

Rev.1:1 The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show to His bond-servants, the things which must soon take place; and He sent and communicated it by His angel to His bond-servant John,

V.10 I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like the sound of a trumpet,

V.11 saying, "Write in a book what you see, and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamum and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea."

V.12 Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands;

V.13 and in the middle of the lampstands I saw one like a son of man, clothed in a robe reaching to the feet, and girded across His chest with a golden sash.

V.14 His head and His hair were white like white wool, like snow; and His eyes were like a flame of fire.

V.15 His feet were like burnished bronze, when it has been made to glow in a furnace, and His voice was like the sound of many waters.

V.16 In His right hand He held seven stars, and out of His mouth came a sharp two-edged sword; and His face was like the sun shining in its strength.

V.17 When I saw Him, I fell at His feet like a dead man. And He placed His right hand on me, saying, "Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last,

V.18 and the living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades.

V.19 "Therefore write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after these things.

2:8 "And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write: The first and the last, who was dead, and has come to life, says this:

V.9 'I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich), and the blasphemy by those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan.

V.10 'Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, so that you will be tested, and you will have tribulation for ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.

V.11 'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes will not be hurt by the second death.'

Rev.2:8 "And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write: The first and the last, who was dead, and has come to life, says this:

1) "to the angel of the church in Smyrna write"

- a) One of the two churches of which God had **no negative things** to say
- b) **Smyrna** is the word translated myrrh
- c) Probably got its name from the export of great quantities of myrrh
 - i) Same word used in **Mk.15:22 (NP)**

Mk.15:22 Then they *brought Him to the place Golgotha, which is translated, Place of a Skull.

23 They tried to give Him wine mixed with **myrrh**; but He did not take it.

Mt.2:11 After coming into the house they^(wise men) saw the Child with Mary His mother; and they fell to the ground and worshiped Him. Then, opening their treasures, they presented to Him gifts of **gold, frankincense, and myrrh**.

- d) Myrrh was a plant
 - i) Myrrh is a fragrant plant – renders an oil when crushed
 - (1) It is used for many things but known for **embalming**
 - ii) Many times in Scripture it represents **suffering & death (but not always)**
 - iii) Comparing **Mt.2:11** w/ **Isa.60:6**
Isa.60:6^(during millennium reign) "A multitude of camels will cover you, The young camels of Midian and Ephah; All those from Sheba will come; They will bring gold and frankincense, And will bear good news of the praises of the LORD.
- e) Smyrna continually inhabited (except for about 400 year period) from approx. 2000BC (Hittites)
 - i) Today it is called Izmir, Turkey, a city of approx.200,000 – 250,000 population –
- f) Alexander the Great **planned** the rebuilding of Smyrna – plan carried out after his death
- g) Alexander made it into one of the most beautiful Greek cities ever erected
- h) He made the streets wide, well-paved, at right angles to one another
- i) There was the famous "**Golden Street**", connecting the temples of Zeus and Cybele(Diana),
 - i) Considered the best road in the ancient world
 - ii) It ran from the coast to the mountains where Zeus' Temple was
- j) There were **temples** to Zeus, Aesculapius, Aphrodite, Apollo, Cybele, Emperor Tiberius
- k) The city was celebrated for its schools of **science** and **medicine**, and for its **attractive buildings**
- l) They monument to Homer – they said **birthplace of Homer**
- m) There was a **theater** which seated 20,000 spectators
- n) Smyrna had the good fortune of always being on the right side when conflict arose –

- i) Whether between Brutus & Cassius on one side & Anthony & Octavius or Augustus Caesar and Mark Anthony
 - ii) Therefore Smyrna was made a free city (had its own government w/out taxes to Rome)
- o) It was a **center** for **Roman Imperial Cult** (Emperor worship) in eastern part of Rome
 - p) In the 23 AD year a temple was built in honor of **Tiberius** and his mother Julia (he sponsored it)
 - q) There was a large Jewish population in Smyrna

Rev.2:8 x "And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write: The first and the last, who was dead, and has come to life, says this:

1) "The first and the last"

a) This description taken from chapter 1

Rev.1:17 When I saw Him, I fell at His feet like a dead man. And He placed His right hand on me, saying, "Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last,

b) There is nothing before Him nor **after** Him

i) He has the final word on everything that goes on.

c) When you are **afraid / hurting** you need to know that there is **nothing** that came before Him & there is **nothing** is coming after Him

d) HE **controls all** that is going on

e) If you hurt enough – it is very important to know that HE is **before** & **after** the **pain!**

Rom.8:31 What then shall we say to these things? If God *is* for us, who *is* against us?

32 He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?

V.35 Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

2) "who was dead, and has come to life"

a) Literally – who **became dead**^(aorist tense) & is alive^(present tense)

b) Death had no hold on Him – He didn't have to die

i) He wasn't **murdered** by anyone

ii) He freely lay down His life

c) He is **talking to people** who have faced & are facing death

i) He wants them to **know** that **HE has defeated it**

- ii) There is now **victory** where **death once reigned**

V.9 *I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich), and the blasphemy by those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan.*

1) "I know your **tribulation**"

a) The word "tribulation" means extreme affliction / pressure

i) Pressed until inside squeezes out

ii) The believers at Smyrna lived under great pressure (daily)

2) "I know...your **poverty** (but you are rich)"

a) Poverty – extreme poverty – w/out essentials for living – beggarly

i) They believers of Smyrna were according to this word – utterly destitute

(1) **Most believers** were **poor** anyway

1 Cor.1:26(NIV) Brothers, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth.

V.27 But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong.

V.28 He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things--and the things that are not--to nullify the things that are,

V.29 so that no one may boast before him.

(2) They **couldn't work** in a **union** – keep a job once it was out that they were Christians

(3) **IF** God has been good to you – and **you have a job** – you might want to stop & thank Him that you didn't live in Smyrna & that we aren't persecuted like that

b) **Man** has a hard time **distinguishing** what is **valuable** & what **isn't**

i) Notice the difference between this church and Laodicea

ii) **To man** Smyrna looked poor & Laodicea looked rich

Rev.3:17 'Because **you say**, "I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing," and you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked,

(1) Have you ever wondered **who** will be rich & who will be poor in the life to come?

V.9 x 'I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich), and the blasphemy by those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan.

2) x "but you are rich"

a) "rich" – **Present tense** – The believers in Smyrna were already rich – just haven't received it yet!

3) "the blasphemy by those who say they are Jews and are not"

a) Paul says that not all of Israel is Israel

Rom.9:6 But *it is* not as though the word of God has failed. For they are not all Israel who are *descended* from Israel; V.7 nor are they all children because they are Abraham's descendants, but: "THROUGH ISAAC YOUR DESCENDANTS WILL BE NAMED."

*This is not a statement of abandonment of Israel

b) The Jews spread many rumors about Christians – they poisoned the populous against Christianity

4) "but are a synagogue of Satan"

a) There is a **hostility** that is **aimed at believers**

i) It is a conspiracy

b) But not a manmade conspiracy – it is **satanic**

c) Our **government** has turned on Christianity – **the world** is against believers – it is **satanically inspired**

d) As earlier stated – Smyrna was the center of Caesar worship in eastern part of Roman empire

e) You get the **idea** that Rome was hated when studying the history of N.T.

f) The Jew hated being ruled by anyone – Jews have always been a thorn in the side of any people who tried to rule them

g) But **not everyone hated Rome** – Rome was **loved** by many

h) For example the **king of Pergamos** willed his empire to Rome

i) Rome **brought civilization** w/ them to a pagan world

j) They introduced the **Pax Romana** – Roman law!

i) War ended – little tyrants & despots quit fighting among themselves

k) Rome made **great roads** for **business & travel**

i) They greatly reduce highway robbery

l) They gave the world a good **legal system**

m) They brought **education** w/ them

- n) Rome had **conquered** all types of **people groups**
- o) They needed something to bond them into a unit to help control them
- p) So they introduced worship – worship of the “**spirit of Rome**”
- q) That was pretty vague & didn’t do what they wanted: so they raised the level to what is called **Imperial Cult worship** (worship of the Emperor)

- r) The worship of Caesar actually started at death of Julius Caesar
 - i) **After his death** he was declared a god **by the Roman Senate**
 - ii) They emperors didn’t like it at first & were against it

- s) **Augustus Caesar endorsed it** – honors were **more like** those of a **hero** than god
- t) When **Tiberius** became Emperor he encouraged Emperor worship by sponsoring an official priesthood, **building a Temple** – but he **didn’t accept offers of divinity** for himself

- u) Then we drop down to the demented **Caligula** who loved being god
- v) By the time of the writing of Revelation – Caesar worship was **mandatory**
- w) What made it so dangerous – was that **most people loved it** what it stood for
 - i) It was**n’t** really a spiritual thing – more political
 - ii) It was more a declaring your allegiance to Rome
 - iii) It didn’t interfere w/ their **worship** of their gods

- x) **Here is where the synagogue of Satan comes in**
 - i) As much as the Jews hated being ruled by the Romans they **hated the Christians** even more
 - ii) The **Jews** turned the Christians in to authorities anytime they saw a violation of any kind
- y) The **Jews** were given an exemption from Caesar worship for a time – **Christians** were not given an exemption

- z) Explain how Caesar worship worked

- aa) So the Jews turned Christians b/c they knew they wouldn’t worship Caesar in for the same thing they detested
- bb) We have an written example of how much the Jews hated Christianity
 - i) An official **letter** from the Church of Smyrna on the martyrdom of Polycarp is the proof
 - ii) When **Polycarp**, the pastor of Smyrna, was martyred it was the Sabbath

- iii) But the Jews freely helped gathered wood to burn him at the stake **V.10 (NP)**

V.10 *'Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, so that you will be tested, and you will have tribulation for ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.*

- 1) "Do not fear what you are about to suffer"
 - a) One of the most famous martyrs is Polycarp
 - i) HE was brought before the local Roman governor & told to either declare Caesar as lord or Jesus as Lord
 - b) **HE said this after being threatened first w/ wild animals then w/ fire** –
 - c) "86 years have I served Him and He never did me harm. How, then, can I blaspheme my King and my Savior?...Since you seem vainly urging that I should swear by the fortune of Caesar and pretend not to know who & what I am, hear me, I am a Christian!
 - b) Being threatened again w/ fire Polycarp said, "You threaten me w/ fire which burns for an hour, and after a little, is extinguished. But you are ignorant of the fire of the coming judgment and of the eternal punishment reserved for the ungodly. But, why tarry? Bring fourth what you will."
 - 2) "the devil is about to cast some of you into prison"
 - a) Our **adversary** is **not** the government or people or circumstances
 - b) Our **adversary** is **Satan**
 - c) There is a conspiracy but not man-made
 - 3) "you will have tribulation for ten days"
 - a) I'm not sure what time frame this is
 - b) Some seem to know when the "ten days" was but I don't see enough proof
 - c) Here is what I do know
 - i) Five & 10 stand for connection & wholeness of the **flesh** of man
 - (1) Man has 5 senses in which we are in contact w/ the world around us
 - (2) Man has 5 toes & fingers ea. foot & hand
 - (3) **If a man was missing any finger or toe** he was **not** able to serve as a priest
 - (4) The **consecration** of the **priest** was putting blood on his right ear lobe, right thumb, right big toe
 - (5) There were **10 commandments** – **man's walk** in his **flesh** before God
- #6 (NP)

- (6) In **Luke 19** there are **10 servants** were given **10 minas**
*How the servants spent their time on earth (in flesh)
 - (7) If 10 righteous men could have been found in Sodom it would have been spared
 - (8) The **10 toes** on the **statue Nebuchadnezzar** saw represent the total governments rules by fleshly men
 - (9) Daniel & friends ate what was Levitically clean & were **10 times better off than the other slaves**
Dan.1:20 As for every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king consulted them, he found them **ten times better** than all the magicians *and* conjurers who *were* in all his realm.
 - (10) The **Ten mentioned here** represents the pain of the flesh for the believers in Smyrna
- 4) "Be faithful until death & I will give you the crown of life"
- a) **Compared** w/ looking at all the temples in Smyrna – **Christianity** looked like a bunch of losers
 - b) They were to see themselves as **winners**
 - c) It is **not** eternal life He **offers** them (they already have that) it is the "**crown**" of life
 - d) God calls some to a higher calling than others
 - e) These were called to suffer persecution – but others called to suffering
Phil.1:29 For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake,
James 1:12 Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which *the Lord* has promised to those who love Him.

V.11 'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes will not be hurt by the second death.'

- 1) "the second death"

Summary: The man of the world lives to die – believers die to live!