**The Book of Revelation:**

**Smyrna: The Persecuted Church**

February 25, 2017

Revelation 2:8-11 (NKJV)

8“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: 9“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. 10Do 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.

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.”’

Revelation 1:20 (NKJV) – The mystery of the seven stars which you saw in My right hand, and the seven golden lampstands: The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands which you saw are the seven churches.

Angel: aggelos (ἄγγελος) – an angel or a messenger (pastor)

**The city of Smyrna.**

**Description of Yeshua –** “who was dead, and came to life” (2:8).

**There is no rebuke to this church** (5 of 7 churches receive rebuke).

**The Book of Job –**

Job 2:11-13 – 11Now when Job’s three friends heard of all this adversity that had come upon him, each one came from his own place—Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite. For they had made an appointment together to come and mourn with him, and to comfort him. 12And when they raised their eyes from afar, and did not recognize him, they lifted their voices and wept; and each one tore his robe and sprinkled dust on his head toward heaven. 13So they sat down with him on the ground seven days and seven nights, and no one spoke a word to him, for they saw that *his* grief was very great.

Job 3:1-6 (NKJV)

3:1 After this Job opened his mouth and cursed the day of his *birth*. 2 And Job spoke, and said:

3 “May the day perish on which I was born,

And the night *in which* it was said,

‘A male child is conceived.’

4 May that day be darkness;

May God above not seek it,

Nor the light shine upon it.

5 May darkness and the shadow of death claim it;

May a cloud settle on it;

May the blackness of the day terrify it.

6 *As for* that night, may darkness seize it;

May it not rejoice among the days of the year,

May it not come into the number of the months.

**Commendation to the church (2:9).**

* “I know your works.” It is the same praise used for Ephesus in Revelation 2:2. (*ergon*, ἔργον)
* “I know your tribulation.”
* "I know your poverty."

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

**Who are these persecutors in Revelation 2:9-10?**

**“The “synagogue of Satan”**

* Satan (שָׂטָן, *satan* – Rev. 2:9)

– the adversary or the one who withstands.

* Devil (*diabolos*, διάβολος – Rev. 2:10)

– the slanderer or false accuser.

* Synagogue (*sunagoge*, συναγωγή – Rev. 2:9)

– a congregation or a gathering of people.

* Church (*ekklesia*, ἐκκλησία – Rev. 2:8)

– a gathering of citizens who are called out of their homes into some public place.

“Revelation shows no sense of a Christianity, or even of a Jewish-devotion, unmoored from Judaism.” – ***The Jewish Annotated New Testament*, (New York, Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 464.**

“Increasingly, scholars are looking at Revelation as a Jewish text that reveals a heavenly Christ rather than a Christian text with Jewish attributes,” – *The Jewish Annotated New Testament*, p. 465.

**Satan** (vs. 9) **or the devil** (vs. 10) **is behind all persecution.**

**“Ten days” of tribulation?**

1. 10 is a symbol of completeness.
2. 10 is a limited period.

* Daniel 1:12 (NKJV) – Please test your servants for ten days, and let them give us vegetables to eat and water to drink.
* Abraham had sent his servant to find a wife for Isaac.

Genesis 24:55 (NKJV) – But her brother and her mother said, “Let the young woman stay with us *a few* days, at least ten; after that she may go.”

1. 10 is prophetic
2. 10 periods of persecution.

1: Nero: A.D. 54

2: Domitian: A.D. 81

3: Trajan: A.D. 98

4. Hadrian: A.D. 117

5. Septimius Severus: A.D. 193

6. Maximin: A.D. 235

7. Decius: A.D. 249

8. Valerian: A.D. 254

9. Aurelian: A.D. 270

10. Diocletian: A.D. 284

1. 10 years of Diocletian’s persecution.

**Why do the godly suffer?**

1. **Discipline.** (1 Cor. 5; 1 Cor. 11:30-32; Heb. 12:3-13)
2. **Teaching.**

* Hebrews 5:8 (NKJV) – though He was a Son, *yet* He learned obedience by the things which He suffered.

1. **Preventative.**

* 2 Corinthians 12:7 (NKJV) – 7And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure.

1. **Testimony.**
   * In Acts 9:15-16 (NKJV) – , 15But the Lord said to him, “Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine **to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel**. 16For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name’s sake.”
   * Revelation 12:11 (NKJV) – And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death.

**Instructions to the church at Smyrna (2:10).**

* “Do not fear.”
* “Be faithful until death.”

**Promise to the church at Smyrna (2:10).**

“I will give you the crown of life.”

**Prophetic Message to the church at Smyrna**

Time period: A.D. 100 – 312