

# Revelation 2:8-11

## Introduction:

1. John delivers Jesus' message to four churches of Asia Minor in this chapter.
2. The first church studied was the church at Ephesus. (2:-7)
- I. The Church At Smyrna (2:8-11)
  - A. The Splendid City of Smyrna (2:1a)
    1. The name "Smyrna" means "Myrrh."
      - a. The city possibly obtained this name from the abundance of myrrh that it exported.
      - b. Myrrh is a gum-like substance which comes from a bushy plant that produces a plum-like fruit. The bark and the fruit of the plant are crushed to produce the substance.
      - c. Myrrh is a very sweet smelling yet bitter tasting material.

NOTE: Myrrh always represents suffering and torment in the Word of God.

1. At Jesus' birth, the Magi presented Him with gold, frankincense and myrrh
  - a. Gold representing His deity.
  - b. Frankincense representing His ministry.
  - c. Myrrh representing His suffering.
2. At Jesus' death, He was presented with wine mingled with myrrh (Mk. 15:23) to alleviate the pain, which He refused.
3. At Jesus' return, wise men will again present Him with gifts: Gold and Frankincense (Is. 60:6). There will be no Myrrh presented. Why? Because Jesus will no longer be the Suffering Servant, but the Saving Sovereign!
  2. It was a strong commercial city which connected trade routes from the East to the West.
  3. It was a cultural city, with many music amphitheaters.
  4. It was a physically beautiful city.
    - a. Smyrna harbor stretches over 35 miles inland with cliff-lined shores.
    - b. It has been called a "flower," and "ornament" and the "Crown of all Asia."
  5. It was a quite large city with over 100,000 inhabitants in John's day.

6. The city was home to several pagan temples:
    - a. The Temple of Zeus – The supreme Greek god.
    - b. The Temple of Cybele – The goddess of nature.
    - c. The Temple of Aphrodite
    - d. The Temple of Apollo
    - e. The Temple of Asclepius
  7. The city still exists today under the name IZMIR in Turkey. There are presently over 300,000 inhabitants.
- B. The Spiritual Condition of Smyrna
1. The people of Smyrna were poly-theistic pagans.
  2. They were very opposed to the Gospel.
  3. It is reported that there was a large Jewish population that migrated to Smyrna following the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. by Titus. These Jews were still following Judaism and possibly urged the persecution of the church there.
  4. The spiritual climate was one of boisterous blackness.
- C. The Supernatural Church of Smyrna
1. The church was possibly started by Paul (Acts 19:10)
  2. The church was pastored by Polycarp (one of John's disciples) in John's day, who was martyred.
  3. The church as Smyrna was persecuted relentlessly.
  4. This church possibly represents the period of time from 100 to 313 A.D. from the death of John the Apostle to the "Edict of Toleration" proclaimed by Constantine in 313 A.D., which legalized Christianity.
  5. FOX'S BOOK OF MARTYRS states that 5 million Christians were slaughtered during this period of time.
- D. The Sovereign Counselor of the Church of Smyrna (2:8): Jesus says He is the "first and the last, which was dead and is alive:"
1. Jesus identifies Himself as the "first" and the "last," which was a comfort to the Smyrna Christians because there is nothing before Him or after Him. All things remain in His sight and are still under His control.
  2. Jesus identifies Himself as the One who was "Dead and is Alive," which was an encouragement to remain FAITHFUL, even in the face of death. They knew that if they died, they would live as He lives.

E. The Superb Commendation of the Church of Smyrna (2:9)

“I know thy works...tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich)...”

1. He knew their **tribulation** – has the connotation of a man being executed by crushing him to death beneath a great stone. Jesus was saying that He knew all about crushing persecution and could rightly empathize with them.
2. He knew their **poverty** (but thou art rich)
  - a. Materially the Smyrna Christians were poor.
    - (1) The word for poor means “beggarly;” the Smyrna Christians were reduced to starvation.
    - (2) They were refused the right to work for food.
  - b. Spiritually, they took literally the admonition to “lay up treasure in Heaven.” Mt. 6:19-21
3. He knew their **persecutors** - “...and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan.”
  - a. Their persecutors “slandered” them. There was an element of the Jews whose intent it was to destroy the church by spreading false accusations (cannibalism, sorcery, etc.) against them to stir up hatred for them.
  - b. Romans 9:6 reveals even although a man is born of the Jewish ethnicity, the distinguishing feature is not his heritage, but his belief. These Jews of the “synagogue of Satan” had forsaken their worship of the True God and had begun worshipping the gods of the people around them.

F. The Stinging Chastening of the Church of Smyrna – THERE IS NONE!

G. The Stern Counsel to the Church of Smyrna (2:10)

1. Jesus promised that the persecution would continue... “shalt suffer.” But that even in the face of death they were to remain strong.
2. Jesus revealed the timing of this persecution. The phrase “ten days” is figurative, referring to ten distinct periods of persecution under Roman rule.
  - a. Nero – 64-68 A.D. – Paul was beheaded under this persecution.
  - b. Domitian – 95-96 A.D. – John the Apostle was banished to Patmos during this persecution.
  - c. Trajan – 104-117 A.D. – Ignatius was martyred during this persecution.
  - d. Marcus Aurelius – 161-180 A.D.
  - e. Servus – 200-211 A.D.

- f. Maximinus – 235-237 A.D.
  - g. Decius – 250-253 A.D.
  - h. Valerian – 257-260 A.D.
  - i. Aurelian – 270-275 A.D.
  - j. Diocletian – 303-313 A.D. (By far the worst of all)
3. Jesus promised to reward the faithful servants with a distinct reward....the Crown of Life.
- H. The Solemn Challenge to the Church of Smyrna (2:11): Jesus promises all overcomers will not be touched of the second death.