



REVELATION

FOLLOWING THE WAY OF THE LAMB

WEEK 05
Suffering as Success
Revelation 2:8-11 & 3:7-13

Dwelling in the Word

1. Prayerfully read through Revelation 2:8-11 & 3:7-13 (or focus on one of the churches) and reflect on the following questions:
1) What words, phrases, or images stood out to you? Why? 2) What does this passage communicate to you about God? 3) How would you like to respond to what God may be desiring to accomplish in you?

Digging Deeper


1. In both letters this week Jesus introduces himself through traits that the Old Testament attribute to Yahweh; he is the first and the last, holy and true (Isa 44:6; 48:12-13). Reread John's initial vision experience of Jesus from Revelation 1:12-18. Which part of these descriptions most capture your attention? What do they say about the early Christ followers' understanding of Jesus?
2. The label, "synagogue of Satan" is used in the letters to both Smyrna and Philadelphia. In her sermon, Caley emphasized how throughout Revelation, Satan or the Devil is being referred to as the invisible spiritual forces working behind the human systems; how a rejection of Jesus puts anyone (even Jews) outside of the renewed covenant that he initiated with his self-sacrifice (see Romans 2); and that this reference should never be used to perpetuate hate towards the Jewish people. How have you understood the label "synagogue of Satan" in the past? How did the sermon help you understand this reference?
3. Read Isaiah 60 and the prophetic vision of Zion found there. How would knowing this passage have encouraged the first century believers in Roman Asia? Can you notice the parallel passages to this week's letters?
4. The suffering and persecution that these two churches were going through was not unique in the early centuries of the church, in fact, they understood their suffering in light of the suffering that Jesus endured. How do you understand suffering? How is that different from the way the early Christians understood suffering (apart from these letters, see also 1 Peter 3:13-18)?
5. In the letter to Philadelphia, Jesus is described as one who "holds the key of David" (3:7; he also "holds the keys to death and hades" in 1:18). "Holding the key" is a metaphor for authority. In the sermon, it was emphasized that Jesus has all the keys to every door, everywhere, ever (see Matt 28:18). How does this idea produce endurance and faithfulness in the light of external pressure and persecution?

For Groups

1. What attracts you or draws you to Christianity? What keeps you connected to your faith even in the midst of difficult seasons?
2. Our passages this week talk about opposition to the gospel. Do you have people in your life, friends, family, colleagues who oppose the gospel? What are some of their main reasons for being against it? What is something that may draw them to the good news of the gospel?
3. Smyrna and Philadelphia were both commended for remaining faithful to Christ. Take some time in your group to specifically encourage each other. How have you seen faithfulness at work in your group members' lives?


Living it Out

1. Take some time to research the persecuted church. PEW research finds that Christians suffer for their faith in 144 countries worldwide. Access a prayer guide or podcast through Voice of the Martyrs at <https://www.persecution.com>.
2. Pray for a renewed vision of your ultimate future. Read through Psalm 144 as a prayer and speak to God about how he might want to understand your current life in light of eternity.



SUFFERING AS SUCCESS: SMYRNA & PHILADELPHIA

Revelation 2:8-11; 3:7-13
October 8, 2023 | Caley Tse




Revelation is at its core a book about
Jesus Christ,
worship and discipleship,
and final hope for the world.




PASTORAL-PROPHETIC MESSAGES


1. Ephesus (2:1-7)
2. **Smyrna** (2:8-11) ←
3. Pergamum (2:12-17)
4. Thyatira (2:18-29)
5. Sardis (3:1-6)
6. **Philadelphia** (3:7-13) ←
7. Laodicea (3:14-22)

Proved themselves faithful despite persecution







Place



People



Problems



Promises

SMYRNA (2:8-11) 📍

- Present day: Izmir, Turkey
- Loyal to Roman Empire
- Wealthy port city (trade guilds)
- Worship centres (Greek gods, emperors)



SMYRNA 📍



SMYRNA 🧑

Angel: messenger, either supernatural or human.

'Him': who is the first and the last, who died and came to life again.

JESUS, THE FIRST & THE LAST

“This is what the Lord says— Israel’s King and Redeemer, the Lord Almighty: **I am the first and I am the last;** apart from me there is no God. (Isaiah 44:6)

“Listen to me, Jacob, Israel, whom I have called:
I am he; **I am the first and I am the last.**
My own hand laid the foundations of the earth, and my right hand spread out the heavens; when I summon them, they all stand up together. (Isaiah 48:12-13)

SMYRNA

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who died and came to life again.

Church: afflicted, poor, will suffer, some to be
imprisoned, even die; *but declared rich.*

False Jews: slanderers, a “synagogue of Satan”.

THE SYNAGOGUE OF SATAN?

- Typical rhetoric
- Jews by external measures only (circumcision, ethnicity); self-deceived.
- A rejection of Jesus puts anyone (even Jews) outside of the *renewed* covenant that he initiated with his self-sacrifice.
- ‘Ignorant agents’ of the evil one.
- Not a statement of hate.

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the Devil: prisoner, persecutor.

SMYRNA

Not internal compromises, but external challenges.

Slander, βλασφημία (blasphemy)

→ “crushing pressure”: economic hardship,
social segregation,
religious dislocation,
political suspicion,
physical danger

DO NOT FEAR

SMYRNA



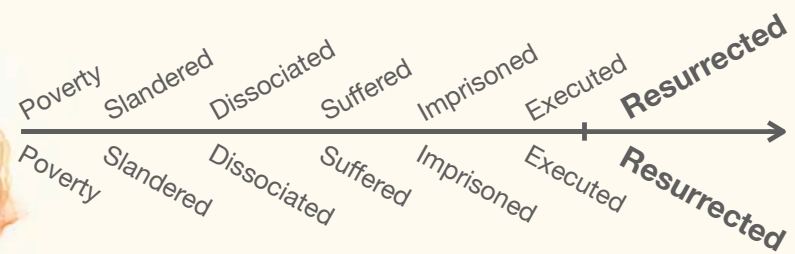
The “crown of life”

- from public shame to public honour
- ζωή (zoe), the absolute fullness of life

Protection from the “second death”

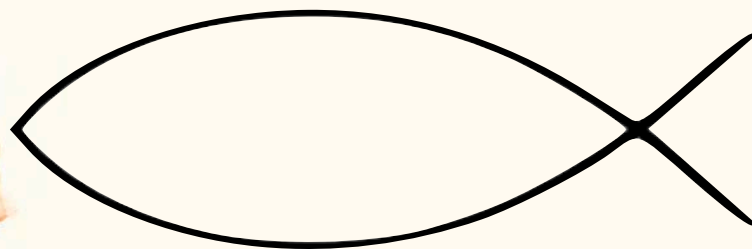
- the final judgment (Rev. 20:6)
- symbolized as the Lake of Fire (Rev. 20:14-15; 21:8)

SMYRNA



JESUS CHRIST

SMYRNA

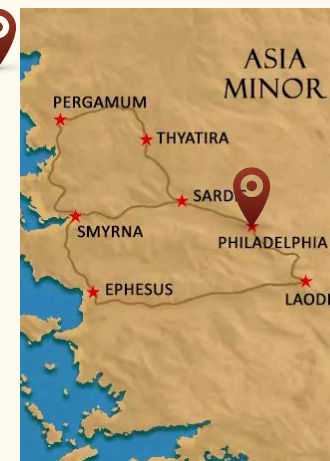


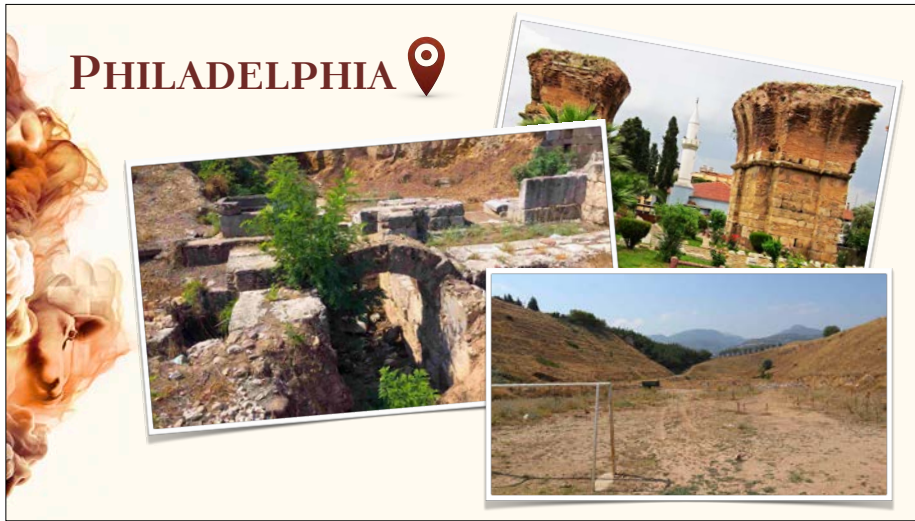
JESUS CHRIST

PHILADELPHIA (3:7-13)



- Present day: Alaşehir, Turkey
- Earthquake prone
- Smaller city
- Few archaeological sites





PHILADELPHIA

Angel: messenger, either supernatural or human.

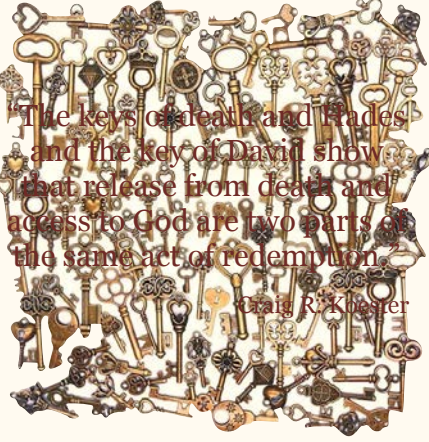
'Him': who is holy and true, who holds the key of David.

JESUS, KEY-HOLDER

"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me."

Death
- Jesus (Matt 28:18)

Hades
David



The keys of death and Hades and the key of David show that release from death and access to God are two parts of the same act of redemption.

Craig R. Kesler

PHILADELPHIA

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Church: have little strength/power, have kept Jesus' word and not denied his name, but endured patiently.

False Jews: a "synagogue of Satan", claim to be Jews, but are liars.

THE SYNAGOGUE OF SATAN?

- Jews by external measures only (circumcision, ethnicity); self-deceived.
- A rejection of Jesus puts anyone (even Jews) outside of the *renewed* covenant that he initiated with his self-sacrifice.
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PHILADELPHIA

Not internal compromises, but external challenges.

Pressure to deny the name of Christ

- “little strength/power”: low emotional strength, low physical strength, low resources, low influence

HOLD ON

PHILADELPHIA

Public acknowledgment of **Jesus’ love**

- denial vs. confession

Protection in **“the hour of trial”**

- keep from or keep *through*?

Established as a **temple pillar**

- permanent inclusion
- inscribed with God’s name, the City’s name, Jesus’ name
- from “little strength” to massive strength



PHILADELPHIA

Experienced pressure but would not compromise their confession.

Experienced weakness but endured patiently.

Experienced crisis but were unquestionably loved.

JESUS CHRIST



WHAT ABOUT US?

Let us

look *at* Jesus,

look *to* Jesus,

look *after* our 'siblings',

look *beyond* this life.

