

Introduction:

- In Revelation 1-3, there are 34 majestic terms used of Jesus to describe Him. You will also find 22 rewards mentioned in chapters 2-3 to those who overcome. All 56 of these things are to encourage the church/bride in her relationship with her Groom, Jesus!
- *"And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write: 'The words of the first and the last, who died and came to life. 'I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich) and the slander of those who say that they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and for ten days you will have tribulation. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. The one who conquers will not be hurt by the second death.'"* (Revelation 2:8-11, ESV)
- In the letters to the seven churches, Jesus is speaking to the church. Note: he is walking among the churches and in the letters He is speaking to them. It is not seven messages (It is a book to the 7 churches) to seven churches it is a message to seven churches, preparing the Church for the events that are about to unfold at the end of the age.
- To the church in Smyrna he is 'shooting straight'... you are about to suffer some more. vs 10 He calls them to be faithful. Be faithful in the midst of pressure. I want you to be faithful! How long? Until you die!
- He is calling the church to be fearless and faithful. Resist fear and embrace the grace for faithfulness.

I. Jesus Walks In Smyrna

- A. Smyrna was a large harbor city on the Aegean Sea (west coast of modern Turkey). Today it is called Izmir. It is the only city of the seven mentioned that still exists today. In the Ancient world, it was called the Crown of Asia or the Flower of Asia because of the beauty of the city. It was a prosperous and major economic center.
- B. Everyone was required to worship at the pagan temple—Zeus and Cybele (mother of all gods). Emperor worship was a unifying factor in the Roman Empire.
 1. Everyone was required once a year to burn incense on the altar for Caesar. If you did not you were considered a criminal.
 2. On top of that pressure the Jewish population actively persecuted the church by turning Christians in to the authorities. Rev. 2:9 "...*They say they are Jews, but are not.*"
 3. *"These men have upset the world . . . and act contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king Jesus"* (Acts 17:6-7).

II. Jesus Revealed in Smyrna - Things are better than they seem!

- A. Again, we are drawn back to Revelation 1 where Jesus is described/revealed by 18

clear declarations of who He is. The Book is called the Revelation of Jesus. It is all about Jesus. End time events are mixed into that but Jesus is the focus of the book!

1. In Revelation 1:12-20 we see His glory and in the seven letters we see Jesus revealing Himself again to His church.
 2. There is a reason for all of this. He is looking for vessels that will reflect his glory in a time when the world is growing progressively dark under an antichrist system.
- B. Jesus takes a couple of the facets of His glory revealed in chapter one and He applies it to the unique circumstances of the church of Smyrna. (See also 1:17,18.)
1. First and Last. *“And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write: ‘The words of the first and the last, who died and came to life.’* (Revelation 2:8, ESV) In the verse Jesus reveals himself! (See also 1:17,18.)
 - a) We will need the words in this verse as persecution arises in the America before the coming of the Lord.
 - b) First and last is used seven times (Is 41:4; 44:6; 48:12; Rev 1:8, 17; 2:8; 22:13)
 - c) We will receive the glory of God and strength from this passage when we tap into the revelation of Jesus in it. HE IS THE FIRST!! THE SOURCE OF ALL BLESSINGS!
 - (1) They were losing everything: money, dignity, business, property, etc.
 - (2) Verse 8a: Christ is the first and the last. Christ will have the last word. This is what nullifies all slander. In the end there will only be truth. Christ, and not slander, will be last.
 - (3) Jesus is saying, ‘I am the First and Last’ to remind them that He holds all things in His hand and if they will hold on and be faithful under pressure—consistently they will be amazed at what is restored. He alone knows the end of the story.
 2. I was dead but came to life!
 - a) This is a declaration to the persecuted church of Smyrna saying, “When I died, I suffered through the pain of what you are going through.” It hurt me like it hurts you. I understand! He is saying, I know the pain of the process of death. I will not forsake you—I went through it and I came out in victory—I know the way through death!
 - b) When He says He came to life He reveals that there is no demonic force, or physical power that can constrain and hold Him back. NONE. And none for the person who submits to Him.
- C. I know your tribulation (pressure)—powerfully states that I know you! The word ‘know’—Greek.— To see, perceive, understand. The implications are hugely intimate. He knows what we feel and that we know He feels.
1. He knows pain in tribulations—He knows! He is not just aware. I know the pressure you are under. When He says that He means He really does know.

2. He knows their poverty—their losses because of the faith and obedience. Persecution was causing them to lose wealth but He sees.
 - a) *"But recall the former days in which, after you were illuminated, you endured a great struggle with sufferings: partly while you were made a spectacle both by reproaches and tribulations, and partly while you became companions of those who were so treated; for you had compassion on me in my chains, and joyfully accepted the plundering of your goods, knowing that you have a better and an enduring possession for yourselves in heaven.* Hebrews 10:32-34 NKJV
3. Rev 2:9: You are rich. Even in poverty. Even in prison. Even in death. You are rich. Blessed are the meek for they will inherit the earth. *"If you are children of God, then you are heirs, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ . . . the sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that is about to be revealed to us"* (Ro 8:15-18). You are rich!
4. He knows those who say they are Jews but are not. Jesus is aware of the pressure that the 'brethren' are putting upon them.
 - a) Synagogue of Satan is simply those who actively persecute the church.
 - (1) *You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do.* John 8:44 NKJV
 - (2) *whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the age to come.* Matthew 12:32 NKJV

III. Jesus Has No Correction For Smyrna

- A. Smyrna is one of two churches that receive no correction. (Philadelphia) There was no rebuke because in pressure they remain faithful. In trials they remained pure in belief and behavior.
- B. It is also interesting to note that those who received no correction were also those cities that had a synagogue of Satan.
- C. The pressure of this synagogue of Satan actually produced zeal and purity in the Smyrnan church. Pressure with a godly response that is consistent to the end is rewarding!

IV. Jesus Affirms Smyrna

- A. Do not fear. The command to live free from fear has the promise of enabling to be able to do it.
 1. *"Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and for ten days you will have tribulation. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life."* (Revelation 2:10, ESV)
 2. *"If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of*

glory and of God rests upon you." (1 Peter 4:14, ESV)

- B. Be forewarned. The devil is about to throw some of you into prison that you may be tested. He was preparing them.
1. *"I have said all these things to you to keep you from falling away. They will put you out of the synagogues. Indeed, the hour is coming when whoever kills you will think he is offering service to God. And they will do these things because they have not known the Father, nor me. But I have said these things to you, that when their hour comes you may remember that I told them to you. I did not say these things to you from the beginning, because I was with you."* (John 16:1-4, ESV)
 2. He does not want them to be offended because of what is taking place. It is during trouble that the devil whispers in your ear, "God has forgotten you." Matthew 24:10
- C. Glory and trouble are coming. This is a major message of revelation. Glory and trouble are both coming. Mt 13:30–Wheat and tares growing together.
1. Be faithful unto death. Yikes! The Hope is this: that He was dead and is alive! He journeyed through death. vs. 11 the one who conquers will not be hurt by the second death.
 2. What is the best way to remain faithful? Have a clear picture of Jesus, the One who died for you, the One who overcame death and grave!
- D. When you overcome you receive:
1. Crown of life–Rev 2:10-11. This is not the same as the gift of eternal life that all born again believers receive. There is a specific reward for overcoming persecution.
 - a) *"So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison,"* (2 Corinthians 4:16-17, ESV)
 2. Shall not be hurt by second death.
 - a) The second death is eternal separation from God. Remain faithful!

Conclusion: He who has an ear let him hear.

- Things are better than they seem!
 1. Christ has the last word!
 2. Christ is alive forevermore and so am I!
 3. Christ knows your pain, not just know about it.
 4. I am rich with the riches of Christ.
 5. I will receive from him the crown of life.
 6. He will not let me be hurt by the second death.