

# Letter to the Church in Smyrna

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Text: Revelation 2:8-11

This is the second in a series of lessons on the seven churches of Asia addressed in Revelation 2-3. Through John, Jesus sent a letter to each church, which He also shared with the others and with us as well. The letters described challenges they were facing, what they were doing well, what they needed to correct, and more. In studying these seven letters, every church can find encouragement and/or warnings that apply to them. We will notice these are we go through our study.

## About the City of Smyrna

- Important trade city (like Ephesus) – this led to it being a wealthy city
- Emphasis on Caesar worship – this would make it difficult for Christians who refused to participate
- Large Jewish population – often instigated persecution against Christians (cf. Acts 17:5-8)
- This is the only time the city or church is mentioned in the New Testament

## Letter to the Church

- Description of Jesus – first and last (v. 8; cf. Isaiah 44:6 – no God beside Him), eternal (cf. Revelation 1:7); was dead, but came to life (v. 8), giving us hope (1 Corinthians 15:20); this would be especially encouraging for those facing persecution
- Current circumstances – tribulation (v. 9); poverty (v. 9; cf. Hebrews 10:34 – similar reason?), unlike other citizens; faced persecution from the Jews (v. 9); more persecution was coming (v. 9)
- Commendations – “you are rich” (v. 9), spiritually; they were faithful to the Lord
- Condemnations – none; one of two churches that received no rebuke from the Lord
- Punishment for sin – none mentioned because no sin was addressed
- Reward for faithfulness – crown of life (v. 10; cf. 2 Timothy 4:8); would not be hurt by second death (v. 11), which was eternal punishment (Revelation 20:14-15; 21:8)

## Main Lesson

- Tribulations are temporary – they were going to face persecution, and it was undeserved; it appears that it was unavoidable; this would lead to imprisonment and even death, but it would be over soon (ten days is not literal, but represents a short period of time); they needed to remain faithful no matter what happened and not abandon the Lord at the end
- This is the lesson for us today – we must be willing to face persecution (1 Peter 4:12-13, 16); we also need to act in such a way that persecution is undeserved (1 Peter

4:15; 2:12, 20); whatever suffering we have to endure is momentary and light (2 Corinthians 4:17); even if we lose our lives, we have hope through the resurrection of Christ (1 Peter 1:3-4)

## **Conclusion**

- We will face tribulations in this life, just as the church in Smyrna did – however, no matter how difficult they might be, they are only temporary
- Let us remain focused on the reward – stay faithful until death, even if persecution brings death