

**The Seven Churches**  
Part 2.  
Smyrna  
“The Persecuted Church”

**Revelation 2**

**8** “To the angel of the church in Smyrna write:

**These are the words of him who is the First and the Last, who died and came to life again.**

**9** I know your afflictions and your poverty—yet you are rich! I know about the slander of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan.

**10** Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test you, and you will suffer persecution for **ten days. Be faithful**, even to the point of death, and I will give you life as your victor’s crown.

**11** Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches. The one who is victorious will not be hurt at all by the second death.

**Vs. 8** **These are the words of him who is the First and the Last, who died and came to life again.**

The Question being answered here is this: Who is the one speaking to the Church of Smyrna?

Once again these are the words of the Lord Jesus Himself and just who is He?

He is the the First and the Last:

- He was the one who Spoke to Abraham on the Mountain and provided the Ram for sacrifice instead of Isaac. He is - Jehovah Jirah - The Lord our Provider...
- He is the one who spoke to Moses in the Desert and appeared to him in the burning Bush. He is the Jehovah the - I Am...
- He is the one who delivered the Israelites from their enemies and was named Jehovah Nissi - The Lord our Banner...
- He says right here I am the one Daniel spoke of in Daniel 7

The **Ancient of Days** who was seated;  
With His garment was white as snow,  
And the hair of His head like pure wool.  
His throne was a fiery flame...

He is the Ancient of Days  
He is the First and the Last  
He is the Lord God Jehovah

- Jesus chose this title **The First and the Last** from His initial appearance to John. **The First and the Last** are titles that belong only to the LORD, Yahweh, according to [Isaiah](#).

The Lord Himself is speaking to his Church in Smyrna...  
Notice he doesn't just speak to them as a whole...  
He is speaking to each of the Churches individually...  
This is true for us also; I believe the Lord wants to speak to each one of us individually...

He says in

**Vs. 9** "I know your afflictions and your poverty—yet you are rich!"

According to history, Smyrna was a prosperous city. Yet the Christians there were poor. "The word used for 'poverty' is the word for abject poverty which meant they were really poor.

The Christians of Smyrna knew **poverty** because they were robbed and fired from jobs in persecution for the gospel.

This kind of economic persecution was one reason why Christians were poor in Smyrna. Even today, this is a common form of persecution against Christians.

The Lord says, "Yet you are rich!"

**Rich** is what Jesus thought of them, and if Jesus considered them **rich**, then they were **rich**. Our estimation of ourselves is far less important than God's estimation of us. This is a contrast to the Christians at Laodicea who thought they were rich, but they were really poor spiritually.

God knows rich

He walks on streets of gold...

He owns the Cattle on a Thousand Hills...

There is a Richness that goes beyond bank accounts and belongings...

The Church in Smyrna had the kind of wealth that Jesus recognized as true riches...

A wealth that comes from God

A wealth that starts on the inside and leads to an eternity of riches...

He who is rich in Christ has true riches...

These riches my friend are eternal...

**Vs. 9b** "I know about the **slander** of those who **say they are Jews and are not**, but are a synagogue of Satan."

## **Romans 2**

A person is not a Jew who is one only outwardly, nor is circumcision merely outward and physical. **29** No, a person is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code.

- What does it mean to say I am a Jew other than I am God's; I belong to him. I am set apart and chosen by God.
- This is in essence what we as NT Christians have the privilege of saying about our election in Christ.
- When we say I am a Christian, we are saying I belong to God; I am set apart and chosen by God as a Son or Daughter of God.
- Yet how many Christians Slander (defame) others including other Christians who belong to God.

The Bible says here that they call themselves Jews and are not, but a synagogue of Satan.

Has there ever been a time when you were tempted to speak down of someone because of what they had done to you.

- There have been times I've heard the Holy Spirit say; Shhhh don't say a word.
- My friend when God speaks to you like that it's because we don't belong to synagogue of Satan...
- We belong to the Synagogue of God Almighty...
- The Holy Spirit is on the inside of us, helping us, leading us...

**Vs. 10** "Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test you, and you will suffer persecution for **ten days**. Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you life as your victor's crown."

Notice the Lord shares that this will be for ten days...

In other words don't give up on day 9...

How many people call it quits on day 9...

Remember "All things work together for the good, to those who love God and are called according to his purposes." Romans 8:28

To better understand what was going on I want to share some historical context with you:

In 23 A.D. Smyrna was the City that build the first temple to worship the Emperor Tiberius Caesar. Smyrna was a leading city in the Roman cult of Emperor worship.

The Roman Emperor Domitian (81-96 A.D.) was the first to *demand* worship under the title "Lord" from the people of the Roman Empire as a test of political loyalty. According to ancient church history, it was under the reign of Domitian that John was banished to the Island of Patmos where he received this vision.

It was under this kind of government that the people were ordered to once a year burn a pinch of incense on the altar to the godhead of Caesar; and

having done so, they were given a certificate that guarantee they had performed their religious duty.

"All that the Christians had to do was to burn the pinch of incense, say, 'Caesar is Lord,' receive their certificate, and go away and worship as they pleased. But that is precisely what the Christians would not do. They would give no man the name of Lord; that name they would keep for Jesus Christ and Jesus Christ alone."

Polycarp: The Pastor of the Church in Smyrna

Tradition holds he was personally Discipled by the Apostle John.

Story of Polycarp's Death:

It is not clear exactly why at age 86, he was suddenly subject to arrest, but when he heard Roman officials were intent on arresting him, he decided to wait for them at home. Panic-stricken friends pleaded with him to flee, so to calm them, he finally agreed to withdraw to a small estate outside of town. But while in prayer there, he received some sort of vision in which he layed upon a fiery pillow. Afterwards Polycarp reported to his friends that he now understood, "I must be burned alive."

Roman soldiers eventually discovered Polycarp's whereabouts and came to his door. When his friends urged him to run, Polycarp replied, "God's will be done," and he let the soldiers in.

He was escorted to the local proconsul.

As Polycarp was being taken into the arena, a voice came to him from heaven: "Be strong, Polycarp."

When the crowd heard that Polycarp had been captured, there was an uproar.

The Proconsul tried to persuade him to apostatize, saying to him, "Have respect for your old age, swear by the fortune of Caesar. Repent.

"reproach Christ, and I will set you free." Polycarp looked at the wicked heathen multitude in the stadium, and gesturing towards them, he said, "86 years have I have served him and he has done me no wrong. How can I blaspheme my King and my Savior?"

Head of the Proconsul - Quadratus lost his temper and threatened Polycarp: he'd be thrown to wild beasts, he'd be burned at the stake, and

so on. Polycarp said to Quadratus that while the proconsul's fire lasts but a little while, the fires of judgment ("reserved for the ungodly,") cannot be quenched. Polycarp concluded, "Why do you delay? Come, do what you will."

Soldiers then grabbed him to nail him to a stake, but Polycarp stopped them: "Leave me as I am. For he who grants me to endure the fire will enable me also to remain, without the security from your nails."

So they simply bound him with his hands behind him like a distinguished ram chosen from a great flock for sacrifice. Ready to be an acceptable burnt-offering to God, he looked up to heaven, and said,

"O Lord God Almighty, the Father of your beloved and blessed Son Jesus Christ, by whom we have received the knowledge of you, the God of angels, powers and every creature, and of all the righteous who live before you, I give you thanks that you count me worthy to be numbered among your martyrs, sharing the cup of Christ and the resurrection to eternal life, both of soul and body, through the immortality of the Holy Spirit. May I be received this day as an acceptable sacrifice, as you, the true God, have predestined, revealed to me, and now fulfilled. I praise you for all these things, I bless you and glorify you, along with the everlasting Jesus Christ, your beloved Son. To you, with him, through the Holy Ghost, be glory both now and forever. Amen."

Then the fire was lit, and the flame blazed furiously. Those who were privileged to witness it saw a great miracle. The fire shaped itself into the form of an arch, like the sail of a ship when filled with the wind, and formed a circle around the body of the martyr. Inside it, he looked not like flesh that is burnt, but like bread that is baked, or gold and silver glowing in a furnace. And witnesses said, "we smelt a sweet scent, like frankincense or some such precious spices."

### **Isaiah 43**

But now, this is what the Lord says...

"Do not fear, for I have redeemed you;  
I have summoned you by name; you are mine.  
When you pass through the waters,

I will be with you;  
and when you pass through the rivers,  
they will not sweep over you.  
When you walk through the fire,  
you will not be burned;  
the flames will not set you ablaze.  
For I am the Lord your God,

**Vs.** 10,11

Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you life as your victor's crown.

**11** Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches.  
The one who is victorious will not be hurt at all by the second death.