

## CHAPTERS TWO AND THREE – SEVEN LETTERS TO SEVEN CHURCHES

### THE LETTER TO THE CHURCH OF SMYRNA – REVELATION 2:8-11

The passage here in Revelation 2:8-11 is the second of \_\_\_\_\_ letters written to the key churches of Asia Minor. This particular epistle is to the church of Smyrna (signified by their appearance before God in heaven – *the angel*). Its scriptural value is threefold:

- 1) Historical – Written to the actual church in Smyrna around 91-96 AD...
- 2) Doctrinal – Details the events and circumstances taking place during the church age around 200 AD thru 325 AD...
- 3) Devotional – Contains commendations, exhortations and praises that can apply to various churches at \_\_\_\_\_ times in history...(including those blood-washed assemblies of believers saved during the tribulation as seen in verse 11)

As we study today's text let's keep our focus personal and allow God to speak to our heart, convicting each of us in the way we ought to go, in order to walk closer with Christ according to the \_\_\_\_\_ of the word and words of God.

#### The name Smyrna means:

Myrrh; by contrast it is associated with both *beauty* and \_\_\_\_\_ with \_\_\_\_\_ - Although *Amyrrh* is a costly perfume made from the bitter gum of a middle-eastern tree, it was also associated with death as it was used for embalming purposes. Smyrna is therefore connected with *beauty, bitterness* and *death*.

#### The commendation – Revelation 2:9, 10

- It was hard \_\_\_\_\_ – “*I know thy works*”
- It was \_\_\_\_\_ – “*and tribulation...*” “*Fear 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*”
- It was \_\_\_\_\_ – “*and poverty, (but thou art rich)...*” “*be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life*”

-Christ values this dedication to him – He encourages this church by reminding them that He is “*the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive*” – verse 8

-There are five crowns or rewards revealed in the Bible that can be earned by the faithful servants of Jesus Christ:

- 1) Crown of Righteousness – 2 Timothy 4:8 – Given to those who love the appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ
- 2) Incorruptible Crown – 1 Corinthians 9:25 – Given for temperance or moderation in all things of life
- 3) Crown of Rejoicing – 1 Thessalonians 2:19 – The soul winner's crown...
- 4) Crown of Glory – 1 Peter 5:4 – The shepherd's crown given to those who pastor people in the Word of God
- 5) Crown of Life – Revelation 2:10; James 1:12 – The martyr's crown, also given to those who endure temptation by dying to self

**The condemnation** – There is \_\_\_\_\_ condemnation given to the church at Smyrna

- But there is a condemnation given to another group of Smyrna's citizens - *I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan* – verse 9

Blasphemy – is an injury offered to God, by denying that which is due and belonging to him, or attributing to him that which is \_\_\_\_\_ agreeable to his nature.

Synagogue of Satan – The synagogue was an assembly of Jews that met for the purpose of \_\_\_\_\_ and Bible \_\_\_\_\_. The synagogue of Satan was a term used to identify the blasphemous assembly of those who, knowingly or unknowingly, worship the devil and teach his counterfeit doctrines.

**Historically** – 91 AD – 96 AD

- On the outside, the city of Smyrna (modern day Emir, Turkey) was \_\_\_\_\_; it was called the “glory of Asia” because of its awesome landscape, ornate temples, planned development with thriving commerce, and ideal harbor.
- On the inside, the city was teeming with false religions, idol worship, mother goddess worship (Roma), Caesar worship and all kinds of immoral, unrighteous activity. Its citizens were intolerant of true Bible Christianity; they \_\_\_\_\_ persecuted and put to \_\_\_\_\_ all born again saints whose lives were in direct opposition to the vile religious culture.
- There was a large \_\_\_\_\_ population in Smyrna that bitterly blasphemed Christ as “the hanged one” and vehemently opposed true Bible Christianity. Believers were turned over to local Roman magistrates for severe punishment – they were betrayed by local “delatores” (informers), most of whom were Jews. (Polycarp would later be turned over and martyred in Smyrna around 155 AD).
- The believers in Smyrna were \_\_\_\_\_ able to prosper financially – for them gainful employment was scarce; this was due to their love for Christ and open opposition to the city’s mainstream religions and the decadent behavior of its populace.
- Smyrna was a dangerous place for all faithful born again believers...the letter from John would have encouraged them to persevere for Jesus Christ.

The New Unger’s Bible Handbook – revised by Gary Larsen; The IVP Bible Background Commentary – by Craig S. Keener

**Doctrinally** – 175/200 AD – 325 AD

- The Smyrna Church period takes place during the time of pagan Rome; it is the time of the \_\_\_\_\_ official Roman persecutions directed toward anyone even called Christian. (See vs. 10 - notice what God calls Rome at this time in history – the \_\_\_\_\_).

- 1) Under Nero - 67 AD
- 2) Under Domitian - 81 AD
- 3) Under Trajan - 108 AD
- 4) Under Marcus Aurelius Antoninus - 162 AD
- 5) Commencing with Severus - 192 AD
- 6) Under Maximus - 235 AD
- 7) Under Decius - 249 AD
- 8) Under Valerian - 257 AD
- 9) Under Aurelian - 274 AD
- 10) Under Diocletian - 303 AD

- This period ends in 325 AD with the Council of Nicaea. It is commonly referred to by church historians as the time of the “Ante-Nicene Church Fathers.”
- The Smyrna time was by contrast a \_\_\_\_\_ church period full growth and gospel propagation, yet a time of horrific persecution, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_...

*But, though persecuting malice raged, yet the gospel shone with resplendent brightness; and firm as an impregnable rock, withstood the attacks of its boisterous enemies with success. Tertullian, who lived in this age, informs us that if the Christians had collectively withdrawn themselves from the Roman territories, the empire would have been greatly depopulated.*

*Fox=s Book of Martyrs,*

- The main bodies of men leading the church at this time are referred to as the Ante-Nicene Church Fathers; some of the key players are: Origen, Cyprian, Hippolytus, Clement, Athanasius, and Didymus. Because the leaders began to deviate from sound words during the previous Ephesus period, leaders during the Smyrna period make additional \_\_\_\_\_ errors:
  - 1) The corrupt teaching that God is \_\_\_\_\_ with the Jews:
    - Because the Christian is a spiritual Jew (Ro. 2; Gal 3...) He is also now a physical Jew...
    - Therefore, all the promises in the Bible given to the Jews are now ours...
    - And because of that, God is all finished with the Jew.
    - The Christian has \_\_\_\_\_ the Jew.
    - The church has \_\_\_\_\_ Israel.
    - The kingdom of God (spiritual) and the kingdom of heaven (physical) are the same...
    - God calls this satanic and blasphemous: *And I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan - Revelation 2:9*
    - Through God=s Word we learn that this will be one of the fundamental doctrines upon which Satan will build his counterfeit \_\_\_\_\_, referred to in vs. 9 as the “synagogue of Satan” – Acts 19:37
  - 2) A doctrinal error concerning the millennial reign of Christ:
    - What they believed about the Jew effected what they believed about the millennium (Rev. 20:1-7).
    - There are three categories you end up in depending on what you believe about the Jew:
      - #1 \_\_\_\_\_ -Millennial  
A pre-millennialist believes Christ will return BEFORE the 1000 year reign begins.
      - #2 \_\_\_\_\_ -Millennial  
A post-millennialist believes Christ will return AFTER the 1000 year period has already begun.
      - #3 \_\_\_\_\_ -Millennial  
An a-millennialist believes Christ is NOT coming back to reign for 1000 years.
    - Note: Misplacing the Jew will cause you to believe #s 2 or 3 – See Proverbs 22:28; 23:10
  - 3) Other \_\_\_\_\_ doctrines develop when you lose sight of the Jew:
    - Baptismal regeneration
    - Apostolic sign gifts (I.E. Healing by the laying on of hands; speaking in *unknown* tongues, etc.)
    - No eternal \_\_\_\_\_
- The Ephesus Period brought about deviations from the Word of God and introduced philosophy and Gnosticism into Christianity. These corrupt practices combined were the foundation of false teachings in the Smyrna period. Satan now has all the false doctrine he needs to develop his counterfeit religious system through the \_\_\_\_\_ Empire.

**Devotionally** – The influences of this church period press upon us in our present time, our church, and our individual life

- We will \_\_\_\_\_ for Christ when we stand against things opposed to the Bible. Our suffering will only be for a time, tribulation will pass; it will be worth it all...
- Christians must \_\_\_\_\_ discount Israel nor take the promises that God gave to the Jew – Ro. 11:25
- We must know our history:
  - If you can separate people from their history, you can convince them of anything – Karl Marx*
- We must not let the devil sidetrack us into \_\_\_\_\_ time –
  - Redeeming the time, because the days are evil – Ephesians 5:16*