**The Book of**

 **Revelation**

Lesson Number Four

 **“Walk Through the Bible” Series**

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We are continuing on in our study of the letters to the seven churches in Asia Minor that Jesus gave to John to give to the church’s pastors. Last week we talked about the letter to the church at Ephesus.

**Points of Similarity in the Letters to the Seven Churches**

1. The headings of all letters addressed to the various pastors correspond. “Write this letter to the angel of the church in ,,,”
2. Christ commends each church, except the last (Laodicea), for its “works” and other virtuous characteristics.
3. Christ rebukes every church except the second (Smyrna) and the sixth (Philadelphia).
4. The first (Ephesus), third (Pergamum), fifth (Sardis) and the seventh (Laodicea) churches are commanded to repent while the second (Smyrna), fourth (Thyatira) and sixth (Philadelphia) churches are not. The second (Smyrna) and sixth (Philadelphia) have nothing of which to repent, having been purged by persecution. The fourth (Thyatira) has sufficient evil of which to repent but has become reprobate and past redemption.
5. A warning of judgment is given to every church except the second (Smyrna) and sixth (Philadelphia) ones.
6. Every church, except the second (Smyrna) and the sixth (Philadelphia), is more corrupt than its predecessor; the last (Laodicea) is the most corrupt of all, without one single virtue to commend it. There are about ten points of commendation in favor of the first (Ephesus) church and the same number of condemnation against the last church (Laodicea).
7. There is a promise to the overcomer in each letter.
8. The same admonition is given to each church, “He that hath an ear let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.”
9. In each letter John is told to “write.” This shows that he is being directed by Christ. When each letter is made complete, the next begins. This makes evident the consecutive order of the “things” of the book. When the last letter is completed John is told to write “the things which shall be hereafter.” Thus we have a new order of “things” after the churches, which do not concern the Church on earth, for it is in heaven during the fulfillment of Rev. 4:1; 19:10 and it will come back to earth with Christ at the second advent as pictured in Rev. 19:11-21.

**Letter to the Church at Smyrna**

Smyrna is the commonly known city of Izmir in Turkey. Smyrna was a large beautiful city. In fact, it was known for its beauty. It was about 35 miles northwest of Ephesus.

**Polycarp** was the bishop, or pastor, of the Church at Smyrna. He was ordained by John to this position and had been a disciple of John’s. Polycarp was martyred in Smyrna at the age of 86 in 156A.D.

Polycarp wrote a letter to the Church at Philippi which is still in existence. There is also another writing called, “The Martyrdom of Polycarp” which is still available.

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

8 “Write this letter to the angel of the church in Smyrna. This is the message from the one who is the First and the Last, who was dead but is now alive: 9 “I know about your suffering and your poverty—but you are rich! I know the blasphemy of those opposing you. They say they are Jews, but they are not, because their synagogue belongs to Satan. 10 Don’t be afraid of what you are about to suffer. The devil will throw some of you into prison to test you. You will suffer for ten days. But if you remain faithful even when facing death, I will give you the crown of life. 11 “Anyone with ears to hear must listen to the Spirit and understand what he is saying to the churches. Whoever is victorious will not be harmed by the second death.

Some teachers of eschatology teach that the letter to the Church at Ephesus refers to a time period of the beginning of the Church. They say that the letter to the Church of Smyrna refers to a forty year period of suffering that the Church went through.

We talked about this earlier and there is no scriptural evidence to support this kind of doctrine. These teachers believe that each letter to each of the seven Churches refers to a specific time period and age for the Church. It just isn’t scriptural!

What does God teach us from the letter to the Church of Smyrna?

1. Again, God knows everything about us!
	1. God is **Omniscient**, all knowing.
	2. Jesus was NOT all knowing on earth.
		1. What He knew was by **revelation** of the **Holy Spirit** in the same way we can.
	3. God knew about the Smyrnan’s suffering and poverty.
		1. God has a special place in His heart for the poor.

**Psalm 72:12-14 (NLT)**

12 He will rescue the poor when they cry to him; he will help the oppressed, who have no one to defend them.
13 He feels pity for the weak and the needy, and he will rescue them. 14 He will redeem them from oppression and violence, for their lives are precious to him.

* 1. Even though the Smyrneans were poor (financially), God considered them to be **RICH**!
		1. One commentator said they were poor because of not accepting the mark of the beast (Rev. 13:16,17). This cannot be so!
		2. We must remember the book of Revelation is **CHRONOLOGICAL**.
		3. The CHURCH (these seven churches included) will be **raptured** before the taking of the mark of the beast occurs. It will by only by those who become born again AFTER the rapture.
	2. God knew the blasphemy of those who opposed them.
		1. Their opposition were not **TRUE** Jews.
		2. They were of the **“Synagogue of Satan.”**
			1. Jews were the offspring and descendants of Judah, **one** of the sons of Israel – NOT ALL the sons and tribes of Israel.
			2. **Israelites are the offspring of Israel** (also Hebrews - Jacob) **regardless of which tribe they came from**.
			3. A Jew IS an Israelite but not all Israelites are Jews!
			4. Many Israelites were dispersed throughout the known world in the 7th and 8th centuries B.C.E. in what is called the **Diaspora**.
			5. In the 9th century A.D., a group of people from the Caucasus region of Russia, the **Khazars**, took on the religion of the Jews. Many of them are the “Jews” who are in Israel now.
			6. **DNA** **testing** proves that the largest percentage of Jews in modern day Israel are not true descendants of Abraham!

<http://www.texemarrs.com/042013/jews_not_descendants_of_abraham.htm>

The Book of Mormon’s story of a righteous people coming the Americas before Christ has been disproven by DNA also.

*“True science and the “****rightly******divided****” Word of God will always* ***agree****!”*

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Modern science **changes** from generation to generation. Scientists rely on “hypothesis” and “theories.”

* + - 1. **“Synagogue of Satan” - Commentary**

“Most commentators (for example, Beasley-Murray 1974:82; Wall 1991:73) identify this group as **actual Jews in Smyrna who refused to accept Jesus as Messiah**.

The assumption is that Christians, even Gentile Christians, by the end of the first century were regarding themselves as the true "Jews," and the actual ethnic Jews as no Jews at all.”

<https://www.biblegateway.com/resources/commentaries/IVP-NT/Rev/Message-Smyrna>

Jews by national descent, but not spiritually of "the true circumcision." The Jews blaspheme Christ as "the hanged one." As elsewhere, so at Smyrna they bitterly opposed Christianity; and at POLYCARP'S martyrdom they joined the heathens in clamoring for his being cast to the lions; and when there was an obstacle to this, for his being burnt alive; and with their own hands they carried logs for the pile.

The Jews, who might have been "the Church of God," had now, by their opposition and unbelief, become the synagogue of Satan. So "the throne of Satan" (Revelation 2:13) represents the **heathens' opposition to Christianity**; "the depths of Satan" (Revelation 2:24), **the opposition of heretics.**

<http://www.biblestudytools.com/commentaries/jamieson-fausset-brown/revelation/revelation-2.html>

* + - 1. Who are the “True Jews?”

**Romans 2:28-29 (NLT)**

28 For you are not a true Jew just because you were born of Jewish parents or because you have gone through the ceremony of circumcision. 29 No, a true Jew is one whose heart is right with God. And true circumcision is not merely obeying the letter of the law; rather, it is a change of heart produced by God’s Spirit. And a person with a changed heart seeks praise from God, not from people.

* + - * 1. The “True Jews” are those who **believe** in **Christ** and have been **circumcised** in their hearts!
1. Instruction to the Church at Smyrna.
	1. Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer.
		1. Some would be thrown into prison to be tested.
			1. God **will allow** us to go through difficult times but **He does not** test or tempt us.

**James 1:13 (WEY)**

13 Let no one say when passing through trial, "My temptation is from God;" for God is incapable of being tempted to do evil, and He Himself tempts no one.

* + 1. They would suffer for ten days.
	1. **Suffering** is a part of the human experience AND a part of the Christian experience. Mt. 5:11,12; Mt. 10:22-26; Mt. 24:9; 2 Tim. 3:12; 1 Pet. 3:14-18.
1. If they would remain faithful, even while facing death, God would give them the **crown** of **life**.

**James 1:12 (NLT)**

12 God blesses those who patiently endure testing and temptation. Afterward they will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him.

*“There are five crowns mentioned in Scripture. They are the Everlasting Crown (1 Cor 9:25), the Crown for the One who Wins Souls (Php 4:1; 1 Thess 2:19), the Crown of Righteousness (2 Tim 4:8), the Crown of Glory (1 Pet 5:4), and the Crown of Life (Jas 1:12; Rev 2:10).”*

*“Part of the difficulty with these crowns is that most cultures today do not use crowns, and those that do reserve the crowns for royalty. But the word used for “crown” is stephanos, which can also refer to a “reward” or “laurel wreath.” In the original Greek Olympics, the winner of the sporting contests was awarded the stephanos, a laurel crown.”*

*“So each of the crowns mentioned above represents a reward for some particular special act of service or perseverance within the Kingdom of God. By all appearances, the crowns will be some sort of actual reward handed out to believers when Jesus returns again in the future. This will be at the Bema — the Judgment Seat of Christ.”*

redeeminggod.com/what-is-the-crown-of-life

The Bible gives us examples of those who endured until the end who will, no doubt, receive the Crown of Life.

1. *“Persecution of Christians endures to this day and is becoming more severe as the end approaches.”*

<https://gracethrufaith.com/ask-a-bible-teacher/what-is-the-crown-of-life/>

From “Christian Killed Every 5 Minutes” by The Desert News in 2012.

*“105,000 Christians are martyred yearly, not counting those killed in war.”*

*“Barrett and Todd M. Johnson said from AD 30 to 2000, 70 million Christians died as martyrs. The majority of those martyrs were not in ancient times. There were 45 million Christian martyrs in the 20th century. Introvigne emphasized these figures "exclude those killed for national, ethnic or political reasons who just happened to be Christian but were not killed because of their being Christian."*

*“Barrett and Johnson's figures attribute 31.6 million of those 70 million Christian martyrs to atheist persecutors. Muslims killed another 9.1 million Christians. Another way they broke it down was that 63.9 million of the deaths were at the hands of non-Christians and 5.5 million were from other Christians. Their data available on the Internet did not appear to break martydom down by geographic area and did not have an analysis for just the 20th Century.”*

*“The numbers peaked at 160,000 in 2000 and are expected to be at about 100,000 this year (2012).”*

http://www.deseretnews.com/article/700175766/Christian-killed-every-5-minutes.html?pg=all

1. Instructions to the Church
	1. We must listen to what the Spirit says to the Churches, even in our day!
	2. The overcomer is promised that he will not be hurt by the second death which goes on continually for eternity in the Lake of Fire. Rev. 14:9-11; 19:20; 20:13-15; 21:8.
	3. Unbelievers will go through the “Great White Throne” judgment. Rev. 20:10-15
		1. They will be cast into the Lake of Fire for eternity and they will be seen by those who dwell with the Lord forever.
	4. Many false prophets and teachers are teaching an “Inclusion” gospel.
		1. They say that there are “many” ways to God.
		2. Some teach that unbelievers will only spend a short amount of time in hell and then God will redeem them.
		3. All these teachings are FALSE!