

The Church in Smyrna

Revelation 2:8 - 11 *“And unto the angel of the church in Smyrna write; These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive; (9) I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan. (10) Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life. (11) He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.”*

It is said that this church covers from the end of the first Century through the “Dark Ages” or the 1500’s or the dark time of Great Time of Christian Martyrs. It is recorded that during this time 10’s of millions of Christians, churches especially Baptist Churches were grossly murdered by the Roman Government and Catholicism. The Lord will tell us in this study that in this time period they would suffer greatly, and they did. *(I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty”*. Rev. 2:9 **Brother E.G. Cook wrote** in his study of Revelations these words, *“This persecution by Rome had already begun when the Book of Revelation was written. John was an exile on the isle of Patmos at the hand of Rome at that time. The Smyrna type churches suffered the most ruthless and heartless persecution during the “dark ages” at the hand of the Thyatira Church that this old world has ever witnessed. Thousands, yea millions of our Lord’s saints who were members of the Smyrna type churches were beheaded, burned at the stake, thrown to hungry lions, or buried alive by the Thyatira (Roman Catholic) Church.”*

Brother E.G. Cook also went farther to write, *“While Thyatira has always been, and will always be a bloodthirsty monstrosity, the true churches of our Lord have never had the least desire to kill those who refuse to believe the great truths which have been committed unto them. We pity the religionist, and would do anything in our power to get the truth of the gospel of grace over to him, but we would never touch a hair of his head in judgment upon him. Our Lord has not committed that type of judgment to His churches as yet. Since Thyatira has ever been a murderous thing, there was never a time when all the churches were Thyatira Churches. Therefore, we contend that Smyrna type churches existed all through the “dark ages” and that they blended into the Philadelphia type churches of modern times.”*

I have in my 40+ years in the Ministry heard and read from the writings of many Ministers of old that these things are truth and can be proven by history.

Brother E.G. Cook referenced a document Titled “Catholic Encyclopedia volume 8, and page 37” as his proof of the dark ages. I am not going to read this document however I searched the internet and found this exact document. I have printed copies that you may take home and read; I have underlined the part Brother Cook was referring to. Take a copy and read it for yourself. It is from the Catholic Encyclopedia and it gives the Volume and page number 37.

A. A little about the Church in Smyrna.

1. V. 8a. “And unto the angel of the church in Smyrna write”
 - a. It is said that this church was about two thousand years old.
 - b. The city of Smyrna was also a seat of emperor worship with the Temple of Tiberius located there.
 - c. The city was part of the Roman empire.
2. The name Smyrna means – Myrrh - which was a tree - the color of myrrh varies from pale reddish-yellow to reddish-brown or red in color.
3. The root meaning is “from a root meaning "bitter” as it was in taste.
 - a. The Myrrh gave out a fragrance but must have been crushed before it would.
 - b. This perfume was a sacred use in the Old Testament. Exodus 30:23
 - c. The word “bitter” also describes the way the church in Smyrna was treated.
 - d. Today the city is known by the name Izmir the largest city in Asiatic Turkey which is known as Asia Minor it is also famous for its beautiful and magnificent buildings.
 - e. It is located about 40 miles North from where Ephesus was.
 - f. The city was the seat of a strong Jewish Community. Brother Moser Jr believes this church could have been started by the Apostle Paul on his third mission journey and he referenced Acts 19.
 - g. This church represented the post-apostolic churches up to the time of Constantine and a time of great martyrdom from 170 – 315 A.D. With 315 being about the time Catholicism began. This is what Brother E.G. Cook said in our introduction.

- h. Constantine converted to Christianity and as I remember reading, he was the one who basically started the Catholic church and was the first Pope. He combined the Roman government and the so-called Catholic church and persecuted other Christians. This continued and about the year of 869 the Catholics split into the Greek Catholic and the Roman Catholic.
 - i. The so called “Dark Ages” or the time of great Christian persecution was from about 500A.D. thru about 1700A.D. in which it is believed it was about 1600A.D. when the reformation happened, and many Protestant Churches branched off of the Roman Catholic Church in protest of the Catholic Church.
 - j. The Roman Government and the Catholic State Church were guilty of a gross persecution and slaying of the Baptist and other Christians who would not convert to Catholicism.
 - k. During the reformation in about 1700A.D. those Protestant Churches were also guilty of persecution the Baptist and other Christians.
 - l. It is believed that thru these years of persecution in the “Dark Ages” of about 1200 years some 10 million or more Baptist were slaughtered in very harsh and unimaginable ways.
4. It is believed that Polycarp, a disciple of John was the first Pastor of this church. Pastor Polycarp was Martyred on February 23, 168A.D. It is stated that Pastor Polycarp had been a Christian for 86 years before he was martyred.
 5. Pastor Polycarp was accused by the Jews and the pagans of hostility to the state and they demanded him be thrown alive to the lions but that failed and the Jews and pagans gathered some wood, and sticks to light a fire and burned him alive.
 6. Bystanders shouted, “Pastor Polycarp stay strong, and his reply was I will”. And as the fire started to surround his body, he was heard saying a prayer to God. It is reported that this was his prayer, *“I thank thee that thou hast graciously thought me worthy of this day and this hour, that I might receive a portion in the number of Thy martyrs in the cup of Thy Christ.”*
 7. Brother Moser said, some 1500 at one time were martyred on this same hill called pagus and about 800 at another time.

8. The name Smyrna can be seen as the prophecy of the dark ages and persecution as this church began the martyrs of the church age and many of Baptist Churches were persecuted and martyred in many horrible and unimaginable ways.
 9. The Christians were flayed, burned alive, cast to wild beast alive, and cruelly tortured.
- B. The message to this church. *“These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive;”* V. 8
1. The Author is identified in V. 8
 2. He is the First. **John 1:1 - 2** *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. (2) The same was in the beginning with God.”*
 3. He is always with us. **Matt. 28:20** *“Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.”*
 4. He will be the last One standing in the end. Victory is His and His will, will be done. When all things are passed away, He will be living. **Revelation 1:18** *“I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.”*
 5. As this church is under great persecution, and much persecution will come to the churches such as the Dark Ages, He wants us to know that He is the Sovereign God Who rose from the death of persecution and now lives forever.
- C. The persecution begins.
1. **Revelation 2:9 - 10** *“I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan. (10) Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.”*
 - a. **Hebrews 11:33-40** *“Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received*

their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection: And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.”

- b. Faith is the key to acceptance that what God has foreordained, what He has brought our way even in persecution, even in sacrifice, our faith in Jesus, Who will be alive and standing as conquer over all things will be our Victory.
 - c. How did these believers and churches not surrender to Satan, the Catholic’s, and the evil government? Faith in our Lord and King!
2. Jesus said to this church, “I know thy works” not just the knowledge as our Sovereign God who knows all things, but through experience.
- a. I know thy works – I did the same works as you.
 - b. I know thy tribulation – The word means pressure and suffering. Vines says it means “anything which burdens the spirit.” It includes distress, do you get the thought that this word is speaking of the mental tribulations of suffering?
 - c. I know thy poverty – this means – destitution – Remember that Jesus suffered poverty for our sake. **2 Corinthians 8:9** *“For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor; that ye through his poverty might be rich.”* This is said to strengthen the churches of Macedonia. **2 Corinthians 8:2** *“How that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality.”* And here to the church at Smyrna. And for churches to come.
 - d. I know the blasphemy of them. – This word means - The reproaches; the harsh and bitter reviling’s and slanders – But not against God, not against the Son of man, but of this church and other churches and against Christians in general.

- e. Jesus does not just Omnisciently know these things and so much more, He suffered them for us and will suffer them with us.
3. But Jesus assured them as He does us, *“but thou art rich”* We never should forget that we are God’s children.
- a. Our Father is the Sovereign God of all creation, all things, all power, all riches are His, and because we are His children all is ours.
 - b. Worldly possessions may not be ours but all of God’s glory is ours.
 - c. This is where our faith and strength must be as we suffer in this world. God promised **Romans 8:28** *“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.”* And He foreknew, ordained, and predestinated everything for us in this life, and this is where our faith must be. **Ephesians 2:10** *“For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.”*
 - d. Yes, Jesus said “I know thy works” because I walked in your shoes.
4. The source of all this is Satan.
- a. Satan is the source of control over this world system, and the government and the persecutors.
 - b. He disguises himself as “one of God” he has many servants and many of them dress themselves as Christians and are not. God said of them, *“of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan”* V. 9
 - c. If people do not believe in Jesus Christ as their Saviour, they are not Christians.
 - d. If churches are not pillars and ground of Truth then they are not churches.
 - e. If churches do not stand in this Truth then Jesus has left the building and they are not churches.
 - f. If one is not a Christian, then they are a child of Satan.
 - g. God said in **John 8:44** *“Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.”* – Even who claim to be Christians and are not, we are not children of God if we do not know Jesus as our Saviour, and we

are not churches if we are not walking in God's word. **Matthew 7:15** "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves."

- h. These people are not our friends, they do not want us to succeed, they want to destroy the Truth. **2 John 1:9 - 11** "*Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. (10) If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: (11) For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds.*"
5. The duration, 2:10 "*and ye shall have tribulation ten days*"
- a. What is "ten days"? I do not believe that this was simply ten twenty-four-hour days. The truth is, we simply do not know what the Lord is saying here, however, it is universally believed that it is not simply ten days.
 - b. **Brother E.G. Cook** wrote, "
 - c. But let us not for one fleeting moment forget the fact that our Lord's true churches, the Smyrna type churches, were scattered here and there throughout this entire time. In Revelation 2:10 we read, "Ye shall have tribulation ten days", and in II Peter 3:8 we read, "One day is with the Lord as a thousand years." Since our Lord can look upon a thousand years as a day, could He not do the same for a hundred years? If so, could not the ten days of tribulation in Revelation 2:10 speak of the terrible slaughter of the Smyrna saints during the ten centuries in which darkness and ignorance fostered by the Catholic Church hovered over the earth like a heavy fog?"
 - d. Brother Moser wrote, "it could be ten years of the most fiercest persecution Roman Emperors.
 - e. The Roman government hated Christians and the bible. They had public bible burnings and destroyed as many copies as they could.
 - f. The Catholic church did not allow their people to have copies, their Pope was their translation of the bible.
 - g. When people finally got copies and read the Truth of the Word, there was a great reformation in the 1500's and some great men began protestant assemblies like

Martin Luther, John Wycliffe, John Knox, William Tyndale, and John Calvin, and dozens more. All Reformers, none were Baptist, none started churches of Truth.

6. They were Catholic and most were persecutors of Baptist, Smyrna type churches.

During the Dark Ages from mid-500 to early 1700

7. So, the Catholic church was created by Roman emperor Constantine the Great around 306–337 most say about 315 They say he converted to Christianity and started the Catholic church. Which was built of “irregular churches”. Baptists are Smyrna type churches, and our history includes this church to the church at Jerusalem. Baptists were not part of reformation; Baptist are the ones that were being murdered by these people.

D. Their faithfulness to the Lord was commanded. “be thou faithful unto death” V. 10

1. That is natural death or a Martyrs death, either way, be faithful.
2. “hold fast to thy profession of faith and holiness to the end of thy life” As Poole wrote.
3. Paul writing about Jesus said, **Philippians 2:7 - 8** “*But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: (8) And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.*”
4. Then the Lord promised them, “*and I will give thee a crown of life.*” V. 10
 - a. This must be a very special crown. Christians earn different crowns, Jesus has many crowns, but the crown for our martyred brothers and Sisters must be the best!
 - b. The Lords promise, **Isaiah 43:1 - 2** “*But now thus saith the LORD that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine. (2) When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.*”
 - c. Paul wrote, **Philippians 1:20 - 21** “*According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death.*”

(21) *For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.*” – “whether I be taken off by a violent death, or whether I be permitted to continue here longer; in either case I can lose nothing.” -Albert Barnes

- d. **James 1:12** “*Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.*”
 - e. What is “the crown of life”? It could mean many things; it could mean a crown for your life sacrifice or life achievements. It could be a universal meaning Pastors get a crown, faithful Christians get another crown, Christians who make great sacrifices get a different crown, and Martyrs get their crown.
 - f. John wrote of Jesus, **Rev. 19:12** “*His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself.*” – What are the “many crowns”? Maybe all the different crowns all faithful believers get? And all the crowns a King would get, maybe every crown God has made and given Jesus has them all.
 - g. Paul wrote of himself in, **2 Timothy 4:7 - 8** “*I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: (8) Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.*” – What a blessing! – This tells me, that there are crowns for God’s most faithful.
- E. The promise. Verse 11
- 1. “*He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches*”
 - a. This is the message to all seven churches. Jesus also said this in Matt. 11:15, and Mark 4:9.
 - b. All Believers and all churches need to understand that when God speaks, we are commanded to hear him.
 - 2. The promise is “*He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.*”
 - a. The that has ears to hear will overcome the pains of hell, not because of hearing but the fact that you can hear because you are saved.
 - b. John wrote in, **Revelation 20:6, 20** “*Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be*

*priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years. (14) “And death and **hell were cast into the lake of fire**. This is the second death.”*

- c. **Revelation 21:7 - 8** *“He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son. (8) But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.”*
- d. Death from live cuts off human life, and the death in hell cuts off eternal life.
- e. Death ends all hope of life, and hell has no hope.
- f. Death has no power over Christians, while we will all die, there will be no pain in death.
- g. Psalms 23 is assurance to us in our time of death. Especially verse 4 *“Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.”* – Any pain of death will only be in the process of fleshly death, not in the second death.
- h. **1 Corinthians 15:55 - 58** *“O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? (56) The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. (57) But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. (58) Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.”*
- i. **We will not die alone.**