



Opening God's Mail

Do you like to get letters in the mail? Maybe you have a pen pal, or a friend who moved away and sends letters to stay in touch.

More than fifty years after Jesus went back to heaven, He visited John and gave him seven very important letters.

Would you like to get a letter from Jesus? What if that letter were to reveal your real spiritual condition? Would you still want to read the letter? Jesus knows us better than we know ourselves. Can we trust our own hearts? No, the Bible says, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked" (Jeremiah 17:9).



- 1** Why does Jesus want us to know what is in our hearts?
Ezekiel 36:26, 27 "I will give you a _____ heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them."

Jesus wants to give us a new heart that will obey and follow Him. If we will let Him, He will take away our hard, rebellious hearts and give us soft hearts that are willing and glad to obey Him.

Jesus sent special letters to seven of the many churches that were started by His followers after He went back to heaven. These seven churches were all in the area that is the country of Turkey today. The letters Jesus sent told the truth about the spiritual condition of each church, and how Jesus wanted to help them.

When Jesus visited John and told him what to write to these seven churches, John was a prisoner on an island called Patmos. He had been exiled there.

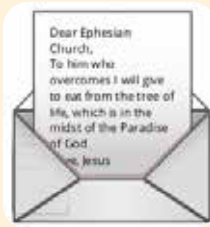
 **Exiled: To be sent to a place far away from your home**

The seven churches knew that John was on the lonely island of Patmos because of his faithful witness for Jesus.

- 2** How had the Romans tried to kill John?
By **bgiiino** _____ him in oil. (Unscramble.)

God miraculously protected John, and he did not die. Since the Romans couldn't kill John, they decided to send him far away to a place where he couldn't talk to very many people about Jesus.

But John could send letters. Can you imagine how excited each of those seven churches felt as they opened their letter from him? What would he say?



And can you imagine how amazed the people must have been to learn that these letters were really from Jesus Himself, and that John had just written down what Jesus said to tell them?

We will study these letters in the order that Jesus gave them. Why? Because they not only tell about the churches in John's day, but also what God's church would be like in different time periods from John's day to the end of time.

- 3** What is the name of the first church?
Revelation 2:1 "To the angel of the church of _____ write."

This first letter tells what the Christian church was like in John's day, right after Jesus left His disciples and went back to heaven.

- 4** What did Jesus say about this church?
Revelation 2:2 "I know your _____, your labor, your patience, and that you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have _____ those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars."

- 5** Were these people doing what Jesus said we should do when we listen to people talking about the Word of God? Yes!
Isaiah 8:20 "To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this _____, it is because there is no light in them."



In Jesus' letter, He called false teachers "liars."

- 6** How did John describe those who falsely claim to be following Jesus?
1 John 2:4 "He who says, 'I know Him,' and does _____ keep His commandments, is a _____, and the truth is not in him."
7 God's commandments are very important to Him. If someone tells you the commandments don't matter anymore, should you trust him? _____

The Christians in Ephesus tested everything they heard by God's Word. We need to do that, too.

- 8** What other nice thing did Jesus say about the church of Ephesus?
Revelation 2:3 "You have persevered and have _____, and have labored for My name's sake and have not become _____."

Jesus had a lot of nice things to say about Ephesus. But they also had a very big problem that they needed Jesus to point out to them. And since Jesus is the "faithful witness," they could trust Him to tell the truth about it.

- 9** What was a big problem in this church?
Revelation 2:4 "Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have _____ your first love."



Someday, you might meet someone special who becomes your first love. That is a very special experience. Imagine how you would feel, however, if the person you loved so much stopped loving you in return.

A young troublemaker boy attended a children's prophecy class Ms. Tina was teaching. He had never learned about Jesus before and was very surprised to discover that Jesus loved him and could give him a new heart and make him a new boy.

One evening, he came to class just beaming. He looked so happy that Ms. Tina noticed. He excitedly told her that he had asked Jesus into his heart, and Jesus was helping him not to be naughty anymore. He was in love with Jesus, and Jesus' love was changing him and making him better.

If we have asked Jesus into our hearts, we will love Him like that. Walking with Jesus brings peace and joy, even when bad things happen to us. Be careful, though! We can lose our first love. Ephesus lost it. They were doing many right things, but they were no longer doing them because they loved Jesus.

- 10** What does Jesus want? **&+) 851)><** [Solve using the code below.]

a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i	j	k	l	m	n	o	p	q	r	s	t	u	v	w	x	y	z
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	@	#	\$	%	^	&	*	()	<	>	+	=	-	{	}	/

Jesus wants us to love Him and be "crazy" about Him and think about Him all the time. That is the kind of love He has for us!

- 11** What did Jesus say would happen to the Ephesus church if they did not repent?
Revelation 2:5 "Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and _____ your lampstand from its place—unless you repent."


Jesus introduced Himself to the Ephesians as one walking in the midst of seven golden candlesticks. These candlesticks represent the churches. (Revelation 1:20.) If a church stops loving Jesus, its light goes out. There is no need to have a candlestick that doesn't shine, and it will have to be removed.

- 12** After warning the Ephesians that their love for Jesus was growing cold, how did Jesus encourage them?
Revelation 2:6 "But this you have, that you _____ the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate."



The Nicolaitans taught that if a person just *believed* in Christ, he would be saved, and he didn't have to obey God's law, the Ten Commandments. According to the Nicolaitans, you did not need Jesus to actually change your life as long as you just believed that He had saved you.

- 13

What does the Bible say about that?
James 2:18–20 “But someone will say, ‘You have faith, and I have works.’ _____ me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the _____ believe—and tremble! But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is _____?”
- 

Faith and works are like two poles that lean on each other. Neither can stand up by itself. Obedience (good works) shows that we really have faith.

- 14

Can we obey without Jesus' help?
Philippians 2:12, 13 “Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is _____ who works in you _____ to will and to do for His good pleasure.”

How does this work, practically?

Let's say you have trouble with lying. You know that lying is breaking the ninth commandment. You don't want to tell lies anymore, but you aren't sure how to stop. Try doing these things:

- 15

Confess your sin of lying to Jesus. Admit that when you told lies, you were doing wrong. Don't try to excuse your sin and say it's OK.
1 John 1:9 “If we _____ our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins.”
- 16

Ask Jesus to help you stop lying.
1 John 1:9 “He is faithful ... to _____ us from all unrighteousness.”
Psalms 141:3 “Set a guard, O Lord, over my _____; keep watch over the door of my lips.”
- 17

Memorize Bible verses. These help you know what God wants you to do. God's promises help you be sure that He will help you do right.
Psalms 119:11 “Your word I have hidden in my _____, that I might not sin against You.”
- 18

When you are tempted to tell a lie, immediately ask Jesus to help you only tell the truth.
1 Corinthians 10:13 “With the temptation [God] will also make the way of _____.”
- 19


If you accidentally tell another lie, immediately ask Jesus to forgive you and help you tell the truth.
1 John 2:1 “If anyone _____, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.”

- 20

How did Jesus end His letter to the Ephesians?
Revelation 2:7 “He who has an _____, let him _____ what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of _____, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God.”

Do you like how this letter ends with a promise of reward? Each of the seven letters ends by promising a different reward. This letter promises that those who overcome will be able to eat from the tree of life!

- 21


What happened to the tree of life after Adam and Eve sinned?
Genesis 3:24 “So He [God] drove out the man; and He placed cherubim at the east of the garden of Eden, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to _____ the way to the tree of life.”
- 

Sin brings death, and God sent an angel to guard the tree of life so that sinners would not be able to live forever. Thanks to Jesus, we don't have to remain sinners; we can be changed into saints. When Jesus comes again and sin is destroyed, the saints will eat from the tree of life and live forever.

Let's look at the next letter Jesus wrote.

- 22

What did Jesus say to the church in Smyrna?
Revelation 2:8, 9 “These things says the _____ and the _____, who was dead, and came to life: I _____ 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.”
- 23

How can someone be poor and rich at the same time?
James 2:5 “Listen, my beloved brethren: Has God not chosen the _____ of this world to be _____ in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him?”
- 

What a great promise! Money can't buy peace, love, and happiness. Even if we do not have very much money, we are really rich if we have a relationship with Jesus.

- 24

What do we call people who claim to be something they are not?
Matthew 23:14 “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, _____! For you devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayers.”

Let's keep reading Jesus' letter.

- 25

What did Jesus say would happen to the Christians in Smyrna?
Revelation 2:10, 11 “Do not _____ 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 _____ days.”

OK, detectives, this is a time prophecy.

- 26

How long would they suffer persecution if one prophetic day equals one literal year? (Ezekiel 4:6.) _____ years.

History confirms that God's church suffered very severe persecution for ten years under a Roman emperor named Diocletian, from A.D. 303–313. During this time, many Christians died.


Jesus said that Satan, also called the devil, caused the persecution of Smyrna. He caused trouble for Job and many other people in the Bible. Do you think he might be to blame for some of your troubles?

Jesus knows what it is to be tested by Satan



and to suffer tribulation. Remember how He mentioned His own death at the beginning of this letter? (Revelation 2:8.)

- 27

Just before Jesus suffered on the cross, what did He tell His disciples?
John 16:33 “These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the _____ you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.”
- 


Since Jesus overcame the world, He can help us overcome all our troubles.

- 28

What did Jesus promise to give those in Smyrna who remained faithful even when Satan inspired bad people to kill them?
Revelation 2:10 “Be faithful until death, and I will give you the _____.”

Jesus wore a crown of thorns so He could give us a crown of life!

- 29

What special promise did Jesus give to those who overcome?
Revelation 2:11 “He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second _____.”
- 

The second death is the death the wicked will die. It is sometimes called hell, and we learned about that in lesson 10.

Both the righteous and wicked who die before Jesus comes die the first death. At Jesus' second coming, the dead righteous will be raised to eternal life. (1 Thessalonians 4:16.) The living righteous will be given new bodies, and they will never die again. (1 Corinthians 15:51–53.) The wicked who are alive at Jesus' coming will die the first death. (2 Thessalonians 2:8.) But later they will be destroyed forever, and they will never live again. That is called the second death, and we will learn about that in another lesson.

If we really love Jesus, do we need to be afraid of the first death? No. It is just like a sleep until Jesus comes. Then comes the reward of wearing a crown and living eternally with Jesus.

Maybe someone will make fun of you because you obey God's Ten Commandments. Maybe you will even be persecuted like the church at Smyrna.

- 30

If that happens to you, what promise can you claim?
Matthew 5:10 “_____ are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”
- 31

Will you choose to stay with Jesus, even if it means the loss of everything on earth? _____

Answers

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|---------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------|
| 1. new | 9. left | 16. cleanse / mouth | 24. hypocrites |
| 2. boiling | 10. our hearts | 17. heart | 25. fear / ten |
| 3. Ephesus | 11. remove | 18. escape | 26. ten |
| 4. works / tested | 12. hate | 19. sins | 27. world |
| 5. word | 13. show / demons / dead | 20. ear / hear / life | 28. crown of life |
| 6. not / liar | 14. God / both | 21. guard | 29. death |
| 7. no | 15. confess | 22. First / Last / know | 30. blessed |
| 8. patience / weary | | 23. poor / rich | |