

The Church of Smyrna (2:8-11)

Passage: Revelation 2:8-11

Title: The Church of Smyrna (the Persecuted Church)

Summary: The Church of Smyrna is known for being the persecuted church, a church suffering tribulation, but..... that remained faithful to the end. There is a power in a believer's life that is unstoppable, cannot be overcome, that says..... even in the storm, I will still praise You Lord.

Revelation 2:8–11 (NKJV) ⁸ "And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write, 'These things says the First and the Last, who was dead, and came to life: ⁹ "I know 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. ¹⁰ Do not fear 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 ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life. ¹¹ "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death." "

Blessing / John on Patmos

The only book that comes with a promised blessing for those who read it:

(Revelation 1:3 NKJV) Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; for the time is near.

John on the Island of Patmos receives this revelation of Jesus Christ.

Book of Revelation Outline

- The Things Which You Have Seen - (Chapter 1).
- The Things Which Are - (Chapters 2-3).
- The Things Which Will Take Place After This - (Chapters 4-22).

(Revelation 1:19 NKJV) "Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after this.

John wrote 5 Books / Believe – Eternal Life – Be Ready

The Apostle John wrote 4 other books to the church. The Gospel of John, and 1,2,3 John, and this fifth book, Revelation. In the Gospel of John he wrote that we might believe, he uses the word believe some 60 times:

(John 20:31 NKJV) but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.

He wrote us in 1,2,3 John so that we might know that we have eternal life:

(1 John 5:13 NKJV) These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God.

So he wrote that we might believe, then that we might know, and now he writes Revelation so that we might be ready:

(Revelation 2:7 NKJV) "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God."

The Christian life is more than "just being saved", it is about growing and knowing Him, and making Him known. And the Christian life is more than this life, it is about the life to come, and what is to come here on this earth. God writes us Revelation, so we might be "Ready".

Before Glorified Christ / Look for in Church – as Individuals / Praise – Problem -Promise

John is now before the glorified Christ, and Jesus says John now write these things to the 7 churches so that they might be ready, for this book is all about man coming before the Holy God:

Chapter 2

The Church of Ephesus (2:1-7)

The Church of Smyrna (2:8-11)

The Church of Pergamos (2:12-17)

The Church of Thyatira (2:18-29)

Chapter 3

The Church of Sardis (3:1-6)
The Church of Philadelphia (3:7-13)
The Church of Laodicea (3:14-22)

Now personally and practically for each of us, it is important to read what Jesus says is important for the church, and this is what we should look for in the church we choose to fellowship. And equally as important is what Jesus says is important for us as individuals. Jesus will praise, present, and promise each church. He will praise each church on the good things they are doing, He will then present each Church with a problem He sees in that Church (except Smyrna and Philadelphia), and then give each Church a promise they can hold on to.

So the Outline for each of the 7 Churches will be the same:

- The Praise of the Church
- The Problem in the Church
- The Promise for the Church

Actual Churches – Church History – Churches Today - Individuals

When we study the 7 churches in chapters 2-3 we will see these 7 churches are Actual Churches in the day this was written, they also represent periods of Church History, conditions of Actual Churches today, and they represent each believer individually as each believer can fall somewhere into what is being said about that particular church. The order of these churches was an actual mail route in Asia Minor, it was a postal route, and God today still sends a personal letter, a love letter, to us.

Persecuted Church / Favorite Letter – 160K / For Us Individually

Smyrna is the persecuted church, a church that endured tremendous persecution, yet stayed committed to the Lord. For many Christians around the world this letter to Smyrna is their favorite letter out of all the 7 churches because they suffer such great persecution.

- Open Door Ministry Statistics
 - 5621 Christians murdered for their faith last year
 - 2110 Churches were attacked for their faith last year
 - 4542 Christians were detained (without due process/trial) for their faith last year
 - 1 in 7 Christians worldwide are persecuted for their faith last year
 - More than 360million Christians suffer high levels of persecution and discrimination for their faith.
- Statistics say there have been more Christians martyred in this century than any century ever.

Maybe today this isn't so applicable to us as American Church, but who knows years down the road. But as we said these churches also apply to us individually and thus we all go through hardships, often because of our faith, so God has a word for where we are at individually today, and preparing us for our tomorrows.

But, maybe not death, we all suffer some level of persecution as Christians in this fallen world and County.

Prayer

The Word of God is Living and Powerful, and is ready, and will do a mighty work in our lives.

Hebrews 4:12 (NKJV) ¹² For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

In Every Study

- Who Is God? (How Great is He?)
- What Does He Think of Me? (How Wonderful Are His Thoughts Towards Me?)
- What Does He Want Me to Do?
- What Can I Boldly Request of Him?
- What Do I Need to Be on Guard of When I Leave Here Today?

Boldly come to the throne of grace, ask God to reveal Himself in a mighty way to you, and to do I might work in you, and through you.

Hebrews 4:16 (NKJV) ¹⁶ Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need

(Revelation 2:8 NKJV) "And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write, 'These things says the First and the Last, who was dead, and came to life:

Get Pen & Paper Out

Verse 8 – And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write – Get your pen and paper our Christian, for the Lord has something just for you today, He wants to speak to you directly and intimately.

No mention of Church Start

Scripture does not record the founding of the church at Smyrna, nor is the city mentioned in the book of Acts. All that is revealed about this congregation is contained in this letter. Presumably, a church was planted in Smyrna during Paul's Ephesian ministry (Acts 19:10), either by Paul himself, or by his converts.

Description of Smyrna - Izmir / Beauty of Asia / Loyal to Rome / Temples / Capital Offense

Verse 8 - Smyrna –

- 35 miles north of Ephesus, there on the Aegean Sea.
- It was called the Beauty of Asia (for it was/is such a beautiful city).
- Today it is called Izmir, with a population of about 300, 000.
- At the time of this writing this city was known for its loyalty to Rome.
- Had an amphitheater that sat 20,000 (which is no small feat 2000 yrs ago).
- There, like Ephesus was a pagan temple, it was called the Temple of the Roman Goddess (in which Rome was worshiped).
- This city built housing for the Roman soldiers, just a display of how loyal and pro-Rome they were.
- Caesar worship was preeminent. It started as voluntary and then evolve to mandatory.
- In 26AD they were awarded the so-called honor to build the temple of Tiberius (Tiberius is the title of an Emperor - who they considered God), they beat out 3 other cities for the honor, much like our Olympic bidding we just witnessed this past week.
- Caesar worship was very prominent there obviously, under Emperor Domitian, it became a capital offense to refuse to offer the yearly sacrifice to the emperor.
- You can see the setting for Christian persecution.

Pastor / Polycarp Disciple of John / 30yrs old – 100yrs old

Verse 8 - to the angel (messenger)of the church in Smyrna - Early church writings actually tell us who the Pastor was of this church, it was Polycarp, and there is much written about him that we can read about today, for he was one of the early church fathers. Polycarp was a disciple of John himself, and was approximately 30 years old at the time of this writing, and will pastor the church until he is almost 100 years old, that's a long time in the pulpit.

Verse 10 Coming / 70 yrs Later / Polycarp's Death

As we see in verse 10, the tribulation was coming (future) upon them (personally as a church even though persecution is already underway, but the major force of it was yet to come, and John has the blessing to write to Polycarp giving him words of preparation, comfort, and encouragement before the full force comes upon them, and Polycarp himself. It will be 60-70 years after this letter (aprox 155-165AD) that these words will come true for Polycarp. Polycarp's life, and then his death, would bring strength to the church. Foxes box of Martyr's tells of Polycarp' death; Polycarp was the last living disciple of one of the apostles, the apostle John. When the authorities came to seize Polycarp and arrest him for his failure to worship Caesar, the church hid Polycarp out at a farm, but eventually through the torture of one of the brothers, Polycarp's location was given to the Roman soldiers. The Lord had told Polycarp that the soldiers were coming, so Polycarp made them a meal and was napping while waiting for their arrival. When the soldiers came to the house he invited them in, served the meal to them, and made one request to them, that he might have 1 hour of prayer before he departed, which turned into 2, and then they

departed. History said these soldiers were overwhelmed by his godliness and peace and actually felt guilty about bringing him in. So Polycarp was brought before the Roman officials and given the offer that if he would renounce Jesus as Lord and pronounce Caesar as Lord, which he refused. So they said they would burn him at the stake if he didn't pronounce Caesar as Lord, Polycarp said:

"These 86 years I have served my Master, and He has been faithful every day, should I at the last blaspheme His Holy Name"

They said well then you are going to the flame, and Polycarp said,

"You deliver me to the flame the burns but for an hour, and before you stands the flame that burns without end."

They took him to the stake, before a filled Roman arena, and witnesses said as the flames were lit they burned in an arch around him, not touching him. One of the soldiers in anger ran and stabbed him with a spear, and when his blood poured out, it put the fire out. So then they buried him with wood, and finally burned him, and they said the aroma that came from his burnt body was that of a sweet savory. Reports said that when the story of Polycarp went through Smyrna, 1500 believers on one day would not renounce Christ and were martyred, and then another day 800.

Only Beginning of Persecution / Christians Blamed for Everything / Today? / Chaplain

This was only the beginning of the wave of persecution that went through the Roman Empire against the Christians. Tertullin said in his writings, that at this time there was such hatred towards the Christians that they would be blamed for everything, he said if the Nile dried up, they would blame it on the Christians, if the Tiber river overflowed its bank and flood the city, it was the Christians fault, if there were earthquakes, droughts, death, or famine, then the cry of Roman was always it is the fault of the Christians. Today you will hear it in various circles, and I believe it will increase more and more as we approach the last days, and that is that people say one of the greatest obstacles against world unity, are bible believing Christians. In ministry I have shown up when there was death, and actually had hatred vented towards me, saying how could your God allow such a thing, where was you God when cancer slowly ate away at my father's life.

During Tribulation – This Message on Internet or CD

I pray that in the last days, during the great tribulation, that Christians will gain strength from this letter written to the Church of Smyrna, and I pray that somehow this Bible study is preserved and that Christians meeting underground may listen to it and gain strength during their period of severe suffering. And we as a church say to them, hold on, *Be faithful until death, and I (Jesus) will give you the crown of life (verse 10).*

Bury Brother – not a Baptist

A word for the church to consider, when you face this type of tribulation, to the point of death, you will be burying a brother, a sister, not a Baptist, or Pentecostal, or Calvary Chapelite. Ohh that the church would unify today, and do damage on the works of satan.

Smyrna – Bitter – Myrrh / Used Embalming – Pain Killer

Verse 8 - Smyrna - means bitter, and is related to the word "myrrh. Each of the 7 churches we will see that their name reflects their situation - as Ephesus means "darling" and they had left their first love and God was calling them back to a romance with Him. Myrrh, was used for embalming and as a pain killer. Myrrh was a resin from the balsa tree, and its agent was only released after it was crushed, and they say when it was crushed it would let off a sweet smelling fragrance.

Myrrh when Jesus Born / Gold – Frankincense - Myrrh

Myrrh was brought to Mary and Joseph while in Egypt with child Jesus, Interestingly gold was for kings, frankincense for priests, and myrrh was a burial spice, already gifts symbolizing His deity, priesthood, and purpose for coming, to die, as myrrh was used for embalming:

(Matthew 2:11 NKJV) And when they had come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary His mother, and fell down and worshiped Him. And when they had opened their treasures, they presented gifts to Him: gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

Second Coming – No Myrrh

As interesting, when Jesus returns in His Second Coming, Isaiah writes "all they from Sheba shall come: they shall bring gold and incense; and they shall shew forth the praises of the Lord" (see 60:6). The

people of Sheba will bring gold for the King; frankincense for the Priest. But they won't bring myrrh because when Jesus comes back, He's not coming to die. He's coming to rule and reign:
(John 19:39 NKJV) And Nicodemus, who at first came to Jesus by night, also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds.

(Isaiah 60:6 NKJV) The multitude of camels shall cover your land, The dromedaries of Midian and Ephah; All those from Sheba shall come; They shall bring gold and incense, And they shall proclaim the praises of the LORD.

Myrrh on the Cross

When myrrh was offered to Jesus on the cross He refused it because He had to take the full wrath of God, all the pain for us:

(Mark 15:23 NKJV) Then they gave Him wine mingled with myrrh to drink, but He did not take it.

This Church Crushed – Gave off Fragrance of Christ / May the Same for Us

So this church of Smyrna when it was crushed gave off a great fragrance to other Christians. May that be our story when we go through a crushing in our lives as we experience the pains of living in a fallen world. Again, for many Christians around the world this letter to Smyrna is their favorite letter out of all the 7 churches. There have been more Christians martyred in this century than any century ever.

Jesus Identifies Self with Church / Gives what need to Hear

Verse 8 - 'These things says the First and the Last, who was dead, and came to life – Jesus walks in the midst of His Church

Revelation 1:12–13 (NKJV)¹² Then I turned to see the voice that spoke with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands, ¹³ and in the midst of the seven lampstands One like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the feet and girded about the chest with a golden band.

Jesus identifies Himself with each church (from chapter 1) and what they need to hear, as applicable to their situation, and for the Church of Smyrna, he assures them of the resurrection, the power of the gospel. These letters are so masterfully and wonderfully written that it is beyond human genius to write such writings. They have to be God inspired the way they tie each word together. These letters increase my faith.

But Will He

Jesus expresses his eternal power to a church that's suffering, to a people that are in tribulation and persecution because in the midst of it, we can question, where is your power? Why am I still here in the middle of this trial, whether it be an outside persecution or an inside struggle or a outward attack of the devil himself, we can question and wonder. But here God is ensuring and reassuring his power to us made available. And here's the bottom line of the whole summation of the church of Smyrna. It's for us that we finish well in the midst of it all, that we don't cower, pull back, quit.

There's a word that the Lord would speak by faith, we walk by faith that the just shall live by faith. And we claim that all the time in Hebrews, but there's another passage right after it that says, my soul takes no pleasure in those who draw back, there's a word for us, anyone who's sleeping or quitting because you feel it's too hard. Whatever you're in the middle of, whether it's your ministry, whether it's persecution, whether it's an addiction, whether it's your marriage, whether it's a relationship, the Lord would speak to you. I take no pleasure in those who draw back for by faith, we continue to live knowing the word of God that's been spoken to us, and the calling to continue you regardless of the hardness and the pressures. Many times, maybe even most of the time, our crisis of faith isn't that we lack faith. It's because of our faith in him that bring on these trials and affliction and our struggle becomes not that he can, not that he's not able to do what he says he can do, deliver us from the circumstance, but we question why he's not where he's at and why he doesn't respond.

Hebrews 10:38 (NKJV)³⁸ Now the just shall live by faith; But if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him."

There's a song by Casting Crowns and goes something like, I would've been sure by now you would've stepped down, stepped in to save the day, but it's still raining. How many times I listened to that song in my life, Lord, it's still reigning. Even after all my cries and my please. And yet we'll see in our study today, he sees, he knows he's doing something for greater glory.

The Praise of the Church

(Revelation 2:9 NKJV) "I know 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.

I Know / Think they Quit Works - I Serve to see Daughter Killed

Verse 9 - I know your works, tribulation - Like Ephesus, the Lord praises them for their works. You would think a people going through such suffering would say forget it, I am not serving you, I step out to serve you and my daughter gets murdered, or my house gets burned, I can't work for you anymore, but they don't, they continue to do the work of the Lord, and God praises them for it.

Christians Quit / Where are You – My Marriage – Job – Father / Polycarp

How many Christians do we know that they totally walk away from the Lord, they lose a job, a spouse, diagnosed with an illness and they say forget it, I want nothing to do with you. This church suffered greatly, yet they would not turn away from the Lord. Polycarp said:

"These 86 years I have served my Master, and He has been faithful every day, should I at the last blaspheme His Holy Name."

Complete Poverty / Name it Claim It

Verse 9 - I know your works, tribulation, and poverty (but you are rich) - 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." So much for the name it claim it, and that all Christians should prosper, or even that we should live easy lives.

Progress:

We also know from history:

- that it was a city deeply committed to idolatry and the worship of the Roman Emperor. On one famous street in Smyrna, called the "Golden Street," stood magnificent temples to Cybele, Apollo, Asklepios, Aphrodite, and a great temple to Zeus—but the worship of those pagan gods was dying out. The real focus was on the worship of the Roman Emperor.
- In 196 B.C. Smyrna built the first temple to Dea Roma—the goddess of Rome, the spiritual symbol of the Roman Empire. Once the "spirit" of Rome was worshipped, it wasn't much of a step to worship the dead Emperors of Rome. Then it was only another small step to worship the living Emperors, and then to demand such worship as a evidence of political allegiance and civic pride.
- In A.D. 23 Smyrna won the privilege (over 11 other cities) to 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 (A.D. 81–96) 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.
- "Emperor worship had begin as spontaneous demonstration of gratitude to Rome; but toward the end of the first century, in the days of Domitian, the final step was taken and Caesar worship became compulsory. Once a year the Roman citizen must burn a pinch of incense on the altar to the godhead of Caesar; and having done so, he was given a certificate to guarantee that he had performed his religious duty." (Barclay)
- "All that the Christians had to do was to burn that 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. They would not even formally conform." (Barclay)

Guzik, D. (2013). Revelation (Re 2:8a). David Guzik.

No certificate, no work, nor business. The resultant, abject poverty. Imagine being a father. All you got to do is throw a little pinch and then your wife will have provisions. Your children will have provision. Imagine coming home and saying, "I couldn't do it".

There is before all of us a progression we can see, as we can compromise a little here, justify a little there, the retreat from what we once stood so firmly on, until we can convince ourselves that what we are doing God understands, because we are a special circumstance.

Jesus says I Know / You are not Forgotten / I Know the Cost / Hold You in Nail Scarred Hands

Jesus says "I know", I know what you are going through, I see. Important words for us today because when we go through hardship we are so quick to say or think, God has forgotten me. Jesus says to them and us, I know fully and completely what it is costing you to walk with me. Jesus would say to Smyrna, to any of us who are suffering, I know, I know, I am he who holds you in my hand, my nail-scarred hand.

I Know – I became Poor for You / Emptied Myself

I know He says, I became poor that you might become rich, I emptied Myself, took on the form of man, so that I might redeem man, abandoning it all for your sake:

(2 Corinthians 8:9 NKJV) For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich.

(Philippians 2:5 NKJV) Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus,

(Philippians 2:6 NKJV) who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God,

(Philippians 2:7 NKJV) but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men.

(Philippians 2:8 NKJV) And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.

(Philippians 2:9 NKJV) Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name,

(Philippians 2:10 NKJV) that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth,

(Philippians 2:11 NKJV) and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

(2 Corinthians 6:4 NKJV) But in all things we commend ourselves as ministers of God: in much patience, in tribulations, in needs, in distresses,

(2 Corinthians 6:5 NKJV) in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in sleeplessness, in fastings;

(2 Corinthians 6:6 NKJV) by purity, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy Spirit, by sincere love,

(2 Corinthians 6:7 NKJV) by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left,

(2 Corinthians 6:8 NKJV) by honor and dishonor, by evil report and good report; as deceivers, and yet true;

(2 Corinthians 6:9 NKJV) as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold we live; as chastened, and yet not killed;

(2 Corinthians 6:10 NKJV) as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.

Blaspheme of Jews / Large Jewish Community – Accepted by Rome / Slander Christians

Verse 9 - and I know the blasphemy of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan.

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. Unbelieving Jews commonly accused Christians of

- *cannibalism* (based on a misunderstanding of the Lord's Supper),
- *immorality* (based on a perversion of the holy kiss with which believers greeted each other; cf. Rom. 16:16; 1 Cor. 16:20; 2 Cor. 13:12; 1 Thess. 5:26),
- *breaking up homes* (when one spouse became a Christian and the other did not, it often caused conflict; cf. Luke 12:51–53), *atheism* (because, as already noted, Christians rejected the pagan pantheon of deities),
- and *political disloyalty and rebellion* (because Christians refused to offer the required sacrifices to the emperor).

Hoping to destroy the Christian faith, some of Smyrna's wealthy, influential Jews reported these blasphemous, false allegations to the Romans. These haters of the gospel were a synagogue of Satan, meaning they assembled to plan their attack on the church, thus doing Satan's will. They may have claimed to be a synagogue of God, but they were just the opposite

Of course – because in the synagogue of Satan, is the whole of the father of lies:

John 8:44 (NKJV) ⁴⁴ You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it.

(Revelation 2:10 NKJV) "Do not fear 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 ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.

Be Faithful / Checking Address / Jesus doesn't Always Deliver Way we Think

Verse 10 - Be faithful unto death - I would be checking the address on the envelope and be hoping that I got Ephesus' or Pergamos'. This church had lost it all, everything except life itself, and Jesus says do not fear, some will be thrown in prison, others will die. Jesus doesn't always deliver they way we expect or would like Him to, this is what the Scripture says, and it flies in the face of any thought or teaching that Christianity is an easy walk.

Roman Prison – not Rehabilitation / Exiled – Scourged - Executed

When you were thrown in prison in the Roman Empire, it wasn't for rehabilitation, where you got a cell, a bunk, 3 meals a day, cable television, and a workout room. Rome was much smarter than that, a person went to prison while they waited for their trial, after you trial you were either freed if found not guilty, but if guilty you were either exiled (to like Patmos), flogged (scourged), or executed (crucifixion).

10 Days / AD100 – 313 / 10 Periods Roman Persecution / 5 – 7 Million Killed

Verse 10 - and you will have tribulation ten days – this period of actual church history was in the years A.D. 100 through A.D. 313, there were ten Roman emperors who correspond to the ten days spoken of here. They launched such massive attacks against the believers that between five and seven million Christians were killed during their rule. The persecution had begun globally, but it had yet to reach the church of Smyrna in full force yet, but it would:

There were ten intense periods of persecution by ten Roman emperors (these dates are approximate):

- 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).

Crown / Smyrna called Crown City / Church wouldn't sell Out

Verse 10 - and I will give you the crown of life - Smyrna was called the crown city because the acropolis was encircled with flowers, a hedge, and myrtle trees. The Lord uses this symbolize to make His point to these people. No doubt there would be a temptation to grab the crowns the world had to offer, take the easy route available in the world, take care of number 1, but these people refused to take the temporary blessings of the world, in exchange for the Eternal Blessings of the Lord. Jesus chose the crown;
(John 19:5 NKJV) Then Jesus came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. And Pilate said to them, "Behold the Man!"

Several Crowns for Us

There are several crowns waiting us, an imperishable crown, a crown of rejoicing, a crown of righteousness, the crown of life, and the crown of glory. What could the world possibly offer us that could compare to these crowns:

(1 Corinthians 9:25 NKJV) And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown.

*(1 Thessalonians 2:19 NKJV) For what is our hope, or joy, or **crown of rejoicing**? Is it not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming?*

*(2 Timothy 4:8 NKJV) Finally, there is laid up for me the **crown of righteousness**, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.*

*(James 1:12 NKJV) 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.*

*(1 Peter 5:4 NKJV) and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the **crown of glory** that does not fade away.*

Literal Crowns or Not / Cast at Feet

Are these literal, who knows, but Revelation 4 the elders are casting their crowns at His feet, so we should want to have some crowns ourselves so we can get in on the action:

(Revelation 4:10 NKJV) the twenty-four elders fall down before Him who sits on the throne and worship Him who lives forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying:

The Problem in the Church

Smyrna, like Philadelphia, the Lord will not lay any correction, or callout any error/problem in the church.

Historically – Persecution – Purity / Russia – Mideast - China

Throughout its history, the seemingly paradoxical truth has been that the more the church has been persecuted, the greater has been its purity and strength. For decades, churches in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe were oppressed by their atheistic communist governments. Believers continue to be persecuted in Muslim countries and elsewhere to this day. They are forbidden to openly proclaim their faith. Many are imprisoned and some martyred. In the Soviet Union books, even Bibles, were scarce. Yet not only did those churches survive, they prospered. The lifting of the Iron Curtain revealed a powerful, pure church, one characterized by genuine faith, deep spirituality, humility, zeal, love of the truth, and single-minded devotion to the Lord.

Persecution equals Spiritual Strength / Forged in Furnace of Adversity

Scripture links persecution and spiritual strength.

- “Consider it all joy, my brethren,” wrote James, “when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing” (James 1:2–4).
- Peter encouraged suffering Christians with the truth that “after you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you” (1 Pet. 5:10).
- The purest Christian graces are those forged in the furnace of adversity.

Purifies Church / False Believers Drop

The church at Smyrna displayed the power and purity that comes from successfully enduring persecution. Persecution had purified and purged it from sin and affirmed the reality of its members' faith. Hypocrites do not stay to face persecution, because false believers do not want to endure the pain. Trials and persecution strengthen and refine genuine saving faith, but uncover and destroy false faith.

Smyrna Church Poverty / Immeasurable Spiritual Riches / Smyrna - Philadelphia

Though they suffered physical privation and poverty, the Christians at Smyrna clung to their immeasurable spiritual riches. Fittingly, the church at Smyrna is one of the two churches (along with Philadelphia) that received no rebuke in its letter from the Lord Jesus Christ.

Persecution Inevitable / Smyrna example how to Respond

As Scripture makes clear, persecution and trials are an inevitable and essential part of the Christian life (Acts 14:22; 2 Tim. 3:12). The example of the church at Smyrna instructs all churches on how to properly respond when they come.

2 Timothy 3:12 (NKJV) ¹² Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.

Biblical Christianity will Preach Everywhere

Biblical Christianity will preach everywhere, biblical Christianity must be able to be preached in Gaza, in Israel, in Afghanistan and North Korea, in Maryland, not just the Western hemisphere.

We have to be reminded. Every Christian in this world is richer than the richest man and woman in the world who do not know Jesus. We have a riches, a spiritual inheritance that we can withdraw today as we read in the book of Ephesians. And maybe you need to come back to your first love that you left and reclaim those riches of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control, the big three, faith, hope. Love the peace, the past's, understanding eternal forgiveness, cleansed from all unrighteousness secured into heaven and loved by the king creator of the universe. Bezo Musk Gates, paupers and poverty stricken (spiritually). We have the riches of the world. Will we live like it and claim it?

Listen, understand, view, history, view today, any time you find a nation that persecutes or marginalizes Christians, they have come under the influence of the devil. They turned themselves over to the leading of the lies and the murder of the devil. And you can pass that on outward down into individuals who persecute and marginalize Christians.

When he says stop fearing, it's because they're fearing and we need to understand might be the brother in the workplace or the sister in the prison camp in the persecuted country. They're not super Christians. They have fear and we need to pray for them to cover them and hedge them. Our Bible studies are not just for us. Our Bible studies are to lead us in prayer. We need to pray for the persecuted church. These other six churches would've read of this church and they could have said the same thing. Wow, I'm glad I'm not living in Smyrna. But they should have read and said, I need to pray for my sister church in Smyrna. What they're going through is hard. Maybe God's calling us to supply them and to provide for them not just in prayer, but provisions, whatever it may be. They're not super Christians, they're faithful Christians. Big difference.

The Church of Smyrna leaves us with the question to ask ourselves, why do I follow him? Satan will challenge and say, Christians only follow because of what they can get. Give me a chance to persecute them and they'll curse him and we have to come and go. Do I praise him as well on mountaintops as I do in valleys in sickness and in health, the face of death and the face of strength and every one of us and evaluation. Can I praise you in the storm? And equally, can I praise you in the still sea of prosperity? What a comparison.

The Church of Smyrna and the Church of Laodicea (who thinks they're rich). God says, therefore, Smyrna is in the abject poverty. Yet God says, you're the richest church in the world, and he speaks to Christians individually as well. When I praise him today, why will I praise him? We praise him because he's worthy. We praise him because he is God.

Verse 10, Jesus said, if one wants to be my disciple, deny himself and follow me, you know what this Death, first and foremost, very clearly speaking of literal physical death, they will make it clear that it will not be a spiritual death, but there's something to be sent here. The death that may bring you is the death of your reputation, the death of a relationship, the death of a job, the death, the financial wealth and comfort by not cowering and taking the pinch of incense to blend in with the rest of the world by standing up and saying, as for me and my house, we choose to serve the Lord.

Matthew 16:24–26 (NKJV) ²⁴ Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. ²⁵ For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. ²⁶ For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?"

Joshua 24:15 (NKJV) ¹⁵ And if it seems evil to you to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."

Many churches in America won't stand for this message because many don't want to believe it or accept that it could be. But here the Lord is speaking to the pastor of this church. You just preach the word. You don't get to decide what to say and not, here's the word that I'm telling you to speak to this church and

you better speak it every last word of it. Jesus makes no excuse or regret about this letter. He doesn't try to defend it. He doesn't even try to reason it. He just declares it. And you know what? If you can come to this place in your life,

If you're in a persecuted place, persecuted, ballfield, persecuted campus, persecuted workplace, persecuted work, persecuted family, maybe even a persecuted country, there's a power in just a simple declaration of Jesus says that it will be Without any specific promise of deliverance on this side of heaven. And when we come to it and receive this, there is a power that makes us unstoppable. There's a power that we cannot be overcome. There's a power when we say in this world we will have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I've overcome the world. You can walk through this world and have peace and power and intimacy and praise with the Lord that you've been kind worthy to suffer shame for His name that you can worship even in the midst of the worst of the worst circumstances. This Church of Smyrna is a book, a letter of power, and I pray we receive it and live in the power.

John 16:33 (NKJV) ³³ *These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."*

Each Church – is an Individual / Hanging on To / I Know / Bankrupt – Forgotten / Blessed / Aroma

Each of these 7 churches can be applied to a Christians life individually, and if you feel that you are going through some bitter and crushing times, may the words of the Lord to the Church of Smyrna bring you encouragement. Perseverance is not getting on through; it is hanging on to, hanging on to Jesus Christ. May you hear the words of the Lord saying, "I know", I know what you are going through. I know you feel bankrupt and empty, but you are not forgotten. The Lord says blessed are you when people revile and persecute, for yours shall be the kingdom of God. As you are being crushed, your aroma, your fragrance is not just for your fellow man, but it rises up to Me, and it is a sweet smell, I am pleased with you my child:

(Matthew 5:10 NKJV) Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

(Matthew 5:11 NKJV) "Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake.

The Promise for the Church

(Revelation 2:11 NKJV) "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death."

Jesus gives Each a Promise / Need to Hear / No Second Death

Jesus gives every church a promise to hold on to, and He promises this church just what they need to hear, though they may be killed, they shall not die the second death.

2 Deaths in Bible / Spiritual Beings – Eternal Beings / Physical – Spiritual Death

The Bible tells us there are 2 deaths, for each of us are spiritual beings, dwelling in a physical body. Being a spiritual being means you are eternal, and will live for eternity. Everyone lives for eternity, and they will either live with God, or live separated from God. The first death is the physical death of the human body.

Everyone Dies / Great White Throne

Everyone apart from the rapture will face the first death. The second death, is for the unbeliever only, it is called the Great White Throne Judgment, which is the sentencing of the unbeliever to spiritual death which is eternal separation of God, to the Lake of Fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, for eternity, for a spiritual beings are eternal beings.

Believer not Experience 2nd Death / Absent - Present

The believer will not experience this second death because God says to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord:

(2 Corinthians 5:8 NKJV) We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.

Put on Incorruption / Basking in His Glory & Love

We will put on incorruption and live with the Lord forever in His presence, basking in his love and glory:
(1 Corinthians 15:42 NKJV) So also is the resurrection of the dead. The body is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption.

(1 Corinthians 15:43 NKJV) It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power.
(1 Corinthians 15:44 NKJV) It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.
(1 Corinthians 15:45 NKJV) And so it is written, "The first man Adam became a living being." The last Adam became a life-giving spirit.
(1 Corinthians 15:46 NKJV) However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural, and afterward the spiritual.
(1 Corinthians 15:47 NKJV) The first man was of the earth, made of dust; the second Man is the Lord from heaven.
(1 Corinthians 15:48 NKJV) As was the man of dust, so also are those who are made of dust; and as is the heavenly Man, so also are those who are heavenly.
(1 Corinthians 15:49 NKJV) And as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man.
(1 Corinthians 15:50 NKJV) Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption.
(1 Corinthians 15:51 NKJV) Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed;
(1 Corinthians 15:52 NKJV) in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.
(1 Corinthians 15:53 NKJV) For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.
(1 Corinthians 15:54 NKJV) So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory."
(1 Corinthians 15:55 NKJV) "O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?"

Jesus Says – Hard as Get – Lose nothing that Matters / No Second Death

Jesus says as hard as it gets, you will lose nothing that matters, in eternity. My promise to all that overcome, you will not be hurt by the second death.

Gospel / If You Were to Die Tonight

Personal

Jeremiah 29:11 (NKJV) ¹¹ For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope.

Problem

Romans 3:23 (NKJV) ²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

Penalty

Romans 6:23 (NKJV) ²³ For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord

Provision

John 3:16 (NKJV) ¹⁶ For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

Profession

Romans 10:13 (NKJV) ¹³ For "whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved."

Recognize

John 14:6 (NKJV) ⁶ Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.

Repent

Acts 3:19 (NKJV) ¹⁹ Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord,

Receive

Romans 10:9 (NKJV) ⁹ that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.

Overcome / Polycarp

To him who overcomes I will give the crown of life, and the death will not and cannot touch you. Whatever you may be going through, or may go through in the future, persevere, don't get through, but hang on to:

"These 86 years I have served my Master, and He has been faithful every day, should I at the last blaspheme His Holy Name."

Prayer

The Word of God is Living and Powerful, and is ready, and will do a mighty work in our lives.

Hebrews 4:12 (NKJV) ¹² For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

In Every Study

- Who Is God? (How Great is He?)
- What Does He Think of Me? (How Wonderful Are His Thoughts Towards Me?)
- What Does He Want Me to Do?
- What Can I Boldly Request of Him?
- What Do I Need to Be on Guard of When I Leave Here Today?

Boldly come to the throne of grace, ask God to reveal Himself in a mighty way to you, and to do I might work in you, and through you.

Hebrews 4:16 (NKJV) ¹⁶ Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need