

SEVEN

CHURCHES IN REVELATION



- Church in Smyrna
- May 31, 2026
- Shalom Ministries International

Church at Smyrna



- Smyrna: myrrh (bitterness):
 - It was 50 miles north of Ephesus; a wealthy, beautiful, and prominent port city in ancient Asia Minor.
 - Who founded the church? He (Paul)...had discussions daily in the lecture hall of Tyrannus (in Ephesus). This went on for two years, so that all the Jews and Greeks who lived in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord (Acts 19:9-10).
 - The biggest center of Caesar worship. Christians refused to worship the Emperor, they were heavily marginalized, barred from the local economy.
 - Polycarp, disciple of the Apostle John, served as the Bishop of Smyrna. He was burned alive (155 AD), after steadfastly refusing to curse Christ. He said, *"86 years have I served Him, and He never did me wrong. How can I blaspheme my King, who saved me?"*
- Diocletian's Great Persecution (303 AD)
 - **1st Edict**: Ordered the destruction of all Christian churches, the burning of sacred Scriptures, and the prohibition of Christian assemblies.
 - **2nd Edict**: Mandated the arrest and imprisonment of all Christian bishops, priests, and deacons.
 - **3rd Edict**: Offered imprisoned clergy a pardon if they agreed to sacrifice to the Roman gods.
 - **4th Edict**: Forcing all people to perform public sacrifices to the traditional gods. Refusal carried the penalty of imprisonment, slavery, or execution.

To the Church in Smyrna

- And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write,
- These things says the First and the Last, who was dead, and came to life: I know your works, **tribulation**, and poverty (but you are rich); and I know the blasphemy of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have **tribulation** ten days. Be faithful until 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. He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death (Revelations 2:8-11, NKJV).

Jesus Knows the Church

- Who is Jesus?
 - These are the words of him who is the First and the Last, who died and came to life again. I know... (Rev 2:8-9a).
 - By pointing out His own resurrection, Jesus gives the heavily persecuted church ultimate hope that death is not the end.
 - The omniscient nature: Jesus possessed a complete and perfect knowledge of their needs and their character.
- The commendation
 - One of only 2 churches (Philadelphia) that receives no rebuke from Jesus.
 - I know your works, tribulation, and poverty (but you are rich) (Rev. 2:9).
 - Your work: We are going to be judged by our works.
 - God is not unjust; he will not forget your work and the love you have shown him as you have helped his people and continue to help them (Hebrews 6:10).
 - You are (spiritually) rich despite what they lacked materially. This richness consists of unwavering faith, hope, and an eternal inheritance in Christ.

The Source of Tribulation

- Where does tribulation come?
 - Tribulation (Thilipsis, pressing, Myrrh): Persecution makes the church strong.
 - I know your...tribulation... and I know the blasphemy (slander) of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan (Rev. 2:9, NKJV).
 - Tribulation came in three ways: 1) opposition to emperor worship; 2) objection to pagan idolatry; and 3) hostility from the local Jewish community.
- The slander (blasphemy) from the synagogue of Satan
 - The hostile local Jewish leaders who denounced Christians to the Romans for refusing to participate in Caesar worship.
 - By actively harassing, slandering, and betraying Christians to the authorities, they denied them the legal protections that Judaism enjoyed under the Roman Empire.
- Roman authorities and other pagan worshippers
 - Smyrna became a center of the worship of Rome (goddess) and Caesar (god).
 - Roman authorities required citizens to offer incense before the altar of emperor (Caesar is Lord). Because Christians refused it, they risked harsh punishments, imprisonment, and execution.

Smyrna: Overcoming Tribulation

- Tribulation of the church
 - The devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days (Rev 2:10, NKJV).
 - It is an ultimate reminder that while God does not shield His followers from suffering, He sets strict limits on it and promises ultimate victory.
- Test: The purpose of tribulation
 - When he has tested me, I will come forth as gold (Job 23:10).
 - It is an ultimate reminder that while God does not shield His followers from suffering, He sets strict limits on it and promises ultimate victory.
 - God is still sovereign: The devil may throw you into a prison, but God holds the keys. He controls the boundaries and duration of every test.
- 10 Days: The duration of tribulation
 - Tribulation is temporary and cannot last forever.
 - In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world (John 16:33).

The Promise of the Reward

- Jesus promises a reward for believers who remain faithful
 - Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer... Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of (eternal) life (Rev 2:10-11, NKJV).
 - Be faithful. Abide in Jesus: maintaining a continuous, trusting relationship with Him.
 - Our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us (Romans 8:18).
 - But the one who stands firm to the end will be saved (Matthew 24:13).
 - Jesus promises a trophy (Stephanos) of triumph to believers who win (overcome) the race of faith, particularly those who endure severe persecution or martyrdom.
- Exemption from the second death
 - He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death (Rev 2:11b).
 - While all Christians may experience physical death, believers are promised they will never face eternal judgment or spiritual separation from God.

Lessons for the Persecuted Church

- Remember Christ's victory
 - These are the words of him who is the First and the Last, who died and came to life again (Rev 2:8).
 - Remember that the One you serve has conquered death. Because He lives, you share in His ultimate triumph over worldly oppression.
- Earthly poverty does not define you
 - True wealth is spiritual (grace, holiness, and eternal inheritance) and cannot be stripped away by worldly deprivation.
 - And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:19).
- Suffering is strictly timed and purposeful
 - God places strict boundaries on suffering. What the enemy uses to destroy, God uses to test, refine, and prove the genuineness of a believer's faith.
 - No matter how brutal persecution may be, it is a temporary threshold to eternal life.
 - You are anchored by the promise of the crown of life (v. 10), a glorious, eternal reward for those who endure.