**Lesson 5**

**Revelation 2:8-11 (NASB77)**
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:

**1. Destination (**[**2:8**](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Rev+2%3A8)**)**

[**2:8**](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Rev+2%3A8)**.** The second letter was addressed to **Smyrna,** a large and wealthy city 35 miles north of Ephesus. Like Ephesus, it was a seaport. In contrast to Ephesus, which today is a deserted ruin, Smyrna is still a large seaport with a present population of about 200,000. Christ described Himself as **the First and the Last, who died and came to life again.** Christ is portrayed as the eternal One (cf. [1:8](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Rev+1%3A8), [17](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Rev+1%3A17); [21:6](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Rev+21%3A6); [22:13](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Rev+22%3A13)) who suffered death at the hands of His persecutors and then was resurrected from the grave (cf. [1:5](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Rev+1%3A5)). These aspects of Christ were especially relevant to the Christians at Smyrna who, like Christ in His death, were experiencing severe persecution.

The name of the city, Smyrna, means "myrrh," an ordinary perfume. It was also used in the anointing oil of the tabernacle, and in embalming dead bodies (cf. [Ex. 30:23](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ex+30%3A23); [Ps. 45:8](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ps+45%3A8); [Song 3:6](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=SS+3%3A6); [Matt. 2:11](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Mt+2%3A11); [Mark 15:23](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Mk+15%3A23); [John 19:39](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Jn+19%3A39)). While the Christians of the church at Smyrna were experiencing the bitterness of suffering, their faithful testimony was like myrrh or sweet perfume to God.

**Revelation 1:8 (NIV)**
8  "I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty."

**Revelation 1:17 (NIV)**
17  When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. Then he placed his right hand on me and said: "Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last.

**Revelation 21:6 (NIV)**
6  He said to me: "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To him who is thirsty I will give to drink without cost from the spring of the water of life.

**Revelation 22:13 (NIV)**
13  I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.

**Revelation 1:5 (NIV)**
5  and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood,

**Exodus 30:23 (NIV)**
23  "Take the following fine spices: 500 shekels of liquid myrrh, half as much (that is, 250 shekels) of fragrant cinnamon, 250 shekels of fragrant cane,

**Psalm 45:8 (NIV)**
8  All your robes are fragrant with myrrh and aloes and cassia; from palaces adorned with ivory the music of the strings makes you glad.

**Song of Songs 3:6 (NIV)**
6  Who is this coming up from the desert like a column of smoke, perfumed with myrrh and incense made from all the spices of the merchant?

**Matthew 2:11 (NIV)**
11  On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold and of incense and of myrrh.

**Mark 15:23 (NIV)**
23  Then they offered him wine mixed with myrrh, but he did not take it.

**John 19:39 (NIV)**
39  He was accompanied by Nicodemus, the man who earlier had visited Jesus at night. Nicodemus brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about seventy-five pounds.

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.

**2. Commendation (**[**2:9**](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Rev+2%3A9)**)**

[**2:9**](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Rev+2%3A9)**.** What a comfort it was to the Christians in Smyrna to know that Christ knew all about their sufferings: **I know your afflictions and your poverty—yet you are rich!** Besides suffering persecution, they were also enduring extreme poverty (*ptōcheian* in contrast with *penia*, the ordinary word for "poverty"). Though extremely poor, they were rich in the wonderful promises Christ had given them (cf. [2 Cor. 6:10](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=2Co+6%3A10); [James 2:5](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Jas+2%3A5)). They were being persecuted not only by pagan Gentiles but also by hostile Jews and by Satan himself. Apparently the local Jewish synagogue was called the **synagogue of Satan** (cf. [Rev. 3:9](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Rev+3%3A9)). (Satan is mentioned in four of the seven letters: [2:9](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Rev+2%3A9), [13](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Rev+2%3A13), [24](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Rev+2%3A24); [3:9](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Rev+3%3A9).) In the history of the church the most severe persecution has come from religionists.

**2 Corinthians 6:10 (NASB)**
10  as sorrowful yet always rejoicing, as poor yet making many rich, as having nothing yet possessing all things.

**James 2:5 (NASB)**
5  Listen, my beloved brethren: did not God choose the poor of this world *to be* rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him?

**Revelation 3:9 (NASB)**
9  'Behold, I will cause *those* of the synagogue of Satan, who say that they are Jews and are not, but lie—I will make them come and bow down at your feet, and *make them* know that I have loved you.

**Revelation 2:9 (NASB)**
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.

**Revelation 2:13 (NASB)**
13  'I know where you dwell, where Satan's throne is; and you hold fast My name, and did not deny My faith even in the days of Antipas, My witness, My faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells.

**Revelation 2:24 (NASB)**
24  'But I say to you, the rest who are in Thyatira, who do not hold this teaching, who have not known the deep things of Satan, as they call them—I place no other burden on you.

**3. Rebuke**

Notable is the fact that there was no rebuke whatever for these faithful, suffering Christians. This is in striking contrast with Christ's evaluations of five of the other six churches, which He rebuked. Smyrna's sufferings, though extremely difficult, had helped keep them pure in faith and life.


10  'Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast 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.
11  ' 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.'

**4. Exhortation (**[**2:10a**](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Rev+2%3A10)**)**

[**2:10a**](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Rev+2%3A10)**.** The word of Christ to these suffering Christians was an exhortation to have courage: **Do not be afraid** (lit., stop being afraid) **of what you are about to suffer.** Their severe trials were to continue. They would receive further **persecution** by imprisonment and additional suffering **for 10 days.** Some have taken these words "for 10 days" as a symbolic representation of the entire persecution of the church; others think it refers to 10 persecutions under Roman rulers. The most probable meaning is that it anticipated a limited period of time for suffering (cf. Walvoord, *Revelation*, pp. 61-2). Scott finds precedence in Scripture that 10 days means a limited period of time (Walter Scott, *Exposition of the Revelation of Jesus Christ*, p. 69). He cites [Genesis 24:55](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ge+24%3A55); [Nehemiah 5:18](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ne+5%3A18); [Jeremiah 42:7](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Jer+42%3A7); [Daniel 1:12](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Da+1%3A12); [Acts 25:6](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+25%3A6). Alford holds the same position, citing [Numbers 11:19](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Nu+11%3A19); [14:22](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Nu+14%3A22); [1 Samuel 1:8](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=1Sa+1%3A8); [Job 19:3](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Job+19%3A3) (*The Greek Testament*, 4:567).

The problem of human suffering, even for a limited time, has always perplexed faithful Christians. Suffering can be expected for the ungodly, but why should the godly suffer? The Scriptures give a number of reasons. Suffering may be (1) disciplinary ([1 Cor. 11:30-32](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=1Co+11%3A30-32); [Heb. 12:3-13](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Heb+12%3A3-13)), (2) preventive (as Paul's thorn in the flesh, [2 Cor. 12:7](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=2Co+12%3A7)), (3) the learning of obedience (as Christ's suffering, [Heb. 5:8](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Heb+5%3A8); cf. [Rom. 5:3-5](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ro+5%3A3-5)), or (4) the providing of a better testimony for Christ (as in [Acts 9:16](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Ac+9%3A16)).

**Genesis 24:55 (NIV)**
55  But her brother and her mother replied, "Let the girl remain with us ten days or so; then you may go."

**Nehemiah 5:18 (NIV)**
18  Each day one ox, six choice sheep and some poultry were prepared for me, and every ten days an abundant supply of wine of all kinds. In spite of all this, I never demanded the food allotted to the governor, because the demands were heavy on these people.

**Jeremiah 42:7 (NIV)**
7  Ten days later the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah.

**Daniel 1:12 (NIV)**
12  "Please test your servants for ten days: Give us nothing but vegetables to eat and water to drink.

**Acts 25:6 (NIV)**
6  After spending eight or ten days with them, he went down to Caesarea, and the next day he convened the court and ordered that Paul be brought before him.

**Numbers 11:19 (NIV)**
19  You will not eat it for just one day, or two days, or five, ten or twenty days,

**Numbers 14:22 (NIV)**
22  not one of the men who saw my glory and the miraculous signs I performed in Egypt and in the desert but who disobeyed me and tested me ten times--

**1 Samuel 1:8 (NIV)**
8  Elkanah her husband would say to her, "Hannah, why are you weeping? Why don't you eat? Why are you downhearted? Don't I mean more to you than ten sons?"

**Job 19:3 (NIV)**
3  Ten times now you have reproached me; shamelessly you attack me.

**1 Corinthians 11:30 (NIV)**
30  That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep.

**1 Corinthians 11:31 (NIV)**
31  But if we judged ourselves, we would not come under judgment.

**1 Corinthians 11:32 (NIV)**
32  When we are judged by the Lord, we are being disciplined so that we will not be condemned with the world.

**Hebrews 12:3 (NIV)**
3  Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

**Hebrews 12:4 (NIV)**
4  In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood.

**Hebrews 12:5 (NIV)**
5  And you have forgotten that word of encouragement that addresses you as sons: "My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you,

**Hebrews 12:6 (NIV)**
6  because the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son."

**Hebrews 12:7 (NIV)**
7  Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father?

**Hebrews 12:8 (NIV)**
8  If you are not disciplined (and everyone undergoes discipline), then you are illegitimate children and not true sons.

**Hebrews 12:9 (NIV)**
9  Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of our spirits and live!

**Hebrews 12:10 (NIV)**
10  Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness.

**Hebrews 12:11 (NIV)**
11  No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.

**Hebrews 12:12 (NIV)**
12  Therefore, strengthen your feeble arms and weak knees.

**Hebrews 12:13 (NIV)**
13  "Make level paths for your feet," so that the lame may not be disabled, but rather healed.

**2 Corinthians 12:7 (NIV)**
7  To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me.

**Hebrews 5:8 (NIV)**
8  Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered

**Romans 5:3 (NIV)**
3  Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance;

**Romans 5:4 (NIV)**
4  perseverance, character; and character, hope.

**Romans 5:5 (NIV)**
5  And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.

**Acts 9:16 (NIV)**
16  I will show him how much he must suffer for my name."

**5. Promise (**[**2:10b-11**](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Rev+2%3A10-11)**)**

[**2:10b-11**](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Rev+2%3A10-11)**.** In their suffering the believers at Smyrna were exhorted, **Be faithful, even to the point of death.** While their persecutors could take their physical lives, it would only result in their receiving **the crown of life.** Apparently up to this time none had died, but this could be expected. Later Polycarp, having become the bishop of the church in Smyrna, was martyred, and undoubtedly others were also killed (cf. Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset, and David Brown, *A Commentary Critical*, *Experimental and Practical on the Old and New Testaments.* Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1945. 6:662). "The crown of life" is one of several crowns promised to Christians (cf. [1 Cor. 9:25](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=1Co+9%3A25); [1 Thes. 2:19](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=1Th+2%3A19); [2 Tim. 4:6-8](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=2Ti+4%3A6-8); [1 Peter 5:4](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=1Pe+5%3A4); [Rev. 4:4](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Rev+4%3A4)). The crown of life is also mentioned in [James 1:12](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Jas+1%3A12). Believers are encouraged to be faithful by contemplating what awaits them after death, namely, eternal life.

As in all the letters, an exhortation is given to the individuals who will listen. The promise is given to overcomers, referring in general to all believers, assuring them that they **will not be hurt at all by the second death** (cf. [Rev. 20:15](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Rev+20%3A15)).

The reassuring word of Christ to Smyrna is the word to all suffering and persecuted Christians. As stated in [Hebrews 12:11](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Heb+12%3A11), "No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it."

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**1 Corinthians 9:25 (NIV)**
25  Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever.

**1 Thessalonians 2:19 (NIV)**
19  For what is our hope, our joy, or the crown in which we will glory in the presence of our Lord Jesus when he comes? Is it not you?

**2 Timothy 4:6 (NIV)**
6  For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time has come for my departure.

**2 Timothy 4:7 (NIV)**
7  I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.

**2 Timothy 4:8 (NIV)**
8  Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day--and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.

**1 Peter 5:4 (NIV)**
4  And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away.

**Revelation 4:4 (NIV)**
4  Surrounding the throne were twenty-four other thrones, and seated on them were twenty-four elders. They were dressed in white and had crowns of gold on their heads.

**James 1:12 (NIV)**
12  Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him.

**Revelation 20:15 (NIV)**
15  If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

**Hebrews 12:11 (NIV)**
11  No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.

**Open it**

1. What are the most valuable things you own—those things that make you feel rich?
 **God, Family Bible, Family**

2. What is the most hurtful thing anyone has ever done to you because of something you stood for?
 **Cussed out for changing my mind on a financial decision that was right for me in the end**

**Explore it**

3. Who was addressing John? ([2:8](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Rev+2%3A8))
 **Jesus**

4. What kind of contrast did Jesus draw? ([2:9](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Rev+2%3A9))
 **I know your trials and your poverty, yet you are rich**

5. What did Christ say about some so-called Jews in Smyrna? ([2:9](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Rev+2%3A9))
 **They were a synagogue of Satan**

6. What did Jesus say to comfort the Christians in Smyrna? ([2:10](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Rev+2%3A10))
 **Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer**

7. How long would the church in Smyrna suffer? ([2:10](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Rev+2%3A10))
 **10 Days**

8. What challenge did Christ give His audience? ([2:10](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Rev+2%3A10))
 **Be faithful, even to death and I will give you the crown of life, victors crown**

9. Who else did Jesus say could benefit from the message to the church at Smyrna? ([2:11](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Rev+2%3A11))
 **He who has and ear, let him hear**

10. What final promise was made to "him who overcomes"? ([2:11](http://www.crossbooks.com/verse.asp?ref=Rev+2%3A11))
 **He will not be hurt by the second death**

**Get it**

11. What is significant about the title Christ gave Himself ("the First and the Last, who died and came to life again")?
 **To show He is God and to show He alone is the way**

12. What kinds of persecution do Christians face today?
  **We are laughed at for our beliefs, and killed in some countries**

13. How can the eternal promises of God give us courage and strength in the face of attacks on our stand for Christ?
 **We know where our end place is, they may kill the body but not our soul**

**Apply it**

14. What are some ways you can express your thanks to God today for the riches you enjoy?
 **Share his story to all who will listen**

15. What steps can you take today to build your courage against persecution?
 **Read about what was done in the bible and prepare for the worst in prayer**