

Prayer:

In the OT, God gave a prophetic overview of Israel’s history from the time of the Babylonian Captivity all the way to the Kingdom of our Lord in what is called “The Seventy Weeks of Daniel” (Dan. 9:24-27). This prophecy included very precise dating and dates. But that all pertains to Israel and not the Church.

As we come to the NT, we are introduced to Church truth. But in contrast to Israel, the Church comes into being suddenly and signlessly, and it will conclude that same way at the Rapture. In contrast to Israel, the Church has no specific dates or dating; rather, our calling is to consistently live ready.

And this is how the REVELATION of Jesus Christ begins. It begins with an emphasis on imminency, which does not necessarily mean immediacy. It simply means that these things being revealed are imminent, meaning they could begin to unfold at any time, and once the unfolding begins, there will be no prophetic pause or delay in the process of it unfolding. Rather, this is one continuous unfolding package as chronologically revealed in the book of Revelation.

I believe that Revelation 1:19 provides an inspired outline to the book which presents a general chronological outflow of God’s prophetic program, starting with the things which presently ARE, that is, things that relate to the current Church Age.

Slide # 1

Revelation 1:19 – Inspired Outline

Revelation 1:19 (NKJV)

19 “Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after this.

- ***“have seen” – Past (Vision of Christ) – Ch. 1***
- ***“which are” – Present (Church Age) – Ch. 2-3***
- ***“after this” – Future (Post-Church Age) –Ch. 4-22***
 - - Scene in heaven –Ch. 4-5
 - - Tribulation – Ch. 6-18
 - - Second Coming – Ch. 19
 - - Kingdom – Ch. 20
 - - Eternal State – Ch. 21-22

In Revelation 2-3, Christ addresses the “things which are” in the form of addressing seven local churches. These 7 churches are representative of all churches down through the church age. No two are exactly alike.

However, there is application for all churches in each address, as seen in the repeated refrain, “***He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.***” This shows that even though Christ was addressing a specific local church, there is universal truth applicable to all churches down through the Church Age in each letter.

The first church addressed was the church at Ephesus. It was the fundamental church. Strong on doctrine and discernment, and very busy, but it **lacked love**. This one flaw is seen to be so serious that if not repented of, Christ would remove it, which He did.

Ephesus was the **orthodox but lacking love church**.
Smyrna is shown to be **the persecuted but pure church**.

Persecution has a way of purifying the church and Smyrna is an example of this reality.

No one wants to go through hard times. No one wants persecution. But God is sovereign and He determines our calling. And we are called to suffer (to some degree) for Him. We are called to take our cross and follow Him. First the cross, then the crown. That is always the order!

The Bible is very clear that in the last days of the Church Age, “perilous times will come” for true believers, and they will be perilous times because of the ever-growing apostasy that will define these last days. As Paul said, people will still claim to be Christian, having a form of godliness but denying its life-changing power (2 Tim. 3:5).

These are those who are “always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.” (2 Tim. 3:7). And so Paul said, “***evil men and imposters will grow worse and worse.***” We live there. And where apostasy abounds, so does persecution of the true believers. We should expect it more and more in these last days.

Thus, the persecuted church at Smyrna has much to teach us as we are called to live ready in these last days of ever-growing apostasy.

Revelation 2:8–11 (NKJV)

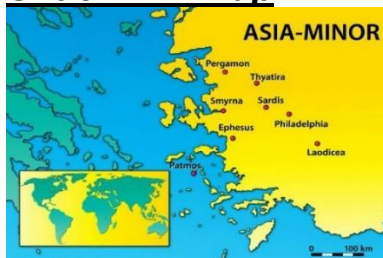
8 “And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write, ‘These things says the First and the Last, who was dead, and came to life:

The word “angel” literally means “messenger”. It can refer to an angel, but it is also used of human messengers. I take it that these are the KEY human messengers to the seven churches, as they are intimately identified with the churches. NT churches are led by a team of leaders, commonly called elders, but even so, there is KEY leadership among them – what we sometimes refer to as “first among equals”. Thus, James was recognized as the prominent leader in the Jerusalem Church and so forth (cf. Acts 12:17; 15:13, 19; Gal. 1:18-19, 2:9).

This is addressed to “the church in Smyrna”.

Whereas Ephesus and the other cities addressed here eventually died out, the city of Smyrna continues on even to this day. The modern name of this city is **İzmir**, located in Turkey, and has a population of about **200,000 people**. It is an old city going back to at least 1000 B.C. Even in Paul’s day, it was a large city with a population even then of about 200,000. So it too was a prominent city. It was located about 35 miles north of Ephesus.

Slide # 2 – Map



The name Smyrna means literally means “bitter” and is related to the word “myrrh”. Smyrna was named for a perfume that was released by crushing the resin out of leaves or a small thornbush. The perfume was known to the Greeks as “Smyrna”. Smyrna was used not only as perfume but also as anointing oil for priests, as well as for the dead for aromatic purposes.

Smyrna was an important **seaport**. It was known for its **commercialism** and especially for its trade in wines. It was a very **beautiful** city with a **crown** like appearance as it was encircled with various temples and buildings draped across the skyline on a rounded hill. It had what was called the **golden street**, which began down by the seaside and stretched all the way up to Mount Pagos with an impressive array of pagan temples and buildings along the way.

For this reason, it was called “***The crown city***” or “***The crown of all Asia***”. It was also called “***The port of Myrrh***” or “***The Beautiful***”. It was a key **learning center** – especially in the area of medicine and the sciences. It came to be the birthplace of Homer (the Greek poet of the 8th century who wrote the Iliad and the Odyssey). It had a **library and a large stadium**.

But Smyrna was a place of intense persecution for the Christians. There are two factors that figure into this. One was the fact that this city had become a KEY **center for emperor worship**. It prided itself on commitment to Rome and to the emperor – even to the point of worship. For this reason, the city was allowed by the Romans to be self-governing. Worshipping the emperor had its privileges.

The other factor that entered in here was that this city had a **LARGE Jewish population** that was hostile to Christianity. Putting it altogether you had a formula for intense PERSECUTION. Smyrna represents the persecuted church.

We really don’t know for sure how a church came to be planted in Smyrna but a good guess would be that it happened in conjunction with **Paul’s 3 year ministry** in this area on his third missionary journey (cf. Acts 19). Christ’s message to Smyrna is the shortest of the messages to the churches. It contains **no statement of condemnation** or no call to repentance. Only praise and exhortation are in view.

This messenger to the Church at Smyrna was to relay this message from Christ: “These things says the First and the Last”.

When John saw the glorified Christ in chapter one Christ said to him, “I am the First and the Last” in verse 17. This is a title for God that comes out of the OT (cf. Isa. 41:4; 44:6; 48:12).

Slide # 3

Isaiah 44:6 (NKJV)

6 “Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel, And his Redeemer, the LORD of hosts: ‘**I am the First and I am the Last**; Besides Me there is no God.

This is clearly a self-designated title of YHWH, the eternal, unchanging God of Israel, but here Christ applies it to Himself (cf. Rev. 22:13). This is a very clear statement of His deity – that He is the eternal God along with God the Father and God the Son.

First implies that everything began with Him, and Last implies that everything ends with Him. He is both Creator of all and Consummator of all. He truly is the Lord of History. This shows that He is both eternal and sovereign. He is in control of all things! And the proof is that He ***“was dead, and came to life”***. He has power over death and life!

The phrase ***“who was dead”*** is literally ***“who became a corpse”***. Yes, indeed, He was dead but then “came to life”, that is, He was resurrected back to life in His physical body, which was then in glorified form.

What a great encouragement to this church facing persecution: **Caesars come and go – but Christ remains.**

Hebrews 13:8 (NKJV)

8 Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

Yes, Christ died, but He passed through **it triumphantly**. What a great encouragement this would be to the suffering saints who are facing persecution and possible death. Their Lord, their leader, has been there and conquered it, and they now share in that hope.

This is now the second time in the book that we have this combination of Jesus saying He is the First and the Last and then combining that reality with His death and resurrection.

Slide # 4

Revelation 1:17–18 (NKJV)

17 And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. But He laid His right hand on me, saying to me, “Do not be afraid; I am the **First and the Last**.

18 I am He who lives, and was **dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore**. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death.

Revelation 2:8 (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:**

This is a great combination of texts to use on cultists who don’t think Jesus is God. First, establish from Isaiah (41:4; 44:6; 48:12) that God declares that He is “the First and the Last.” This defines God.

Then ask them who “the First and the last is in Rev. 1:17. Then show in verse 18 that He says He is the one who was dead and is now alive forevermore. Then show in chapter 2 that the very same emphasis is brought out again. The plain sense is clearly that Jesus being the FIRST and the LAST is the sovereign God.

When going through persecution or hard times the great BED ROCK truth that comforts God’s people is that God is SOVEREIGN. Jesus is the First and Last, and as such He has conquered DEATH!

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.

To each of the churches, Christ begins by saying, “***I know***”. Whatever we are going through, He knows, and somehow that reality is comforting, especially if we are hurting as this church was. Christ says He knows their tribulation. He knows the suffering, trouble, and affliction they are going through. He was totally aware.

God’s people are not exempt from daily tribulations as we go through this life.

Slide # 5

John 16:33 (NKJV)

33 These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. **In the world you will have tribulation**; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.”

Acts 14:22 (NKJV)

22 strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying, “**We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God.**”

Jesus knew of their “poverty”. This word speaks of extreme poverty, “abject poverty”, having absolutely nothing.

In the early days of the church, workers often belonged to guilds, which were like unions today, involving associations of craftsmen or merchants. If one was excluded from these guilds, it had the effect of canceling them. Consistently, the unbelieving community did not want to hire or do business with these “Christians” whom they saw as a blight on their community. In effect, they would be “**black listed**”. Thus, it would be very hard to make a living, resulting in unemployment and poverty.

But Christ told them they were RICH – that is, spiritually rich. They were poor in worldly terms but rich towards God (cf. Lk. 12:21). They truly were laying up their treasures in heaven (Mt. 6:19-21; 2 Cor. 6:10, 8:9).

This is only one of two churches that receive no rebuke from Christ, the other being the church at Philadelphia. Persecution and poverty had a purifying effect on these people. There is a special danger that goes with riches and often God's people can't handle it. In 1 Timothy 6 Paul wrote of those who desire to be rich and fall into temptation and many harmful lusts (cf. 1 Tim. 6:9-10).

Christ told the church in poverty at Smyrna that they were RICH, but He told the wealthy church at Laodicea that they were POOR (cf. Rev. 3:17). Christ's evaluation is often contrary to human evaluation.

Comparatively speaking, only a few Christians have been able to stand prosperity without the resultant loss of spirituality.Over and over again, the blight of prosperity has been seen. While in an unpretentious building – it may have been a pine tabernacle with a sawdust floor – many a church was a spiritual dynamo. A few years later, in a finely appointed building, the same congregation had become a spiritual refrigerator. This is not always the case, but it seems to be the general rule. – **John VanGorder**

Reportedly, one day someone from a wealthy church said to a Christian, "No longer do we need to say as Peter did in Acts 3:6, 'Silver and gold I do not have...'. The response came back, "But in the same vein, no longer can we say, 'rise up and walk.'"

Often, the challenge for the rich American Church has been the challenge of affluence. In some ways, I think that, subtly, it is often a greater challenge than poverty. It is hard for the wealthy not to get off track. That is not to condemn wealth as God often uses wealthy people and wealthy churches, but it is a good reminder that there are dangers here (cf. 1 Tim. 6:17-19). We need aware of the danger and yet at the same time not have false guilt.

Slide # 6

1 Timothy 6:17–18 (NKJV)

17 Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy.

18 Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share,

Be humble, don't trust in it, and be willing to share. And in the process, enjoy the blessing of God. That is the balance. But the point is to always keep God FIRST. We must never allow anything to distract us from God being our number ONE priority!

And then Christ said, "***and I know the blasphemy of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan.***"

Yet again, Christ says, "I know". Thus, there is a double emphasis here.

It seems there was a large population of Jews in Smyrna and they did all they could to oppress the Christians.

As Jews, Rome gave them some special leeway to practice their faith, but they absolutely stood against Christians having these same privileges.

The word "***blasphemy***" is the idea of slander, injurious speech, or irreverent speech. The target of their slander was the Christians and the Christ they followed. Christ knew all about the slanderous attacks waged against them.

Poverty and slander are here very closely linked, which may be an indication that part of the reason for their poverty was the slanderous attacks by these Jews.

Slide # 7

Robert Thomas points out that during the first century, six types of slander were leveled against Christians. 1) Cannibalism (The Lord's Supper), 2) lust and immorality (holy kiss), 3) breaking up homes (unbelievers leaving believers), 4) atheism (recognizing no other idolatrous gods), 5) political disloyalty (refusal to worship Caesar), and 6) Arson (blamed for the burning of Rome).

None of these things were true, but the slanderous rumors spread far and wide and did great damage. As is often quoted: "***A lie gets halfway around the world before the truth gets its boots on.***"

Few things are more hurtful and damaging than SLANDER. It is one of the devil's main weapons to afflict God's people. The name SATAN means "adversary" and the name DEVIL means "slanderer". This is who Satan is: He is our adversary who slanders us.

The Jews in this city were noteworthy for stirring up slander against the Christians. They claimed to be God's special people and had the bloodline tying back to Abraham; however, spiritually they were not really God's people because they rejected their Messiah and the Church believers who followed Him.

These Jews were **physical Jews but not spiritual** in the sense that they didn't really belong to God but rather to Satan (cf. Matt. 3:9; Rom. 2:28-29; 9:6; 2 Cor. 11:22; Phil. 3:4; 1 Thess. 2:14-15). Jesus told the rebel Jewish leaders of His day...

Slide # 8

John 8:44 (NKJV)

44 You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it.

The NT defines the true people of God in terms of their relationship to Jesus!

Slide # 9

Philippians 3:2-3 (LSB)

2 Beware of the dogs! Beware of the evil workers! Beware of the mutilation!

3 For we are the circumcision, who **worship in the Spirit** of God and **boast in Christ Jesus** and put **no confidence in the flesh**,

John MacArthur said that Phil. 3:3 was his favorite salvation verse. True believers are true worshipers who worship in spirit, they boast only in Christ for salvation, and they have NO confidence in the flesh – that is, in anything they can do to save themselves. Our faith is in Jesus alone! That is why we BOAST in Him and Him alone.

Slide # 10**Galatians 6:14 (NKJV)**

14 But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.

Note the ultimate source behind the “slander” is Satan. Ultimately, our battle is with the spiritual forces behind what people are doing to us in terms of persecution. (Eph. 6:12)

Satan is mentioned in reference to 4 out of the 7 churches. (cf. 2:9, 13, 24, 3:9). Make no doubt about it, Satan is very active in relation to the churches. Christ is walking in the midst of the churches, but at the same time Satan is targeting them in spiritual warfare.

Slide # 11**1 Peter 5:8-9 (NKJV)**

8 Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.

9 Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world.

In the churches mentioned here, we find 3 sources of antagonism against the believers. 1) Hostile Jews, 2) Pagans, and 3) Heretics. However, there ultimately is ONE source behind them all, and that is SATAN. However, in the history of the church, his most useful tools in oppressing Christians have been the religionists. False religion and those propagating it are one of Satan's most powerful weapons.

These Jews prided themselves on being the chosen people of God, but Jesus labeled them “a synagogue of Satan.” Synagogue literally means “place of assembly”. They were quite literally a congregation of Satan. How tragic that these people actually thought they were God's people and yet were Satan's people. Lots of church people in that category too!

Christ has no words of condemnation for the church at Smyrna but He does have two exhortations. First, he says...

10 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.

Very literally, Christ says, “Stop being afraid,” with the implication that they were already afraid. Being afraid is very human, but our Lord says do not be afraid of suffering.

And the surrounding context tells us WHY we don’t have to be afraid.

- Christ, the sovereign One, has conquered death.
- Christ knows what we are going through.
- Suffering is temporary.
- The promise of LIFE in death.

Note that there is no word that this church would or somehow could escape this coming suffering, only that they were to face it with boldness!

This destroys the so-called “Prosperity Gospel” that says if you just have faith, all will go well for you. Here is a church that is spiritually rich and Christ tells them you have been suffering, but you are about to suffer MORE! There is no promise that we won’t suffer; in fact, the very opposite is true. If we belong to Christ, we should expect to suffer for it!

Slide # 12

2 Timothy 3:12 (NKJV)

12 Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.

Peter told the suffering saints to cast all your cares on the Lord “for He cares for you.” (1 Pet. 5:7). We do this through PRAYER!

Slide # 13

Philippians 4:6–7 (NKJV)

6 Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God;

7 and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Stop being afraid – pray! Give it to God!

- **God gives grace at the point it is needed.**
- **He gives dying grace when we are dying.**
- **He gives living grace when we are living.**
- **He gives calming grace when we are facing suffering.**

Slide # 14**2 Timothy 1:7 (NKJV)**

7 For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.

Christ knows what is coming, and so He told them, “Indeed, ***the devil is about to throw some of you into prison that you may be tested.***”

The name devil means “slanderer”. Connecting back to verse 9 this evidently indicates that because of the slander of the Jews this was going to happen to some of them.

Note the devil is said to do this, but he uses people to carry out his dirty work. As Paul said in Ephesians 6:12, we don’t wrestle with flesh and blood but rather with the spiritual forces of darkness, but Satan certainly uses his people in the process.

But at the same time God is at work, in this case He allows this to happen to TEST His people. To test is the idea of proving them. God uses it to prove us – to use us and to prove us. The genuine survive the test! They are shown to be the real deal in the process.

“Under Domitian (A.D. 81-96), emperor worship became compulsory for every Roman citizen on threat of death. Once a year, a citizen had to burn incense on the altar to the godhead of Caesar, after which he was issued a certificate. ... all a citizen had to do was burn a pinch of incense and say, “Caesar is Lord”. - ***Expositors***

This became a real TESTING time! Will you, in effect, renounce Christ as Lord and affirm Caesar, or will you affirm Christ and renounce Caesar as Lord? This was a real LORDSHIP issue! Who is really Lord to you? TESTING times bring it out!

And then Christ added this detail: “and you will have tribulation ten days.”

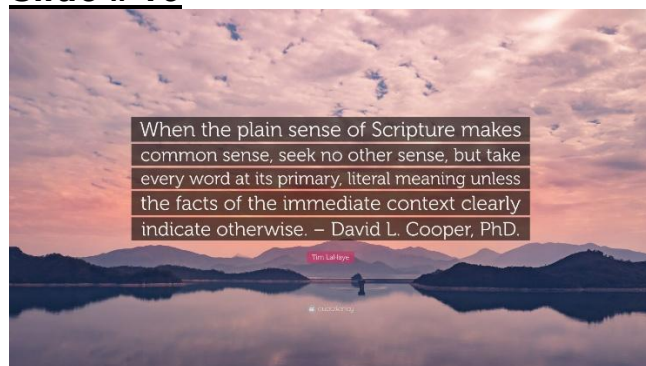
It is amazing how much commentary and different ideas are put forth on how “ten days” should be understood. Included are...

- Symbolically, it refers to 10 persecutions under 10 Roman Emperors.
- Symbolically, it refers to a short, indefinite period of persecution.
- Symbolically, it refers to a year.
- Symbolically, it refers to a long period of time.

Do you see what is in common in all these views? They all take it symbolically, which is why they come up with all kinds of different ideas.

How about coming back to the golden rule of biblical interpretation?

Slide # 15



In looking at the text of the passage, we do not see any good reason for taking the ten days symbolically. It is preferable to interpret the ten days of tribulation as a reference to a literal ten-day period of brief, intense trial that the believers in Smyrna were going to suffer.

– **Mark Hitchcock**

An elderly lady was asked what she thought about some commentaries, and she replied, “This Bible sure does shed some light on those commentaries.” Yes, God has given teachers to the church, but never forget the final authority is always the Bible itself and not the commentaries.

This testing would be intense but limited!

Christ then exhorts them: “**Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.**” Christ is not saying be faithful and thereby earn eternal life, but rather it is an encouragement to the faithful of the promise of LIFE that awaits them should they be killed for their faith.

Remember this is a time of TESTING and the faithful will pass the test with the result being given the crown of life. James used this same language in regard to being approved by enduring temptation.

Slide # 16

James 1:12 (NKJV)

12 Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will **receive the crown of life** which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.

This degree of faithfulness is the ultimate proof of loyalty and it comes with a promise of ASSURANCE. You will receive the crown of life.

This is a statement of assurance – not a statement of the ground on which you have eternal life. The ground is the finished work of Christ alone and saving faith in Him. However, if the faith is real, it shows in the life – and this is the ultimate proof of genuine saving faith.

“This is not to be understood as a crown or a reward attending eternal life, but rather that their crown would be eternal life itself.”

– **John Walvoord**

“This does not mean that faithfulness is a means of earning eternal life, but that such perseverance through suffering furnishes tangible assurance that they will receive eternal life through their faith in Christ...” – **Robert Thomas**

The word crown (Gk. stephanos) does not refer to a royal (Gk. diadema) crown, but rather to the victor's crown. It was commonly awarded to the winners of athletic contests. Thus, it is a symbol of ultimate victory as an overcomer (cf. 1 Cor. 9:24-25; Gal. 2:2; Phil. 3:14; 2 Tim. 2:5; 1 Pet. 5:4). These are the true WINNERS for all eternity. And as Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15:57, “thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Many Christians went to their death rather than renounce their Lord Jesus Christ (cf. Heb. 11:35). Many went to their deaths SINGING to their Lord and of their faith. (cf. Acts 16)

They passed the ultimate EXAM and were immediately promoted to GLORY with all the best that heaven has to offer.

Fox's Book of Martyrs says that in close connection to this period five million believers died for their faith. A little later the church father Tertullian (160-225) said, “The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church”.

Found inscribed many times on the walls of the catacombs in Rome is “**Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.**”

Don't be fearful – do be faithful!

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.” ’

Those in the churches (all churches) need to take this heart. Listen up! To truly hear means to take it to heart and apply it. And specifically what the Spirit has to say here is that ***“He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death.”***

Overcomers here is closely connected with those who are tested, found faithful, and receive the crown of life in verse 10. Overcomers will receive the crown of life and will not be hurt by the second death.

Now we know that John in 1st John 5:4-5 said that overcomers are people of faith who believe in Jesus as the Son of God. We are overcomers on the basis of FAITH alone. But as I have emphasized through the years – it must be THE RIGHT KIND OF FAITH. Overcoming faith continues – it perseveres – it dies in faith.

In 1 Cor. 15:2, Paul says we are saved by believing the gospel “if you hold fast the word...unless you believed in vain.” A vain (empty, useless) faith does not continue. In Col. 1:21-23, Paul says we are reconciled “if indeed you continue in the faith.” Hebrews 3:14 says we have “become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end.” In 1 John 2:19, John says that those who left the faith were not real, saying, if they had truly been of us, “they would have continued with us.”

All true believers (overcomers) will faithfully persevere in the faith and not fully or finally apostatize. Indeed, there are degrees of faithfulness (which is why there is a believer's judgment to determine varying degrees of rewards), but all true believers are faithful on some level and will die in the faith (cf. Heb. 11). Overcomers have an enduring faith unto death!

Slide # 17

Revelation 12:11 (NKJV)

11 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.**

Overcomers in Revelation are those willing to die for Christ. It is the faithful who ultimately will be with Christ.

Slide # 18

Revelation 17:14 (NKJV)

14 These will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings; and **those who are with Him are called, chosen, and faithful.**"

We are not saved by being faithful, but if we are saved, we will be faithful – certainly on some level. (Lk. 8:15). In this sense, all believers are overcomers who will receive the crown of life.

Overcomers will receive the crown of life (v. 10) and will not be hurt by the second death (v. 11).

Unless Christ comes in our lifetime, all will die! That is first death! It is "appointed for men to die once" (Heb. 9:27). The word death means separation. When we die our soul is separated from our body (Ja. 2:26). This is true for everyone!

But then there is a resurrection for everyone, either to "the resurrection of life" or to "the resurrection of condemnation" (Jn. 5:29). Those resurrected to condemnation (the lost) will experience what John called "second death" which is eternal separation from God in the lake of fire.

Slide # 19

Revelation 20:14-15 (NKJV)

14 Then Death and Hades were cast into **the lake of fire. This is the second death.**

15 And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.

Revelation 21:8 (NKJV)

8 "But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have **their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.**"

Slide # 20



If you are born again, you will only die once in physical death. But if you are only born physically, you will die twice – once physically, and then after the resurrection, you will experience the second death of eternal damnation in the lake of fire. ***Born once – die twice – born twice – die once.***

When the Spirit says overcomers “shall NOT be hurt by the second death,” the word “NOT” is the strongest negative that can be expressed in the Greek language!

The most famous martyr from Smyrna was a man named Polycarp.

Polycarp was a student of the apostle John. He served as bishop at Smyrna for many years. In 156 AD a Roman military officer ordered Polycarp to renounce Christ and reverence Caesar. His reply was this: “For 86 years I have served the Lord, and He never wronged me: How then can I blaspheme my King and Savior?” The officer said: “I’ll throw you to the beasts”. Polycarp said, “bring them on”. The Roman official said: “Then I’ll have you burned”. Polycarp responded: “You try to frighten me with the fire that burns for an hour and you forget about the fire of hell that never goes out.” The officer said, “I have respect for your age – simply say ‘Away with the Atheists’” (and by this he meant the Christians who would not acknowledge Caesar as Lord). The old man Polycarp pointed to the crowd of Roman Pagans surrounding him and cried, **“Away with the atheists!”**

Polycarp then died with calm dignity and unflinching courage as he was burned at the stake.

Jesus said, “Do not fear... Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.” The Spirit says, “He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death.”

God help us to...

Not be afraid...
To be faithful!

“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.