

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 Each of these seven churches can be framed with historical reference:

(2:1-7) *Ephesus*- The Apostolic Church (1<sup>st</sup> 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)

#### > The Church of *Smyrna* (2:8-11) – “The Martyr Church” (A.D. 100 - 314)

*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. *Smyrna* will be persecuted and will suffer greatly at the hands of Jews and Romans, yet it will perfume the heavens 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 that 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.

Two of the seven churches listed in Revelation chapters 2 & 3 received no word of condemnation. 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 conquered “*death & came to life*” (John 5:17-29)

(v9a) “*Tribulation*”- literally means “*pressure*” - 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 antisocial.

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

**How To Be Rich in Christ? Eph 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, Eph 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.*

**Eph 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. - John 8:42-59

(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 martyred); Severus—200-211; Maximinius-235-237; Decius—250-253; Valerian—257-260; Aurelian—270-275; Diocletian—303-313 (the worst emperor of all). According to *Foxes Book of Martyrs* over 5 million Christians were killed for their faith and devotion to Jesus Christ!

(v10b) “*Be faithful & receive the crown of life*”- *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*”- Revelation 20:14-15; 21:8

**Jesus gives us hope, strength & comfort in Matt 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."*