



The REVELATION of Jesus Christ

Chapter 2:8-11

"The Church of Smyrna- The Martyr Church"- (A.D. 100 – A.D. 314)

> Each of these seven churches can be framed with a historical reference:

(2:1-7) *Ephesus*- The Apostolic Church (1st Century)

(2:8-11) Smyrna - The Martyr Church (A.D. 100 – A.D. 314)

(2:12-17) *Pergamum* - The Worldly Church (A.D. 314 – A.D. 590)

(2:18-29) *Thyatira*- Church of the Dark Ages, “Romanism” (A.D. 590 – A.D. 1000-continues today)

(3:1-6) *Sardis*- The Protestant Church, “Reformation” (A.D. 1517 – A.D. 1800)

(3:7-13) *Philadelphia*- The Revived Church (A.D. 1800 to Rapture)

(3:14-22) *Laodicea*- The Apostate Church (Last Days & into the Great Tribulation)

> Smyrna means “myrrh” that which represents suffering & bitter persecution.

- When Jesus was born the wise men presented gold, frankincense and myrrh. Gold for Jesus as the King of kings, frankincense was for Jesus as our great High Priest, representing an incense of prayer. Myrrh was for His suffering on the cross for our sins. When the myrrh substance is crushed it yields a fragrant aroma. The church at Smyrna will be persecuted and will suffer greatly at the hands of Jews and Romans, yet it will perfume the heavenlies for centuries to come!

Smyrna is located on the coast of Turkey, and it had a beautiful harbor. Smyrna was known as one of the most beautiful cities in Asia. It was called a flower, an ornament, and it has been called the crown of all Asia. The acropolis is located on Mount Pagos. In fact, the early city goes back to about 2000 B.C., a Hittite city at that time was built around the slope of Mount Pagos. Later Alexander the Great had a great deal to do with building it into the beautiful city that it became. There were wide boulevards along the slopes of Mount Pagos. Smyrna was called the crown city because the acropolis was encircled with flowers, a hedge, and myrtle trees. The city was adorned with noble buildings and beautiful temples—a temple of Zeus, a temple of Cybele (Diana), a temple of Aphrodite, a temple had a theater and an odium, that is, a music center—it was the home of music. Also it had a stadium, and it was at that stadium that Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna and student of the apostle John, was martyred, burned alive in A.D. 155. Today Smyrna is called Izmir and is a major commercial center in Turkey.

- (VIDEO on SMYRNA)

- Two of the seven churches listed in Revelation chapters 2 & 3 received no word of correction; the two churches are *Smyrna* and *Philadelphia*.

(v8a) **Jesus is eternal! - “First & Last”** is also an Old Testament title for God (Isa. 44:6; 48:12; cf. 41:4), and its application here (and in 22:13) to Christ affirms His equality of nature with God. He is the eternal, infinite God, who already existed when all things were created, and who will continue to exist after they are destroyed. Jesus Christ transcends time, space, and the creation.

(v8b) **Jesus was “dead and came to life!”**

- All four gospels give us great evidence of Christ death on the cross and His resurrection, let us quickly review in *The Gospel According To Luke* chapters 23 and 24.

- **Paul also gives a summary of our Lord’s resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15:1-8 -**
Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve. After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep. After that He was seen by James, then by all the apostles. Then last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time.

(v9a) **“Tribulation” – speaks of pressure, trouble, persecution** - All citizens in Smyrna were called to willingly offer worship to the Roman Emperor, which at that time was Domitian. Christians would submit to the civil authority, but they refused to offer sacrifices and to worship the Emperor, thus the Smyrna Christians were branded as rebels and faced the wrath of the Roman government. Christians also refused to participate in the pagan rituals, festivals, and worship in the many temples of gods and goddesses. Thus they were viewed as anti-social.

- **The Roman Empire’s Persecution of Christians:**

The Roman Empire’s relationship with early Christians was fraught with tension and violence. For centuries, Christians faced sporadic episodes of severe persecution, often punctuated by moments of extreme cruelty. These persecutions were not only about religion but also about power, control, and the social order within the Roman Empire. Emperors like Nero and Domitian are infamous for their brutal campaigns against Christians. Nero, for example, scapegoated Christians for the Great Fire of Rome in 64 AD, subjecting them to grotesque tortures and executions. Christians were dressed in animal skins and torn apart by dogs or crucified. Domitian’s reign saw Christians accused of atheism and antisocial tendencies, primarily because they refused to participate in the worship of the emperor or the Roman gods. This refusal was seen as a direct challenge to the Roman way of life and so warranted severe punishment.

(v9b) **"Poverty (yet rich)" - Materially poor—Spiritually rich!**

- **How are we rich in Christ?**

Ephesians 1:7-8 - *In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence,*

Ephesians 2:4-7 - *But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.*

Ephesians 3:8-9 - *To me, who am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to make all see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ;*

(v9c) **"Synagogue of Satan"** - cf. - Jesus said in John 8:37-59 - ***"I know that you are Abraham's descendants, but you seek to kill Me, because My word has no place in you. I speak what I have seen with My Father, and you do what you have seen with your father." They answered and said to Him, "Abraham is our father." Jesus said to them, "If you were Abraham's children, you would do the works of Abraham. But now you seek to kill Me, a Man who has told you the truth which I heard from God. Abraham did not do this. You do the deeds of your father." Then they said to Him, "We were not born of fornication; we have one Father—God." Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and came from God; nor have I come of Myself, but He sent Me. Why do you not understand My speech? Because you are not able to listen to My word. 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.***

But because I tell the truth, you do not believe Me. Which of you convicts Me of sin? And if I tell the truth, why do you not believe Me? He who is of God hears God's words; therefore you do not hear, because you are not of God." Then the Jews answered and said to Him, "Do we not say rightly that You are a Samaritan and have a demon?" Jesus answered, "I do not have a demon; but I honor My Father, and you dishonor Me. And I do not seek My own glory; there is One who seeks and judges. Most assuredly, I say to you, if anyone keeps My word he shall never see death." Then the Jews said to Him, "Now we know that You have a demon! Abraham is dead, and the prophets; and You say, 'If anyone keeps My word he shall never taste death.' Are You greater than our father Abraham, who is dead? And the prophets are dead. Who do You make Yourself out to be?" Jesus answered, "If I honor Myself, My honor is nothing. It is My Father who honors Me, of whom you say that He is your God. Yet you have not known Him, but I know Him. And if I say, 'I do not know

Him, 'I shall be a liar like you; but I do know Him and keep His word. Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad.' Then the Jews said to Him, 'You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?' Jesus said to them, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM.' Then they took up stones to throw at Him; but Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by.

The majority of the persecution the New Testament church faced came from the Jewish community. Even most of the Roman persecution was an effort to appease the Jewish authorities. This is true of Pilate's condemnation of Jesus (John 19:1–16) and Paul's imprisonment by the Roman governors Felix (Acts 24:27) and Festus (Acts 25:16). This pattern held true throughout the Roman world in the first century. As long as Christians were considered a sect of Judaism, they were exempt from the required observance of certain aspects of Roman state religion. However, as Christians were expelled from synagogues and denounced by the Jewish leadership, Rome began to see Christianity as a new religion that did not have these same exemptions. Therefore, Christians outside the protective umbrella of the synagogue were open to Roman persecution.

The synagogue of Satan say they are Jews (the people of God), and they persecute those who believe in Jesus the Messiah (the true people of God). In reality, by rejecting the Jewish Messiah, they have renounced their status as "true" Jews, and that is why Jesus calls them "liars." This distinction between ethnic Jews and faithful Jews is also seen in Romans 9:6 ("Not all who are descended from Israel are Israel") and 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"). By their persecution of the true people of God, these unbelieving Jews had become a synagogue of Satan—a gathering of people who were actually following the devil's priorities.

(v10) "Tribulation for ten days"- Two thoughts- (1) Literally ten days of heavy persecution, or

(2) Ten Roman Emperors that subjected the Church to intense persecution - 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 burned alive);
Severus—200-211; Maximinius—235-237; Decius—250-253; Valerian—257-260;
Aurelian—270-275; Diocletian—303-313 (the worst emperor of all).

- The persecution stopped with the Edict of Toleration by Constantine in A.D. 313.

- According to *Foxes Book of Martyrs* over 5 million Christians were killed for their faith and devotion to Jesus Christ during this time period, (A.D. 100 – A.D. 314).

(v10b) "Be faithful & receive the crown of life"

- To be FAITHFUL is to be FAITH FILLED!

> Let's observe and embrace 7 FACTS of FAITH:

- Faith Fact #1 – What is BIBLICAL FAITH (*pistos*)? - A belief in or confident attitude toward God, involving commitment to His will for one's life. Faith is part of the Christian life from beginning to end. As the instrument by which the gift of salvation is received (Eph 2:8-9 - *For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.*), faith is thus distinct from the basis of salvation, which is grace, and from the outworking of salvation, which is good works.

- Faith Fact #2 – Let us understand SAVING FAITH – SAVING FAITH involves personally depending on the finished work of Christ's sacrifice as the only basis for forgiveness of sin and entrance into heaven. In Acts 16:31 - "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved."

But saving faith is also a personal commitment of one's life to following Christ in obedience to His commands.

Such commands as in Matthew 22:37-40 - *Jesus said to him, "'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets."*

John 13:34-35 - *A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.*"

- The word LOVE is found 361 times in the Bible!

- Faith Fact #3 - In the New Testament, faith refers to the TEACHINGS of the Bible, the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints (Jude 3).

Romans 10:17 - So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

In modern times, faith has been weakened in meaning so that some people use it to mean self-confidence. But in the Bible, true faith is confidence in God or Christ, not in oneself. (From Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary)

- Faith Fact #4 - "*The just shall LIVE BY FAITH!*" - This declaration of the Christian's principle of life is found four times in the Bible: Hab. 2:1-5; Rom. 1:17; Gal. 3:10,11 Heb. 10:38.

In Habakkuk 2:4 - *"Behold the proud, his soul is not upright in him; but the just shall live by his faith."* The unjust are puffed up and live according to self-sufficiency.

Atheism for example is religion of faith in man and not a Creator called God. The term atheist literally means “one without God” and refers to a person who claims to believe there is no Divine Being. It is represented in a variety of philosophical arenas: politics (Marxist communism), education (secular humanism), pseudo-science (evolution), and religion (not believing the entire Bible).

Atheism is a belief that allows man to live an immoral life without future accountability to a Holy God, so they think. This is the height of self-deception. Listen to the self-professed truth of two-world renowned atheist, “I’m an atheist! I am an atheist! God knows I’m an atheist!” said Soviet Premier Nikita Kruschev.

How about Chairman Mao who commented to Richard Nixon, “when I go to heaven to see God, I’ll tell him that for the present it is better to have Taiwan under the care of the United States.”

But the Bible says, “*the just shall live by faith*”—our confidence is in God. To us, faith is more than a philosophy of life; it is the very principle of life. The just shall live their whole life by faith.

- **Faith Fact #5** – Peter declares that we are **KEPT BY FAITH!** - 1 Peter 1:3-5 - *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.*

- **Faith Fact #6** – Paul proclaims we must **LIVE BY FAITH!** - Galatians 2:20-21 - *I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.*

- **Faith Fact #7** – **EXAMPLES of FAITH** are found in Hebrews Ch. 11, which is known as the “Hall of Fame of the FAITHFUL!”

- **Crown is stephanos** – which is the “victor’s crown”- James 1:12- *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*

(v10c) **“He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death”**

- The *second death* is found in Revelation 20:14-15 - *Then Death and Hades (all non-believers) were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.*

Revelation 21:8 - *But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.*

- Jesus gives us hope, strength and comfort in Matthew 5:10-12 - *Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. "Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.*