

Calendar

No Wednesday Night Studies

the month of July.

(5th, 12th, 19th, 26th)

Revelation

Chapter 2

The Church at Smyrna

Smyrna

Church One: Ephesus (Desired)

Church Two: **Smyrna**

Implies suffering

Revelation 2:8

“And to the angel of the church
in **Smyrna** write:

The **first and the last, who was
dead, and has come to life, says
this:**

The Persecuted Church

Data attributed to the late researcher David Barrett puts the number of Christians martyred since the time of Jesus at 70 million.

It puts the number of Christians exterminated in Nazi Germany at a million,

The Persecuted Church

while the number of Orthodox Christians and others murdered in Russia between 1917 and 1950 at 15 million.

In China, at least 200,000 Christians and foreigners were killed in the Boxer Rebellion of 1898 to 1900.

The Persecuted Church

Another 700,000 were killed in communist China between 1950 and 1980.

300,000 Christians are believed to have been killed under Idi Amin in Uganda between 1971 and 1979.

The Persecuted Church

Estimates of the number of Christians killed annually for their faith today differ massively. Todd Johnson, of the Center for the Study of Global Christianity, puts the number of Christians martyred annually at 100,000.

The Guardian Newspaper

Persecution of Christians 'coming close to genocide' in Middle East

the overwhelming majority (80%) of persecuted religious believers are Christians”.

The Persecuted Church

Acts 8:1 - Now Saul approved of putting Stephen to death. And on that day a *great persecution began against the church* in Jerusalem, and they were all *scattered throughout the regions* of Judea and Samaria, except for the apostles.

The Persecuted Church

Acts 8:4 - Therefore, those who had been scattered went through *places* preaching the word.

The Persecuted Church

John 16:33 - These things I have spoken to you so that in Me you may have peace. In *the world* you have *tribulation*, but take courage; I have overcome the world.”

The original Greek word for “world” in this verse is *kosmos* and it is referring to this evil world system as it is organized and controlled by Satan. He is the *prince of the power of the air*. The reason we are guaranteed to have pressure or testing in this world is because we are not OF this world system. We have been translated out of this kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light. That's why later in His Upper Room discourse as Jesus prayed to the Father in John 17:14:

John 17:14 - I have given them
Your word; and the world has
hated them because they are not of
the world, just as I am not of the
world.

The Persecuted Church

Philippians 3:10 - that I may know
Him and the power of His
resurrection and *the fellowship of
His sufferings*, being conformed to
His death;

The Persecuted Church

Colossians 1:24 - Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am *supplementing* [ἀνταναπληρῶ] what is *lacking in Christ's afflictions* in behalf of His body, *which is the church*.

How Did Jesus Suffer

- 1) **As** a man – fulfilled all righteousness
- 2) **For** man – completed work
- 3) **From** man – to be continued

What's Lacking

'In me behold the love of God, as I sacrifice to come to you and preach to you, and risk my life and imprisonment to preach the gospel.'

2 Corinthians 1:1-11

For just as the sufferings of Christ are ours in abundance, so also our comfort is abundant through Christ.

The Persecuted Church

Smyrna: the Persecuted Church
(100 A.D – 313 A.D.)

Revelation 2:8

“And to the angel of the church in
Smyrna write:

The **first and the last**, who was dead,
and has come to life, says this:

“First and the Last”

The “**First and the Last**” speaks of His eternal character and is a title that only belongs to Yahweh: Isa 41:4; Isa 44:6; Isa 48:12. Therefore, Jesus is declaring Himself to be God.

“First and the Last”

Jesus concludes the Bible by using the same title of Himself in **Revelation 22:13**,
““Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense with me, to repay each one for what he has done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, **the first and the last**, the beginning and the end.”

Myrrh

MYRRH (Heb. *Mor*) one of the most important perfumes of ancient times. It is referred to 11 times in the Bible, more than any other perfume.

Myrrh

The Hebrew, *mor*, refers to its bitter taste (*mar*, "bitter"); the root is common to the various Semitic languages, from where it was transferred to Greek Μύρρα and Latin *myrrha*.

Myrrh

first mentioned along with the ingredients from which the holy anointing oil in the Tabernacle was prepared ([Ex. 30:23–25](#)), where it is called mor deror, i.e., myrrh congealed to form granules (deror from dar, "pearl") and then dissolved in olive oil.

Myrrh

The king's garments were perfumed with myrrh (Ps. 45:9) and the faithless wife perfumed her couch with it when she wanted to seduce men (Prov. 7:17). The maidens were treated with it for six months before being presented to Ahasuerus (Esther 2:12). In Song of Songs myrrh is mentioned seven times.

Myrrh

Myrrh is extracted from certain trees or shrubs growing in Africa or in the Arabian peninsula: *Commiphora abyssinica*.

These plants contain a fragrant sap under the bark like the sap of the acacia , from which gum arabic is prepared

Myrrh

Myrrh is interpreted by the rabbis spiritually as referring to Moses and Aaron (priesthood) or to Abraham (the Father): myrrh, the prince of spices, is Abraham who offered his son Isaac on Mt. Moriah (connecting "*mor*" with "Moriah").

Myrrh

They also connected it with Mordecai whose name was explained to mean *mor-dakhya*: "pure myrrh". The *mor over*, "flowering myrrh," of the Song of Songs alludes to Israel's troubles which will pass.

Isaiah 60:6

“A multitude of camels will cover you,
The young camels of Midian
and Ephah; All those from Sheba will
come; They will bring gold and
frankincense (but no Myrrh???),
And will bear good news of the praises
of the LORD.

The Magi

Myrrh: death (prophet)

Frankincense: Priesthood

Gold: Royalty (King)

Acts 7:52

Matt. 23:31-37

The City of Smyrna

Ancient Smyrna (now called Izmir) is the third largest city in modern day Turkey (ancient Asia Minor)

Istanbul 14,804,116

Ankara 3,517,182

Izmir 2,500,603

The City of Smyrna

It exports tobacco, grapes, figs, cotton, olives, and olive oil. Smyrna possesses an excellent harbor adjacent to the European continent.



TURKEY

- PERGAMOS
- THYATIRE
- SARDIS
- PHILADELPHIA
- SMYRNA
- EPHESUS
- LAODICEA

- Edirne
- Istanbul
- Gebze
- Kocaeli (Izmit)
- Sakarya (Adapazarı)
- Bursa
- Ereğli
- Samsun
- Çorum
- Sivas
- Kayseri
- Konya
- Kahramanmaraş
- Adana
- İçel (Mersin)
- Gaziantep
- Malatya
- Elazığ
- Şanlıurfa
- Antioch
- Iskenderun

The Seven Churches of Revelation



Macedonia

Galatia

Greece

Asia Minor

Corinth

Antioch

Patmos

Pergamum

Thyatira

Sardis

Smyrna

Philadelphia

Ephesus

Laodicea

Cyprus

Byblos

Sidon

Tyre

Nazareth

Mediterranean Sea

Jerusalem

Bethlehem

Alexandria

Crete

For what it's worth

Smyrna: inhabited in about 3000 B.C. with a *Hittite influence*. During the period around 900 B.C. the poet Homer was born, lived and died in Smyrna. In the 4th century, Alexander the Great, in response to a dream, ordered Lysimachus, one of his four generals, to rebuild the city he formerly destroyed.

The City of Smyrna

Came under control of the Romans in 27 B.C.

27 B.C. -- 324 A.D. enjoyed great material prosperity.

Strabo described it as the most beautiful city in the world.

About 40 miles north of Ephesus with a double harbor.

A hub of Armenian and Greek culture for many years.

A commercial and cultural hub of Asia Minor until the destruction of the city in 1922 at the hands of the Turks.



The City of Smyrna

Christian church with a bishop (Polycarp) existed here from the very early days of Christianity.

Saint Ignatius of Antioch visited Smyrna and later wrote letters to Polycarp. A mob consisting of Jews and pagans martyred Polycarp in AD 153. Saint Irenaeus was a native of Smyrna.

Pagan Influences

Altar of Zeus, the father of the gods (Satan)
Shrines of Apollo the sun-god, Aphrodite
(goddess of love), Aesculapius the god of
medicine, Cybele the Phrygian nature
goddess.

At the Agora were statues of Poseidon the
sea-god, and Demeter the goddess of corn.

Revelation 2:9

‘I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich), and the blasphemy by those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan.

Tribulation: thlipsis (pressure)

First Persecution Brought On by Jews

Early persecution was brought on by the Jews not the Romans – Judaizers

Antioch Acts 13:50

Iconium Acts 14:2,5

Lystra Acts 14:19

Thessalonica Acts 17:5

Judaizers

Another “works righteousness system”

Conversion to “Christianity” first meant conversion to “Judaism”.

Ephesus = continue Apostleship

Smyrna = continue the priesthood

Judaizers

Both systems later merged into a system built to conquer the laity (Nicolaitans), complex system or rituals, superstitions, ordinances, sacrifices, penances.

Poverty

Abject poverty - not just poor – they were as beggars.” Not quite a “prosperity gospel”?

The Christians of Smyrna knew **poverty** because they were kicked out of the local trade guilds which meant the loss of their jobs and livelihood. This happened not only because they shared the gospel but because they would not compromise and declare Caesar as Lord.

Poverty

In the “**Great Tribulation**” people will not be able to buy or sell – to take part in the financial system of the day unless they swear allegiance to the “Beast” – the False Christ.

Poverty

2 Cor. 6:10 – “having nothing yet
possessing all things”

An ‘eternal perspective’

Say They Are Jews

Ephesus: those who say they are
apostles but are not

Smyrna: those who say they are
Jews but are not

Say They Are Jews

Replacement/Covenant Theology

We are the true people of the
Covenant

“This cup is the new covenant in
my blood”, Jesus said.

Roman Persecution

In 23 A.D. 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*.

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

“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.” (William Barclay)

Revelation 2:10

Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, so that you will be tested, and you will have tribulation for **ten days**.

'10 Days'

10 Days": used as a limited time of testing

Genesis 24:55 – Before Rebekah could leave her household and marry Isaac

1 Samuel 25:38 – Nabal sifted for ten days then judged by the Lord (death)

Jeremiah 42:7 – time testing on people of Judah before God answers.

'10 Days'

Daniel 1:12, 14 – dietary test for Daniel, Hannaniah, Azariah, Misheal in Nebuchanezzars court

There will be suffering but it is (1) known to God and (2) is limited by God's divine

Ten historical periods of persecution under future Roman Emperors

- 54-68 Nero (Paul beheaded; Peter crucified upside-down)
- 95-96 Domitian (John exiled)
- 104-117 Trajan (Ignatius burned at the stake)
- 161-180 Marcus Aurelius (Polycarp martyred)
- 200-211 Septimus Severus (killed Irenaeus)
- 235-237 Maximinus (killed Ursula and Hippolytus)
- 249-251 Decius
- 257-260 Valerian
- 270-275 Aurelian
- 303-313 Diocletian (Worst of all) 10 total 250 years!

Roman Persecution

- Famine and pestilence falls on Rome. Diseases brought back from the Parthian wars devastated much of Rome. Flooding from the Tiber put much of the grain storehouses under water.
- The Christians were a convenient scapegoat. These disasters were brought on by this new religion, so Christianity became a crime...
- 5 million believers died for Christ during this period...Fox's Book of Martyrs.

“Crown of Life”

‘Stephanos’ - not diadem. Diadem = a King. Stephanos: the winner of an athletic contest – the victors crown. In Smyrna the priests of the various deities were termed stephanophori, in reference to the laurel or golden crowns which they used to wear in public processions. They were awarded this honor at the end of their year of office. Believer’s at the ‘Bema Seat’

“Crowns” Rewards for work – Bema Seat Judgment

- Crown of Life (Jas 1:12; Rev 2:10) for those who have suffered for His sake.
- Crown of Righteousness (2 Tim 4:8) for those who loved His appearing.
- Crown of Glory (1 Pet 5:4) for those who fed the flock.

“Crowns” Rewards for work – Bema Seat Judgment

- Crown Incorruptible (1 Cor 9:25) for those who press on steadfastly.
- Crown of Rejoicing (1 Thess 2:19) for those who win souls.

Bema Seat Judgment

1 Corinthians 3:1-17

Revelation 2:11

He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes will not be hurt by the **second death.**'

Why Do Christians Have Trials

1. To glorify God (Dan 3:16-18, 24-25)
2. To Discipline for known sin (Heb 12:5-11; James 4:17 Rom 14:23; 1 John 1:9)
3. To prevent us from falling into sin (1 Pet 4:1-2)
4. To keep us from Pride (2 Cor 12:7-10) Paul's "thorn in the flesh.
5. To build faith (1 Pet 1:6-7 6).

Why Do Christians Have Trials

6. To cause growth (Rom 5:3-5 7).
7. To teach obedience and discipline (Acts 9:15-16; Phil 4:11-13)
8. To equip us to comfort others (2 Cor 1:3-4 9).
9. To prove the reality of Christ in us (2 Cor 4:7-11)
10. For testimony to the angels (Job 1:8; Eph 3:8-11; 1 Pet 1:12)

Romans 8:18

For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

2 Corinthians 6:9-10

Four Levels of Application

1. Local: Actual churches in John's day with
The actual problems described
2. Universal (correction): “to the churches”
3. Personal (homiletic): 'he that hath an ear”
4. Prophetic: lays out church history

Seven Letters - Structure

1. Name of the church
2. Title Jesus Uses
3. Commendation – what’s good
4. Concern – what’s bad
5. Exhortation – what to do
6. Promise to the Overcomer - unique
7. “He that hath an ear, let him hear”

Name of Church	Title of Christ	Represents	Commendation (Good News)	Condemnation (Bad News)	Exhortation (what to correct)	Promise to the Overcomer	The Closing
Ephesus (Desired One)	Jesus as High-priest	Apostolic (Pentecost-100 AD)	Works, patience, righteousness	Left first love	Repent/turn from it	Eat from Tree of Life	“He who hath an ear”
Smyrna (myrrh-death)	The eternal one	Persecuted (100-313 AD)	I know your works, persecution, poverty	none	remain faithful	no second death	
Pergamos (mixed marriage)	Bringer of truth	Unequally yoked (314-590 AD)	Kept the faith	Doctrine of Balaam and Nicolaitans	Repent/turn from it	Eat hidden manna, white stone, new name	
Thyatira (Continual labor/sacrifice)	The Judge	Medieval Church (590-1517 AD)	Good works, love, service, faith, patience	will go into tribulation	Repent/turn from it	Power over nations, rule with Christ	
Sardis (remnant)	Omniscient One	Reformation Church (1517-1700)	None	You are dead	Be watchful, strengthen, repent	Name not blotted out, confess before my Father	
Philadelphia (Brotherly Love)	Holy and true One	Missionary Church (1700-1900 AD)	Openly confess the Word and the Incarnation	none	None/hold fast	pillar in temple, new name, kept from tribulation	
Laodoea (Rule of the People)	Faithful and true witness	End-times Church (1900-today)	None	Lukewarm, wretched, naked, poor, blind	Be zealous, repent	Sit with me on my throne	