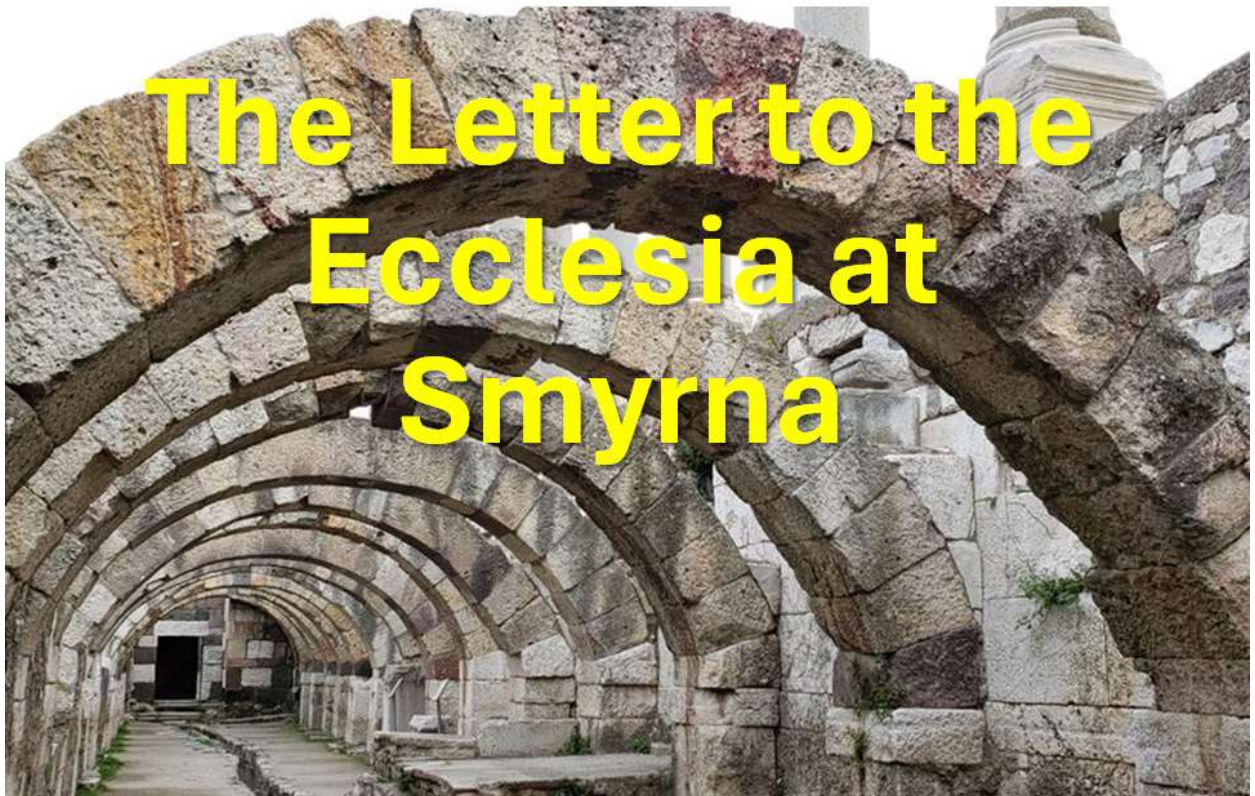




This, the second letter to another Ecclesia. The letter follows a similar structure as the letter to Ephesus as do all the letters.

- Address
- Who it is from
- An expression of intimate knowledge of the circumstances
- Message of encouragement
- A word of warning
- An exhortation of reward to those who overcome

The Lord Jesus in dictating the letter to the Apostle John in Patmos makes it clear in each of the letters that the message is not from John, but from he, the Lord Jesus Christ. Although each letter is tailor-made to each Ecclesia, each letter ends with advice, that all Ecclesias, all members of the One Body should take heed, and that the letters are equally addressed to them. All members of the One Body of all ages since.

The Lord, therefore at the start of each letter, heads it with his title.

8 And unto the angel of the church in Smyrna write; These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive;

In each case, the title is linked back to the vision that was seen by John, when he was first visited by the angel in Patmos, described in chapter 1. Being the beginning and the ending of the work of salvation for mankind, only Jesus can describe himself as he who was dead and is alive. Themes from the previous chapter – this continual emphasis: - *1:5 And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, 1:8 I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending,*

And as the title of the letter to Smyrna, the very same phrase is repeated from 1:17,18 *I am the first and the last: I am he that lives, and was dead;*

The Lord Jesus is very thoughtful in emphasising this aspect. He demonstrates in the next couple of verses, how that he has an intimate knowledge of the exact situation within the ecclesia, which would have been unknown to anyone else – probably even John in Patmos, before this revelation, and so it was cast iron proof that not only was Jesus resurrected and risen to eternal life, he was able to watch, and see exactly what was going on within the ecclesia – and that he cared! Not only does this awareness give encouragement, but it also should give caution, that God sees all that we do - *Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.* (Hebrews 4:13) This power of God, has uniquely been given to the Lord Jesus, that has enabled him to watch and see how the Ecclesias fare and cope with the pressures of apostacy, and temptation. And individuals. You and me.

Jesus said to them in Ephesus, in Smyrna.... *I know thy works...* It will be said to us. *9 I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan.*

Smyrna is today known as Izmir. In ancient times it would have had a fine harbour as it does today, and provided an important trade route into the interior of Asia Minor, and Lydia as the region was then known. There is not much historical information available except that at the time of the first century it competed with Ephesus and Pergamum for the title "First City of Asia". We do have information that Polycarp, a historical figure who was supposed to have been taught by the Apostles, and was supposed to have been made a "bishop" of Smyrna. Apparently according to church history, *a mob of Jews and pagans abetted the martyrdom of Polycarp in AD 153*. Although this limited information is difficult to place much faith in, it does show that apostasy crept in the Ecclesia very early on, and that it confirms other sources that Smyrna was a Jewish colony, which made it easier to establish an Ecclesia there. Appointing bishops as the church does is apostate practice, as there is no scriptural teaching showing that an ecclesia was to be led by one bishop. There can be multiple bishops – (see Philippians 1:1) the word which means *to oversee*. They are to serve (see Titus 1:7) and do not have authority, instead the authority lies with the mind of the ecclesia, and with the Head of the Ecclesia - Jesus Christ – (see 1 Peter 2:25)

Returning to the letter, no wonder then, that Jesus said *I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan*. Strong historical evidence suggests as we have mentioned, that there were many Jews in this city. Paul used a technique when visiting Gentile cities as the book of Acts shows, to go straight to the local synagogue and preach the Gospel. It was more likely to be listened to there, as Jews were familiar of course with the Scripture, and would have been the easiest group of people to convert. Interested pagans would then have joined in and so on. It would then follow that the ecclesia in Smyrna developed in the same way. However as the Acts of the Apostles also shows the Jews soon were filled with envy, as they saw Christianity growing and sought to infiltrate and corrupt the ecclesias. See Acts 13:45,50; 17:13; 21:27.

There were Jewish converts who also thought they were somehow better than pagan converts but as can be seen in Paul's teachings the definition of a Jew Romans 2:29: *But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.*

All of this nastiness and jealousy caused tribulation. Jesus observed that they were poor and yet rich. How was this? The same was said of the Lord Jesus himself in 2 Corinthians 8:9: *For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.* That is poor in this world's riches, poor in the reputation of the worldly, poor in the estimation of men, but rich in faith (James 2:6) rich in good works (1 Timothy 6:18)

Jesus continued in his letter:

10 Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.

Jesus plainly tells them that the tribulation they are enduring is not going to get any better but will in fact get worse. But not to be afraid. Persecution did get worse, as history relates. But comfort and complacency, entitlement is a greater satan, a greater diabolos, or devil than persecution. With persecution, the enemy can be seen. With peacetime, and complacency, the enemy is unseen and is within. The devil was to throw some of them into prison. Not some fallen angel, but as the Greek word for devil here – which is diabolos – means a false accuser. The Christians were falsely accused by the authorities, of causing disturbances, and as we know, even some of the Caesars blamed the Christians for the misfortunes which fell upon the Roman empire.

The Lord Jesus predicted that this tribulation would get worse for a specific period of time. This would be “ten days” Most people would manage a short period of persecution if they knew it was for ten days.

It is only a small section of one's life, just over a week. But remembering that the Lord Jesus employed symbolic language in much of the information he gave to ensure that only those who are familiar with scripture will understand his code, it is more likely that the ten days is representative just like all the other time periods mentioned in this book are.

Dr Thomas points out in Eureka page 258 Brown copy, or Section 2 of Volume 1, subsections 5, that prophetic language often follows a rule of a *day for a year*. This can be seen in Numbers 14:34 and Ezekiel 4:4 by way of example (and there are others). Bearing this in mind, all of a sudden a warning of ten years tribulation makes a huge difference to believers. A significant section of their life would be enduring persecution and trial. In fact, history reveals, this is exactly what happened. Not long after the death of John on Patmos, and new Roman emperor came to the throne. His name was Trajan.



Rather a mean looking character, it is remarkable that a series of letters have survived, the contents of which are readily accessed today, which shows Trajan complaining to one of his governors – a chap by the name of Pliny about these Christians.

Trajan ordered that if Christians would not renounce their faith, and worship the Roman gods then they would be capitally punished. The letters record Christians being tortured in this process. Trajan died in 117AD. The ten years of persecution for that generation was over. But it was just the beginning. The next generation of believers would also have to undergo a terrible time, as the book of Revelation reveals, and history attests..

The Lord Jesus concludes:

He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; He that overcomes shall not be hurt of the second death.

As previously and often stated, these letters though individually addressed were general letters designed to be read by all, in any place, any ecclesia in any century, and therefore contain valuable advice which is suitable for all time. The letters contain lessons, which principles of Godly living, resisting temptation, being prepared for trial, being awake, aware, on guard, active, resilient and faithful. All aspects which are not natural to the old man who is sluggish, lazy, gives in too easily. The only way to obtain this energy is to read scripture, to be infused with its spirit, to allow it to fill the emptiness of the mind, and focus the eye of faith. *Let him hear what the Spirit says to the Ecclesias...* How is it possible if we do not read, discuss or talk about these things?

He that overcomes shall not be hurt of the second death. Jesus said in John 16:33: *These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.* Jesus was not hurt of the first death. Death could not hold him, because he overcame – through the power of the word. Thousands and thousands of believers have died, and lay in the dust of the earth awaiting the resurrection. Their thoughts and memories have perished. There is nothing left. However their image and superscription is inscribed in the mind and memory of the Almighty, who will and can recreate as He created in the first place, and will reassemble molecules of dust and matter to the exact formula to recreate the same individual again. Those who rise will be taken to the Judgment seat of Christ, (2 Corinthians 5:10) to be judged. Some will be awarded everlasting life, but some will be awarded everlasting shame and contempt. (Daniel 12:2) This will not be a eternal hell with flames burning for ever. It will man that those judged not worthy to enter Into the Kingdom will not be given eternal life. They will continue to live, but will die in due natural course. Their misery in knowing what they have squandered, and their hopeless situation will be punishment enough, as they will have shame and humiliation heaped upon them. They will die the second death. This death, from which there is no hope, dying like beasts. Forever gone. It does not bear thinking about,

but it is the common fate for all, except for those who have the hope of Israel in their hearts. They have a promise that if they overcome the old man, and accept the forgiveness of sins freely offered and maintain their garments, they will not be hurt of that second death, but will live for ever. It just depends on how we cope with the period of trial and tribulation. But Scripture promised that he that endures to the end will be saved. Matthew 10:22

Brother Terry