

# The book of Revelation

**2:8-11**

Welcome to the weekly verse-by-verse bible study in the book of Revelation.  
Make sure you pray before you start this, or any bible study.

Last week we began chapter 2 looking and the first letter to the church in Ephesus.  
This week we will read the second letter to the church in Smyrna.

✠ **Rev 2:8-11** *"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.' "*

Smyrna was about 50 miles north of Ephesus. Polycarp was the Bishop or Pastor of this church, and was believed to have been appointed that position by the apostle John. So who is Polycarp? Well, first off you must realize that Jesus has no words about things that the church in Smyrna are doing wrong. You don't read of Jesus saying to them.

✠ **Rev 2:4a** *Nevertheless I have this against you*

✠ **Rev 2:14a** *But I have a few things against you*

But instead Jesus says to this church:

✠ **Rev 2:10a** *Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer.*

So how does this fit in with Polycarp? Halley's Bible Handbook says this about him.

*Polycarp (A.D. 69-156) Pupil of the apostle John, Bishop of Smyrna. In persecution ordered by the Emperor he was arrested and brought before the Governor, and when offered his freedom if he would curse Christ, he replied "Eighty and six years have I served Christ and He has done me nothing but good; how then could I curse Him, my Lord and Savior?" He was burned alive.*

Fox's Book of Martyrs says:

*Polycarp, the venerable bishop of Smyrna, hearing that persons were seeking for him, escaped, but was discovered by a child. After feasting the guards who apprehended him, he desired an hour in prayer, which being allowed, he prayed with such fervency, that his guards repented that they had been instrumental in taking him. He was, however, carried before the proconsul, condemned, and burnt in the market place.*

*The proconsul then urged him, saying, "Swear, and I will release thee; -- reproach Christ."*

*Polycarp answered, "Eighty and six years have I served him, and he never once wronged me; how then shall I blaspheme my King, Who hath saved me?" At the stake, to which he was only tied, but not nailed as usual, as he assured them he should stand immovable, the flames, on their kindling the fagots, encircled his body, like an arch, without touching him, and the executioner, on seeing this, was ordered to pierce him with a sword when so great a quantity of blood flowed out as extinguished the fire. But his body, at the instigation of the enemies of the Gospel, especially Jews, was ordered to be consumed in the pile, and the request of his friends, who wished to give it Christian burial, rejected. They nevertheless collected his bones and as much of his remains as possible, and caused them to be decently interred.*

And you thought you were having a bad day.

The church in Smyrna is known as the persecuted church, and we will see why as we study this letter to the church. But the first thing Jesus says to this church are words of encouragement.

✠ *These things says the First and the Last, who was dead, and came to life*

Jesus was constantly persecuted by the religious leaders and knew exactly what this church was going through, and even though Jesus was crucified He came back to life "*who was dead, and came to life*".

So how are these words of encouragement? Well, combined with the first statement "*These things says the First and the Last*" and this one "*who was dead, and came to life*" it was encouraging for them to know that no matter what they were going through, that they would come out ok in the end.

When Jesus says that He is *the First and the Last* He means that there were none before Him, nor will there be any after Him. He created all things

✠ **Rev 4:11** *"You are worthy, O Lord,  
To receive glory and honor and power;  
For You created all things,  
And by Your will they exist and were created."*

and all things are in His hands.

† **Psalms 8:3-8** *When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers,  
The moon and the stars, which You have ordained,  
What is man that You are mindful of him,  
And the son of man that You visit him?  
For You have made him a little lower than the angels,  
And You have crowned him with glory and honor.  
You have made him to have dominion over the works of Your hands;  
You have put all things under his feet,  
All sheep and oxen--  
Even the beasts of the field,  
The birds of the air,  
And the fish of the sea  
That pass through the paths of the seas.*

Including the situation that the church was going through, or about to go through as we read on in verse 9.

✠ *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.*

When you read the first sentence here, does it sound familiar? No, think back to last week's study.

† **Rev 2:2a** *I know your works, your labor, your patience, and that you cannot bear those who are evil.*

Both the church in Ephesus and Smyrna were doing **works**, yet there was a difference between the two. The church in Ephesus was so busy doing that they forgot why or for Whom they were doing for, as we studied last week.

† **Rev 2:4** *Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love.*

But that was not the case here in Smyrna; they were doing for the Lord and were doing out of love. But on top of their works, the church was also going through tribulation as well as being poor. *I know your works, tribulation, and poverty (but you are rich)*; Yet Jesus says that they are rich. The church may have been poor financially or concerning possessions here on this earth, but they were rich in heaven with the treasures that they were storing there.

Jesus made this clear in His teachings when He said:

† **Matt 6:19-21** *Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; "but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*

The word "**tribulation**" that the church was going through, could also be translated as "affliction", which means: "to suffer affliction, to be troubled," has reference to sufferings due to the pressure of circumstances, or the antagonism of persons,

So the church had very little or nothing at all in regards to earthly possessions, yet they were still doing for the Lord, and because of their works they were being afflicted by the world.

Stop and think about these things for a moment. We say that if we won the Lotto that we could do so much for the Lord, or if I only had more money I would do more for the Lord. The church in Smyrna did not think this way. They didn't depend upon their earthly possession to dictate their service to the Lord. They knew they were poor yet this did not stop them from ministering to others or telling others about Jesus. They were not focused on building a church building, but rather building God's Kingdom

So, tell me, what do you need to serve the Lord? The answer is very simple... a willing heart, period.

† **Ex 25:2** *Speak to the children of Israel, that they bring Me an offering. From everyone who gives it willingly with his heart you shall take My offering.*

† **1 Chron 28:9** *As for you, my son Solomon, know the God of your father, and serve Him with a loyal heart and with a willing mind; for the LORD searches all hearts and understands all the intent of the thoughts. If you seek Him, He will be found by you; but if you forsake Him, He will cast you off forever.*

† **1 Cor 9:16-17** *For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for necessity is laid upon me; yes, woe is me if I do not preach the gospel! For if I do this willingly, I have a reward; but if against my will, I have been entrusted with a stewardship.*

"Just a willing heart? But that sounds to simple." You may be thinking. Sure it does, but didn't salvation sound simple also, yet you believed and you are now saved. Just as we don't have to give to be saved, we also don't have to have a bunch of money to serve.

This website is a perfect example of that, because it teaches the bible all over the world, and it costs me only \$9.95 a month. So for less then \$10.00 a month the Lord can use this website to reach the entire world with the gospel of Jesus Christ. Now a days, that's pretty much cheaper then a cup of coffee.

Also notice that the tribulation was not that they were poor. So many times people think that if they don't have everything they want, that God doesn't love, or doesn't take care of them properly.

I know for me, for many years, I was broke, or should I say that I was broker then broke. I worked two jobs, 14-16 hours a day 6 days a week, while I was still writing daily devotionals and weekly bible studies. I had no free time what so ever, and my Sunday's consisted of serving in the church for 2-3 services, which took up a large part of my Sunday. The Lord allowed things to get better over times where I didn't have to work two jobs anymore and I had weekends off, and it just got better and better over time. But through it all and over the years the Lord has allowed me to teach His word, and it was never based upon what I had, but rather the ability that the Lord has given me. It's something that you can't buy with money, yet some have tried.

† **Acts 8:17-20** *Then they laid hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit. And when Simon saw that through the laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Spirit was given, he offered them money, saying, "Give me this power also, that anyone on whom I lay hands may receive the Holy Spirit." But Peter said to him, "Your money perish with you, because you thought that the gift of God could be purchased with money!*

Yet we still tend to think that money and service go hand in hand and that you can't serve unless you have money or stuff. I love what pastor Chuck Smith used to say, which was, "Where God guides, God provides" If you think about it, if you are serving in any capacity in the church, have you ever realized that you do so with very little, or no money at all. It doesn't cost a penny to be a greeter or usher in the church, or clean bathrooms or sweep floors or sing on the worship team or teach God's word. So don't ever associate ministry, or as some would call it, and successful ministry as being one that cost big bucks. Just read the book of Acts, and you will read that the gospel was preached and 3,000 men were saved, and how much did it cost? NOTHING (But it cost Jesus everything)

† **Acts 2:41 (NLT2)** *Those who believed what Peter said were baptized and added to the church that day—about 3,000 in all.*

So in this verse: ***and I know the blasphemy of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan.*** What does it mean when it talks about the ***synagogue of satan***? The synagogue of satan is mentioned one other time in the bible, and it's here in the book of Revelation.

† **Rev 3:9** *Indeed I will make those of the synagogue of Satan, who say they are Jews and are not, but lie--indeed I will make them come and worship before your feet, and to know that I have loved you.*

The word synagogue is a term used for the assembly of men, and we usually relate it to a building, which is also true. So who or what is this so called synagogue of satan?

The Old Testament gives us an idea.

† **Num 14:26-27** *And the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying, "How long shall I bear with this evil congregation who complain against Me? I have heard the complaints which the children of Israel make against Me."*

Then put this together with:

† **Romans 2:28-29 (NLT)** *For you are not a true Jew just because you were born of Jewish parents or because you have gone through the Jewish ceremony of circumcision. No, a true Jew is one whose heart is right with God. And true circumcision is not a cutting of the body but a change of heart produced by God's Spirit. Whoever has that kind of change seeks praise from God, not from people.*

The Jewish leaders thought that they were the only way, and the right way, and that they had everything figured out. Yet they refused to be obedient to God. Sure, they tried, but tried under their own wisdom and knowledge, and they took God's law and twisted it so much that they made their own law override God's law. Jesus addressed this with the religious leaders as well.

† **Mark 7:13** *"making the word of God of no effect through your tradition which you have handed down. And many such things you do."*

Sure, these men were Jewish by birth, but according to what Paul wrote, *a true Jew is one whose heart is right with God*. Their hearts were not right with God, even though they had the label of God, it still did not make them followers of God and His law.

If I were to wear a shirt that said, "LA Lakers" that would not make me a Laker. The Jewish leaders wore their robes with tassels yet it did not make them true servants or children of God. It's not what we wear or the things that we do, or even how we look, but rather the attitude of our hearts that makes us true children of God.

† **Romans 2:28-29a (NLT)** *For you are not a true Jew just because you were born of Jewish parents or because you have gone through the Jewish ceremony of circumcision. No, a true Jew is one whose heart is right with God.*

It's the same with being a Christian. So many believe that they are a Christian because they are born into a Christian family. Even other countries think that everyone in the USA are Christians, because we are born here. But neither one of these makes one a Christian, once again it's the attitude of the heart.

So the synagogue of satan is the gathering of Jewish men who played the part of Godly men, yet refused His Son Jesus Christ and by doing so showed that they really didn't believe God's word nor live by it.

In Verse 10, Jesus goes on to give the church in Smyrna a warning for their protection.

✠ *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.*

Jesus tells this church that they are about to suffer many things, and even tells them what some of them are.

✠ *Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days.*

Notice it's not man throwing these people into prison, but rather ***the devil is about to throw some of you into prison***, and he will do it through man.

Many times we get upset with a person who persecutes believers, yet we seem to forget the force that is behind the persecution. Jesus explains this to the religious leaders in the book of John.

✠ **John 8:44** *You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it.*

"Your gonna have to serve somebody. It may be the devil, or it may be the Lord, but your gonna have to serve somebody" Words from an old song, yet they are so true. A lot of people will say that they are not serving the devil, yet they are not serving the Lord. So then either one or the other is in control of their lives.

"But that's not fair" you may be thinking. There are only two choices in life, choose the good or choose the evil.

✠ **Isaiah 7:15** *Curds and honey He shall eat, that He may know to refuse the evil and choose the good.*

✠ **Deuteronomy 30:19 (KJV)** *I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live:*

You make that choice by accepting Jesus or rejecting Him. There is no middle ground and those who try to take the middle road, Jesus has these words for them as we learned in last week's study.

† **Rev 3:15-16** *I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth.*

To choose neither is a copout and is detestable to the Lord, so much that He says that, *I will vomit you out of My mouth.*

So there are those who reject Jesus, and those who do will, not might, but WILL persecute us. Peter says:

† **1 Peter 4:12-14** *Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy. If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are you, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. On their part He is blasphemed, but on your part He is glorified.*

And Jesus has words of encouragement for the church in Smyrna and us too.

✠ *Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.*

We have nothing here on this earth, and all that we have will perish and we will not be able to take any of it with us to heaven. But in heaven you have a crown waiting for you that will not perish, and a crown represents royalty.

† **Gal 4:3-7 (NLT)** *And that's the way it was with us before Christ came. We were slaves to the spiritual powers of this world. But when the right time came, God sent his Son, born of a woman, subject to the law. God sent him to buy freedom for us who were slaves to the law, so that he could adopt us as his very own children. And because you Gentiles have become his children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, and now you can call God your dear Father. Now you are no longer a slave but God's own child. And since you are his child, everything he has belongs to you.*

Not only did Jesus save us, but also through His death and resurrection we are adopted into the family of God, and we know that the family of God is pure royalty.

† **1 Tim 6:15 (NLT)** *For at the right time Christ will be revealed from heaven by the blessed and only almighty God, the King of kings and Lord of lords.*

And if He is King of kings, then we are adopted into this royal family and will receive a crown in heaven.

So, you can either choose to hear what Jesus is saying or ignore it. Jesus says in verse 11



***"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."***

*"Overcomes, what does Jesus mean by that?" The definition is: of Christians, that hold fast to their faith even unto death against the power of their foes, and temptations and persecutions*

We often think of overcoming as getting through something unharmed. But in battles you will get scars, even Jesus bears the scars of His battle. Yet even though Jesus has scars, He came through victorious.

So what are these scars? You have heard the term, *"sticks and stones can break my bones but names will never hurt me."* This is false, because we know that names do hurt, some times more than being hit with a rock or a stick. And people will say things to you as a Christian that hurt, and sometimes we carry that hurt around for a long time. Maybe things from your past that happened to you that you still carry around. Those are the scars of your past life that you are still carrying around. Yet we don't have to carry around those scars any longer, because Jesus took them all when He went to the cross.

† **Isaiah 53:5-6 (NLT)** *But he was wounded and crushed for our sins. He was beaten that we might have peace. He was whipped, and we were healed! All of us have strayed away like sheep. We have left God's paths to follow our own. Yet the LORD laid on him the guilt and sins of us all.*

Whether you did things that you are ashamed of, or things were done or said to you that you are ashamed of, you can be healed of them right now at this very moment, if you just realize that Jesus took those past things to the cross and you are carrying around a burden that Jesus already took off of you.

† **Matt 11:28-30** *"Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."*

If things from your distant, or even near past are burdening you, then it's time to give them to the Lord and stop hanging onto them. How do you do that? In prayer, just speaking it out to the Lord whatever it, or they are, and asking Him to take them from you. You can even symbolize it by going through the motions of lifting this yoke of bondage from around your neck and handing it to the Lord as you confess these things to Him and ask Him to take them from you, Because Jesus said, ***"Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."*** Then take His yoke and place it on yourself, ***"Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls."*** Then you will find rest from your past.

Some of you may be wondering, *"what is this **second death** that Jesus is talking about in verse 11?"* John tells us further on in chapter 20 of Revelation.

† **Rev 20:11-15** *Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.*

Simply put, if you are a Christian, then you don't have to worry about the second death. But if you are not, then see if you fall into one of these categories to see if you will experience the second death.

† **Rev 21:8** *"But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."*

We will get into more detail into these things when we get to chapter 21 in our study of the book of Revelation, but until then, if you are not a believer then the second one fits you "*unbelieving*".

You may be wondering, "*But I thought we only died once, so is this talking about reincarnation and we will have a second chance?*"

No, the first death is our physical death, which we will all experience. Once you die then you go to one of two places, either immediately to heaven.

† **2 Cor 5:8** *We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.*

But if you are not a believer, then you go to a holding place to be tormented, known as Hades.

† **Luke 16:22-23** *So it was that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom. The rich man also died and was buried. And being in torments in Hades, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.*

We often think of hell as the last place that sinners go to when they die. But it's not, yes they will be tormented in Hades and it's described as:

† **Luke 16:24** *Then he cried and said, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.'*

But as bad as this place is, it will get even worse for those who reject Jesus Christ.

† **Matt 22:13** *Then the king said to the servants, 'Bind him hand and foot, take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'*

† **Mark 9:44** *where  
'Their worm does not die,  
And the fire is not quenched.'*

But you may think or heard others says that, “I’m going to party in hell” but there will be no party in hell. If people really want to party when they die, then they need to go to where the party is, and that’s in heaven!

† **Luke 6:22-23** *Blessed are you when men hate you,  
And when they exclude you,  
And revile you, and cast out your name as evil,  
For the Son of Man's sake.  
Rejoice in that day and leap for joy!  
For indeed your reward is great in heaven,  
For in like manner their fathers did to the prophets.*

You’re invited to this party in heaven; why not RSVP to Jesus right now!

Well, that’s it for this week, next week we get into the third letter to the church in Pergamos.

May the Lord richly bless you in His love, grace and mercy and I pray that I will see you all at the party in heaven.