



UNDERSTANDING  
THE BOOK OF  
REVELATION

# Revelation 2

## Letter to the Church In Smyrna (Revelation 2:8-11)

- This letter is the shortest of the seven.
- It abounds in beauty.
  - It contains...
    - Words of praise...
    - Words of prophecy...
    - Words of promise.

- The name Smyrna means "myrrh."
- It is a very fitting name because myrrh is a perfume, the fragrance of which is released by crushing.

· **Smyrna was a seat  
of emperor-worship  
with a  
temple to Tiberius.**

**The city was a seat of  
the worship of  
Cybele the Mother of  
the gods, and of  
Dionysus or Bacchus.**

(VWS)

- Smyrna had erected a temple to Roma,  
the goddess of Rome,  
as far back as 195 BC.

- Having a temple to the emperor  
was a matter of great pride  
to the city of Smyrna.

# Emperor Domitian

(81-96 a.d.)

was the first to demand  
worship under the title  
"Lord" from the people of  
the

Roman Empire as a  
test of political loyalty.

**"Emperor worship  
began as a  
spontaneous demonstration of  
gratitude to Rome;  
• but toward the end  
of the first century,  
in the days of Domitian,  
the final step was taken  
and Caesar worship  
became compulsory.**

*(Barclay)*

**" Once a year  
the Roman citizen must burn  
a pinch of incense  
on the altar to  
the godhead of Caesar;  
and having done so,  
he was given a certificate  
to guarantee that  
he had performed  
his religious duty."**

*(William Barclay's Daily Study Bible)*

**Refusal by any citizen of  
the city to pay tribute in  
that temple was seen as  
a disgraceful lack of  
patriotism.**

- To receive a certificate to conduct business, you were required to burn incense on an altar to Caesar once a year.
- The Jews had received an exemption,
- But the Christians had not.

# Smyrna:

**The persecuted church  
which receives  
no word of blame**

**2:8 And to the angel of  
the church in Smyrna  
write...**

**John was the writer...**

**But the words he wrote were  
the words of Christ.**

**2: 8b “These things saith  
the first and the last”**

• The “Alpha and the Omega”

• The author and finisher  
of our faith.

(Hebrews 12:2)

- **All letters to the 7 churches begin with a reference to some of the attributes of the Saviour,**
- **To make a deep impression so as to have a special application to each particular church.**

• To the church at Ephesus

Rev\_2:1

• Reminding them

that he who speaks to them

“holds the seven stars

in his right hand,

and walks in the midst of the

seven golden candlesticks”;

· To the church at  
Smyrna Rev 2:8,

it is He who

“is the first and the last,  
who was dead  
and is alive”;

· **To the church at**  
**Pergamos,**

• It is **He**

**“which hath**  
**the sharp sword**  
**with the two edges”**

**Rev\_2:1**

· To the church at Thyatira, it is “the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet like fine brass”; Rev\_2:18

· To the church at Sardis, it is he who  
“hath the seven  
Spirits of God, and  
the seven stars” Rev 3:1

- **To the church at Philadelphia,**

- **It is**

**“he that is holy,  
he that is true,”;**

**Rev\_3:7**

- **To the church at Philadelphia,**

- **It is “he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth and no man shutteth, and shutteth and no man openeth”;** **Rev 3:7**

• **To the church at Laodicea**

**Rev\_3:14,**

• **It is he who is the**

**“Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God.”**

- These introductions are followed with the words,

- “I know thy works.”

Of two of the churches  
He expresses his approval

Smyrna

Rev\_2:9,

- Philadelphia

Rev\_3:10,

- **To the churches of:**

**Sardis**

**Rev\_3:3,**

- **Laodicea**

**Rev\_3:15-18,**

- **He administers a rebuke.**

- **To the churches of:**
  - Ephesus,
  - Pergamos
  - Thyatira
- He intermingles praise and rebuke,
- For he saw much to commend,
- And some to condemn.

- In all cases the approval precedes the blame;
- Showing that he was more disposed to find what was good than what was evil.

## Joel 2:13

**The LORD your God:**

- **for he *is* gracious and merciful,**
- **slow to anger,**
- **and of great kindness,...**

- **There follows in each case**  
**counsel, advice,**  
**admonition, or promises.**

- **As circumstances**  
**demande**.

- **There is a solemn admonition to hear what the Spirit has to say to the churches.**

- **“He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches”**

- **What was addressed to one church would be equally applicable to all churches.**

• 2:8c Who was dead  
and lived again

• In this little expression  
is the sum total  
of the gospel.

• The death and  
resurrection

are the two great divisions  
of the work of  
the Lord Jesus  
on our behalf.

(1 Corinthians 15:1-4)

- Christ died to live again.
- You will die to live again.
- What a fine thought to encourage a people who were to be called upon to die for their faith.

· That He who is  
beyond the reach  
of death  
might give them  
encouragement.

**Though they were called  
to undergo the  
bitterest deaths  
for his sake,  
They should be raised again  
as he was, and  
live with him for ever.**

# • Words of Praise

• 2:9 I know thy tribulation, and  
thy poverty {G\_4432}  
(but thou art rich),

• and the blasphemy of them that  
say they are Jews, and they are  
not, but are a synagogue of  
Satan.

· **This is the  
first mention  
of the devil  
in the book of  
Revelation.**

- They were commended for their heroic endurance.
- Smyrna was a suffering church.
  - Against whom no word of reproach was spoken.
  - Had these saints been refined by suffering?

- **Where there is spiritual plenty,**
- **Outward poverty  
may be better  
endured.**

- **2:9** Tells us that these Christians were in poverty {G\_4432} yet were rich.

- Without that certificate it was very hard to find work.

- There are two Greek words for poverty:
- One that means destitution
  - Another that means having nothing extra.
- The one used here means destitution.

- **Two Degrees of Poverty**  
are recognized  
in the New Testament.
- The **Old Testament** does not  
distinguish between them  
as clearly as does the  
New Testament.

· **The New Testament,**  
**for example,**  
**by its use of**  
**two words**  
**for "poor"**  
**sets forth this distinction.**

- “Penes”

G\_3993 {pennies}

not extreme poverty,  
but simply a condition of  
living from hand to mouth,

- “Ptochoi”

G\_4434 -- (pto-khos’)

a condition is indicated  
of abject beggary, pauperism

(ISBE)

- In 2Cor 9:9,  
"he hath given to the poor,"  
the word used is "penes,"  
which does not indicate  
extreme poverty,
- Down to their last penny  
widow who cast her two mites  
into the treasury  
(Luke 21:2);

- Without that certificate mentioned earlier it would be almost impossible to find work.

- Might this be the “mark of the beast” that John is referencing in his Revelation letter? (Rev.16:2)

- The next Greek work used to indicate poverty is

**ptochoi** (pto-khos')

{**G\_4434**}

- Denoting a condition of

**abject beggary**

such as that in which we find

**Lazarus**

• **who was laid at the gate of the rich man's palace, begging even the crumbs which fell from the table of the rich man (Luke 16:20-<sub>51</sub>**

- **Remember the words of the Apostle Paul to Corinth:**

- **2 Corinthians 6:10 (ASV)**

••• **sorrowful, yet always rejoicing;**  
**as poor {G\_4434},**  
**yet making many rich;**  
**as having nothing,**  
**and [*yet*] *possessing all things.***

- Who are the Jews that are not really Jews in 2:9?

- We find similar descriptions elsewhere.

**In John 8:39 Jesus  
told some Jews that  
they were not truly  
Abraham's  
children.**

**In Romans 2:28–29**

**Paul explained**

**that to be a true Jew**

**one must believe in**

**Jesus Christ.**

- **Very strong language**  
is used in **verse 9**

• **“I know the blasphemy of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan.”**

• **Synagogue of Satan?**

• Who was the **mean-spirited**,  
**divisive**, **unloving**, **hatemonger**  
who came up with that phrase?

• **Oh!** What do you know?

It was **Jesus**.

And this was **not the first time**  
he had used this description.

We have become  
a generation of Christians  
**afraid to rock the boat.**

Christians of John's generation were  
much more interested in  
**pulling perishing people**  
**into the boat**  
than they were about  
not rocking that boat!

- **Listen to what he said to the Jewish leaders in**

**John 8:44**

- **You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do.**

• **It doesn't sound much like Jesus thought the Jewish leaders were just on another path to God.**

• **But that message does not go over very well in today's modern world.**

· **But if one can  
be saved  
apart from  
the blood of Christ,  
then Christ  
died in vain.**

**• What does that tell us  
about the God  
revealed to us in scripture?**

**• What kind of God  
would he be if  
he sent his son  
to suffer and die  
for no reason?**

· **There is only**  
**one way to God**  
**and we do no one**  
**any favors when we**  
**teach or suggest**  
**otherwise.**

## 1 John 2:22-23

Who is a liar but he who denies that Jesus is the

Christ? He is antichrist who

denies the Father and the Son.

Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father either.

- 1 Corinthians 3:11

**For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.**

- Acts 4:12

**Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.**

- **John 14:6**

**“I am the way,  
the truth, and the life.”**

- **No one comes  
to the Father  
except through Me.”**

- The phrase

**“synagogue of Satan”**

is strong, but it was fitting.

- The **Jews** of that day stirred up a lot of trouble for the early Christians.

- There is more anti-semitism in the world that we need.

- But in Smyrna it was the other way around.

- When it comes to salvation the Gospel of Jesus Christ divides people into only two groups:
  - Those in Christ.  
(Found 78 times)
  - Those out of Christ.  
(Eph 2:12 “no hope”)

•Smyrna's tribulation came in two forms:

•**1<sup>st</sup>** in the spoiling  
of their goods.

•The ruthless hand of persecution  
had reduced them  
to dire poverty.

(**Hebrews10:24**)

• Although they had lost their material possessions, they retained their spiritual wealth:

• For the Savior said, “Thou art rich.”

- **2<sup>nd</sup>** Smyrna was commended for its endurance.
- The saints in Smyrna must have been godly in life, Or they would not have drawn such opposition.

- **Rev 2:9 I know .... the blasphemy of them that say they are Jews, and they art not, but are a synagogue of Satan.**
  - **As surely as Christ has a church in the world,**
  - **So the devil has his temple.**

# Words of Prophecy in Verse 10.

**2:10 Fear not the things which thou art about to suffer: behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days.**

- **Trials and tribulations were to come.**
- **They were not out of the fire yet.**

- He forewarns them of future trials:
- The devil shall cast some of you into prison, and you shall have tribulation,  
Rev 2:10.

- They had been impoverished by their tribulations before;
- Now they must be imprisoned.

- **In store for them were the pain and shame of imprisonment**
  - **Perhaps death itself.**
- **But they were to face these things with calm courage,  
trusting in the  
mighty arm of the Lord.**

• The author of these things was “the devil,”

• “the accuser of our brethren.”

(Revelation 10:12)

**The Lord acknowledges  
that he who is the  
First and the Last  
is going to allow  
this to happen.**

- The duration of the persecution would be

“ten days,”

- A short period  
of time.

• Rev 2:10

• TEN DAYS.

Remember the

KEY

to understanding Revelation

is

symbolism.

- **He does not promise**  
**to remove the trials,**
- **But He does promise**  
**to be with us**  
**in those trials.**

· **For the**  
**child of God,**  
**all evil is**  
**temporary.**  
**(Job 3:17; 2 Cor. 4:17)**

- For the child of God,  
all evil is temporary.  
(Job 3:17; 2 Cor. 4:17)

- For the  
“Joy set before him”  
the captain of our salvation  
endured the cross,  
despising the shame.  
(Hebrews 12:2)

- **I counted dollars  
while God  
counted crosses.**

- **I counted gain while  
He counted losses.**

- **I counted  
my worth**

- **by the things  
gained in store,**

• But he sized me up  
by the scars  
that I bore.

• I coveted honors, and  
sought for degrees.<sup>86</sup>

**• He wept as he  
counted the hours  
on my knees.**

**• I never knew till one  
day by a grave,**

• How vain are the things

• that we spend life to save.

• **I did not yet know, 'til a  
Friend from above,**

• **Said, richest is he**

• **Who is rich in God's love!**

**(Author Unknown)**

• **Fear none of these things.**

• **Not enslaved by fear.**

• **But subduing it and  
furnishing the soul with  
strength and courage.**

**The fact that the Lord  
knows all that we  
suffer for him should  
serve a least  
three purposes.**

**1<sup>st</sup>** : It should cause us  
to seek His help.

**2<sup>nd</sup>** : It should  
inspire us with courage.

**3<sup>rd</sup>** : It should clothe us with  
deepest humility.

# Words of Promise

2:10 Be thou faithful  
unto death, and  
I will give thee  
the crown of life.

• Observe:

- First, The sureness of the reward:
  - He who said it is able to do it;
- 2<sup>nd</sup> A life laid down in his service, shall be rewarded with another and a much better life that shall be eternal.

**James 1:12 (ASV)**

**Blessed is the man**

**that endureth temptation;**

**for when he hath been approved,**

**he shall receive the**

**crown of life,**

***which [the Lord] promised***

***to them that love him.***

**2:11 He that hath an ear,**

**let him hear what the**

**Spirit saith to the churches.**

**He that over cometh**

**shall not be hurt**

**of the second death.**

• Two precious promises  
are pledged.

**1<sup>st</sup>**: The first promise is positive in  
nature:

• “*I will give thee the crown of  
life.*”

• Our Christ is the gracious giver.

- (1.) There is not only a first,
  - but a second death,
    - a death after  
the body is dead.

- (2.) This second death is unspeakably worse.
- Which is the agony of the soul.
- Having no hope!  
(1 Thess. 4:13)

- **(3.) From this 2<sup>nd</sup> death,  
Christ will save  
his faithful servants;**

- **The first death  
shall not hurt them.**

- **And the second death shall have  
no power over them.**

**(Rev 20:6)**

**Because He is the**

**“Prince of Life”**

**he is abundantly  
able to bestow the  
gift of life. (Acts 3:15)**

- The metaphor “crown”  
is employed  
in various scriptures.
- Paul speaks of his own  
personal hope  
“crown of righteousness”  
(2 Timothy 4:8)

- **James** speaks of  
“**the crown of life, which the Lord promised to them that love him.**” (James 1:12)

- **Peter** speaks of the  
“**crown of glory that fadeth not away.**” (1 Peter 5:4)

- Let us now note the condition upon which this crown is awarded.

- 2:10 “Be thou faithful unto death”

- There is something more precious than life itself.

- The **2<sup>nd</sup>** promise is negative –
- Immunity from punishment of the most fearful form.
- “He that over cometh shall **not** be hurt of the second death.”  
(Rev 2:11)

- One death is of the body.
- The 2<sup>nd</sup> death  
is of the soul.
- But, the “*crown of life*”  
secures us.

**Persecution may  
take you life but it  
cannot  
take your soul**

# From this letter we learn:

- That unto the saints who suffer, Christ comes with words of consolation.
- “I am the Alpha and the Omega. I was dead, but I am alive again.”

- **From this letter we learn:**
  - **That fiery trials of tribulation consume life's impurities**
- **But at the same time fits us for a higher calling.**

• **From this letter we learn:**

• **That it is better by far to be  
rich in grace and  
poor in earthly goods,**

• **Than to be poor in grace and  
rich in earthly goods.**

- From this letter we learn:
  - That it is better to suffer injury
- Than it is to inflict injury.

• **From this letter we learn:**

• **It isn't**  
**lukewarm Christians**  
**but**  
**zealous Christians**  
**that Satan pursues.**

- **From this letter we learn:**
  - **That the suffering of a Christian is confined to this life.**
  - **He shall not feel the pangs of the second death.**

• **From this letter we learn:**

• **The lesson for the church today is that**

**Christ is not just a way**

• **Christ is the only way.**

• The modern world  
gnashes its teeth and  
recoils at the idea that  
there is one and  
only one path  
to the Father.

**But we must  
never cease  
to proclaim it,  
no matter the cost.**