riches that could never be taken away."

- *How to Be Rich in Christ?*

Ephesians 1:7-8 - *In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence,*

Ephesians 2:4-7- *But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.*

Ephesians 3:8-9- *To me, who am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the **unsearchable riches of Christ**, and to make all see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ;*

(v9b) “I know the blasphemy of those who say they are Jews and are not”

- Matthew 12:22-32

(v9c) “Synagogue of Satan”

- John 8:31-59

(v10) “Tribulation for ten days”

- **Two thoughts:**

(1) Literally ten days of heavy persecution, or

(2) Ten Roman Emperors that subjected the Church to intense persecution - Nero—64-68 (Paul was beheaded under his reign) Domitian—95-96 (John was exiled during that period); Trajan—104-117 (Ignatius was burned at the stake); Marcus Aurelius—161-180 (Polycarp was martyred); Severus—200-211; Maximinius-235-237; Decius—250-253; Valerian—257-260; Aurelian—270-275; Diocletian—303-313 (the worst emperor of all). According to *Foxes Book of Martyrs* over 5 million Christians were killed for their faith and devotion to Jesus Christ!

(v10b) “Be faithful & receive the crown of life”

- *Crown is stephanos* – which is the “victor’s crown” - James 1:12- *Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him*

(v10c) “He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death”

- Revelation 20:14-15; 21:8

- Jesus gives us strength, comfort, and hope in our times of persecution and suffering when He says, *“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”* (Matthew 5:10-12)