

THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST – LETTER TO THE CHURCH IN SMYRNA 2:8-11

OBSERVATION

INTERPRETATION

APPLICATION

Monday 7:30pm, H 106 (1st floor, High School--foot of stairs, behind the gym, by doughnut/vending machine area), Tuesday 7:00am, Family, Room, CCCM – Phil Twente, cell # 714 425 9221; email – ptwente@gmail.com For past studies, audio plus notes, go to: <http://www.missioncalvary.com/> Click on “Bible Studies” on the left column. References include commentaries by Pastor Chuck Smith, Vernon McGee, David Hocking, Warren Wiersby and others.

*Rev 2:8 "And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write, "These things says **the First and the Last,***

who was dead, and came to life:

*Rev 2:9 "**I know your works,***

tribulation, and

poverty (but you are rich);

*and **I know the blasphemy (slander) of those***

who say they are Jews and are not,

but are a synagogue of Satan.

Rev Notice four things about Jesus Christ in this message:
V8. WHO HE IS - 8
V9. WHAT HE KNOWS - 9
V 10. WHAT HE COMMANDS - 10
V 11. WHAT HE PROMISES - 10B-11

V 8. WHO HE IS:

V8a. THE ETERNAL GOD

"the First and the Last" cf. Isaiah 41:4; 44:6; 48:12; Rev. 1:8; 22:13

V8b. **THE RESURRECTED LORD** (how crucial to write to a church who is going through and will go through enormous persecution-the suffering church!)

"who was dead, and came to life" cf. John 11:25-26; 14:19

V 9. WHAT HE KNOWS:

(four things)

V9a. **THEIR WORKS** - "I know your works" Isn't that a wonderful thought to think that He know all that you do!! *cf. Rev. 2:1-Ephesus; Rev. 2:9-Smyrna; Rev. 2:13-Pergamos; 2:19, 23, 26-Thyatira; 3:1, 2-Sardis; 3:8-Philadelphia; 3:15-Laodicea*

V9b. **THEIR TRIBULATION** (this Greek word –*thlipsis*- means pressure from without)- Just rejoice for great is your reward in heaven! - *cf. John 16:33; Phil. 4:14*

V9c. **THEIR POVERTY** (strong term in the original – a beggar/totally destitute) *"but you are rich" You have treasures in heaven! - Cf. Matthew 6:19-21; Ephesians 3:8; James 2:5*

V9d. **THE BLASPHEMY THEY ENDURED** - (slander of others) *Cf. 1 Peter 2:19-23 When Jesus was reviled, He did not revile back! – "leaving us an example"*

1. Their false Claim - *"who say they are Jews, and are not" - cf. Romans 2:28-29*

2. Their true Connection - *"but are a synagogue of Satan" - cf. Eph. 6:12; 1 Peter 5:8-11*

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND: SMYRNA - Romans called it "THE BEAUTY OF ASIA" and "THE CITY OF LIFE AND STRENGTH." 35 miles north of Ephesus, a seaport, beautiful, and still prospering today with over 200,000 people (IZMIR). In 195BC, they erected a temple to the goddess of Rome and supported the Roman Republic. Smyrna became a seat of emperor worship and in 26AD when several cities competed for the honor of building a temple to Emperor Tiberius, Smyrna was given that privilege.

Most famous street – "The Golden Street" – began at the seaside and ran the length of the city to the Acropolis on Mt. Pagus. – First at the sea was a temple to the goddess Cybele, further up – the gorgeous temple of Apollo – further up, was a temple to Aesculapius, the god of healing – beyond which was a beautiful temple to the goddess Aphrodite – next, a monument to Homer and finally the temple to Zeus on the Acropolis. The theater seats more than 20,000.

Alexander the Great and his successors wanted to rebuild Smyrna as the model city, the most beautiful city in the world.

A large colony of Jews lived there with considerable influence upon civic authorities. Years later, Jews joined with Gentiles to form a mob and call for the death of the Bishop Polycarp, a disciple of the Apostle John. Tertullian and Irenaeus say that Polycarp was a Bishop at the time of this letter and that John not only disciplined him, but appointed him to that task.

On February 22, 166 AD, Polycarp was burned at the stake. "86 years have I served Him and He has done me no wrong. How can I blaspheme my King who saved me, who loved me so?—bring on the flames!!" He spoke of serving the Lord for 86 years, which puts him in the church of Smyrna as a young man of 20-30 years when John wrote this letter.

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Rev 2:10 **Do not fear any of those things**

which you are about to suffer.

Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison,

that you may be tested,

and you will have tribulation ten days.

Be faithful until death,

and I will give you the crown of life.

Rev 2:11 "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes **shall not be hurt by the second death.**"

V 10. WHAT HE COMMANDS:

V 10a. As to FEAR

"Do not fear any of those things..." "fear not" 331X – cf. – Mt. 1:20; 10:26,28; 31; 28:5

1. The Prediction of suffering
"which you are about to suffer." – cf. 2 Tim. 3:12 The Bible says that we are going to suffer!

2. The Person behind the persecution of believers – The Devil is behind it!
"Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison" cf. 2 Thessalonians 3:1-3; Revelation 12:10

3. The Purpose of this suffering - God tests that we may be tried, that we may be perfected!
"that you may be tested" Job 23:10; 1 Peter 1:6-7; 5:8-11

4. The Period of suffering
"you will have tribulation ten days" - (three major viewpoints)

a. Ten general persecutions under Rome (but Nero's preceded the date of this message, and the text indicates the "ten days" are future)

b. Ten years of persecution under Emperor Diocletian (303-313 A.D.)

c. A short time - cf. Gen. 24:55; Job 19:3; Dan. 1:12;

V 10b. As to FAITHFULNESS – We cannot read this without thinking of Polycarp's death!

"Be faithful until death" cf. Revelation 6:9 ("martyrs" = "witnesses")
Cf. Hebrews 11:32-40; 12:1-2

V 10C-11. WHAT HE PROMISES

Cf. Romans 8: 18; 2 Cor. 4:17; 2 Timothy 2:12

V 10c. A CROWN that makes it all worthwhile

"and I will give you the crown of life" cf. James 1:12;

V 11. A CONSEQUENCE that will never be faced

"shall not be hurt of the second death" cf. Mt. 10:28; Revelation 20:6, 14-15; 21:8

The name of the city is based on the word "myrrh" which gives off a sweet smell after it has been crushed - the meaning is "bitter" – and used as an allegory, referred to the result of suffering and trials. Balsam herb, spices and medicine from the resin gum used as a drug to relieve pain – cf. Mark 15:23 – used in embalming of Jesus – John 19:38-40.

The first mark of a New Testament church **is love**; the **second mark, is the ability to suffer and endure** - a demonstration of how effective and strong its love for the Lord really is! Jesus said (John 15:18-20): *"if the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hates you...if they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. 1,500 at once were martyred, and later, 800 more on Mt. Pagus – refusing to renounce their faith in Christ. Tertullian, who witnessed many martyrdoms at Rome in his early twenties, wrote these words: "If the Tiber has overflowed its banks, if the Nile has remained in its bed, if the sky has been still, or the earth been in commotion, if death has made its devastations, or famine its afflictions, your cry immediately is, "This is the fault of the Christians."*

Questions: 1. What does “Smyrna” mean? How serious is persecution of Christians today?
2. How many “born again” Christians, who really understand the Scriptures, do you think there are in the USA?
3. Do you think that God wants His children to suffer? (Ps. 119:75; Acts 14:22; 2 Tim. 3:12)
4. Who is more lost – a non-believing Jew who is circumcised or a non-believing Gentile who was baptized as an infant?
5. What are the causes behind your suffering? Can you think of four?
6. What does the term, ten days mean to you? “you will have tribulation ten days.” How is it used in Gen. 24:55; Dan. 1:12;
7. Who and what for is referred to in the Bible, regarding the receiving of the “crown of life”? Is it a martyr’s crown? Is it eternal life?
8. What is the worst consequence that anyone could ever face in this life? (the second what?)
9. How can one be sure that they will never face the worst consequence – question #8?
10. Why was our Lord’s death on the cross so much worse than any of the martyrs?

FAITH OF OUR FATHERS:

□ *Faith of our fathers, living still
 In spite of dungeon, fire and sword,
 O how our hearts beat high with joy
 Whene'er we hear that glorious word!
 Faith of our fathers! holy faith!
 We will be true to thee till death!*

□ *Our fathers, chained in prisons dark,
 Were still in heart and conscience free;
 And blest would be their children's fate,
 If they, like them should die for thee:
 Faith of our fathers! holy faith!
 We will be true to thee till death!*

Source:

<http://www.hymnal.net/hymn.php/h/830#ixzz1rb2yDqyi>

Three days before he was apprehended, as he was praying at night, he fell asleep, and saw in a dream the pillow take fire under his head, and presently consumed. Waking thereupon, he forthwith related the vision to those about him, and prophesied that he should be burnt alive for Christ’s sake. The pursuers having arrived late in the day found him gone to bed in the top room of the house.

Hearing that they were come, he came down, and spoke to them with a cheerful and pleasant countenance: so that they were wonder-struck, who, having never known the man before, now beheld his venerable age and the gravity and composure of his manner, and wondered why they should be so earnest for the apprehension of so old a man. He immediately ordered a table be laid for them, and exhorted them to eat heartily, and begged them to allow him one hour to pray without molestation; which being granted, he rose and began to pray, and was so full of the grace of God, that they who were present and heard his prayers were astonished, and many now felt sorry that so venerable and godly a man should be put to death.

When he was brought to the tribunal, there was a great tumult as soon as it was generally understood that Polycarp was apprehended. The proconsul asked him, if he were Polycarp. When he assented, the former counseled him to deny Christ, saying, ‘Consider thyself, and have pity on thy own great age;’ and many other such-like speeches which they are wont to make. The proconsul then urged him, saying, ‘Swear and I will release thee; – reproach Christ.’

Polycarp answered, ‘Eighty and six years have I served him, and he never once wronged me; how then shall I blaspheme my King, Who hath saved me?’

The proconsul again urged him, ‘Swear by the fortune of Caesar.’

Polycarp replied, ‘Since you still vainly strive to make me swear by the fortune of Caesar, as you express it, affecting ignorance of my real character, hear me frankly declaring what I am — I am a Christian – and if you desire to learn the Christian doctrine, assign me a day, and you shall hear.’

Hereupon the proconsul said, ‘I have wild beasts; and I will expose you to them, unless you repent.’
 ‘Call for them,’ replied Polycarp.

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		<p><u>‘I will tame thee with fire.’</u> said the proconsul, <u>‘since you despise the wild beasts, unless you repent.’</u> Then said Polycarp, <u>‘You threaten me with fire, which burns for an hour, and is soon extinguished; but the fire of the future judgment, and of eternal punishment reserved for the ungodly, you are ignorant of. But why do you delay? Do whatever you please.’</u> The proconsul sent the herald to proclaim thrice in the middle of the Stadium, <u>‘Polycarp hath professed himself a Christian.’</u> Which words were no sooner spoken, but the whole multitude, both of Gentiles and Jews, dwelling at Smyrna, with outrageous fury shouted aloud, <u>‘This is the doctor of Asia, the father of the Christians, and the subverter of our gods, who hath taught many not to sacrifice nor adore.’</u></p> <p>They now called on Philip the asiarch, to let loose a lion against Polycarp. But he refused, alleging that he had closed his exhibition. They then unanimously shouted, that he should be burnt alive. For his vision must needs be accomplished – the vision which he had when he was praying, and saw his pillow burnt. The people immediately gathered wood and other dry matter from the workshops and baths.</p> <p>When they would have fastened him to the stake, he said, <u>‘Leave me as I am; for he who gives me strength to sustain the fire, will enable me also, without your securing me with nails, to remain without flinching in the pile.’</u> Upon which they bound him without nailing him. So he said thus: – <u>‘O Father, I bless thee that thou hast counted me worthy to receive my portion among the martyrs.’</u> As soon as he had uttered the word <u>‘Amen,’</u> the officers lighted the fire. The flame, forming the appearance of an arch, as the sail of a vessel filled with wind, surrounded, as with a wall, the body of the martyr; which was in the midst, not as burning flesh, but as gold and silver refining in the furnace. We received also in our nostrils such a fragrance as proceeds from frankincense or some other precious perfume. At length the wicked people, observing that his body could not be consumed with fire, ordered the confector to approach, and to plunge his sword into his body. Upon this such a quantity of blood gushed out, that the fire was extinguished. (K. Scott, A History of Christianity)</p>
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