

**“The Things Which Are” (Rev 2:1-3:22)**  
**The Seven Churches in Asia**  
**Part 1 - The Church at Ephesus & Smyrna**

**Date:** February 4, 2021

**Series:** Revelation, Part 4

**Text:** Revelation 2:1-7

**Main Idea:** Christ speaks to the seven churches describing and give instructions to the Churches throughout the “Church age” to which we all must soberly listen and obey.

**3 ways to view these letters to the churches:**

- \_\_\_\_\_ **Churches:** The 7 churches actual physical churches in Asia Minor with specific praises & problems.
- \_\_\_\_\_ **throughout History:** The 7 churches represent churches & individuals that have existed throughout the Church Age.
- \_\_\_\_\_ **of Church History:** The 7 churches may describe the health & decline of the Churches throughout the “church age.” (See Chart of 7 Churches)

**1. The Church of Ephesus:** When Love Grows \_\_\_\_\_. (1-7)

- **The Title of Jesus:** The One who holds the 7 stars in His right hand & walks among the seven golden lampstands.
- **The Commendation:** 1) Your works & toil, 2) your patient endurance, 3) your refusal to tolerate evil men & your hatred for works of the evil Nicolaitans. (v. 2-3, 6)
- **The Concern:** You have left your first love. (v. 4)
- **The Exhortation:** 1) Remember the joy of your salvation, 2) \_\_\_\_\_ of your sinful lack of love

for God & 3) Return to devotion by doing the works that you did at first.

- **Promise:** Eternal life is promised to those who overcome. (v. 7)

**2. The Church of Smyrna:** The \_\_\_\_\_ Church. (v. 8-11)

- **The Title of Jesus:** The First and the last, who was dead, and has come to life.” (v. 8)
- **The Commendation:** 1) Your tribulation & your poverty, & 2) the false slander against them.
- **The Exhortation:** Do not \_\_\_\_\_ what you are about to suffer & be \_\_\_\_\_ unto death. (10b-11)
- **The Promise:** I will give you the crown of life and you will not be hurt by the second death (\_\_\_\_\_). (v. 11)

# The Seven Churches Throughout the Ages

<b>Matt 13 - Parables</b>	<b>Rev 2-3</b>	<b>Meaning of name</b>	<b>Approximate dates</b>	<b>Characteristic/Church History</b>
Sower Wheat & Tares	<b>Ephesus</b> – The Loveless Church	Desired One or Darling	Pentecost to 100 AD	Time of sowing, organization & evangelism (2:3 – “I know you are enduring patiently and bearing up for my name’s sake and you have not grown weary.”)
Tares	<b>Smyrna</b> – The Suffering Church	Suffering or Death or Bitter as Myrrh	Nero to 312 AD (when Constantine declared the empire as Christian)	Persecution. 10 Roman Emperors persecuted the church. Enemy revealed. (2:10c – “Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.”)
Mustard Seed	<b>Pergamos</b> - The Church Married to the World	Elevated or Thoroughly Married	300-800 AD	Worldly alliance. The Church and government were combined. Pagan practices. Great external growth. (2:14 – “you have some there who hold the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, so that they might eat food sacrificed to idols and practice sexual immorality.”)
Leaven	<b>Thyatira</b> – The Corrupt Church	Continual Sacrifice	800-1517 – continues on....	Papal domination. Doctrinal corruption. Empty profession. Dark Ages. Gospel grew dim. False Religion. Sell of indulgences began in 1190 AD. (2:20 – “But I have this against you, that you tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess and is teaching and seducing my servants to practice sexual immorality and to eat food sacrificed to idols.”)
Treasure Hidden	<b>Sardis</b> – The Dead Church	Those escaping or Coming Out	1520 (Reformation) – continue on....	Rise of the state church. (3:2-3 – “Wake up, and strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have not found your works complete in the sight of my God. Remember then what you received and heard. Keep it, and repent.”)
Pearl	<b>Philadelphia</b> – The Faithful Church	Brotherly love	1750 - The last days	True Church of the last days characterized by brotherly love. (3:8 – “I have set before you an open door, which no one is able to shut. I know that you have little power, and yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name.”)
Dragnet	<b>Laodicea</b> – The Apostate Church	People ruling or opinion	1900 - Last days	Apostasy. People’s opinion will mean more important than Scripture. Prosperity. No evidence of being true believers. (3:17 – “For you say, I am rich, I have prospered and I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind and naked.”)

# the REVELATION of JESUS CHRIST

## Session 3 - Revelation 2:1-7

### “THE THINGS WHICH ARE”

(2:1-3:22)

### The Seven Churches in Asia

The book of Revelation is addressed to seven particular churches in Asia Minor, a major province of Rome, which is today known as Turkey. Turkey's central location between Greece and Mesopotamia made it a heavily traveled route between Europe and Asia during Bible History. After the decline of the Hittites, the region was colonized by the Greeks, and later by the Persians after the Persian Wars. The Romans then followed.

Cities in Asia Minor most familiar in The Bible are Alexandria, Troas, Assos, Attalia, Antioch, Colossae, Derbe, Ephesus, Iconium, Laodicea, Lystra, Miletus, Patara, Pergamum, Philadelphia, Sardis, Smyrna, Tarsus, and Thyatira.



### A proper perspective on the “churches” in Revelation.

One of the most important points of understanding the letters to the churches is to understand the intended audience. Close examination will reveal:

- **A Tangible Evaluation** - Each of the churches addressed in Revelation were actual physical churches whose evaluations matched the conditions of the cities they were located in.

## Session 3 - Revelation 2:1-7

- **An Inclusive Evaluation** - These churches represent a range of evaluations given by Christ that are applicable to all churches throughout history and into our present age.
- **An Individual Evaluation** - “He who has an ear...” Anyone who claims the name of Christ can examine him or herself by what Christ Himself says in regards to these specific churches. Only those who have an ear (“my sheep hear my voice” Luke 15:6; John 10:26-27) will obey will listen to what the Lord says.
- **An Historical Evaluation** - This final angle of examination isn’t as obvious as the first three. Many scholars view the letters to the churches as a prophetic time line for the history of the church. This is not an understanding on which to build dogma. However this particular approach to the study of the churches would be impossible if it were not for:
  1. These particular churches - We will see that the evaluations do fit church history quite well.
  2. The order in which they were written - Again we will see that the exact order fits church history and this would be impossible if the order was different.

### An Important Note

There is a difference between geographical churches and the actual body of Christ. While these letters are addressed to “churches”, it is always to “the church at...” At any given time in the history of the church age the institutional church has been inhabited by true believers and non-believers so it is best to understand that these letters are written to anyone who would claim to be associated with Christ.

## Ephesus - The loveless church

(2: 1a) “To the angel (*messenger*) of the church in Ephesus write:”

Ephesus = “Desired One” or “Darling”

### The City

Ephesus was founded as early as the 14th century B.C. with an early temple to the Mother Goddess and ancient Hittite fertility deity who later became identified with Diana. Colonists from Athens settled there about 1100 B.C. It was captured and ruled by many subsequent nations such as the Lydians in the middle of the 6th century B.C. then by the Persians in 541 B.C.

In 334 B.C. it fell to the Macedonians under Alexander and after his death, Lysimachus became master of the city and added great improvements. It eventually became the Roman capital of the province of Asia. Ephesus was a free city and had its own municipal government and senate. With an estimated population of between 250,000 to 500,000 people and some of the most impressive architecture of its time, Ephesus became known as the “Queen of Asia”.

## Session 3 - Revelation 2:1-7

Ephesus was the primary harbor of the Roman province of Asia Minor and was located on the Cayster River three miles in from the sea. All Roman governors to Asia Minor and beyond had to come through Ephesus.



**The temple of Diana** was one of the “seven wonders” of the ancient world. It stood on a platform 425 feet by 220 feet. The building itself was 340 by 165 feet, had 120 Ionic columns, each 60 feet high.

Ecstatic, sexual rites took place at the temple, involving both male and female prostitutes. The conversion of a large number of Ephesians posed a severe economic threat to one of the city’s major trades

involving the selling of statues of Diana made by various craftsmen. This led to a violent reaction instigated by a silversmith named Demetrius (Act 19:23-41).



**The Ephesian theater** was 495 feet in diameter and held 25,000 people and was where Gaius and Aristarchus were dragged by an angry mob (Acts 19).

## The Church

The gospel reached Ephesus through Paul’s friends and partners, Priscilla and Aquila (Acts 18:18-19). They were later joined by Apollos (Acts 18:24-26) and together they laid the groundwork for Paul’s ministry there. Paul’s first visit to Ephesus was toward the end of his second missionary journey and was only a brief visit (Acts 18:19-21). On his third missionary journey, Paul spent three years building the church in Ephesus (Acts 20:31) and this church became the doorway to the establishing all of the churches in Asia Minor (Acts 19:10).

It is from here, on his second visit, that Paul wrote 1 Corinthians (The book of Ephesians was penned in Rome). Timothy served as pastor to the Ephesian church (1Tim 1:3). Tychicus (2 Tim 4:12) and Onesiphorus (2Tim 1:16, 18) also ministered there.

## Session 3 - Revelation 2:1-7

John spent the later decades of his life as an elder in Ephesus where he wrote his gospel account and three epistles. It was from here that John was exiled to Patmos and it was to here that he retired and died after his release.

### Title of Christ

(2: 1b) **"The One who holds the seven stars in His right hand, the One who walks among the seven golden lampstands, says this:"**

Chapter one (v20) states that the seven stars are the angels (messengers or elders) of the seven churches and the fact that Christ is holding them in His right hand is a very important point. The "right hand" throughout scripture always represents the extension of **authority**:

*"Your right hand, O LORD, is majestic in power, Your right hand, O LORD, shatters the enemy." Exo 15:6 (NASB)*

*"He is the one whom God exalted to His right hand as a Prince and a Savior, to grant repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins." Acts 5:31 (NASB)*

Christ holding the church in His right hand shows:

- His authority **over the church.**

*"And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all." Eph 1:22-23 (NASB)*

- His authority **given to the church.**

*"But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us." Rom 8:37 (NASB) see also Mat 16:18; Eph 3:14-20*

- His authority to **claim the church as His own.**

*"My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given {them} to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch {them} out of the Father's hand. I and the Father are one." John 10: 27-30 (NASB)*

In a great paradox of terms the sovereign Lord not only holds the church in His hand, but He walks in the midst of it. He is intimately involved in the sanctification of His bride and is able to discern the works of each individual believer.

*"we are of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord. Therefore we also have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad." 2Cor 5:8-10 (NASB)*

## The commendation

(2: 2-3,6) "I know your deeds and your toil and perseverance, and that you cannot tolerate evil men, and you put to the test those who call themselves apostles, and they are not, and you found them {to be} false; and you have perseverance and have endured for My name's sake, and have not grown weary.... Yet this you do have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate."

Christ starts each letter with a commendation (except for two churches) before He lists His observations on their failures. The word *eidon* (know) used here is a **complete and full** knowledge and not a progressive one (*ginōskō*) that man is bound by.

The Ephesian church was commended for:

- **“your deeds and your toil”** (*kopos*) means hard labor to the point of exhaustion and is indicative of the fact that the Ephesians were not **sleeping** Christians, but invested all of themselves physically and mentally to the cause of Christ.
- **“and perseverance”** (*hypomonē*) means steadfast, constancy or endurance. Their steadfast labor was over the **truth**. The location of this church in the midst of such rampant immorality and witchcraft, didn’t seem to thwart their faithfulness to Christ. This particular strong point was no doubt a direct result of the influences of Paul and John:

*“Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them. Therefore be on the alert,...” Paul writing to the Ephesians in Acts 20: 28-31a (NASB)*

*“If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into {your} house, and do not give him a greeting; for the one who gives him a greeting participates in his evil deeds.” 2 John 1:10-11 (NASB) \*see also 1 John 4:1-3*

It is important for all Christians to “endure” in truth, like the Ephesians, for the right motives: “for His name’s sake” and do so without growing weary. We are to be **discerning** and NOT tolerant when it comes to foundational truth. \*for further study read Gal 6:9.

- They also **“hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans (who were the evil men)”** which Christ also hates. Referenced also in the letter the church at Pergamum, Nicolaitanism seems to involve extreme sensuality which led to sexual immorality and eating things sacrificed to idols, apparently under the guise of “Christian liberty”. Clement of Alexandria and Irenaeus wrote of the extreme perversions of the Nicolaitans.

*\*For further study on how God feels toward impurity (Isa 61:8; Jer 44:4; Amos 5:21; Zech 8:17)*

## The concern

(2: 4) "But I have {this} against you, that you have left your first love."

### Session 3 - Revelation 2:1-7

The church in Ephesus was about 40 years old at the time of the writing of Revelation. By this time the spiritual condition of the believers there had become a **cold orthodoxy**. When a commitment to discernment and obedience is practiced to the exclusion of the **grace of God**, the death of Spiritual growth, love for the brethren and blessing is soon to follow.

Christ wants our **Devotion**. When we put Him first, our faithfulness to truth will always be motivated with love; love for Christ AND His body. A great example of duty over devotion is in Luke's account of Jesus joining Mary and Martha for dinner. Martha was frustrated that Mary was not involved with the "duty" necessary for serving Christ. Notice His reply to her:

*"But the Lord answered and said to her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and bothered about so many things; but only one thing is necessary, for Mary has chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her." "* Luke 10:41-42 (NASB)

This move toward cold orthodoxy is a process and the Ephesians did not start this way (Eph 1:15; 3:17-19; 6:23). Paul states that all forms of Spiritual gifts are irrelevant without the exercise of love in his first letter to the Corinthians (1 Cor 13). Here is how he summarizes the whole chapter:

*"But now faith, hope, love, abide these three; but the greatest of these is love."* 1 Cor 13:13 (NASB)

The heart of man is indeed prone to wander. As in the church at Ephesus, the decline of affection toward God was a constant occurrence in the nation of Israel. *\*For further study see Jer 2:2-13 and Ezek 16:8-15).*

How am I loving Christ?

How am I loving the body of Christ?

## The exhortation

(2: 5) “ **Therefore remember from where you have fallen, and repent and do the deeds you did at first; or else I am coming to you and will remove your lampstand out of its place-  
-unless you repent.’** ”

The remedy given to any who are in this state of cold orthodoxy is presented in a simple, concise way by the great physician:

- **Remember the joy of your salvation.** (Ps 51:12; Jer 2:2; 2 Cor 11:2; 1 Jn 4:19)
- **Repent of their sinful failure to love God first.** (Mat 22:36-38; Deut 6:5)
- **Return to devotion.** (Luke 10: 38-42)

Failure to do so will lead to the death of any local church. It is important to understand that the “removal of their lampstand” is not a reference to loss of salvation for the believer, but is a removal of the immediate blessings of opportunity to be a strong instrument in the hand of God and therefore results in the forfeiture of treasure in heaven.

### Session 3 - Revelation 2:1-7

*“Now if any man builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is {to be} revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work. If any man's work which he has built on it remains, he will receive a reward. If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.” 1 Cor 3:12-15 (NASB)*

## The promise to the overcomer

(2: 7) “ **He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will grant to eat of the tree of life which is in the Paradise of God.’** ”

Who is the “**one who overcomes**” ?

*“For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. Who is the one who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?” 1 John 5:4-5 (NASB)*

Adam and Eve were forbidden to remain in the Garden of Eden in order that they would not take of the tree of life and live forever in spiritual death (Gen 3:22-24). The tree of life represents **eternal life** and those who are truly alive will overcome and dwell in the blessings and presence of God in Paradise.

Ephesus today is now over six miles from the sea and is now in utter ruin. Much like the city, the Ephesian church faded into history and is now only alive in writing.

## The prophetic profile

The early Apostolic church is represented here. After reaching soaring heights of growth and expansion, the church was moving into what the letter to the Ephesians points out as a cold orthodoxy and is evidenced regularly in much of the New Testament writings combating legalism. It is toward the end of the first century A.D. that the persecution of the church begins to transition from Jewish sources to Roman emperors and severely intensifies. But it is under such persecution that the church seems to flourish.

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	Ephesus	Smyrna	Pergamum	Thyatira	Sardis	Philadelphia	Laodicea
<b>Meaning</b>							
<b>Title of Christ</b>							
<b>Commendation</b>							
<b>Concern</b>							
<b>Exhortation</b>							
<b>Promise to the overcomer</b>							

# the REVELATION of JESUS CHRIST

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## Session 4 - Revelation 2:8-11

### Smyrna - The suffering church

(2: 8a) "And to the angel (*messenger*) of the church in Smyrna write:

#### Smyrna = “Suffering” or “Death”

The Greek word “Smurna” from the Hebrew root translated “myrrh”. Myrrh is a bitter gum that was used as an ingredient in perfume (Ps 45:8). It was also an ingredient in holy anointing oil for priests (Ex 30:23) and the purification of women (Esther 2:12). It was used in embalming (Jn 19:39).

There are several species of trees throughout the Mediterranean region that contain this gum and the gum is harvested by wounding the tree. It was given as a gift of the Magi at Christ’s birth (Mt 2:11). Gold represented His royalty, Frankincense His priesthood and deity and Myrrh represented His sacrifice. In the Millennium, there will be gold and frankincense offered to Christ but no myrrh (Is 60:6).

### The City

Today Smyrna is called Izmir, and it is the third largest city in Turkey with a population of 300,000. It exports tobacco, grapes, figs, cotton, olives, and olive oil. It’s history goes back as far as 3000 B.C. and is 35 miles north of Ephesus and is built near the ruins of an ancient Greek colony destroyed in the 7th century B.C.

Rebuilt by Lysimachus, one of Alexander the Great’s generals, Smyrna was a well-planned city, the most beautiful in Ionia, which became known as “the Flower of Ionia.” Smyrna came under control of the Romans in 27 B.C. and enjoyed great material prosperity through 324 A.D. During the reign of Tiberius, the city was completely demolished by an earthquake and again from 178-180A.D. A series of earthquakes brought Smyrna to ruin. Marcus Aurelius rebuilt Smyrna and ruins from his rebuild remain there today. Another large earthquake in 378 nearly destroyed the city and it was again rebuilt.



*Agora ruins*



*1st level arches of the market (Agora)*



*Modern day Izmir*

## Session 4 - Revelation 2:8-11

Smyrna, like most cities touched by the Hellenistic and Roman empires, worshipped a pantheon of gods. The goddess of Smyrna was Cybele. Cybele worship was wild and unrestrained. Seen as the giver of wealth, she became recognized in the great cities as the goddess of the settled life and of towns, hence her crown of walled cities. She appears on Smyrnead coins depicted as enthroned and wearing a crown of battlements and towers. In addition to all of the usual deities, Smyrna adopted Caesar worship which became compulsory to all who were within the bounds of the control of Rome:

### CAESAR WORSHIP

*“Each year a Roman citizen had to burn a pinch of incense on the altar and to acknowledge publicly that Caesar was supreme lord. In return, he received a formal certificate that he had done so. Originally the action was intended simply as proof of political loyalty, since the individual was permitted to worship whatever god or goddess he chose once he had offered to Caesar. This was a means of unifying and integrating the many and varied elements in the vast empire of Rome. However, this act of worship presented a vital test for the Christian, and many who refused perished at the stake or by wild beasts in the arena. In 169 (155?) A.D., the bishop of Smyrna, Polycarp, refused to recant. “Eighty and six years have I served Him, and He never did me wrong. How can I now speak evil of my King who has saved me?” The old man was burned at the stake on the sabbath day, an object of Jewish hatred as well as from the Roman persecution.”*  
(Commentary on Revelation study guide by Chuck Missler)

### Title of Christ

(2: 8b) **"The first and the last, who was dead, and has come to life, says this:"**

This title of Christ given in chapter 1 is directly related to the trials of the Christians at Smyrna as well as to any believers who would suffer for His sake. This is a reference to the hypostatic union of the Son of Man. It speaks to:

- **The Eternality of Christ** – **“The first and the Last”** is an Old Testament title of God (Is 44:6; 48:12). Used by Christ here and again in 22:13, it speaks to His eternal, infinite existence.
- **The Humanity of Christ** – **“who was dead, and has come to life”** John’s gospel speaks of the Word becoming flesh (chap 1). The eternal Son of God freely offered His life and was able to raise it back up again (John 10:15-17).

As the persecution was beginning to abound, the believers needed to be reminded that Christ was faithful to death and was raised again, thus conquering it (Heb 2:14). All of those who would be martyrs for the sake of Christ should be comforted by His promise:

*"Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies, and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die. " " John 11: 25-26a (NASB)*

## The commendation

(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.’** ”

Even though the persecution would make it seem as though the Lord is nowhere to be found, Christ reminds them that He is **intimately acquainted** with their tribulation. *Thlipsis* (tribulation) means “pressure” and is a common word used throughout the New Testament for physical suffering due to faithfulness. This is not to be confused with “The Great Tribulation” prophesied in Daniel, Revelation; etc. The persecution here was coming from two fronts.

The devotion of the Smyrnead people to their pantheon of gods and to Caesar worship, caused them to view Christians as uncommitted outcasts. They were actually viewed as atheists because they did not participate in the pagan rituals and, of course, they ultimately were viewed as enemies of the state because of their refusal to worship Caesar, but they knew that any worship of Caesar would deny the **Lordship of Christ**. This often led to their deaths.

They also were reduced to the level of beggars as a result of their obedience to Christ. Notice how Christ views them: **“but you are rich”**. In light of their circumstances they could have given in to the pressure, but by Christ calling them rich in the present tense they would have reflected on what they possess in Him:

“ but just as it is written, "THINGS WHICH EYE HAS NOT SEEN AND EAR HAS NOT HEARD, AND {which} HAVE NOT ENTERED THE HEART OF MAN, ALL THAT GOD HAS PREPARED FOR THOSE WHO LOVE HIM." ” *1 Cor 2:9 (NASB)*

This is a **fresh call to hope** and hope will rise up in the heart when it is fixed on the promises of God, even in the midst of dire times. The Smyrna church is poor but rich in contrast to the Laodicean church which says they are rich and are not!

Perhaps the more significant, but not surprising, source of tribulation here is from the unbelieving Jews who would bring up **“blasphemy”** or false accusations against them in order to get them condemned. It was in an effort to crush the gospel in Smyrna by **“those who say they are Jews and are not”**. Their efforts were so organized that Christ actually calls them **“a synagogue of Satan”**. This is not the first time that Christ labeled certain Jews this way:

“ *You are of {your} father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own {nature,} for he is a liar and the father of lies.’* ” *John 8: 44 (NASB)*

In his letter to the Romans, Paul also describes those who are **“true Jews”**:

“ *For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh. But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God.* ” *Rom 2:28-29 (NASB)*

## The exhortation - (notice no point of concern)

(2: 10a) “ **‘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.’** ”

Satan has always raged against God and His elect. He is “**the accuser of the brethren**” (Rev 12:10). Scripture reveals however that no matter what weapons are mounted up against the servants of the Lord, they shall not prevail:

*“ No weapon that is formed against you will prosper; And every tongue that accuses you in judgment you will condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, And their vindication is from Me, ” declares the LORD” Isa 54:17 (NASB)*

Furthermore, Satan and his agents may have been given “permission” by the council of God’s will to destroy the flesh, but in the end, nothing will keep the Lord from claiming His possession (John 10:28-29; 6:39; Heb 7:25; Rom 8:28-29). In application to this specific church, “ten days” is most likely a reference to some specific local occurrence, however from a prophetic standpoint it’s implications may be broader.

## The promise to the overcomer

(2: 10b-11) “ **‘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 will not be hurt by the second death.’** ”

Christ continues in His encouragement of those who are enduring persecution unto death and again reminds them of the *stephanos* (victors crown) of life which points to their **eternal reward**. The overcomer is a paradox in this life:

*“ He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it to life eternal. ”*  
*John 12:25 (NASB)*

There are several distinct crowns promised to faithful believers:

- **Incorruptible Crown** (1Cor 9:25)
- **Crown of Exultation or Rejoicing** (1 Thess. 2:19; Phil. 4:1)
- **The Crown of Life** (Jam. 1:12; Rev. 2:10)
- **The Crown of Righteousness** (2 Tim. 4:8)
- **The Crown of Glory** (1 Pet. 5:4)

Being faithful until death speaks to the perseverance of the saints who can not completely fall away from the state of grace. This is clear from scripture (Matt 10:22; 24:13; Mark 4:13-20; John 8:31; Col 1:21-23; 1 John 2:19).

Only those who have been **born again** can’t be hurt by the second death. And what is the second death?

*“ Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire ”*  
*Rev 20:14-15 (NASB)*

## Session 4 - Revelation 2:8-11

All believers will face trials that are designed by God to grow us.

*“Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.” James 1:2-4 (NASB)*

Any who are in Christ are to expect some form of persecution:

*“Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.” 2Tim 3:12 (NASB)*

Most of the body of Christ has suffered persecution over the past 2,000 years. This is especially true of the past century which delivered up more martyred believers than all other centuries combined. Are we in the western church prepared to do the same?

### The prophetic profile

After the primarily Jewish led persecution of Christians during the first century, the next 250 years contained 10 distinct (not contiguous) periods of Emperor led persecution of Christians that, according to Fox's Book of Martyrs, killed some 5 million believers.

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)

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	Ephesus	Smyrna	Pergamum	Thyatira	Sardis	Philadelphia	Laodicea
Meaning							
Title of Christ							
Commentation							
Concern							
Exhortation							
Promise to the overcomer							