



# The Revelation of Jesus Christ

**CLA – 2016**

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# Chapter Two

## Day of Discovery Background Video

# Chapter Two

- **8 “And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write: The first and the last, who was dead, and has come to life, says this: 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. 10 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. Be faithful until 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. He who overcomes will not be hurt by the second death.’**



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- The ancient city of Smyrna is now called Izmir, Turkey – a very important seaport city in it's day due to it's proximity to the west.



# Chapter Two

- **Smyrna was decimated in 600 B.C. by Alyattes of Lydia – just about everything about the city was destroyed. (buildings, culture, and many of it's people)**
- **Approximately 200 years later, Alexander the Great came through the ruins and had dream about rebuilding the city, and he rebuilt it into one the most spectacular cities of its day.**
- **So as time went on, Smyrna became the city known for its resurrection. (the very way Jesus described Himself at the start of this letter)**

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- **This whole notion that Smyrna was the city that was dead, but had been resurrected, was strengthened by its most valuable export, myrrh.**
- **Myrrh was used by many of the day to prepare bodies for burial.**
- **Could it be that God, even through the ancient history of their city, was preparing the Christians of Smyrna for the death and resurrection they would face through the coming persecution?**



# Chapter Two

- So it seems even more relevant that Jesus describes Himself to the Smyrna church in verse #8 as “The first and the last, who was dead, and has come to life”.
- 9 ‘I know your tribulation and your poverty’ - the particular word here for tribulation has as its primary meaning, “pressure” and may have reference to a popular torture of the day. (slabs of stone piled on one’s chest seeking submission)
- The three weights on the church of Smyrna were their poverty, the fact that the Jews slandered them into a sub-culture, and finally Jesus’ own prophecy about their coming persecution.

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**The greek word (qliyij) translated as 'tribulation' in Rev 2:9 has as its primary meaning, PRESSURE.**

**Shown at the right is an artist's depiction of an ancient pressure torture.**





# Chapter Two

- **The believers at Smyrna were in poverty because they lived separated lives that actually cost them in the market place. (they did not follow the Nicolaitan doctrine)**
- **To live for Christ in the late first century under Roman rule often meant that you would forego economic opportunity for your faith. (how different in America today)**
- **What is interesting is that as soon as Jesus pronounced them as being impoverished, He followed quickly with, “but you are rich”.**

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- **Luke 12:15 Then he said, “Beware! Guard against every kind of greed. Life is not measured by how much you own.”**
- **Jesus says to the Christians at Smyrna that in their poverty they are rich – that is not some sort of double-speak, it is simply the way life often works for Christians.**
- **Since life is not truly measured in the abundance of things we have, and since possessions are often a giant distraction from God, then it is totally logical that those who seem the poorest by the world’s standards, are in a great position to be rich.**

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- **In the same Luke 12 section of scripture we have the story of the rich fool who, like so many of our day, had this ‘riches’ thing exactly backwards.**
- **Those who become poor due to their stand for Christ, are perhaps the richest of all.**
- **And the rich fool was not a fool because he was rich, he was a fool because he was not rich towards God. You don’t have to be poor to be rich towards God, but it sure does seem to help!**



# Chapter Two

- **Romans 8:17** Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.
- **To be an heir of God is to be rich beyond measure and just like in Rev 2:9 there is a connection between our current poverty and our future riches.**
- **If we share in His sufferings, we will also share in His glory.**

# Chapter Two

- **The second weight of tribulation was that of being slandered by the Jews in the synagogues of Smyrna.**
- **The Jews had carved out a concession from Rome that allowed them to call Yahweh their God, so these converted Jews who were now Christians were a threat to their deal.**
- **So the Jews slandered the Christians in Smyrna by asserting that they worshipped via sexual orgy, and that they were cannibals because they ate the flesh and drank the blood of someone they called Jesus.**

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- **The slanderous accusations of the Jews in Smyrna turned so many against the Smyrna church that they became a despised sub-culture.**
- **They were people who were not to be associated with, and you shouldn't do business with them either. (remember, they were already excluded from the general market place)**
- **Rev 2:9 “and the blasphemy by those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan.”**



# Chapter Two

- **So weight #1 of their tribulation was their poverty as a result of being excluded from the market place.**
- **Weight #2 of their tribulation was that of being slandered by the Jews and thus pushed further towards the fringes of society.**
- **Weight #3 is then found in Jesus' own words – Rev 2:10 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.**

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- **And tested they were – thrown into prisons, burned at the stake, and fed to the lions. They were savaged and ravaged in so many ways.**
- **One their first and most famous martyrs was a man named ‘Polycarp’ who is remembered for saying these words when faced with being burned at the stake ... “I have served my master for eighty and six years; how can I now deny His name?”**

# Chapter Two

- In his later years Polycarp had a dream about his pillow catching fire and said it was God's way of preparing him to be burned at the stake.
- When they came for Polycarp, he fed his accusers and asked for an hour to pray – the hour was granted, and the guards were asking if it was really necessary to kill such a gentle man.
- He was taken before the Roman proconsul and was given opportunity to deny Jesus, but would not.



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- **The proconsul was angered and ordered him burned at the stake – Polycarp asked that he not be nailed to the stake promising he would not move. (request granted)**
- **The fire was lit, but supernaturally held at bay by a strong wind – when the Romans saw what was happening a soldier was ordered to stab Polycarp to death. (this is legend)**
- **We should ask – could I go to death for Christ with such resolve and peace?**

# Chapter Two

- **So what about the reference to ‘10 days’? Best answer is that it was a metaphor of the day for a short period of time.**
- **“Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.”**
- **So the believers of Smyrna were given a special sort of promise – Jesus said that if they would be faithful ‘until death’ that He would reward them with the crown of life.**
- **A crown just happened to be the official symbol for the city of Smyrna. 😊**

# Chapter Two

- **In the 1<sup>st</sup> century crowns were typically given to those who had competed in some fashion and were victorious.**
- **So we have these Christians in Smyrna, who lived at the fringes of society with not even an opportunity to compete, given a promise by Jesus that they can earn the crown of life.**
- **Someone has said of the Smyrna Christians, that the prophecy of persecution did not make them think “game over”, but with a chance to win a crown they thought “game on”!**

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- **They must have believed what Paul wrote in Phil 1:21, “For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.”**
- **Math 5:11 “Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. 12 Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”**
- **So, so much of our joy in Christ is often rooted in our perspective!**



# Chapter Two

- **So think about this – Smyrna is one of just two of the seven churches about which Jesus had nothing negative to say, so why were they seemingly marked for persecution?**
- **In the 1960's and seventies the modern church was told that God wants every Christian to be healthy and wealthy – and we should have responded with, “based on what?”.**
- **There is no scriptural basis to assume that obedience to God brings the blessings of the world.**

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- **If it has not dawned on you yet, please know that it will one day become self-evident that God seems to have little interest in our present comfort.**
- **In fact, it almost seems like He is often interested in our being uncomfortable in this world, so that we will long for Him.**
- **The church at Smyrna was going through some awful things and their future was even bleaker, but they were hard at it for God to the point that He has nothing negative to say about them.**

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- **If we were wise we would welcome suffering with open arms because we know that it is intended to draw us closer to God.**
- **James said, “draw close to God, and He will draw close to you”, but our problem is that we seldom keep drawing closer without some pressure to keep us moving.**
- **It could be argued that wise people pray for suffering because they can see the work it does and the lasting effect it brings to their lives.**

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- **By the way, the tribulation that the church at Smyrna was going through was said to be a ‘testing’.**
- **Now, since God is omniscient, the testing we go through is not so He can see where we are spiritually, but so that we can see what we are made of.**
- **So when we are tested, we have the opportunity to either rejoice in the ground we’ve covered, or we can repent of our laziness and inattentiveness so that we are ready for the next test.**



# The 'Fire'

by Christine Wyrzten

**I've been through a fire, that has deepened my desire;**

**To know the living God, more and more.**

**It hasn't been much fun, but the work that it has done;**

**In my life has made it worth the hurt.**

**You see sometimes we need the hard times;**

**To bring us to our knees, otherwise we'd do as we please and never heed Him.**

**But he always knows what's best; and it's when we are distressed;**

**That we really come to know God as He is.**



# Questions / Comments