

Revelation
Lesson 3
Revelation 2:1-17

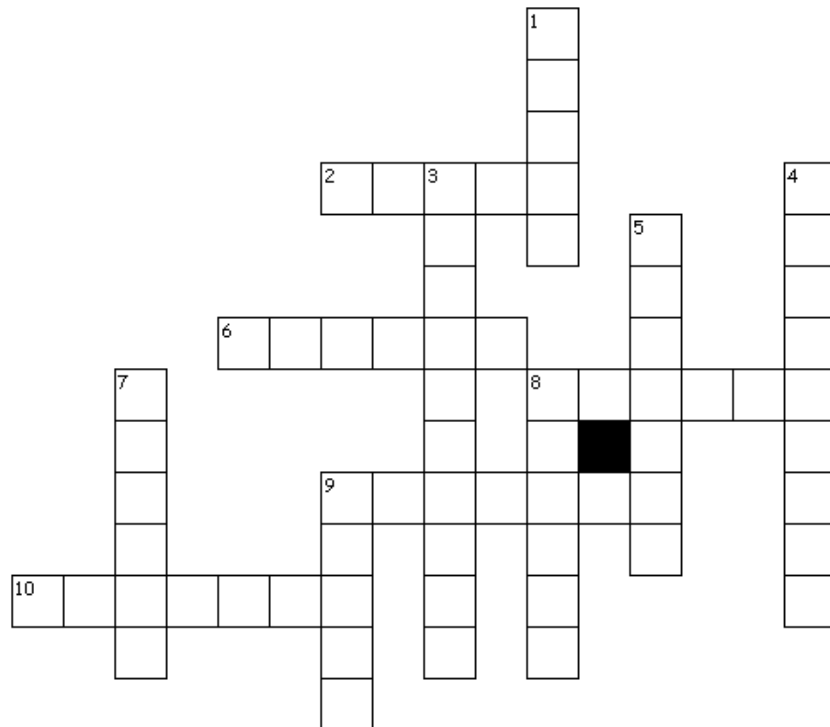
Memory Verse – Revelation 22:2 – *“In the _____ of the street of it, and on either side of the _____, was there the tree of _____, which bare _____ manner of fruits, and yielded her _____ every month: and the _____ of the tree were for the _____ of the nations.”*

Memory Verse for the Next Lesson – Revelation 22:2 – *“In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.”*

Passage to Read for the Next Lesson – Revelation 2:18-29
Review – From Revelation 1

Down

1. Jesus has the keys of hell (hades) and _____.
3. Comes from the Greek word "apocalypse" and means "unveiling."
4. "Candlestick" should be read _____.
5. Because John and his readers both suffered for the name of Jesus, he calls himself their _____.
7. Jesus _____ us from our sins in his own blood.
8. John sees Jesus garbed as a _____.
9. The list of the seven churches is given in a natural geographical _____ a courier would use to deliver the book.



Across

2. There has only been one true resurrection - Jesus is the _____ begotten of the dead.
6. The seven churches of Asia are in modern-day _____.
8. The island John was exiled to.
9. Revelation 1:19 provides an _____ of the book.
10. The reader and the hearers of Revelation are _____ if they heed its message.

Revelation 2:1-17

We now enter the second major section of the book of Revelation. John had been instructed to “write the things which thou hast seen, the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter.” – Rev. 1:19. We are now in the “things which are” portion of the book. This major division is found in Revelation 2-3 and directly addresses seven churches of John’s day. Four of the churches are found in Chapter 2, and three of the churches are addressed in Chapter 3. Since we live in the dispensation of the Church, this portion of Revelation has special significance. It is a description of what our brothers and sisters in the Body of Christ faced and how they fared. Sure, they were near the beginning of our dispensation, and we may be near its end; but it seems little has changed in the challenges we encounter within the local church.

This being said, there are huge differences between the environments of these seven churches then and our local church now. The polytheistic worldviews of Ephesus, Smyrna, and Pergamos were more like modern India’s and Hinduism, and it is essential to read Christ’s assessment of them in that context.

Revelation 2:1-7 – Ephesus – home of the temple to Artemis. (Acts 19)

The section addressed to Ephesus (possibly the “mother” church of the other six? – Acts 19:10) contains a complement (Rev. 2:1-3), a rebuke (Rev. 2:4-5), and a complement (Rev. 2:6). It ends with an exhortation to any individual in the church at Ephesus to give heed to what is written (Rev. 2:7). Could the term “Nicolaitans” be a reference to “overcomers”?

Revelation 2:8-11 – Smyrna – “myrrh” Old city destroyed 600 B.C., was desolate for 300 years, and was rebuilt in 290 B.C. (Rev. 2:8?) Temple to Tiberius – Caesar worship.

Smyrna’s Christians had conflicts not only with the polytheists but also monotheists – members of the Jewish synagogue. The members of this church suffered heavily under the persecutions enacted by Emperor Domitian. The church father Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna, was executed by the Romans in A.D. 155.

Revelation 2:12-17 – Pergamos – the altar to Zeus and the worship of the spirit of Rome. “Zeus the Savior”
Coin – Emperor Caracalla salutes a tree entwined with a serpent. Many religions synthesized – why not Christianity?

Pergamos represents the headspring of Roman influence and power in Asia. Offering a sacrifice to Caesar was a litmus test of loyalty in Pergamos. Antipas was an early Christian martyr in Pergamos. The temptation for Christians to compromise with Rome and paganism was strong in Pergamos. Jesus condemns any who promoted such compromise.