



The Church of “Smyrna”

“THE PERSECUTED CHURCH”

March 4, 2018

REVELATION 2:8-11 NKJV – (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: (9) “I know your works, tribulation, and poverty (but you are rich); and I know the blasphemy of those who say they are Jews and are not, but *are* a synagogue of Satan. (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. (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.”

Smyrna was situated 60 kilometers north of Ephesus at the present-day port of Izmer, which today is Turkey's second largest city with one of the most important harbors in the region. Smyrna was a large, important city on the western coast of Asia Minor, famed for its schools of medicine and science. Smyrna housed the shrine to the goddess Nemesis and was one of the last cities to fall to Islam.

Acts 19:10 suggests that the church in Smyrna may have been established by Paul on his third missionary journey. In the ancient city of Smyrna, the most expensive homes were on the mountainsides that rose above the bay. This gave it the name "Crown City." We can appreciate the appropriateness of the promise, "be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life...He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death" (**Revelation 2:10-11**).

The wording of the message to the church of Smyrna is: “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: “I know your works, tribulation, and poverty (but you are rich); and I know the blasphemy of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan.

““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.

God told the members of the church at Smyrna that He knew the tribulation and poverty they had suffered. And He also knew there were Jewish pretenders. Regarding this reference to those falsely claiming to be Jews, it appears that these people were the cause of much hardship for the members of the church of Smyrna.

This advice to Smyrna remains valid for us. We, too, must remain faithful in spite of tribulation or poverty. To remain faithful to God, we, like the people of God in Smyrna in the early centuries, will need to resist pressure to reject “the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints” (**Jude 3-4**).

Believe it or not, the persecution of Christians has been a world-wide issue for decades. Christians are having to pay for their faith in many foreign countries. In more than two-thirds of the world it is now dangerous to publicly acknowledge Jesus Christ. Why? ... We are living in a world that hates... We are told in Scripture to love our neighbor as ourselves. We are told even to love our enemies... And hatred is threatening our society today!

SCRIPTURE READING: MATTHEW 5:10

THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK: You are not alone. He sees, He cares, He's there.