



T H R E A D I N G T H E P E A R L S . o r g

Threading the Pearls of the Book of Revelation

An Expository Study

Session 4: Seven Letters to Seven Churches, part 2
Smyrna — the 'persecuted'

REVELATION 2:8 — 2:11

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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 life.

[REV 2:10]



REVELATION 2

8 And to the angel of the church of Smyrna write: These things saith the First and the Last, who was dead, and is alive:

The angel of the church

ACTS 8:1-4, At that time *a great persecution arose against the church* which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles...

Smyrna – “myrrh”: an embalming spice which alludes to death;

JOHN 19:39-40, Nicodemus, who at first came to Jesus by night, also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds. ⁴⁰Then they took the *body of Jesus, and bound it in strips of linen with the spices*, as the custom of the Jews is to bury.

These are the words

MATH 10:14-16, whoever will not receive you nor hear your words, when you depart from that house or city, shake off the dust from your feet... ¹⁶Behold, *I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves*. Therefore be wise as serpents and harmless as doves.

The First and the Last

ISA 48:12-13, "Listen to Me, O Jacob, And Israel, My called: I am He, *I am the First, I am also the Last*. ¹³Indeed My hand has laid the foundation of the earth, And My right hand has stretched out the heavens; When I call to them, They stand up together.

Who died, and came to life again

JOHN 2:19-22, Jesus answered and said to them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." ²⁰Then the Jews said, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?" ²¹But He was speaking of the temple of His body. ²²Therefore, when *He had risen from the dead*, His disciples remembered that He had said this to them; and they believed the Scripture and the word which Jesus had said.

CONSIDER THIS —

Each of the Seven Letters to the Seven Churches has a major theme. For the first church, Ephesus, the theme was Love.

Just as love is the greatest command: Love the Lord your God (see DEUT 6:5); So, everything we do should be initiated by and reflecting our love for Him:



REVELATION 2

9 I know thy tribulation and thy poverty, but thou art rich: and thou art blasphemed by them that say they are Jews and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan.

I know

PHIL 1:6, being confident of this very thing, that *He who has begun a good work in you will complete it* until the day of Jesus Christ;

1PET 2:20-21, ...But when you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God. ²¹For *to this you were called, because Christ also suffered* for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps;

PHIL 4:4-5, Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice! ⁵*Let your gentleness be known to all men.* The Lord is at hand.

Your afflictions

PHIL 3:10, that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and *the fellowship of His sufferings*, being conformed to His death;

LUKE 21:16-19, You will be betrayed even by parents and brothers, relatives and friends; and they will put some of you to death. ¹⁷*And you will be hated by all for My name's sake...*

Your poverty

2COR 8:1-5, we make known to you the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia: ²that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and *their deep poverty abounded in the riches* of their liberality...

You are rich!

PHIL 4:19, my *God shall supply all your need according to His riches* in glory by Christ Jesus;

JAM 2:5, Listen, my beloved brethren: *Has God not chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith* and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him?

I know the slander

PHIL 1:15-17, Some indeed preach Christ even from envy and strife, and some also from good will: ¹⁶*The former preach Christ from selfish ambition*, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my chains; ¹⁷but the latter out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel.

Say they are Jews

PHIL 3:2-3, Watch out for those dogs, those men who do evil, those *mutilators of the flesh*. For it is we who are the circumcision;

TIT 1:10-16, there are many insubordinate, both idle talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision, ¹¹whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole households, teaching things which they ought not, for the sake of dishonest gain... ¹³This testimony is true. Therefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith, ¹⁴*not giving heed to Jewish fables and commandments of men who turn from the truth.* ¹⁵To the pure all things are pure, but to those who are defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure; but even their mind and conscience are defiled. ¹⁶They profess to know God, but in works they deny Him, being abominable, disobedient, and disqualified for every good work.

Synagogue of Satan

ACTS 26:17-18, I will deliver you from the Jewish people, as well as from the Gentiles, to whom I now send you, ¹⁸to open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and *from the power of Satan to God*, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me';

MATH 12:24-30, ..."He who is not with Me is against Me, and *he who does not gather with Me scatters abroad.*

CONSIDER THIS —

In the letter to Smyrna, the theme is: Persecution.
Does the persecuted church still exist today?

The Seven Letters of Jesus will continue to be relevant to all the churches then and now, even those that exist until "the redemption of the purchased possession" (see EPH 1:14).



REVELATION 2

10 Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer. Behold, the devil will cast some of you into prison that you may be tried: and you shall have tribulation ten days. Be thou faithful until death: and I will give thee the crown of life.

Do not be afraid

PHIL 1:27-28, Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ... stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel, ²⁸and *not in any way terrified* by your adversaries, which is to them a proof of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that from God; 2TIM 1:7, *God has not given us a spirit of fear*, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.

You are about to suffer

PHIL 1:29, For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also *to suffer for his sake*; 1PET 3:13-17, who is he who will harm you if you become followers of what is good? ¹⁴But even *if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you are blessed*. "And do not be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled"...

I tell you

MATH 5:38-42, You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' ³⁹"But *I tell you not to resist an evil person*... ROM 8:18, *I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us*.

The devil

HEB 2:14-15, ...He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, ¹⁵and release those who through fear of death were *all their lifetime subject to bondage*; 1PET 5:8-10, Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. ⁹Resist him, steadfast in the faith, *knowing that the*

same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world...

Some of you in prison

As in Philippi — ACTS 16:22-26, the multitude rose up together against them; and the magistrates tore off their clothes and commanded them to be beaten with rods. ²³And when they had laid many stripes on them, they *threw them into prison*, commanding the jailer to keep them securely... ²⁶Suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were loosed.

To test you

HEB 11:17-19, By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, ¹⁸of whom it was said, "In Isaac your seed shall be called," ¹⁹*concluding that God was able to raise him up*, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense.

You will suffer

1PET 4:15-19, ...if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter. ¹⁷For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God? ¹⁸Now "If the righteous one is scarcely saved, Where will the ungodly and the sinner appear?" ¹⁹Therefore let those *who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls to Him* in doing good, as to a faithful Creator; 2TIM 3:12, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus *will*

CONSIDER THIS —

Here's our to do list from [1PET 5:8-9], Be sober, be vigilant;
Why?

...Because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion. ⁹Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that *the same sufferings* are experienced by your brothers and sisters throughout the world.

suffer persecution;

MATH 10:21-22, "Now brother will deliver up brother to death, and a father his child; and children will rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death. ²²"And *you will be hated by all for My name's sake*. But he who endures to the end will be saved.

Persecution for ten days

HEB 10:32-35, recall the former days in which, after you were illuminated, *you endured a great struggle with sufferings:* ³³partly while you were made a spectacle both by reproaches and tribulations, and partly while you became companions of those who were so treated...;

1PET 3:17-18, it is better, if it is the will of God, to *suffer for doing good* than for doing evil...;

DAN 1:11-12, ...Daniel said to the steward whom the chief of the eunuchs had set over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, ¹²"Please *test your servants for ten days*, and let them give us vegetables to eat and water to drink.

Faithful, even unto... death

PHIL 3:8-11, I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ ⁹and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith; ¹⁰that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, *being conformed to His death*, ¹¹if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead;

MATH 10:28, do not fear those *who kill the body but cannot kill the soul*. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in gehenna.

The point of death

PHIL 1:19-21, ...Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death. ²¹For to me, to live is Christ, and *to die is gain*.

I will give you

PHIL 2:5-8, *Let this mind be in you* which was also in Christ Jesus, ⁶who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, ⁷but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. ⁸And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross;

PHIL 2:12-13, ...for *it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure*.

Crown of life

JAM 1:12, Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive *the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him*.





REVELATION 2

11 He, that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches: He that shall overcome, shall not be hurt by the second death.

He who has an ear

MATH 13:45-46, "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like *a merchant seeking beautiful pearls*, ⁴⁶"who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it.

Hear what the Spirit says

PHIL 2:1-4, if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any *fellowship of the Spirit*, if any affection and mercy, ²fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind...

To the churches

PHIL 4:11-14, I speak in regard to need, for I have learned *in whatever state I am, to be content*. ¹²I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. ¹³I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. ¹⁴Nevertheless you have done well that you shared in my distress.

Overcomes

JOHN 16:33, These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, *I have overcome the world*";
1JON 4:4, You, dear children, *are from God and have overcome them*, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world.

Will not be hurt at all

JOHN 3:14-15, as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, ¹⁵that whoever believes in him may *have eternal life*;
PHIL 3:20-21, our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹who *will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body*...

Second death

DAN 12:2, many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and *everlasting contempt*;
HOS 13:14, "I will ransom them from the power of the grave; *I will redeem them from death*. O Death, I will be your plagues! O Grave, I will be your destruction! Pity is hidden from My eyes;
REV 20:6, Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. *Over such the second death has no power*, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years;
REV 21:8, as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which *is the second death*.

CONSIDER THIS —

PHIL 2:5-8, Let this mind be in you:

He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death;

PHIL 2:13, for *it is God who works in you* both to will and to do for His good pleasure.

This is His gift to us!



GROUP DISCUSSION

REV 2:8, ...'These things says the First and the Last, who was dead, and came to life.

Jesus chose these titles of Himself to address the church of Smyrna.

- ⊕ **1. Considering the situation of the church in Smyrna, what are some significances of these titles of Himself that Jesus chose?**

Consider these verses:

1PET 3:13-15, who is he who will harm you if you become followers of what is good? ¹⁴*even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake*, you are blessed. "And do not be afraid, nor be troubled." ¹⁵But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you.

- ⊕ **2a. How can we have hope while suffering persecution?**

REV 2:9, I know your works, tribulation, and poverty (but you are rich)...

- ⊕ **2b. Why would realizing that Jesus is aware of our suffering give us hope?**

PHIL 1:27-29, Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ... that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel, ²⁸and not in any way terrified by your adversaries, which is to them a proof of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that from God. ²⁹For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but *also to suffer for His sake*.

- ⊕ **3a. How might we 'stand with one mind together' knowing that there are some who suffer more for His sake than we do?**

2TIM 1:8-10, Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner, but *share with me in the sufferings* for the gospel according to the power of God, ⁹who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began, ¹⁰but has now been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.

- ⊕ **3b. How can we 'share in the sufferings' of the persecuted church? How might we pray for them?**

(also see ROM 12:14-15, Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. ¹⁵Rejoice with those who rejoice, and *weep with those who weep*.)

NEXT SESSION —