

The Revelation of YAHSHUA to the Churches (pt.3)
(The Church of Smyrna- the Persecuted Church)

Write promptly what you see in a book and send it to the seven churches which are in Asia; write the things you see what they are and what is to take place hereafter (Rev. 1:11, 19).

To the angel of the church of Smyrna write, These things says the First and the Last, Who was dead, and came to life: "I know your works, tribulation, and poverty; and I know the blasphemy of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. 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. 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. 2:8-11). The way which the Lord YAHSHUA presented Himself to the Church of Smyrna was very appropriate; He said, These things says the First and the Last, Who was dead and is alive (2:8). These words brought much comfort to a suffering church. YAHSHUA, having been tempted in all the points they were going through, had become their High Priest (Hebrews 4:15-16). He presented Himself as her Savior Who had conquered death; He wanted her to live in the assurance that He was dead, but He is alive. Therefore she too will experience life eternal.

Smyrna, the most beautiful city of Asia Minor, a center of science and medicine, was very loyal to Rome, resulting in a strong emperor-worship cult. In that atmosphere of loyalty and emperor worship, the church of Smyrna suffered much persecution and hostility from Rome and from a community of Jews. The message that YAHSHUA had for this church was not of condemnation, but one of encouragement. Suffering for the sake of Christ, the Smyrna church was considered loyal to her Lord unto death. YAHSHUA said, I know your works, your tribulation and poverty; the blasphemy of those who said they were Jews and were not, but were a synagogue of Satan. These Jews were physically Jews, but spiritually pagans. Paul said, For he is not a [real] Jew who is only one outwardly and publicly, nor is [true] circumcision something external and physical. But he is a Jew who is one inwardly, and circumcision is of the heart, a spiritual and not a literal. His praise is not from men but from God (Rom. 2:28-29). Abraham is not only the father of the physical Jews, but he "was made the father of all who believe, though without circumcision, and who thus have righteousness imputed to them and credited to their account, as well as the father of those circumcised persons who are not merely circumcised, but also walk in the way of that faith which our father Abraham had before he was circumcised" (Rom. 4:11). Abraham was made the father of many nations. In the sight of YAHWEH in Whom he believed (Rom 4:17a). These, in the sight of YAHWEH, are the true Jews.

YAHSHUA instructed the church of Smyrna that they were going to be thrown in prison, suffer tribulation for a period of ten days, perhaps meaning for a period of time and encouraged them to be faithful to the end, and comforted them with these words: do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer;

be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life (Rev. 2:10), not a crown to adorn the head, but life eternal. The crown of life is one of the five crowns promised to faithful believers when Christ returns. They are: the incorruptible crown (I Corinthians 9:25), the soul winners' crown (Philippians 4:1, 1 Thessalonians 2:19), the crown of righteousness (2 Timothy 4:8), the crown of glory (1 Peter 5:4), and the crown of life (James 1:12; Revelation 2:10).

Smyrna means myrrh, bitter spice used for perfume and used to anoint a dead body; it is also used for medicine to stop pain, and reduce swelling. Myrrh was associated with the Lord YAHSHUA after his birth, when the wise men presented Him gifts of gold, and frankincense and myrrh (Matt. 2:11); in His death when at the cross they offered Him wine and myrrh (Mark 15:23); at His burial when Nicodemus brought a "mixture of myrrh and aloes" for His embalming (John 19:39-40). The church of Smyrna in its meaning as myrrh had to be crushed and wounded through persecution just as the myrrh tree, in the harvest time when it is wounded repeatedly until it bleeds the gum of which they make the perfume. The Lord well knew of her poverty, He was well acquainted with poverty; He said, The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man has no place to lay His head (Matt. 8:20). Despite her poverty, the Smyrna Church was rich as the Lord expressed, "But you are rich". Smyrna Church was spiritually rich as Paul expressed, "As having nothing, and yet possessing all things" (2 Corinthians 6:10). Smyrna Church was surrounded by enemies who mercilessly persecuted her; but the comforting words of YAHSHUA to Smyrna stood the trial of times. The Church of Smyrna represents many believers who are being persecuted in countries we will not list here. But we believe that the time will come when we who are faithful to the Lord, will all suffer persecution in this church age. As Paul told Timothy, those who are determined to live a devoted and godly life in Christ YAHSHUA will meet with persecution (II Timothy 3:12). Such a time will separate the true believer from the mere professing to be believer.

This message of comfort touches every believer of today, who facing persecution must remain faithful and persevering in faith. In being crushed and wounded to death through persecution like the Smyrna church, today's church will be given the crown of life. These words Paul left for Timothy before his martyrdom: ... But as for you (Timothy) keep a clear head about everything, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry. I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time for my departure is close. I have fought the good fight, I have kept the faith. In the future, there is reserved for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give me on that day, and not only to me, but to all those who have loved His appearing (2 Tim. 4:5-8).

The crowns mentioned above are not to be worn on our heads when we are in heaven, but rather to be presented to our blessed Lord (Revelation 4: 10). Perseverance of faith in persecution there will be a reward; in death, there will be life with Him.

BE FAITHFUL UNTO DEATH AND I WILL GIVE YOU THE CROWN OF LIFE!