

TO THE CHURCH IN SMYRNA. Ch. 2:8-11.

**8 And unto the angel of the church in Smyrna write; These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive; 9 I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan. 10 Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life. 11 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.**

It is natural that this city should have been next in mind, for it stood next to Ephesus in position and importance. The city was known as “The Beauty of Asia.” Even in modern days the city has been known for its great importance, and has likewise been associated with suffering, for “the Church in Smyrna” was the suffering church.

Whoever “the angel of the Church in Smyrna” may have been, none can forget that, possibly at this time, Polycarp, the famous Christian martyr, was the head of this church. In any case the name Polycarp helps one to remember the church in Smyrna, and to understand this letter of encouragement, which has ever brought cheer to those who were persecuted and tormented for the sake of Christ.

The description of the author is significant, “The first and the last, who was dead, and lived again.” The Christ who tasted the bitterness of death, and rose in triumph, can comfort those who suffer for his sake.

He assures them that he knows all their tribulation and poverty, and the blasphemy of their enemies. He encourages them to be brave even in the face of greater trials: “Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.”

The overcomers are promised exemption, not from the death of the body, but from the death of the soul. One who is loyal to Christ never knows real death, “the second death.”

(Notes on the Revelation by W. J. Erdman, Edited by Charles R. Erdman, New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, MCMXXX, 26-27)