

**Do Not Fear**  
**Revelation 2.8-11**  
June 30, 2024

***<sup>8</sup> "And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write: 'The words of the first and the last, who died and came to life.***

***<sup>9</sup> "I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich) and the slander of those who say that they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. <sup>10</sup> Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and for ten days you will have tribulation. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life. <sup>11</sup> He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. The one who conquers will not be hurt by the second death.'***

BACKGROUND TO THE CHURCH IN SMYRNA:

City (modern day Izmir):

- Population: approximately 200,000
- Important seaport, wealthy city
  - Paved streets, library, gymnasium, shrine to Homer
- Designated as a free City (local autonomy and some tax immunity)
- Place of learning, especially in sciences and medicine
- Temples to Cybele (mother goddess), Zeus, Apollo, Asclepius, Aphrodite
- Centre for emperor worship (compulsory under threat of death)

Church:

- Possibly founded by Paul or colleague
- Little known of its inception
- Known for its loyalty to Christ
- Example of Polycarp, having served as Bishop
  - "Eighty and six years I have served Him, and He has done me no wrong." "How then can I blaspheme my King and Savior? You threaten me with a fire that burns for a season, and after a little while is quenched; but you are ignorant of the fire of everlasting punishment that is prepared for the wicked." Polycarp was burned at the stake and pierced with a spear for refusing to burn incense to the Roman emperor. On his farewell, he said: "I bless you, Father, for judging me worthy of this hour, so that in the company of the martyrs I may share the cup of Christ."
  - All he would have had to do is burn a pinch of incense and say, "Caesar is lord."

<sup>8</sup> *"And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write: 'The words of the first and the last,*

- *Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel and his Redeemer, the LORD of hosts: "I am the first and I am the last; besides me there is no god... Isaiah 44.6*

*who died and came to life.*

- *For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit... 1 Pet. 3.18*
- *For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Heb.4.15*

<sup>9</sup> *"I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich) and the slander of those who say that they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan.*

- Tribulation (afflictions): economic hardship, verbal abuse, marginalization for refusal to participate in the idolatrous activities of the community
- Poverty: Possibly from economic sanctions against the, refusal to hire, etc.
  - *Also it causes all, both small and great, both rich and poor, both free and slave, to be marked on the right hand or the forehead, so that no one can buy or sell unless he has the mark, that is, the name of the beast or the number of its name. Rev.13.16-17*
- Slander: comments seeking to cause harm.
  - Desire of Jews to protect granted exemption from cult worship
  - Jealousy of Jews for converts from Jewish community
    - Accused Christians of not worshipping OT God thus removing exemption
    - Of drowning their children (baptism)
    - Of eating flesh (communion)
    - Of being politically disloyal
- Synagogue of satan:
  - Though they identify as Jews their actions of accusing God's people identify them with satan.
    - *You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies. Jn.8.44*
- Important to note: Though materially very poor, Church of Smyrna very rich:
  - *Listen, my beloved brothers, has not God chosen those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom, which he has promised to those who love him? James 2.5*
  - *Quote attributed to Jim Elliot: He is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep in order to gain what he cannot lose.*

<sup>10</sup> Do not fear what you are about to suffer.

- Getting our perspective straight:
  - *"I tell you, my friends, do not fear those who kill the body, and after that have nothing more that they can do. <sup>5</sup> But I will warn you whom to fear: fear him who, after he has killed, has authority to cast into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him!" Lk.12.4-5*
- The words of the first and the last, who died and came to life.
  - Christ remains sovereign of all the Church of Smyrna faces
  - He is the Lord and Giver of life

Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and for ten days you will have tribulation.

- 10 days – limited and brief period of time
- Testing displays the genuineness of our faith:
  - *In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. 1 Pet.1.6-7*
- Testing strengthens/refines our faith in Christ:
  - *Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us. Rom.5.3-5*
- Testing allows us to show our Lord more clearly:
  - *We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. 2 Cor.4.8-10*

Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life.

- *Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. 1 Cor.15.1-2*
- *The saying is trustworthy, for: If we have died with him, we will also live with him; if we endure, we will also reign with him; if we deny him, he also will deny us; if we are faithless, he remains faithful— for he cannot deny himself. 2 Tim.2.11-13*

Note: There is no promised protection from martyrdom!

<sup>11</sup> He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. The one who conquers will not be hurt by the second death.'

*But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death."* Rev.21.8

*Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered." No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. Rom.8.34-37*

#### WHAT ABOUT THE CHURCH TODAY?

*Jesus said to him, "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God." Lk.9.62*

*Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, while evil people and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. 2 Tim.3.12*

*"Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you. Matt.5.11-12*