

Revelation 2:8-11

Smyrna

- Was one of the greatest cities in the region
 - The city has a rich history and still remains today as modern day Izmir, Turkey. Today, it is the 3rd largest city in Turkey with a population of over 4 million people. With half of that population being under the age of 30, it prides itself in education and is considered by some as a liberal city, relative to other Turkish cities. They boast of having 300 sunny days a year (Sound familiar??) and is considered as the “Pearl of the Aegean”
 - Historically...
 - The city is about 8500 years old!!!
 - Cyrus the Great of the Persian empire had destroyed the old Smyrna in about 545 BC, but in 340 BC Alexander the Great came and rebuilt the city, of which it began to thrive as a city once again and would flourish for hundreds of years
 - Enjoyed various natural advantages
 - Had an excellent harbour at the head of a well protected gulf
 - Was an outlet for trade of the rich valley of Hermus and beyond
 - Surrounded by rich farmland
 - Figs, olives, grapes and cotton are among the many thriving produce
 - Beautiful scenery
 - On the shores of an Aegean Sea Harbor, it provided some wonderful beauty, and still does to this day
 - Apollonius of Tyana marveled at how Mount Pagus was crowned with a circle of beautiful public buildings
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 - Smyrna was a faithful city
 - They were known as a city that was faithful to the Roman Empire, so much so, that they were one of the first cities to worship Rome, and

even built a temple to her around 195 BC. They would later build a second one.

- They were known as religious.
 - They were faithful to Rome, and had begun the worship of their emperors.
 - In AD 29, they were one of 7 cities who bid to have a temple built to Emperor Tiberius. They were chosen and became the “temple Warden”
 - Archaeologists have discovered coins portraying Nero, dedications to the emperors Titus and Domitian, and statues of Domitian, Trajan, and Hadrian. These artifacts all demonstrate Smyrna’s devotion to the emperor.

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V.8- REVELATION

- “The First and the Last”
 - This is the same as Jesus was introduced to John in His vision (1:17)
 - This speaks of the Lords Infinite exsistance. He started all things, He will be the end of all things.
 - Colossians 1:15-17 says “The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.”
- “Was dead, and has come to life”
 - Luke 24:1-8 tells us this “On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb. They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. While they were wondering about this, suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like

lightning stood beside them. In their fright the women bowed down with their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, "Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here; he has risen! Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee: 'The Son of Man must be delivered over to the hands of sinners, be crucified and on the third day be raised again.'" Then they remembered his words."

- Yes, Jesus did die. But He is no longer in the tomb, because He has risen. Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 15:12-19 " Now if Christ is preached, that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, not even Christ has been raised; and if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is vain, your faith also is vain. Moreover we are even found to be false witnesses of God, because we testified against God that He raised Christ, whom He did not raise, if in fact the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised; and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied."
 - Our hope and faith hinge on this one moment, this one reality... That He is risen!!!
- Why tell this to the people of Smyrna. Because their city was once this way.
 - When Cyprus destroyed the city, it lay waste for nearly 300 years. But Alexander the Great came and rebuilt the city. It was a city that was dead, but now is alive.
 - Jesus reminds them that death isn't the end... there is a resurrection. And Jesus tells His disciples, "Because I live, you will also live" (John 14:19)

V. 9- COMMENDATION

- "I know your tribulation"

- Smyrna is known as the persecuted church. And truly, they were. In fact, this is where one of the churches well known bishops, Polycarp, was burnt at the stake.
- Smyrna was a very religious city, very faithful to their Emperor. They worshiped Rome and deified the emperors. Like many Roman cities, they were accepting of other religions, as long as they paid a homage to the emperor. All they had to do was light an incense to the emperor during their ceremonial sacrifices and that was enough. But as we know, the Christians refused to do so, for they knew there was only ONE God, and that He was to be worship, and Him alone. Therefore, because of Smyrna's worship to the emperor and their unwavering dedication to him, they would then have a justified reason to persecute Christians.
 - Truly, this is the danger of any society that magnifies government or king, or emperor above the King of Kings, above God himself.
 - Many have seen that in our own country, especially in the last decade or so. Patriotism before sanctification. Government authority over God. For King and for Country!!! As not only Smyrna, but also historically in other countries and places, when people begin to look at government as the ultimate authority, persecution of the church begins. When Trump or Obama become the savior of our land, anything else that competes must go. The pressure for churches to take sides and to start advocating for a political branch or a type of government begin to mount, and those that don't give in will be viewed as traitors and committing treason. Then the chants begin, to get rid of the dangerous views of the Bible, because it speaks out against immorality, but more treacherously, it speaks of a Jesus that is so narrow minded that Christians spread a heresy that only through Jesus can you get to heaven. This doesn't allow people to choose who they want to be or what they want to be, who they can be with and what they can love. It pollutes the fragile minds of our youth and has pushed young LGBTQ members to suicide and has over populated our foster systems with the idea that a

child should live, even if the parents don't want it. They will not honor our king... I mean our president, and will not allow the government and their wise and divine moral rules of conduct be the absolute law in this land. THE CHRISTIANS MUST GO!!!

- This isn't hypothetical, this is similar to what the church in Smyrna faced. In fact, some Christians hold to the idea that before the Lord returns, the church will look more like the church here in Smyrna than what we look like now. And many have already taken steps and action to prepare themselves for such a hostile type of persecution

- "I know your... Poverty"

- This word "poverty," John uses the strong word ptocheia, which is different than the word penia. Penia, meaning "having nothing unnecessary", while the word used ptocheia means "having nothing at all"
 - The poverty of Christians here in Smyrna was extreme. WHY?? Because they were Christians, they lost their jobs as teachers and public workers, nobody would buy from their shops or their products, They were unemployable and their livelihood was corrupt. They couldn't afford anything because they couldn't earn money. They had no jobs, they had no money, they had no homes. The persecution went beyond physical or emotional, it went deep into financial as well.

- "But you are Rich"

- There is a richness in spiritual things that has nothing to do with the world's wealth.
 - Paul says in Ephesians 1:3 "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ."
 - I've realized in life, the less I have, the more fulfilled I am in the Lord. The more I have, the more I'm longing to be closer to the Lord. It might be the fact that relying on the Lord for your needs makes you rich in Him.

- But being rich in the Lord has nothing to do with whether you are rich or poor in the world. Richness isn't in wealth or poverty, its in Jesus and in Him alone
 - I'm also going to say this... They didn't have anything in this world, but they had each other. They had brothers and sisters that were sticking with them. They had a rich network of people and other Christians praying for them. They were being the body of Christ... That's something not many churches can boast about
- “The blasphemy by those who say they are Jews...”
 - Romans 2:28-29 “For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh. But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God.”
 - In John, Jesus says this speaking to the Pharisees ““If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and have come from God, for I have not even come on My own initiative, but He sent Me. Why do you not understand what I am saying? It is because you cannot hear My word. You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies. But because I speak the truth, you do not believe Me. Which one of you convicts Me of sin? If I speak truth, why do you not believe Me? He who is of God hears the words of God; for this reason you do not hear them, because you are not of God.” (John 8:42-47)

V.10- Jesus skips the condemnation, and goes straight to the invitation

- “Do not fear what you are about to suffer”
 - Jesus says in Matthew 10 “A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a slave above his master. It is enough for the disciple that he become like his teacher, and the slave like his master. If they have called the head of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign the members of his household!

“Therefore do not fear them, for there is nothing concealed that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known. What I tell you in the darkness, speak in the light; and what you hear whispered in your ear, proclaim upon the housetops. Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. Are not two sparrows sold for a cent? And yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So do not fear; you are more valuable than many sparrows.”

(Matthew 10:24-31)

- Paul says in Romans 8:31 “... If God is for us, who is against us?”
- They have an invitation to not fear, and to be faithful until death.
 - Paul says in Philippians 1:21 “ For to me, to live is CHrist and to die is gain.”
 - Jesus in John 12:25 says “ He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it to life eternal.”
 - To the world, death is scary. It has nothing but emptiness and the dread of life ceasing. But we have hope, for our hope is not in this world, but unto eternal life.
 - “Faithful until death”- The people in Smyrna were fiercely faithful to Rome. Jesus was telling his church to be even more faithful to Him, for faithfulness to Rome was of a temporary reward, but faithfulness to the Lord had the crown of life

V.11- EXHORTATION

- This is the same to all the churches, that we should all hear what the Lord is saying. These may be words specific to Smyrna, but the encouragement is to all of us.

V.11b- EXPECTATION

- He who overcomes
 - The world puts pressure on all of us to succumb to their tactics. They will push and persecute until you either fold, or die. But remember this

- John 16:33, Jesus says “These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world.”

- The second death

- We will talk about this second death later in Revelation
- However, the question is, what does it mean? If you don't overcome, you will be hurt from the second death? So can we lose our salvation?
 - This can be a hard one to answer, but I will tell you what I know... The Lord does not want us to give in to the pressures of the world. We read in Leviticus how the Lord wants us to be holy, to be set apart from the world. But the pressure of the world has pushed many not only to leave their first love, but to leave all together. And I think the Lord takes this very serious, so serious, He tells us to overcome.