



## **Revelation 2:8-11 - Letter to the Church in Smyrna**

August 16, 2020

### **Historical prophet view.**

**Ephesus** - Apostolic church AD 30-100

**Smyrna** - Persecuted church AD 100-313

**Pergamum** - State church AD 313-590

**Thyatira** - Papal church AD 590-1517

**Sardis** - Reformed church AD 1517-1730

**Philadelphia** - Missionary church AD 1730-1900

**Laodicea** - Apostolic church 1900 - present

### **Names have important meanings**

**Ephesus** means -Desired

**Smyrna means – Myrrh – the persecuted church**

Pergamum means – Church and State married.

Thyatira means - perpetual sacrifice. - Papal church

Dark ages. (Transubstantiation the blood and body)

Terrible Corruption.

1500's Martin Luther ushers in the reformed church.

Sardis means- means those escaping- Reformed church AD 1517-1730

Philadelphia - means brotherly love, missionary church.

Laodica - means people ruling. A form of Godliness but denying the power of God. People or Democratic rule of the church. Groups and committees. Legislated the Lord out of the church.

### **Smyrna the City –**

25 miles north of Ephesus. A Wealth community.

Very beautiful place.

The crown of Asia Minor.

Rebuilt many times throughout. Last time 290BC.

Today it is a major city in Turkey called Izmir.

(Ephesus is gone. Only remains of the city and the church)

There are 250 churches in Izmir. Modern day turkey is 99.987% Muslim. The lampstand was removed from Ephesus but not Smyrna.

There is a remnant of Christians in Izmir.

The Jews aggressively opposed to Christianity.

Gentiles were loyal to Rome.

The Roman Emperor was worshiped as a god.

There was an altar built to Caesar and everyone was required by law to burn incense and declare Caesar as God. After doing so everyone would receive a certificate. Without that certificate you were harshly persecuted.

Chief export was myrrh

Embalming oil. Only good when crushed.

### **Smyrna was Persecuted church-**

Polycarp who worked with John. Was the pastor at Smyrna. He was murdered in 155AD. He was 86. Burned alive.

Christians herded in coliseums, amphitheaters, and killed by Lyons and wild dogs.

Christians were sewn into animal skins and ravaged by dogs and other animals. Boiled in oil.

Emperors would dip Christians in tar and light them on fire to light his gardens at night.

From 100-313 AD, it's estimated that 5 million Christians were killed simply because they were Christians.

### **Revelation 2:8-11**

**v8** "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.**"

**To each of the seven churches Jesus declares who He is - according to their need.**

**Ephesus Rev 2:1** "the one who holds the seven stars in His right hand and walks among the seven golden lamp stands."

**Smyrna Rev 2:8** "These are the words of him who is the **First and the Last, who died and came to life again.** "

**OT. Isaiah 41:4; 44:6; 48:12** first and last - alpha and omega - the beginning and the end - the eternal one who was and always will be.

**NT. Revelation 22:13** "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end."

God is Almighty and Eternal.

**v8** Words of Christ.

First and last.

Died and Came to life again.

The living one.

Overruled death.

**v9** I know your **afflictions** 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.

**Matthew 5:10-12** "Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you."

**John 16:33** "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."

**2 Timothy 3:12** “All who live godly in this present age will suffer persecution.”

**1 Peter 2,3,4,5** there will come suffering.

**1 Peter 5:10** “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.

**v10 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.

Caesar was the persecutor, and this particular Caesar was named **Domitian**. He was a ruthless dictator who launched extensive persecutions against the church.

### **Foxe’s Book of Martyrs**

“A variety of fabricated tales were, (under the reign of Domitian) composed one in order to injure the Christians. Such was the infatuation of the pagans, that, if famine, pestilence, or earthquakes afflicted any of the Roman provinces, it was laid upon the Christians. These persecutions among the Christians increased the number of informers and many, for the sake of gain, swore away the lives of the innocent.”

**Matthew 16:15-18** “But what about you?” he asked. “Who do you say I am?”

Simon Peter answered, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.”

Jesus replied, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven. And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the **gates of Hades** will not overcome it.”

**CS Lewis** “God whispers to us in our pleasures. He speaks to us in our conscience. God shouts to us in our pain. Suffering is God’s megaphone to wake a deaf world.”

**The Jews** had a saying “Not to have had pain is not to have been human.”

**Aristotle:** “we cannot learn without pain.”

**Hebrew 11:36-38.** “Some faced jeers and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. **37 They were put to death by stoning; they were sawed in two; they were killed by the sword.** They went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted and mistreated - the world was not worthy of them. They wandered in deserts and mountains, living in caves and in holes in the ground.”

**v11** “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.**”

**First death - physical**  
**Second death-spiritual**

**Luke 12:4-5** “I tell you, my friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that can do no more. But I will show you whom you should fear: **Fear him who, after your body has been killed, has authority to throw you into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him.**”

**Psalm 56:11** “In God I put my trust.”

**Matthew 24:6-14** “You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of birth pains.

“Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me. At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, **13 but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved.** And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.”

**From 100-313 AD** - Even with all the persecution and killings the church grew.

**IT HAS ALWAYS FLOURISHED IN TIMES OF PERSECUTION.  
THE CHURCH THROUGHOUT HISTORY DOESN'T FLOURISH IN EASY TIMES.**

**Satan tried to stop the Holy Spirit and the church through pain and persecution but failed.**

**Christ had no admonishment for this church. No challenge. Suffering had purified them.**

**Be FAITHFUL to the end.**

**1 John 5:4-5** “for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world? Only the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.”

**He who has ears to hear LISTEN!!!**