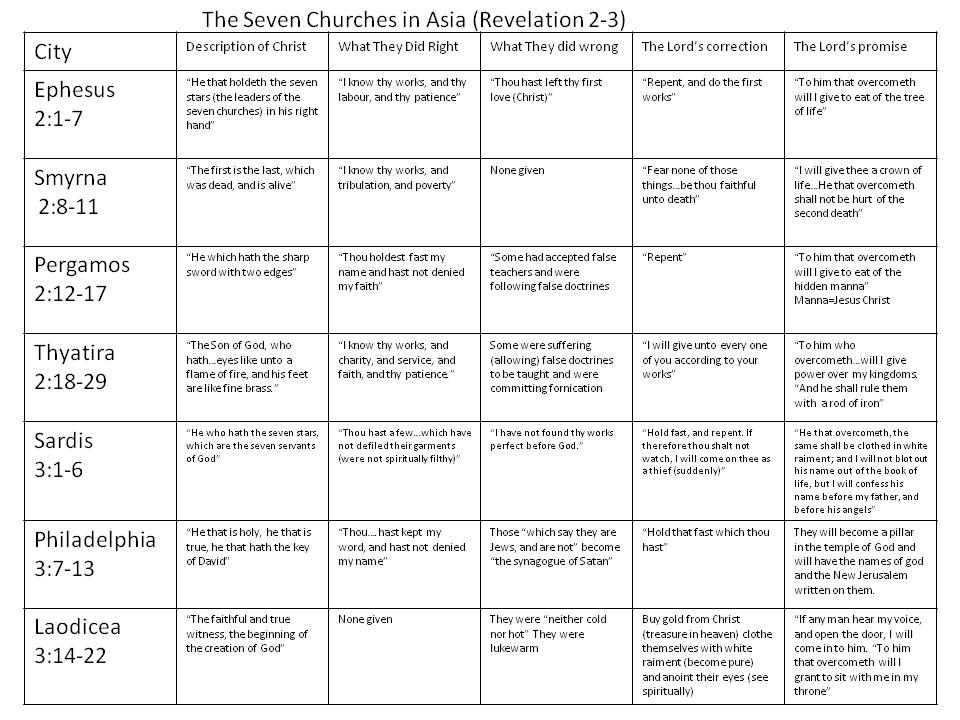
***“Reviewing Revelation”—Chapter 2:8-11, Smyrna (Suffering)***

**By this time we know that the Speaker, introduced by John in Chapter 1, is Jesus, but he introduces himself with a different designation each time: (1) *him who holds the seven stars in his right hand and walks among the seven golden lampstands* (2:1); (2) *him who is the First and the Last, who died and came to life again* (2:8); (3) *him who has the sharp, double-edged sword* (2:12); (4) *the Son of God, whose eyes are like blazing fire and whose feet are like burnished bronze* (2:18); (5) *him who holds the seven spirits of God and the seven stars* (3:1); (6) him who is holy and true, who holds the key of David. What he opens no one can shut, and what he shuts no one can open (3:7); (7) *the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God's creation* (3:14). Smyrna, from the Greek word, “Smurna,” “Mur,” or death. The Hebrew root is translated “myrrh.” Myrrh is a bitter gum and costly perfume which comes from a tree or shrub in Arabia and Ethiopia, obtained by incision made in the bark, and which was the chief export of the city in ancient times.  It is used as an antiseptic or an embalming fluid**. **Each church receives a message composed of seven parts: (1) Name of the Church, (2) Title of Christ as sender, (3) Commendation, (4) Concern, (nevertheless), (5) Exhortation (advice/threat), (6) Promise to overcomer, and (7) Closing: “he that hath an ear”….** Smyrna is the home of Polycarp, an elder in the church, who was martyred because of his faith in the second century. You may recall that when Polycarp was told to renounce Christ he said, "Eighty-six years I have served the Lord, and He never wronged me; how then can I blaspheme my Lord and Savior?" Polycarp's strong faith was typical of the faith of the Christians who were in Smyrna at the time of the writing of the book of Revelation. **The city of Smyrna (today Izmir in Turkey) was located just a little north of the city of Ephesus.  Smyrna was the city of Smyrna was also a seat of the worship of the pagan idols** [**Cybele**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cybele)**, called "the Mother of the gods," and of** [**Dionysus or Bacchus**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dionysus)**. It was also a seat of the worship of the city of Rome with a temple built to worship the goddess** [**Roma**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roma_(mythology)) **in 195 B.C.** [**Emperor worship**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Imperial_cult_(Ancient_Rome)) **was practiced with a temple built to honor the Roman Emperor** [**Tiberius**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tiberius) **in 28 A.D. The church in Smyrna was probably established by the apostle Paul (**[**Acts 19:8-10**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Acts%2019.8-10)**).  It was being severely persecuted at the time this letter was written. Smyrna had a large Jewish population and many of the Jews were hostile toward the church. John Gill makes an interesting statement regarding the meaning of the name Smyrna: Smyrna signifies "myrrh", which being bitter of taste, is expressive of the bitter afflictions, and persecutions, and deaths, the people of God in this interval endured; and yet, as myrrh is of a sweet smell, so were those saints, in their sufferings for Christ, exceeding grateful and well pleasing to him; wherefore nothing is said by way of complaint to this church; not that she was without fault, but it was proper to use her tenderly in her afflicted state. *The churches at Smyrna and Philadelphia are the only congregations of the seven that Jesus addressed that were not condemned for having sin in the congregation.*** *He knew their poverty.* The Christians in Smyrna were poverty stricken because of their stand for the faith. This means they had few material possessions.  It may be that their property had been confiscated ([Hebrews 10:34](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Hebrews%2010.34)).  It is also likely that they were robbed of the ability to work and support their families because they refused to align themselves with either the pagan emperor worshippers or the apostate Jews (cf. [Revelation 13:16-17](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Revelation%2013.16-17)).  **Smyrna** ([Ancient Greek](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ancient_Greek): Σμύρνη or Σμύρνα) was an Ancient Greek city located at a central and strategic point on the [Aegean](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aegean_Sea) coast of [Anatolia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anatolia). This place is known today as [**İzmir**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/%C4%B0zmir), Turkey. Due to its advantageous port conditions, its ease of defense and its good inland connections, Smyrna rose to prominence. Most of the present-day remains of the ancient city date from the Roman era, the majority from after a 2nd-century AD earthquake.

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| **Letters to the 7 \*churches** | **Revelation 2:1-3:22** |
| To the \*church in Ephesus | Revelation 2:1-7 |
| **To the \*church in Smyrna** | **Revelation 2:8-11** |
| To the \*church in Pergamum | Revelation 2:12-17 |
| To the \*church in Thyatira | Revelation 2:18-29 |
| To the \*church in Sardis | Revelation 3:1-6 |
| To the \*church in Philadelphia | Revelation 3:7-13 |
| To the \*church in Laodicea | Revelation 3:14-22 |



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| ***Smyrna***  ***(2:8-11)*** | First and the Last, Who was dead and is alive. | Works, tribulation, poverty. | — | Fear not, be faithful unto death. | — | Will receive the Crown of Life, Will not be hurt of the second death. | The persecuted church of the second and third centuries. |



**The Church of Smyrna—(100-312 A.D.) The Martyred Church. Endure Persecution. Satanic Opposition. 2:8-11, fill in chart. The Suffering Persecuted Church. Greek word with Hebrew root that means “death” or “myrrh.” Used in funeral prep. John 19:39. Myrrh gives off its scent by being “crushed.” Izmir, Turkey is its modern name, and is the 3rd largest city in Turkey; has a good harbor and is a major trading port. There were all kinds of shrines to gods—Zeus, Apollo, Aphrodite, Cybele, Poseidon, etc. The primary deity was Cybele—the giver of wealth, goddesses of fortresses 42 miles north of Ephesus. Modern Smyrna is 60 percent Christian today. Jesus found no fault in this persecuted church. Means “myrrh”….Matthew (Wise Men brought it--Matt. 2:11) and Mark, John—on Cross, at the burial, John 19:39-40. Spiritual strength in persecution. In the Millennium, Jesus is given gifts, minus myrrh, Isaiah 60:6—His death is behind Him. The Smyrna Christian needs the Word of God to “light up.” Non-selfish. Title—first and last, which was dead and is alive—concept of death throughout this persecuted church.**

**Revelation 2:8a, "And unto the angel of the church in Smyrna write;”**

1. **Who is “The Angel?” "**And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write..."  **The word "angel" means "messenger."  Jesus connects stars with the angels in chapter one (**[**Revelation 1:20**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Revelation%201.20)**). Angels and stars are often associated with government and rule (cf.** [**Genesis 37:9**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Genesis%2037.9)**;** [**Judges 5:20**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Judges%205.20)**;** [**Daniel 8:9-11**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Daniel%208.9-11)**;** [**10:13**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Daniel%2010.13)**,** [**20-21**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Daniel%2010.20-21)**). Clearly, Christ holds the angels of the churches responsible for the life and conduct of their respective congregations. It is my opinion that the angel of each church represents the government of each congregation which would be the eldership or the overseers of the church (**[**Acts 14:23**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Acts%2014.23)**;** [**15:2-6**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Acts%2015.2-6)**,** [**22**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Acts%2015.22)**;** [**20:17-31**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Acts%2020.17-31)**;** [**21:8**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Acts%2021.8)**;** [**1 Timothy 3:1-7**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/1%20Timothy%203.1-7)**;** [**5:17-20**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/1%20Timothy%205.17-20)**;** [**Titus 1:5-9**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Titus%201.5-9)**;** [**Philippians 1:1**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Philippians%201.1)**;** [**James 5:14**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/James%205.14)**;**[**1 Peter 5:1-5**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/1%20Peter%205.1-5)**).**
2. In the set-up of the seven letters, the first element is “**(1) Name of the Church.” What is the “name of the church in this section?” Smyrna**
3. **Where is Smyrna**? This was a large, beautiful, and proud city. It was a center of learning and culture, and was proud of its standing as a city. "Smyrna was an outstandingly beautiful city. It claimed to be the 'Glory of Asia.' “Smyrna: This was a *rich* city.” Smyrna was a great trade city . . . Smyrna stood at the end of the road which served the valley of the river Hermus, and all the trade of that valley flowed into its markets and found an outlet through its harbor. It had a specially rich trade in wines. Smyrna, like Ephesus, was a city of wealth and commercial greatness." We also know from history that it was a city deeply committed to idolatry and the worship of the Roman Emperor. On one famous street in Smyrna, called the "Golden Street," stood magnificent temples to Cybele, Apollo, Asklepios, Aphrodite, and a great temple to Zeus - but the worship of those pagan gods was dying out. The real focus was on the worship of the Roman Emperor. In 196 b.c. **Smyrna** built the first temple to *Dea Roma* - the goddess of Rome, the spiritual symbol of the Roman Empire. Once the "spirit" of Rome was worshipped, it wasn't much of a step to worship the dead Emperors of Rome. Then it was only another small step to worship the living Emperors, and then to demand such worship as an evidence of political allegiance and civic pride. In a.d. 23 Smyrna won the privilege (over 11 other cities) to build the first temple to worship the Emperor Tiberius Caesar. Smyrna was a leading city in the Roman cult of Emperor worship. The Roman Emperor Domitian (a.d. 81-96) was the first to *demand* worship under the title "Lord" from the people of the Roman Empire as a test of political loyalty. According to ancient church history, it was under the reign of Domitian that John was banished to the Island of Patmos where he received this vision. "Emperor worship had begun as spontaneous demonstration of gratitude to Rome; but toward the end of the first century, in the days of Domitian, the final step was taken and *Caesar worship became compulsory*. Once a year the Roman citizen must burn a pinch of incense on the altar to the godhead of Caesar; and having done so, he was given a certificate to guarantee that he had performed his religious duty." "All that the Christians had to do was to burn that pinch of incense, say, 'Caesar is Lord,' receive their certificate, and go away and worship as they pleased. But that is precisely what the Christians would not do. They would give no man the name of Lord; that name they would keep for Jesus Christ and Jesus Christ alone. They would not even formally conform."

**Revelation 2:8b, “These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive;”**

1. What is the **“2) Title of Christ as sender?” “The First and the Last, which was dead and is alive.”**
2. **Define “The First and the Last**.” See Revelation 1:11 and 17. Jesus chose this title from His initial appearance to John ([Revelation 1:11](https://www.studylight.org/desk/index.cgi?q1=Revelation+1:11&t1=en_nas), [1](https://www.studylight.org/desk/index.cgi?q1=Revelation+1:1&t1=en_nas):17) to speak of His eternal character.
   1. **The phrase “First and Last” occurs seven times in the Bible. Read Isaiah 41:4, Isaiah 44:6, Isaiah 48:12, and Revelation 1:11, Revelation 1:17-18, Revelation 2:8, Revelation 22:13. Compare, especially when He says, “I was dead and am alive”—in Rev. 1:17-18 and Rev. 2:8 scriptures.**
   2. **See also Isaiah 41:4, 44:6, and 48:12.** **The First and the Last** are titles that belong only to the Lord, Yahweh, according to [Isaiah 41:4](https://www.studylight.org/desk/index.cgi?q1=Isaiah+41:4&t1=en_nas), [44](https://www.studylight.org/desk/index.cgi?q1=Isaiah+41:44&t1=en_nas):6, and 48:12.
3. **Elaborate on the phrase**, “**Who was dead, and came to life**.” Jesus chose this title from His initial appearance to John ([Revelation 1:18](https://www.studylight.org/desk/index.cgi?q1=Revelation+1:18&t1=en_nas)) to remind the Christians in Smyrna that they served the risen Lord, victorious over death. Death could not hold Jesus, and it cannot hold His people.
   1. **What does the word, “Smyrna,” mean?** The association with death - and the victory of resurrection - is throughout this letter. The name *Smyrna* comes from the word *myrrh*, a sweet-smelling perfume used in embalming dead bodies.

**Revelation 2:9, “9I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan.”**

1. **What is the “(3) Commendation” for this letter? I know your works**: Jesus knew the works of the church in Ephesus also ([Revelation 2:2](https://www.studylight.org/desk/index.cgi?q1=Revelation+2:2&t1=en_nas)). In Smyrna, Jesus also knew their **works, tribulation, and poverty**. He knows these hardships both in the sense that He saw what happened to them, and in the sense that He knew their hardships by His personal experience.
   1. **What are “thy works**?” *He knew their "works."* This refers to their way of life - their faithfulness in serving God. In [Matthew 5:16](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Matthew%205.16) Jesus said, **"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven."** The works of the Christians in Smyrna were evidently good works. Their lives glorified the Father. Their persecution was brought about because of their faithful works. On one occasion the Jews picked up rocks to stone Jesus and **"Jesus answered them, 'Many good works I have shown you from My Father. For which of those works do you stone Me?'"** ([John 10:32](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/John%2010.32)). Every work that Jesus did was a good work. And, although the Jews denied it ([John 10:33](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/John%2010.33)), Jesus was persecuted because of His teaching and good works. Paul taught, **"For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them"** ([Ephesians 2:10](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Ephesians%202.10)). The Christians in Smyrna knew that they were created for good works.  In [1 Timothy 5:24-25](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/1%20Timothy%205.24-25) Paul wrote, **Some men's sins are clearly evident, preceding them to judgment, but those of some men follow later. Likewise, the good works of some are clearly evident, and those that are otherwise cannot be hidden.**
   2. **Discuss** **“poverty**.” According to history, Smyrna was a prosperous city. Yet the Christians there were poor. "The word used for 'poverty' is the word for abject poverty. They were not just poor." THEY WERE VERY POOR!
      1. **Refer to persecution of the early Smyrna Christians**. **Use Hebrews 10:34**. The Christians of Smyrna knew **poverty** because they were robbed and fired from jobs in persecution for the gospel. **Early Christians *joyfully accepted the plundering of your goods, knowing that you have an enduring possession for yourselves in heaven*** ([Hebrews 10:34](https://www.studylight.org/desk/index.cgi?q1=Hebrews+10:34&t1=en_nas)). This kind of economic persecution was one important reason why Christians were poor in Smyrna. Even today, this is a common form of persecution against Christians.
   3. **Who are the ones who “say they were Jews?” Refer to John 8:39-44.** Jesus confronted these kinds of Jews as recorded in John 8.  The Jews said to Him, **"'Abraham is our father.' Jesus said to them, 'If you were Abraham's children, you would do the works of Abraham. But now you seek to kill Me, a Man who has told you the truth which I heard from God. Abraham did not do this. You do the deeds of your father.' Then they said to Him, 'We were not born of fornication; we have one Father; God.' Jesus said to them, 'If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and came from God; nor have I come of Myself, but He sent Me. Why do you not understand My speech? Because you are not able to listen to My word. You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it'"** ([John 8:39-44](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/John%208.39-44)).
   4. **Compare the “Poverty but Rich” comment to the Church of Smyrna (in Rev.2:9) to the Laodicea Church, who is “rich but poor”—Rev. 3:17, 2 Cor. 8:9. Are they in direct contrast to each other?**
   5. **What is “blasphemy**?” Jesus knew the abuse these Christians endured at the hands of "religious" men, **those who say they are Jews and are not**. Historically, we are told there was a large and hostile community of Jews in Smyrna,
      1. **Who is a true Jew? Refer to Philippians 3:3.** But this tells us that a *true* Jew is one who trusts God and believes in Jesus Christ ([Philippians 3:3](https://www.studylight.org/desk/index.cgi?q1=Philippians+3:3&t1=en_nas)). Others may be Jews ethnically - which still has its place before God - but they are not Jews spiritually before God.
   6. **Define “rich.”** But you are rich. **Rich**: Every outward circumstance said that the Christians in Smyrna were poor, even destitute, but Jesus saw through the circumstances to see that they were really **rich**. "Sweet smelling Smyrna, the poorest but purest of the seven."
      1. **Contrast the “opposite” commendation/concern of the Laodicea Church with that of Smyrna.** Refer to Revelation 3:17. In contrast, the Christians at Laodicea thought they were rich, but they were really poor ([Revelation 3:17](https://www.studylight.org/desk/index.cgi?q1=Revelation+3:17&t1=en_nas)). Laodicea was a poor rich church. Smyrna was a rich poor church. Better to be a rich poor church than a poor rich church.
      2. **What is the difference in “Material riches” and “spiritual riches?” See Mark 10:23-25**. Are an obstacle to the Kingdom of God, an obstacle that some do not overcome ([Mark 10:23-25](https://www.studylight.org/desk/index.cgi?q1=Mark+10:23-25&t1=en_nas)). There is nothing wrong with having money; the trouble is that money so easily "has" us. Often, material riches are acquired and maintained at the *expense* of true spiritual riches. A story is told of the glory days of the Renaissance Papacy, when a man walked with the Pope and marveled at the splendors and riches of the Vatican. The Pope told him, "We no longer have to say what Peter told the lame man: '*Silver and gold have I none*.' "His companion replied, "But neither can you say, '*rise up and walk*.' "
      3. **The church of Smyrna was rich in leadership. Name some of the early pastors.** The church at Smyrna was also **rich** in leadership. One of the pastors of that church was named Polycarp. He was one of the Apostle John's disciples and served at Smyrna until a.d. 155 when he died heroically as a martyr.
2. **In Verse 9, what is the “Synagogue of Satan?” These are the Judaisers….outward symbols that didn’t change the heart. Legalists. Galatians 2 and 3. Jews always persecuted early Christians. Polycarp may have been the first bishop of Smyrna. John trained Polycarp. Polycarp burned at the stake in 166 A.D., probably over 100 years old by the Jews. These Jews claimed to be children of Abraham, but in reality they were the children of Satan.  These are the Israelites who had rejected Christ and thus had rejected the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.**A better interpretation is that the *synagogue of Satan* consisted of Gentile Christians who had "Judaized," that is, who adopted Jewish ways or even converted to Judaism, perhaps in order to avoid persecution by the Romans (Wilson 1992:613-15). The congregation at Smyrna, unlike the one at Ephesus, was facing persecution, imprisonment for some, even death. The heart of the message was not "repent," but *be faithful, even to the point of death,* and the command was reinforced not by a threat (as in 2:5), but by a promise: *I will give you the crown of life* (v. 10), matching the promises to those who "overcome" in all seven messages (compare v. 11).

**Revelation 2:10, “10Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.”**

1. What is the **(4) Concern, for the Church at Smyrna? NONE**
2. **What is the (5) Exhortation (advice/threat), for the Church of Smyrna? DO NOT FEAR ANYTHING, PRISON. fear**: Literally, this is better translated "stop being afraid." The Christians in Smyrna suffered under persecution, and they were afraid. Sometimes we think that Christians who endure persecution are almost super-human, and we sometimes don't appreciate the depths of **fear** they struggle with. There were **things which** they were **about to suffer**, and Jesus wanted them ready to stand against **those things.** **The devil is about to throw some of you into prison**: Here, Jesus described the nature of the persecution that would come against the Christians in Smyrna. Apparently, they would be imprisoned, and for a specific period of time (**you will have tribulation ten days**).According to Jesus, the persecution about to come against the Christians of Smyrna was from **the devil**. At the same time it was measured and limited by God. Surely, **the devil** wanted to imprison them for a longer time, but God limited the **tribulation** to **ten days**. Being thrown **into prison** was severe persecution. In that day, **prison** was never used to rehabilitate someone, and rarely used to punish someone. Normally, you were thrown **into prison** as you awaited trial and execution. **"For a man to become a Christian anywhere was to become an outlaw. In Smyrna above all places, for a man to enter the Christian Church was literally to take his life in his hands. In Smyrna the church was a place for heroes."**
3. **WHAT DOES TEN DAYS REPRESENT?** **You will have tribulation ten days**: **In verse 10, what does “ten days” mean? Read Gen. 24:55, Job19:3, Dan. 1:12. It could mean a short amount of time, a figure of speech.** 
   1. **Are these years? ten Years--**Some think that Jesus really meant **ten** *years* of persecution. "As the *days* in this book are what is commonly called *prophetic days*, each answering to a *year*, the *ten years* of tribulation may denote *ten years of persecution*; and this was precisely the duration of the persecution under *Diocletian*, during which all the Asiatic Churches were grievously afflicted."
   2. **Others think that Jesus really meant persecution over the reign of ten *Roman Emperors*. Historically there were ten persecutions by Rome: 1. 34-68—Nero, who had Paul beheaded and crucified Peter upside down, 2. 95-96—Domitian, who exiled John to Patmos and boiled him in oil, 3. 104-117—Trajan, who had Ignatius burned at the stake, 4. 161-180—Marcus Aurelius, period of the “Gladiator” movie, Polycarp is burned at the stake, 5. 200-211—Septimus Severus, killed Irenaeus, 6. 235-237—Maximinus, killed Ursula and Hippolytus, 7. 249-251—Decius, 8. 257-260—Valerian, 9. 270-275—Aurelian, 10. 303-323—Diocletian, worst of the bunch. 5,000,000 Christians died during this period.**
   3. Still others take strange and confusing approaches: "Others observe, that in ten days are two hundred and forty hours, which make up the number of years from 85, when the second persecution began, (under which John at this time was) to 325, when all the persecutions ceased."
   4. Others say that **ten days** is simply an expression of speech: "The expression *ten days* is not to be taken literally; it is the normal Greek expression for a short time." (Barclay)
   5. However, there is no compelling reason to believe it means anything other than **ten days** of severe persecution, with an emphasis on the idea that it is a *limited* time.
      1. A few…..Genesis 24:56, ISamuel25:38, Daniel 1:12, 14.
4. **Did God have a purpose for allowing the Devil to persecute the Christians? Use I Peter 1:6-7 and Romans 8:17**. **That you may be tested**: If this attack came from **the devil**, then why couldn't these Christians in Smyrna just rebuke Satan, and stop the attack? Because God had a purpose in their suffering, and so He allowed it. God uses suffering to purify ([1 Peter 1:6-7](https://www.studylight.org/desk/index.cgi?q1=1%20Peter+1:6-7&t1=en_nas)), to make us like Jesus ([Romans 8:17](https://www.studylight.org/desk/index.cgi?q1=Romans+8:17&t1=en_nas)), and to makes us truly witnesses of Him. In all ages, the blood of the martyrs has been seed for the church.
5. **What is the (6) Promise to overcomer? Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life**: What Jesus said to this church is important, but what He *didn't say* is also important. Jesus didn't have a single word of rebuke or correction for the Christians in Smyrna. All He had was the promise of a **crown** - and the encouragement to **be faithful until death**, which is literally "become faithful until death." (Walvoord) **Verse 10, discuss “crown.” Talk about the “crowns” to be rewarded.**
   1. **Crown of Life, James 1:12, Rev. 2:10 (those who have suffered for His sake)** Jesus promised a special **crown** - the **crown of life**. A champion athlete received a crown of leaves, which would soon get brown and die. Jesus' champions receive **the crown of life.**
   2. **Crown of Righteousness, 2 Tim.4:8 (those who loved His appearing)**
   3. **Crown of Glory, I Pet. 5:4 (those who fed the flock)**
   4. **Crown Incorruptible, I Cor. 9:25 (those who press on steadfastly)**
   5. **Crown of Rejoicing I Thess. 2:19 (those who win souls)**
   6. There are two different words for **crown** in the ancient Greek language. One described the kind of crown a *king* would wear,
      1. A crown of royalty. The other kind of **crown** - the *stephanos*, used here - is given as a trophy to a winning athlete. Jesus looks at the Christians of Smyrna, and says to them: "You are My winners. You deserve a trophy." The *stephanos* was also the crown worn at marriages and special celebrations. The picture is of Jesus and His bride, each wearing their crowns.
      2. The promise of a **crown** was especially meaningful for the Christians of Smyrna.
         1. The city of Smyrna had a "crown" of beautiful buildings at the top of Mt. Pagos
         2. In Smyrna, worshippers of pagan gods wore crowns
         3. In that culture, good citizens and winning athletes received crowns.

**11 “He that hath an ear, let him hear** what the Spirit saith unto the churches; He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.”

1. **What is the (7) Closing: “he that hath an ear”…. for the church of Smyrna? He who has an ear**: Though **the Spirit** has something to say to us through every one of **the churches**, this letter to the Christians in Smyrna may apply least of all to modern, western Christians. To this point, we simply don't face the kind of persecution the Christians in Smyrna experienced. Polycarp was a remarkable example of both the persecution and the courage of early Christians. The year after Polycarp returned from Rome, a great persecution came upon the Christians of Smyrna. His congregation urged him to leave the city until the threat blew over. So, believing that God wanted him to be around a few more years, Polycarp left the city and hid out on a farm belonging to some Christian friends. One day on the farm, as he prayed in his room, Polycarp had a vision of his pillow engulfed in flames. He knew what God said to him, and calmly told his companions, "I see that I must be burnt at the stake." Meanwhile, the chief of police issued a warrant for his arrest. They seized one of Polycarp's servants and tortured him until he told them where his master was. Towards evening, the police chief and a band of soldiers came to the old farmhouse. When the soldiers found him, they were embarrassed to see that they had come to arrest such an old, frail man. They reluctantly put him on a donkey and walked him back to the city of Smyrna.On the way to the city, the police chief and other government officials tried to persuade Polycarp to offer a pinch of incense before a statue of Caesar and simply say "Caesar is Lord." That's all he had to do, and he would be off the hook. They pleaded with him to do it, and escape the dreadful penalties. At first Polycarp was silent, but then he calmly gave them his firm answer: no. The police chief was now angry. Annoyed with the old man, he pushed him out of his carriage and onto the hard ground. Polycarp, bruised but resolute, got up and walked the rest of the way to the arena.The horrid games at the arena had already begun in earnest and a large, bloodthirsty mob gathered to see Christians tortured and killed. One Christian named Quintis boldly proclaimed himself a follower of Jesus and said he was willing to be martyred, but when he saw the vicious animals in the arena, he lost courage and agreed to burn the pinch of incense to Caesar as Lord. Another young man named Germanicus didn't back down. He marched out and faced the lions and died an agonizing death for his Lord Jesus. Ten other Christians gave their lives that day, but the mob was unsatisfied. They cried out, "Away with the atheists who do not worship our gods!" To them, Christians were atheists because they did not recognize the traditional gods of Rome and Greece. Finally, the crowd started chanting "Bring out Polycarp." When Polycarp brought his tired body into the arena, he and the other Christians heard a voice from heaven. It said, "Be strong, Polycarp, play the man." As he stood before the proconsul, they tried one more time to get him to renounce Jesus. The proconsul told Polycarp to agree with the crowd and shout out "Away with the atheists!" Polycarp looked sternly at the bloodthirsty mob, waved his hand towards them and said, "Away with those atheists!" The proconsul persisted. "Take the oath and revile Christ and I'll set you free!" Polycarp answered, "For eighty-six years I've served Jesus; how dare I now revile my King?" The proconsul finally gave up, and announced to the crowd the crime of the accused: "Polycarp has confessed that he is a Christian."The crowd shouted, "Let the lions loose!" but the animals had already been put away. The crowd then demanded that Polycarp be burnt. The old man remembered the dream about the burning pillow, and took courage in God. He said to his executioners, "It is well. I fear not the fire that burns for a season and after a while is quenched. Why do you delay? Come, do your will."They arranged a great pile of wood and set up a pole in the middle. As they tied Polycarp to the pole, he prayed: "I thank You that You have graciously thought me worthy of this day and of this hour, that I may receive a portion in the number of the martyrs, in the cup of Your Christ." After he prayed and gave thanks to God, they set the wood ablaze. A great wall of flame shot up to the sky, but it never touched Polycarp. God set a hedge of protection between him and the fire. Seeing that he would not burn, the executioner, in a furious rage, stabbed the old man with a long spear. Immediately, streams of blood gushed from his body and seemed to extinguish the fire. When this happened, witnesses said they saw a dove fly up from the smoke into heaven. At the very same moment, a church leader in Rome named Iraenus, said he heard God say to him, "Polycarp is dead." God called his servant home.
2. **Here is your Daniel Connection to the Church of Smyrna. Read Daniel 11:38—**god of fortresses. Perhaps this is an illusion to the same god. The primary deity was Cybele—the giver of wealth, goddesses of fortresses. May be alluded to of the antichrist and who he worships. This was the primary deity of worship for the Smyrna folks.
3. **What is the (6) Promise to overcomer?** who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death.
   1. **Use John 16:33.** We might say that we overcome by our close association with Jesus, who is the ultimate overcomer. As Jesus said, *in the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world* ([John 16:33](https://www.studylight.org/desk/index.cgi?q1=John+16:33&t1=en_nas)).
   2. **See Revelation 20:14 and 21:8. Shall not be hurt by the second death**: Those who overcome in Jesus will never **be hurt by the second death**. The **second death** is hell, the lake of fire ([Revelation 20:14](https://www.studylight.org/desk/index.cgi?q1=Revelation+20:14&t1=en_nas) and 21:8). Though Satan threatened and attacked their life, Jesus promises His overcomers that death is conquered for them. "The *second death* was a Jewish rabbinic expression for the *total extinction of the utterly wicked*." (Barclay)
   3. **Refer to Revelation 2:11 and 20:6.** The faithful Christian who overcomes opposition and endures unto death **"shall not be hurt by the second death."'** ([Revelation 2:11](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Revelation%202.11)).  The fact that this was written to a first century church helps us understand the meaning of another passage in this book. [Revelation 20:6](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Revelation%2020.6) states, **Blessed and holy *is* he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.** The one who will not be hurt by the second death is the one who has part in the first resurrection, and they are priests of God and Christ, a blessing that John has already stated to be a present reality ([Revelation 1:6](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Revelation%201.6)).  Therefore, the first resurrection cannot refer to the physical resurrection at the end of the world ([1 Corinthians 15:22-28](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/1%20Corinthians%2015.22-28)). Rather, it must refer to what Paul was speaking of in [Colossians 3:1-3](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Colossians%203.1-3):"If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, and sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God." Paul tells us that the Colossians were "raised with Christ."  As a result they were to "seek those things which are above where Christ is..." He tells them that "you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God."  There is a death and resurrection in every Christians' life. When does this death and resurrection take place? Look at [Romans 6:1-4](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Romans%206.1-4). "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."
4. **What is the (7) Closing: “he that hath an ear”…. See 2 Peter 1:21 and 2 Timothy 3:16-17. Jesus says,** "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."  **To hear what the Spirit says is to listen to the words that were revealed to John by the Holy Spirit. This indicates that John was inspired by the Holy Spirit (**[**2 Peter 1:21**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/2%20Peter%201.21)**;** [**2 Timothy 3:16-17**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/2%20Timothy%203.16-17)**).**
5. **What is the “take away” from Jesus’ letter to Smyrna?** In the message to Smyrna, the *angel* is a "conquering" angel, and the Christians there a whole assembly of "conquerors."

https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/5/55/WMA_button2b.png/17px-WMA_button2b.png WikiMiniAtlas

The archaic city ("Old Smyrna") contained a temple of [Athena](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Athena) from the 7th century BC.

[](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Map_of_Lydia_ancient_times-en.svg)

Map of Smyrna and other cities within the [Lydian Empire](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lydian_Empire).

[Alexander the Great](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alexander_the_Great) conceived the idea of restoring the Greek city in a scheme that was, according to [Strabo](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Strabo), actually carried out under Antigonus (316—301 BC) and Lysimachus (301 BC—281 BC), who enlarged and fortified the city. **The ruined acropolis of the ancient city, the "crown of Smyrna", had been on a steep peak about 380 meters (1,250 ft.) high**, which overhangs the northeast extremity of the gulf. Modern İzmir was constructed atop the later [Hellenistic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hellenistic) city, partly on the slopes of a rounded hill the Greeks called *Pagos* near the southeast end of the gulf, and partly on the low ground between the hill and the sea.

[](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Seven_churches_of_asia.svg)

Map of *Western Anatolia* showing the "[Seven Churches of Asia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seven_Churches_of_Asia)" and the Greek island of [Patmos](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Patmos).

**Additional Info**: Polycrates reports a succession of bishops including Polycarp of Smyrna, as well as others in nearby cities such as [Melito](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Melito) of Sardis. Related to that time the German historian W. Bauer wrote: In the late 2nd century, [Irenaeus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Irenaeus) also noted: Polycarp also was not only instructed by apostles, and conversed with many who had seen Christ, but was also, by apostles in Asia, appointed bishop of the Church in Smyrna…always taught the things which he had learned from the apostles, and which the Church has handed down, and which alone are true. To these things all the Asiatic Churches testify, as do also those men who have succeeded Polycarp.[[13]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Smyrna#cite_note-13)

In any case, the first three cities (Ephesus, Smyrna and Pergamum) were rivals for power and prestige. Smyrna (the modern Izmir) laid claim on its coins to being the "first city of Asia in size and beauty" (Ramsay 1904:255), and it was indeed a city of great natural beauty.

There is no record of how Christianity came to Smyrna. Like the other Asian cities, Smyrna was probably reached as a result of Paul's ministry in Ephesus (compare Acts 19:10). The message to Smyrna accents the contrast between the Roman city and the congregation of Christians who lived there. If the city was rich (as Apollonius implies), the Christian community was poor, yet had its own kind of riches (v. 9). If the city was crowned "with porticoes and pictures, or even with gold in excess of what they needed," the angel of the church in Smyrna was promised *the crown of life* (v. 10), or (in the words of another New Testament writer) the crown consisting of the "life that God has promised to those who love him" (Jas 1:12). By the early second century (a decade or two after John's visions), the congregation at Smyrna had a pastor or bishop named Polycarp. Ignatius of Antioch wrote letters, which still exist, to both Polycarp and his congregation. Polycarp himself wrote a letter to the Philippian Christians in Macedonia and (according to an account in the *Martyrdom of Polycarp*) was martyred in Smyrna in the year 156. Nowhere were the words *be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life,* more aptly fulfilled than in the life and death of Polycarp.

It is true that many Jews in Smyrna were deeply hostile to Christianity, at least by the mid-second century, and eagerly joined with the Romans in consigning Polycarp to the flames (*Martyrdom of Polycarp* 11.2; 12.1). Still, when the message to Smyrna speaks of *those who say they are Jews and are not* (v. 9), it is safer to take the words literally. Do we really want to put John (much less the risen Jesus) in the position of claiming that when a Jew calls himself a Jew, he is lying? Even the fine art of name calling requires fair play!

***And, here are the promises:***

**Revelation 2:7b, “To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.”**

**Revelation 2:11, “He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.”**