



Sermon Series: **VII — The Last VII Letters**

Message Title: **SMYRNA**: *Persecution Coming*

This morning we continue our journey into the **Word of God** focusing on **Jesus' Last VII Letters** to **His Churches** in Book of Revelation.

Ephesus — *Abandoned Love*
Thyatira — False Prophets
Laodicea — Lukewarm

Smyrna — *Persecution Coming*
Sardis — Asleep

Pergamum — Repent
Philadelphia — Persevered

The Book of **Revelation** has a 3-Part **PURPOSE**

P#1. The letters to the **7 churches** (**chs. 2–3**) reveal that many of the congregations throughout Asia had **seriously strayed** from the original standards of **truth, faith & practice** **Jesus** and His disciples taught.

P#2. In view of, **opposition & persecution**, Revelation was given to the churches to strengthen **their faith, spiritual determination & loyalty to Jesus Christ**. The Book is also aimed at **inspiring** Christians to be **overcomers** & to **remain faithful** to Christ, **even to the point of death**.

P#3. Finally, it was written to provide Christians, of all generations, with **God's perspective** on:

- (a) our fierce conflict with the **forces of Satan**
- (b) our intense **opposition from the world**
- (c) & the **indisputable fulfillment of HIS PROMISES** to the **CHURCH**!

The GOAL, of JESUS'S Letters, to SE7EN first-century churches was to **challenge, encourage, warn & build up** both believers & churches **throughout** church HISTORY, even to TODAY (**Rev 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22**).

****OUR GOAL** with the **VII SERIES**, is to **CHALLENGE, ENCOURAGE, WARN & BUILD UP, ABUNDANT LIFE!**

LAST WEEK — Our Journey into the Word of God had us examine Jesus' 1st of, **VII LETTERS**, to the Churches in REVELATION. The **1st Church** we visited was **EPHESUS**. It was **commended** for everything it was **DOING** but **REBUKED** for ABANDONING their **1st LOVE, JESUS!**

When the WORK gets elevated over LOVE it is **worthless** because our Work must flow OUT of HIS LOVE!

1 CORINTHIANS 13 tells us we can HAVE & DO, all kinds of things, but without LOVE, We're nothing!

If we do LIFE **without HIS LOVE**, If we do MINISTRY **without HIS LOVE**,
 or RELATIONSHIPS **without HIS LOVE**, even READ the WORD, or REBUKE the WICKED
without HIS LOVE...then its ALL a WASTE of TIME & WORTH NOTHING!!! (**PS 127:1; GAL 4:11**)

****EVERYTHING MUST FLOW FROM HIS LOVE!!!**

THIS WEEK — Our Journey takes us to **SMYRNA**, where we will explore Jesus' **2nd** LETTER to the **VII** Churches in REVELATION.

General Info.

Just 35 miles North of **Ephesus**, the ancient city of **SMYRNA** today is the modern day city of **IZMIR**, Turkey.

SMYRNA was known for its gorgeous architecture & well-planned streets, one famous street named, "**The Street of Gold**," ran through the city. **Prosperity & beauty** were a source of great pride for its citizens.

SMYRNA was major center of **culture, art, & literature** in the ancient world. It was a major **port city**, & its **wealth** contributed to its reputation as a culturally sophisticated city.

Political & Religious Info.

Loyalty to Rome: As a wealthy & important Roman port city, **SMYRNA** was known for its **intense loyalty** to Rome & was a **center for emperor worship**. Inhabitants were required to burn a pinch of incense to the Roman emperor and declare, "**Caesar is Lord**,". **SMYRNA** also had a renown temple to the Goddess Athena (War, Wisdom, & Handicraft)

Hostile Jewish population: The city was also home to a **significant Jewish community** who were actively slandering & persecuting Christians, but interestingly they received permission, because of their submission to Rome, to not have to participate in emperor worship. They were however very concerned the Christians would threaten/ruin this benefit for them.

Biblically Significant Info.

Meaning of name: The name Smyrna is related to **myrrh**, a resin that gives off its sweetest perfume when crushed. Myrrh given as a gift to Jesus in celebration of His birth & used in His burial preparations.

At the time of John's writing, the city's nickname was *The* "**CROWN CITY**" because of its beautifully magnificent buildings situated on the slopes of Mount Pagos, which were said to **resemble a CROWN**.

SMYRNA was also know as a "**CITY of RESURRECTION**": it was founded as a Greek colony, destroyed in **600 BC**, and then famously "**came to life again**" after being rebuilt/resurrected centuries later.

****It's history & it's nickname are symbolically echoed in Jesus's message to the church!**

HERMENEUTICS (Theory & Method of Biblical Interpretation)

Historical Context (Who is involved & Why), **Literary Context** (Genre & Intention),

Syntactical & Verbal Specifics (the way words are put together & the specific words chosen),

Meaning (to the audience then), **Significance** (then, now, future).

On our journey, into the Word this morning, it is so important for us to carefully read each word of these **4 verses**, so we can fully understand what Jesus **said** to **SMYRNA** and **is still saying** to us today.

Imagine yourself having gathered together with your family & other **beleaguered** believers in Smyrna. The once, lively crowd of Jesus followers, can't help but notice **empty seats** once occupied. **Some left** because of **persecution**, others **arrested, exiled**, or gone because they were **"faithful unto death"**. **Most of you** have risked your lives to **gather, pray, study, & worship together**. **All are** societal **outcasts**, deeply **impoverished**, troubled, **afflicted**, & distressed for the choice to **live by faith in Jesus!** **Each one** desperate for a word of encouragement from the guest who has brought a message to the church.

As Pastor unrolls the scroll and begins to read:

REVELATION 2:8-11

To the angel of the church in SMYRNA:

8 "And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write: 'The words of the **first and the last, who died and came to life**. **9** "I know your **tribulation** and your **poverty** (but you are rich) and the **slander** of those who say that they are Jews and are not, but are a **synagogue of Satan**."

10 Do not fear what you are **about to suffer**. Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be **tested**, and **for ten days** you will have **tribulation**. **Be faithful unto death**, and I will give you the **crown of life**. **11** He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. The one who **conquers** will not be hurt by the **second death**."

Jesus' message is one of commendation & encouragement, no rebuke, & begins with the words, **"I know."** **Jesus knew** personally the **trials & tribulations** being experienced by His beloved & precious church. He understood **the suffering, pain, & rejection** they were enduring at the hands of sinners.

The word Jesus uses, **"tribulation"** includes, physical, economic, social, & religious persecution. The **poverty** they lived under was not just, being slightly underfunded, but rather a **crushing, devastating, & inescapable poverty** as the result of business being **boycotted & deliberately suppressed** by the Romans & Jews who hated them. The **slander** was **disgusting & blasphemous** from the Jews including slights of **cannibalism**, because of misunderstanding communion, & **incest** because they loved & called one another brothers & sisters in Christ. All this was intended to **punish, marginalize & vilify** Jesus' followers.

REVELATION 2:10-11

10 Do not fear what you are **about to suffer**. Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be **tested**, and **for ten days** you will have **tribulation**. **Be faithful unto death**, and I will give you the **crown of life**. **11** He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. The one who **conquers** will not be hurt by the **second death**."

Jesus revealed there was **more persecution coming** & encouraged His precious church not to **fear** but to continue in their **faithfulness unto death**. For doing so, they would receive the **CROWN of LIFE**.

Do we have that kind of FAITH? To **faithfully endure**, to **trust God** with our lives, our families, & our death?

Do you remember all the things we learned about SMYRNA at the beginning of this message?

— **SMYRNA** was called the “**City of Resurrection**” because it had been destroyed & rebuilt

BUT Jesus IS the **RESURRECTION** & the **LIFE** & though we shall die, yet shall we LIVE, ETERNALLY

— **SMYRNA** was called the “**Crown City**” because its landscape & architecture resembled a crown. It’s also because it was home to a world-renown stadium where victorious competitors received a champions crown.

BUT Jesus gives those who are faithful unto death, a **CROWN of LIFE!**

— **SMYRNA** had MYRRH the resin that gives off its sweetest perfume when **crushed**.

BUT JESUS was gifted myrrh as a baby foreshadowing the crushing he would experience for our sins and then anointed with it for His burial just before His GLORIOUS RESURRECTION & ASCENSION!

SMYRNA

— REFUSED to abandoned their FIRST LOVE!

— TRUSTED God & were FAITHFUL to Christ even “Unto Death” (Search, Break, Send)

— Kept their EYES FOCUSED on the PROMISES of God (Resurrection & Crown of Life)
& Valued them over the treasures of EARTH!

Perspective doesn’t minimize, justify, or excuse the suffering, but it does allow us to **SEE HIM** through it!

Today is **Missions Sunday** — Lest we forget this mistreatment & tribulation is **STILL** being experienced by Christ’s church, our brothers & sisters, of all ages today, I want to read a **true story** of **FAITHFULNESS!**

READ — **VOM INDIA** — ****Show SLIDES (MAP & COUNTRY LIST)!!!!****

What is JESUS saying to the Church in SMYRNA & to US TODAY?

1. **DRAW CLOSE to YOUR FIRST LOVE!**
2. **TRUST God & Remain FAITHFUL, even UNTO DEATH (NOW & LATER)**
3. **KNOW, Jesus will reward those FAITHFUL unto DEATH with a CROWN of LIFE**
(“Victors” Crown vs. Crown of Life)

ALTAR CALL: “By Your Spirit” (play it?)

NEXT STEPS...

****3 MORE DAYS of FASTING & PRAYER!****

Join us now if you haven’t yet

CLOSING PRAYER! — MAXINE & WARREN DANIELS