

# The Church Facing Persecution

(Revelation 2:8-11)

## Introduction:

1. The second church that is mentioned by the Alpha and the Omega (Revelation 1:8) is Smyrna.
2. Only four verses contain Christ's words to the church at Smyrna, but the words, bring fear, comfort and encouragement.
3. The fear, comfort, and encouragement they bring are not only to the Christians at Smyrna, but those words can bring the same benefit for us today.

## I. The Background of Smyrna

- A. Smyrna, called Izmir today, is located along the Aegean Sea.
- B. Smyrna was a major port city, which made it a great commercial city.
- C. Smyrna was recognized for its educational resources and its many idols.
- D. Smyrna hosted a temple built to Tiberius.
- E. The Greek god Dionysus had a great following there. (*god of wine*)

## II. The Text

- A. "The First and the Last" (Verse 8) – This is a reference to Christ.
  1. (Matthew 27-28; Mark 15-16, Luke 23-24, John 19-20)
- B. Jesus knew the works of the other six churches, and he knew the works at Smyrna.
- C. Jesus knew that they were poor
  1. This poverty may have come through the persecution of the church.
  2. They were rich in Christ (2 Corinthians 8:9; 1 Timothy 6:17)
    - a. (Luke 12:16-21) *Note verse 21.*
    - b. (James 2:5)
- D. Jesus knew about the Synagogue of Satan
  1. This may be a reference to the Jew who persecuted the Christians.
  2. Simply the Jewish opponents of Christianity.
  3. (Romans 2:28-29)
- E. "Do not fear..." (Verse 10)
  1. They are not to fear persecution. (Matthew 5:11-12)
  2. They are not to fear imprisonment. (Acts 16:22-26)
  3. They are not to fear testing. (James 1:2-3)
- F. "...ten days..." (verse 10)
  1. Some believe this meant innumerable persecutions,
  2. Still other think that it may mean a relatively short time.
  3. The fact is they will face tribulation.
- G. "Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life."
  1. Faithfulness until one is dead is a characteristic of many great individuals in the Scriptures:
    - a. Christ (Matthew 27-28; Mark 15-16, Luke 23-24, John 19-20)
    - b. Stephen (Acts 7)
    - c. (Hebrews 11)
  2. To receive our reward (James 1:12) one must abide by the rules (2 Timothy 2:5).
    - a. Our rules (*guidelines*) are contained in the Scriptures. (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

- H. "He who has an ear..."
  - 1. Christ wants these seven churches to listen. He repeats this to every church)
- I. "He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death."
  - 1. Jesus is referring to one who overcomes the evil of this world will not have to face Hell.
  - 2. The second death is the lake of fire (Revelation 20:14).

### III. What About You?

- A. Fire of persecution are valuable (*if not given in to*) (James 1:2-4)
  - 1. (Matthew 5:11-12)
- B. True riches are not material (1 John 2:15-17; Matthew 6:19-21).
- C. Suffering pertains to this life (Revelation 21).
  - 1. (Romans 8:16-18)
- D. Faithfulness to Christ will have its reward (Revelation 2:10).
  - 1. Faithfulness until death will bring the greatest emblem of glory – the crown of life.

#### Conclusion:

- 1. The Smyrna was going to suffer some difficulties.
- 2. You are going to suffer some difficulties in your life. Maybe not to the extent of Smyrna, but you will suffer.
- 3. "Be faithful..."