

Revelation Ch. 2:8-11 Smyrna

V:8a *"And unto the angel of the church in Smyrna write:..."*

Background on Smyrna:

- Ephesus represented the Apostolic church, 30 AD to 100 AD.
 - Represents the church from 100 A.D. to 314 A.D., the persecuted church, the church of tribulation; or the martyred church.
 - Some estimates from various church historians figure as many as 6,000,000 were martyred for Christ during this time period.
 - Smyrna was located on the West coast of Asia Minor with a large, well protected harbor, it is now the modern city of Izmir, Turkey.
- ** see map ***
- Founded by the Hittites around 2,000 B.C., it was famous for science, medicine, and beautiful buildings.
 - Polycarp, Smyrna's bishop was a disciple of John. He was burned at the stake in 155 A.D.
 - Smyrna = myrrh: fragrant subst. with many uses, oil of myrrh.
 1. Exodus 30:23, ingredient used in oil to anoint Aaron and successors.
 2. Psalm 45:8 & Proverbs 7:17, used as a perfume in beds and robes.
 3. Esther 2:12, purification of women.
 4. Mark 15:23, used as a painkiller
 5. John 19:39, anointing the dead, embalming.
 - 1st. Advent / coming, myrrh was a gift to baby Jesus, symbolizing his death & sacrifice presented by the wise men in **Matt 2:11**.
 - 2nd. Advent, myrrh no longer needed. **Isaiah 60:1-6**
 - There are no words of condemnation or rebuke for Smyrna.

V: 8b *"... These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive;"*

- From Jesus, the first and the last, the Alpha and Omega. **Rev.1:8, 11.**
- This follows the pattern set by the first letter, and carried through to the 7th letter.
[Side note on structure:](#)

"... which was dead, and is alive"

- This is an important message and a comfort to those who would be martyred, marching on to victory.

1 Corinthians 15:54-58 ⁵⁴So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, death is swallowed up in victory. ⁵⁵O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? ⁵⁶The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. ⁵⁷But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁵⁸Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, un-moveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."

- Reminding them of His / their victory in Him over death.
- The church has in a sense been forewarned, we should expect trials and difficulties.

John 15:20 "Remember the word that I said unto you, the servant is not greater than his Lord. If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also."

- Polycarp was not above his congregation, he suffered as they did and shared in their trials.
- Polycarp, a disciple of John was martyred in his 90's for Jesus Christ by the Roman government. "As the fagots (bundles of sticks) were gathered around him, the executioner said, "I hate to see an old man die. Just recant Christ and we'll set you free. Then you can live your last days in peace." Polycarp said, "for over 80 years I have served my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Not once has he denied me. I shall not deny Him."

"The executioner replied, "the fire will be hot." Polycarp replied back, "not nearly as hot as the fire you'll experience!" The executioner lit the fagot. At first the flames leaped up around Polycarp but didn't touch his body. Seeing this, the executioner took a spear and thrust Polycarp through. The blood that poured out extinguished the fire. The Christians took his body and gave him a Christian burial."

V: 9a *"I know thy works, and tribulation,..."*

- Jesus knows our situation, he knows our tribulations.
- "Tribulations", not referring to the "great tribulation, but our suffering for Christ
- Every true believer must suffer tribulation, but Jesus knows all about it, we are never alone.

Matthew 16:24 "Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me."

John 16:33 "These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."

Psalms 44:22 / Romans 8:36 "Yea, for thy sake are we killed all the day long; we are counted as sheep for the slaughter."

Acts 14:22 "...we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God."

2 Tim 3:12 "Yea, and all that will live Godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution."

- Trials lead to good things, maturity in Christ for one.
- God does things through trials in our lives that can't be accomplished in any other way.

James 1:2-4 "My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing."

Jeremiah 29:11 **Romans 8:28**

V: 9b *"... and poverty, (but thou art rich)"*

- Poverty, lack of material possessions. They were either from the poorer classes or they were rich and gave it up or had it taken away.
- Poverty or richness: it's all a matter of perspective.

Philippians 4:11 "Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content."

- We can choose to store up riches in heaven, or in contrast to store them up now as did the church in Laodicea who though rich in worldly terms was poor spiritually.

James 2:5 "Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?"

Matthew 25:14-30 The parable of buried talents.

Matthew 6:19-20 "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal:"

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

[Craig Quam – working @ Murrieta](#)

- They were blessing the world with their witness, with their testimony of faith, they didn't keep the gospel of Jesus Christ to themselves, they were rich in faith, spiritual wealth which they shared!

V: 9c "... and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and not, but are the synagogue of Satan."

- Blasphemy: /blas"feuhmee/, *n., pl. blasphemies*.
 1. impious (irreverent, disrespectful) utterance or action concerning God or sacred things.
 2. an act of cursing or reviling God.
- The same as those who claim to be "Christians" then conduct themselves in very un-Christian ways and activities. The crusades being one example.
- Blasphemy / slander, by the synagogue of Satan, many of the Jews in Smyrna who came to Christ were still Jews inwardly and outwardly.
- Paul was constantly under attack by the "Judaizers" of his time.

John 15:19 "If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you."

John 17:14 "I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world."

Mark 7:6-9

Mark 7:6-8 "... this people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men..."

- Spiritual descendants vs: fleshly descendants – real Jews or not.

Romans 9:6-7 "For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel: Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called."

- The false apostles of Ephesus were "ministers of Satan", also the "false Jews" were a "synagogue of Satan"

Romans 8:14 "For as many as are led by the spirit of God, they are the sons of God."

- Those who claimed to be Jews but were either not so physically or spiritually. True Jews knew their messiah and had a personal relationship with him, as do any true believers.

Romans 2:28-29 "For he is not a Jew which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh. But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God."

- True descendants of Abraham: **Gal. 3:26-29, Rom. 4:11, John 8:39-47**
Deuteronomy 10:16 Galatians 2:16
- The church was plagued by "Jewish" converts who did not want to give up synagogue fellowship and Jewish customs of worship, rituals, and ordinances similar to the beginning of the church in Jerusalem as described in Acts 15.
- Eventually this led to a system of works - salvation and almost a complete disappearance of the doctrines of salvation by grace and justification by faith (church of Thyatira). Some wanted to continue the priesthood, just like some in Ephesus wanted to continue with apostolic succession.
- Both were later combined into a vast worldly religious system - DA JA VOO!
- Many of the "Jews" encouraged the execution of Polycarp along with other martyrs, and carried wood to the fires that burned them alive.
- Between verses 9 and 10 we see **7** commendations to the church of Smyrna.

V: 10a *"Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer:..."*

- Note that Jesus doesn't say they won't suffer.
- He does say fear not!

Proverbs 29:25 "The fear of man bringeth a snare: but whoso putteth his trust in the Lord shall be safe."

Matthew 10:28 "And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell."

Romans 8:31 "What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?"

2 Timothy 1:7 "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; for of power, and of love, and of a sound mind."

- He also says that we won't be alone in our trials.

Genesis 15:1; 26:24 **Daniel 3:23-25**

Psalms 23:4 "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me."

- We are never told that the Christian life and everything that comes with it will be easy, just that it will be worth it!

Romans 8:18 "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us."

V: 10b *"... behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried;..."*

- The Lord recognized that Satan is behind all the persecution and tribulation of the church.

Ephesians 6:12 "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, and against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places."

- The devil works through people, even as God does. The devil is currently the prince of this earth and is the "inspiration" behind many people and works.

Testimony: Ken Rosenthal: 647(f) / suicide by cop – blue eyes / black eyes.

V: 10c *"...and ye shall have tribulation ten days:..."*

- Possibly 10 periods of intense persecution under 10 Roman emperors, not necessarily all consecutively.

1.	Nero	64-68 A.D.	4 yrs.
2.	Domitian	95-96	1
3.	Trajan	104-117	13
4.	Marcus Aurelius	161-180	19
5.	Severus	200-211	11
6.	Maximinus	235-237	2
7.	Decius	250-253	3
8.	Valerian	257-260	3
9.	Aurelian	270-275	5
10.	Diocletian (worst)	303-313	10

- Possibly more specific to Smyrna, the 10 years leading up to the martyr of Polycarp
- Possibly to prepare the church for intense suffering, but that it would last but a short time compared to life everlasting.

2 Corinthians 4:17-18 *"¹⁷For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; ¹⁸While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal."*

James 4:14 *"Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away."*

- Daniel and Co. go through 10 days of sacrifice and testing at the end of which they come out the winner, which led to over 70 years of effective service to God.

Daniel 1:12-15

V: 10d *"...be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."*

- Jesus is encouraging them to be faithful even unto death. (You first!)

Romans 12:1 *"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service."*

Romans 8:37-39

Romans 8:37-39 ³⁷*Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.* ³⁸*For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come,* ³⁹*nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."*

- Jesus personalized the letters to the churches:
- Smyrna was considered the "crown city" because of the majestic buildings which formed a crown on the hilltop overlooking the port city.
- The Lord is offering them rewards; "crowns", eternal crowns, in a way they can understand and appreciate.
- Crowns signify victory, like the original Olympics, or like Paul told us to run the race as if to win, to get the crown. There are also crowns of righteousness.

James 1:12 *"Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him."*

2 Timothy 4:8 *"Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at the day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing."*

1 Corinthians 9:24-25

- There are no words of rebuke or correction for Smyrna, they are a church that will be purified through persecution.
- Tribulation always has a purifying and strengthening effect, in a church and in our lives.

James 1:2-4 ²*My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations;* ³*knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience.* ⁴*But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing."*

7 points of commendation:

1. Works.
2. Tribulations.
3. Poverty.
4. Richness in Spirit.
5. Blasphemed against / reproached for Christ.
6. Suffering / persecutions.
7. Faithfulness.

V: 11 *"He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death."*

- Same message about hearing the Word of God, and obeying the Word of God as **Rev. 2:7**
- The Spirit guards the messages to the churches ensuring arrival, then the Spirit speaks the message to listening ears and open hearts.

Being teachable:

Acts 17:11 "These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so."

Isaiah 55:2b-3 "... Hearken diligently unto Me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. ³Incline your ear, and come unto Me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David."

"... second death."

- Born once, die twice..... Born twice, die once.

Revelation 20:6 "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power..."

- Those who die without Christ will die again.

Revelation 20:12-15 "¹²And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. ¹³And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. ¹⁴And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. ¹⁵And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire."

- The promise is that they shall not see spiritual death.

John 5:24 "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on Him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life."