

CP— 2/16/25 — The One Who Conquers

Revelation 2:8–11 — Lessons from Smyrna: The Persecuted Church

“Revelation” = *ἀποκάλυψις*, meaning “a disclosure, uncovering, make known”

Format of Letters: Recipient, Description of Jesus, Commendation/Complaint, Command, Consequence of failing to obey, Call to Listen to the Spirit, Promise to the one who conquers

1. Recipient - “to the angel of the church in Smyrna” (2:8)

- Smyrna:
 - Port city on the Aegean Sea, forty miles north of Ephesus
 - “First of Asia in beauty and size” - Population 100-200,000; rival to Ephesus
 - Home to sports & arts - great stadium, public library, music hall, theater
 - Strong relationship with Rome
 - In 197 BC, switched allegiance to Rome built a temple to the city of Rome, the first in the world to do so. In AD 23, Tiberius allowed a temple built to honor Augustus. In AD 26, he chose Smyrna over 10 other cities to build a temple for him. The emperor cult was strong in Smyrna.
 - Substantial Jewish population
 - Death and Resurrection
 - destroyed in 580 BC, re-founded in 290 BC
 - earthquake in 178, rebuilt by Marcus Aurelius
 - only remaining city of the seven from Rev 2-3 (modern day Izmir)
- Written to the pastor - spiritual responsibility/accountability but written to whole church
 - Early Christian tradition, maybe born from Acts 19:10
 - Ignatius of Antioch wrote the church there
 - Polycarp, the later pastor was a disciple of John
 - Smyrna was a difficult place to live as a Christian.

2. Description of Jesus (2:8)

- “the words of Him” - The message is from Jesus; his church; his message; he speaks! (tending the lampstands); correcting, encouraging, rebuking, affirming to keep light shining
- “the first and the last” - Eternal & Sovereign
- “who died and came to life” (died and lived) - Faithful & Victorious

3. Commendation, complaint, command (2:9-10)

- Christ knows the troubles they face.
 - tribulation (situational difficulties)
 - poverty (physical and financial struggles)
 - slander (being lied about) -
- Christ calls them to not fear the imminent suffering. - “ten days”
- Christ calls them to remain faithful death.

4. Call to Listen to the Spirit (2:11)

- Believe that Jesus sees your life.
- Believe you have treasure in Christ.
- Remember all suffering is temporary.
- Remain faithful to Jesus, no matter the cost.

5. Promise to the One Who Conquers (2:10-11)

- You will receive the crown of life.
- You will not experience eternal hell.
- Those who deny Christ in this life will be denied by Christ in the life to come.
- Those who know Christ in this life will be forever with Christ in the life to come.

Polycarp of Smyrna:

<https://www.earlychristianwritings.com/martyrdompolycarp.html>

<https://www.amazon.com/Early-Christian-Martyr-Stories-Introduction/dp/080104958X>

<https://www.gotquestions.org/Polycarp.html>

Small Group Discussion:

1. How did the Holy Spirit speak to you through the Scripture passage and sermon Sunday? What stood out to you? What questions do you have?
2. What were important and interesting details about the city of Smyrna? What made the city so hard for Christians to live there? Discuss the relationship of how difficult places for Christians sometimes bring about the most loyalty to Christ.
3. Discuss the description that the Lord Jesus gives of himself. What is the significance of this description, and how did it relate to the believers in Smyrna?
4. What did Christ know about the believers in Smyrna, and how should this knowledge encourage us? What were the believers facing, and what did Christ call them to do? Discuss the weight of the call to be faithful unto death and its implications.
5. What were the promises Christ made to the one who conquers? Why won't believers be hurt by the second death? (What is the second death?). Discuss how believers conquer through death and the reward that awaits them.