

When Jesus Comes To Church

3) Poor, But Rich

Smyrna is from 'myrrh'

**Myrrh is a gum resin taken from a
shrubby tree and has a very bitter taste**

**But when crushed it emits a beautiful
perfume**

**Smyrna, like myrrh, released its
fragrance as it was beaten into
fine pieces**

'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...'

(Rev.2:8)

About 600BC the Lydians broke into Smyrna and destroyed it

For about 400 years it lay in ruins, desolate

Then it was rebuilt with great style by Alexander the Great

Smyrna increased in importance as Ephesus declined and is still standing after 3,000 year as Ismir a Turkish city of over 300,000

***'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'***

(Rev.2:9)

They were persecuted and poor

The two were related

- **Persecution came from the pagans and the Jews. The Jews informed on the Christians for their refusal to worship Caesar and participate in municipal pagan religions**
- **They also blasphemed (slandered) the Christians. Lies were told to smear their reputation**
- **It is hard enough to escape poverty and persecution with a good reputation; but impossible with a bad reputation**
- **Jesus says, 'I know'. Your reputation before Him is what matters**
- **The Jews were called 'a synagogue of Satan.' (Compare 'the throne of Satan' Rev.2:13 and 'the depths of Satan' Rev.2:24)**

- ✓ **Poverty. Smyrna was a great trade city and a wealthy city and the Christians could have had a slice of it if they compromised**
- ✓ **Instead they experienced economic boycott, etc.**
- ✓ **The word used for 'poverty' is the word for abject poverty. They were not just poor, they were very, very poor**
- ✓ **Smyrna was a poor-rich church; Laodicea was a rich-poor church**

- ✓ *'...men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain. From such withdraw yourself. Now godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content...But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness'* (1 Tim.6:6-9, 11)
- ✓ **Biblical prosperity:** *'And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work'* (2 Cor.9:8)

- **Tribulation. Gk. *thlipsis* which means 'pressure; being squeezed; a crushing beneath a weight'. Paul said, '*We are hard pressed on every side...*' (2 Cor.4:8)**
- **The pressure of the suffering inflicted upon them by Satan through their enemies was designed to crush the Christianity out of them**
- **But it did the opposite. It released a beautiful perfume that was a sweet-smelling savour to God**

'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' (Rev.2:10)

**The devil would throw *some* into prison
See Eph.6:11-12**

**However we interpret the 'ten days' the point is
God sets a time limit of persecution. It is finite**

**Always view suffering in the context of eternity
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' (Rev.2:11)

The 'second death' is a Biblical term for the final annihilation of those who reject Christ (see Lk.12:4-5; Rev.20:6,14; 21:8)

Eternal life is not a reward; it is a gift through faith or personal belief in Jesus Christ

This is a litotes

What Jesus is saying is that believers may face physical death, but because they have had a second birth no believer will ever face the second death (Eph. 2:1, 5; John 5:24; 11:25)

Jesus warned His followers, '*Remember the word that I said to you, "A servant is not greater than his master."* If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you' (Jn.15:20)

This began from the start of the Church Age

Peter and John were imprisoned

Stephen and James were martyred

Paul stoned, beaten, imprisoned and executed

Peter was executed

Nero was the first emperor to persecute Christians

Polycarp

***Today, almost 300 million Christians around the world—or 1 out of every 7—live in a country where they suffer some form of persecution, such as random arrest, violence, human rights violations and even murder**

***Christian persecution is most sharply on the rise in South and East Asia, in countries like Myanmar, India, Pakistan, China and North Korea**

***Across Africa jihadist violence against Christians is at critical levels, e.g. ISIS affiliate Boko Haram**

***In Pakistan, blasphemy laws have been used to target Christians in an effort to silence them**

***Persecution of Christians in parts of the Middle East amounts to almost genocide. Millions of Christians have been uprooted from their homes, some have been killed, kidnapped, imprisoned and discriminated against**

***The purpose of persecution is to destroy Christianity and wipe the Church from the face of the earth. It failed. 'The blood of the martyrs was the seed of the Church'. 'If you can't beat them...' The Church grows dramatically under persecution. 'The false brethren are gone'**

***In the West we are beginning to know persecution through attempts to silence us**

***'I will build my church; and the gates of
hell shall not prevail against it'***

Matt. 16:18 (KJV)