

The Church in Smyrna

Revelation 2:8-11

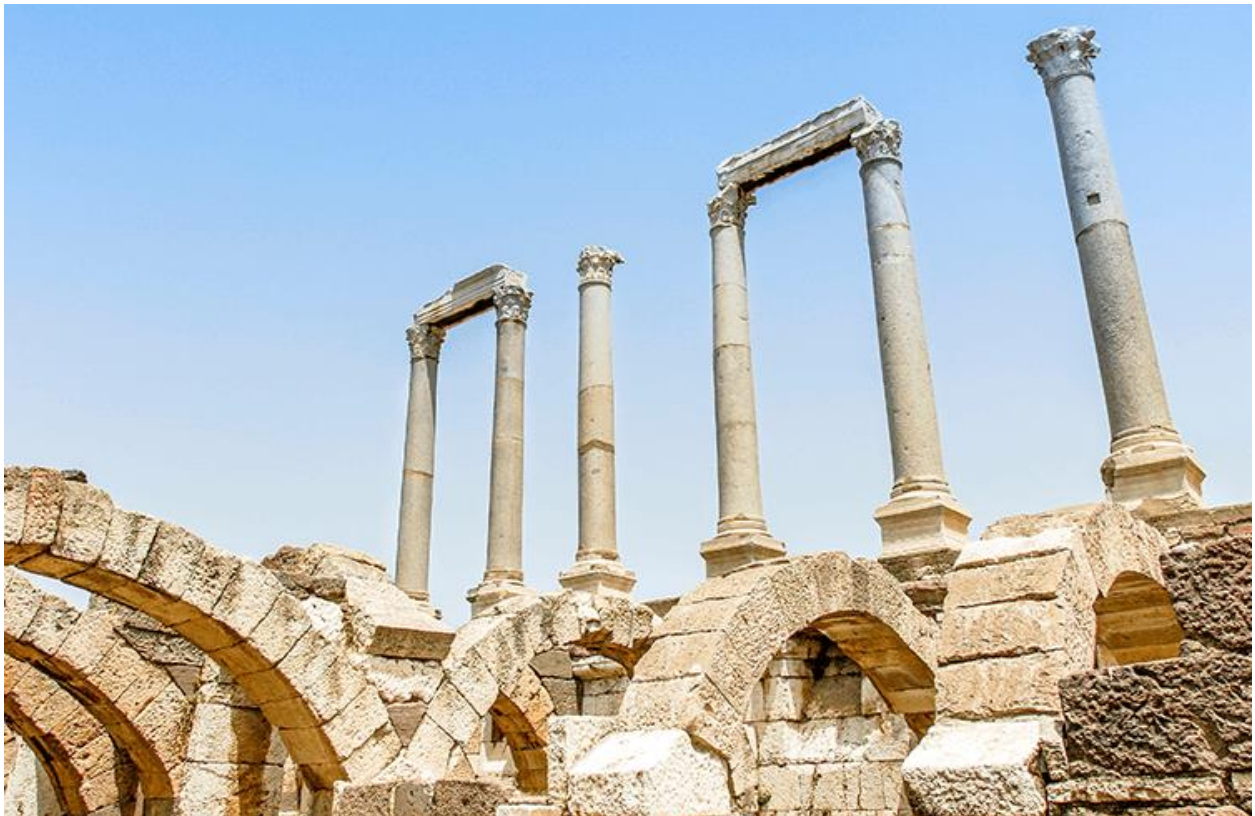
[8](#) To the angel of the church in Smyrna write:

These are the words of the First and the Last, who died and returned to life.

9 I know your affliction and your poverty—though you are rich! And I am aware of the slander of those who falsely claim to be Jews, but are in fact a synagogue of Satan.

10 Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Look, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison to test you, and you will suffer tribulation for ten days. Be faithful even unto death, and I will give you the crown of life.

11 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. The one who overcomes will not be harmed by the second death.



Introduction:

We came across the Church in Ephesus last week. Let us look at the church of Smyrna this week. The ancient town Smyrna is now called Izmir founded by the Greeks but later taken over by Romans. Alexander the Great had rebuilt this city; a hilltop kadifakele or velvet castle that overlooks the city. The current population is about 4 million. It is the third most populated city in Turkey next to Istanbul and Ankara. Poet Homer, who wrote the famous Illiad and Odyssey was probably a native of Smyrna.

Smyrna remained intensely loyal to Rome for at least 3 centuries, and it was a center for emperor worship. During Roman Emperor Domitian's reign, (AD 81-96) emperor worship became compulsory for every Roman citizen or penalty of death. Horrible suffering for the cause of Christ became part of Smyrna's history. Polycarp, a bishop of the church in Smyrna who once studied with John, refused to offer sacrifice to the Roman emperor and was burned alive. He was quite old at that time, and the Roman authorities who were familiar with his good works, begged him to renounce Christ and escape execution. Polycarp replied, **"86 years have I served Christ, He has done me no wrong. How can I blaspheme my King and my Savior?"** He did die as a martyr.

The Church of Smyrna is all about Christian suffering and persecution. Pay attention to what our Lord Jesus had to say to this suffering church which was facing a severe blood path of martyrdom! You could apply these verses to Pakistan, China, India, and Middle Eastern churches.

The first point Jesus makes is that:

1. Jesus is the first and the last!

Revelation 2:8 To the Church in Smyrna

[8](#) To the angel of the church in Smyrna writes:

These are the words of the First and the Last, who died and returned to life.

Jesus is the first and the last. He was there before anything; He will always be there even if everything around Him vanishes. He will never be gone. As He told Moses, **"I am that I am!"** He was always there; He is always there, and

He will always be there! The earthly emperors will be like grass here today and gone tomorrow! But our Lord will always be there to shepherd us! So, we should not be afraid of the people persecuting us. Also, Jesus Himself laid down His life for our sins and rose again on the third day for our justification and redemption. He will carry us even through death, and beyond that, and grant us our eternal living with Him in His heavenly home! Yea, I walk through the valley of the shadow of evil, I shall fear no evil for He is with me always. He will never leave nor forsake us! How comforting is His Word!

2. Jesus knows everything about our life! Revelation 2:9

[9](#) I know your affliction and your poverty—though you are rich! And I am aware of the slander of those who falsely claim to be Jews but are a synagogue of Satan.

Jesus is watching us closely. He has those eyes of flames, and nothing escapes His eyes. His eyes are even on sparrows. Nothing falls to the ground without His permission! He understands what is going on in your life. He wants you to go through those trials and suffering and come out as purified gold. Suffering brings us closer to God. 1 Peter is a great book in the Bible, and it tells us in detail that we come out as glowing stars through those sufferings. So, take your suffering as an opportunity to grow in the Lord, not as a curse. If our Lord bore the marks of the cross, why do we try to avoid them? Face head-on and go through those sufferings in the name of Christ.

For some reason, the saints in the church of Smyrna were poor! Is it because of discrimination from the Jews or the Romans? Or were they all slaves? No one knows! But they were all very rich in Christ. They must have been filled by the Spirit and blessed with many spiritual gifts! Their faith was extraordinary!

The Jews were the informants of the Romans, and they were encouraging persecution among the Christians. The Romans had exempted the Jews from the emperor worship, but they did not give that exemption to Christians! So, Jews may have instigated the persecution by making Romans go against Christians. Jesus calls those Jews “a synagogue of Satan”.

3. All who follow Jesus will suffer persecution! Revelation 2:10

[10](#) Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Look, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison to test you, and you will suffer tribulation for ten days. Be faithful even unto death, and I will give you the crown of life.

Jesus foretold this church how they were going to suffer! Will they throw some of them in prison!

Suffer tribulation for “10 days”? No one knows what this means. We could take it literally and interpret that they would suffer for 10 actual days. Or it could just mean that they would suffer for some days! Or it may stand for 10 different times of suffering.

It does not matter what it is, we must be faithful to Him until death comes to us, and Jesus will crown us with eternal life.

Fourth, Jesus promises eternal life for those who overcome!

4. The one who overcomes will receive eternal life! Revelation 2:11

[11](#) He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. The one who overcomes will not be harmed by the second death.

The prophesy of God is only for those people who want to hear. Those who don't care to pay attention to it, they can go their way, but they will head toward destruction!

Conclusion/Summary

1. Jesus is the eternal Son of God, the first and the last!
2. Jesus knows what you are going through in your life!
3. We cannot escape suffering!
4. The one who overcomes will receive eternal life!

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