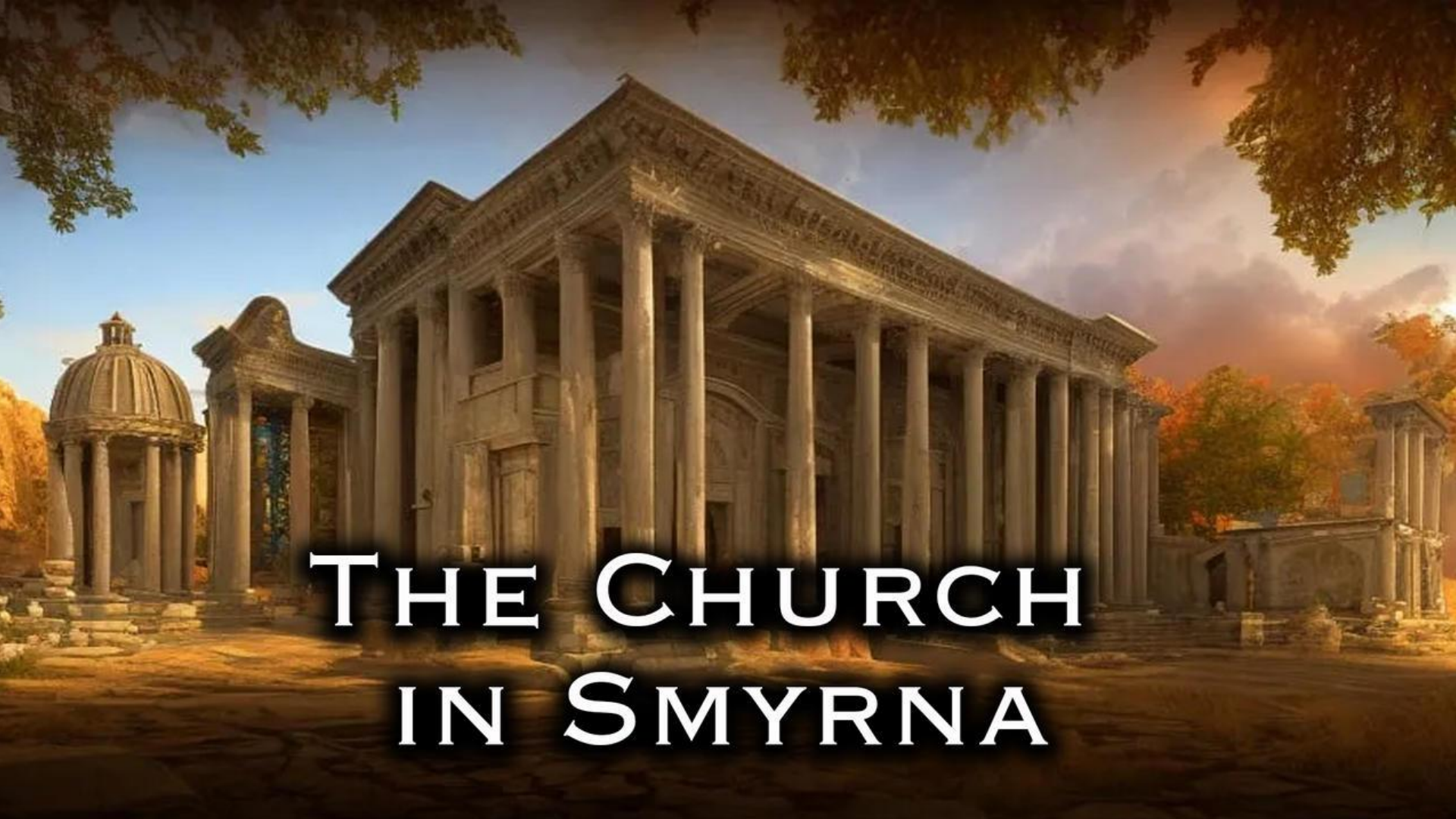


The Revelation

Chapter 2:8-11

Christ Church
Summer 2026



THE CHURCH IN SMYRNA



Asia Minor

• Pergamum

• Thyatira

• Smyrna

• Sardis

• Philadelphia

• Ephesus

Laodicea •

•
Island of
Patmos

- Smyrna means 'myrrh'



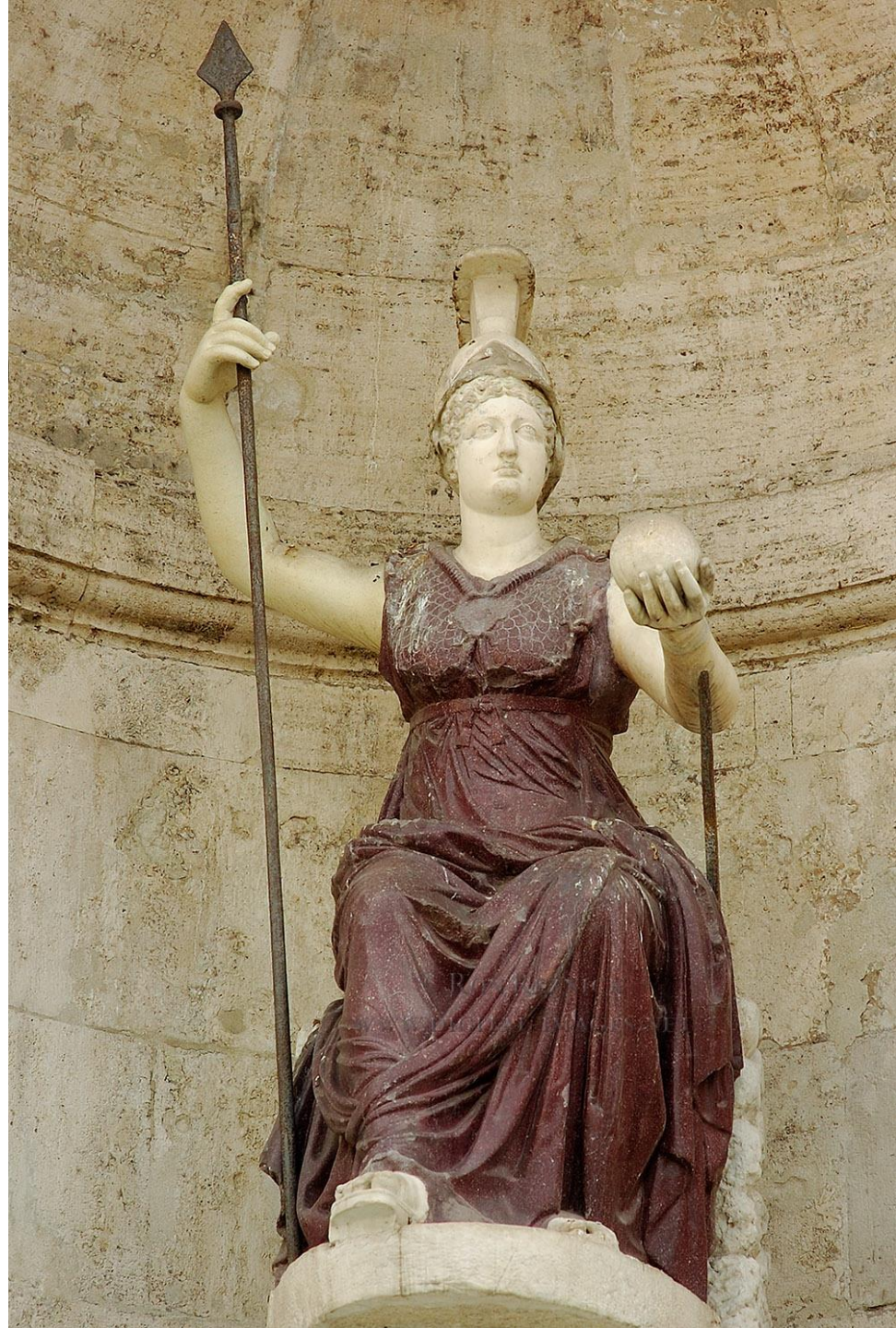
- A. Ephesus – no strengths
- B. Smyrna – faithful
- C. Pergamum – unfaithful (w/ some)
- D. Thyatira – worst unfaithfulness
- C'. Sardis – unfaithful (w/ some)
- B'. Philadelphia – faithful
- A'. Laodicea – no strengths



- Smyrna is about 35 miles NE of Ephesus
- It boasted itself as the “pride of Asia”
- It is not known when the church was founded there. Early church tradition states that Paul had visit the city on his way to Ephesus
- It was a church under severe persecution. It is not difficult to reconstruct the situation

- In 195 BC a temple was built to honor Dea Roma, which was the personification of Rome
- Smyrna acquired the reputation of being patriotic and loyal to Rome
- In AD 25 other Asia Minor cities were competing for the privilege to erect a temple to Emperor Tiberius. Smyrna was given that honor

- Smyrna, therefore, had both the temple of Caesar and Dea Roma
- Christians were expected to offer incense to Caesar on the altar fires before these shrines
- At their baptism Christians had vowed that “Jesus is Lord” not Caesar;
“*Iesou ha kurios*”





- This is called ‘statism.’ Statism is the absolute rule of man over other men by means of force
 - Police force
 - Armed forces
 - Confiscatory taxation and wealth redistribution

- “Modern man believes in political salvation, and he is destroying civilization with this false hope. The state is not God, nor can it save man. Only when we see the state as a ministry of God (Romans 13) can we make it again a useful and moral factor in our lives.” – R. J. Rushdoony

- That unwillingness to conform/compromise was interpreted as treacherous and disgraceful
- The local Jewish population fanned the flames under the church in Smyrna
- Remember the sheer amount of coverage that the Jewish persecution of the church is given in the NT

- See Acts 4:1-3; 15-18; 5:17, 18, 27-33; 6:8-15; 7:51-60; 9:23,29;13:10, 45-50; 14:2-5; 17:5-8; 18:6, 12,13; 19:9; 20:3; 21:21:27-36; 22:22,23; 23:12,20,21; 24:1-9; 25:2,3,7



- The Smyrnan church is between rabid Roman patriots and vicious apostate Jews



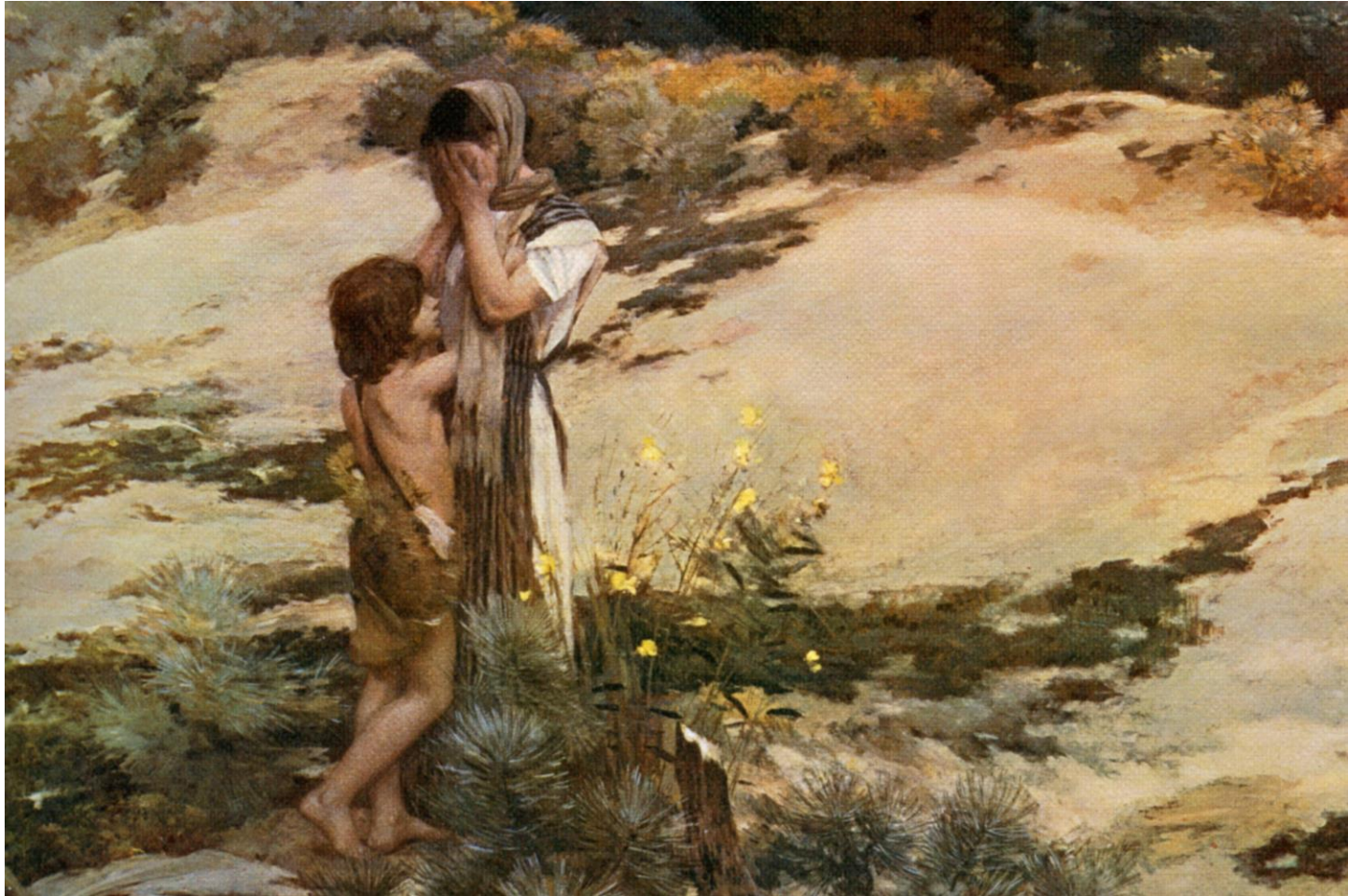
- Take notice of these words/terms
 - **“died and came to life again”**
 - **“poverty”**
 - **“Jews and are not”**
 - **“suffer”**
 - **“prison”**
 - **“suffer persecution”**

- What period of the OT does this language suggest?
- The possible choices are:

- Paradise
- Patriarchs
- Wilderness
- Davidic Monarchy
- Prophetic
- Post- Exilic
- Last Days (AD 30-70)

- Think of Abraham. He was continually confronting **death**
 - Wife was barren (childless)
 - Land was barren (famine)
 - He was in his old age
 - God wanted Abraham to kill his son Isaac
- Think of Joseph
 - Frequently thrown into ‘graves’
 - Pit
 - Prison
 - **‘First and Last’** – his brothers

- Think of Ishmael - “**Jews and are not**”



- **Salutation – v. 8**

- Commendation

- Accusation

- Admonition

- Exhortation

- Declaration

- v. 8 Jesus announces Himself as “**the First and the Last**”
 - It’s a name taken from Isaiah 44:6 & 48:12
 - Jesus is the *Determiner* of all history
 - He is the *Goal* of all reality
 - This is the biblical doctrine of predestination
 - There is nothing in your life that is without meaning and purpose

- Not only is Jesus the “**First and Last**”, He was also “**dead and has come to life**”
 - Jesus is completely victorious over death, and the grave
 - He is the first of the resurrection – Read I Corinthians 15:20-22
 - He guarantees our resurrection – Read I Corinthians 15:54

1 Corinthians 15:20-22

“²⁰ But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. ²¹ For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. ²² For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.”

1 Corinthians 15:54

“⁵⁴ When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: “Death has been swallowed up in victory.”











- All of our pain, sorrow, and sufferings are part of an eternal, consistent plan
- We can be secure that since we've been called “**according to His purpose**” (Romans 8:28), then all things in our life are a necessary aspect of His purpose



- Salutation
- **Commendation – v. 9**
- Accusation
- Admonition
- Exhortation
- Declaration

- At the same time, it was not easy to be a Christian in Smyrna
 - They didn't get raptured out of the tribulation, their “**afflictions**”
 - That often leads to “**poverty**”

- This fanatical Jewish hostility was the cause of the tribulation for Smyrna
- **Four trials** are mentioned
 - v. 9 '**poverty**' recall Paul's statement in I Corinthians 1:26. No doubt apostate Jews and godless Gentiles wouldn't do business with them. It is possible that they had their property confiscated (see Hebrews 10:34)

- “**slander**” – false accusations were circulating and flying in Smyrna. Jesus characterizes the ‘slanderers’ as ‘the synagogue of Satan’. They learned from the ‘father of lies’ (John 8:44). In v. 10 he is the ‘devil’ which means ‘accuser’. Read Proverbs 26:22. In this kind of pain remember Jesus faced it too, note His response and follow it

- Who are the **‘Jews that are not Jews’**
 - They are also known as the Nicolaitans, the followers of Balaam, and Jezebel
 - They are the Jews who have rejected Jesus and thus have rejected the God of Abraham
 - Despite the popular notion that Jews are true believers in the God of the OT – the NT categorically teaches that non-Christian Jews are covenant-breaking apostates

- Recall how often Jesus went to synagogues and was confronted by demon possessed people
 - Mark 1:21-28
 - Matthew 4:23-25
 - *Mark 1:39
 - Luke 4:41

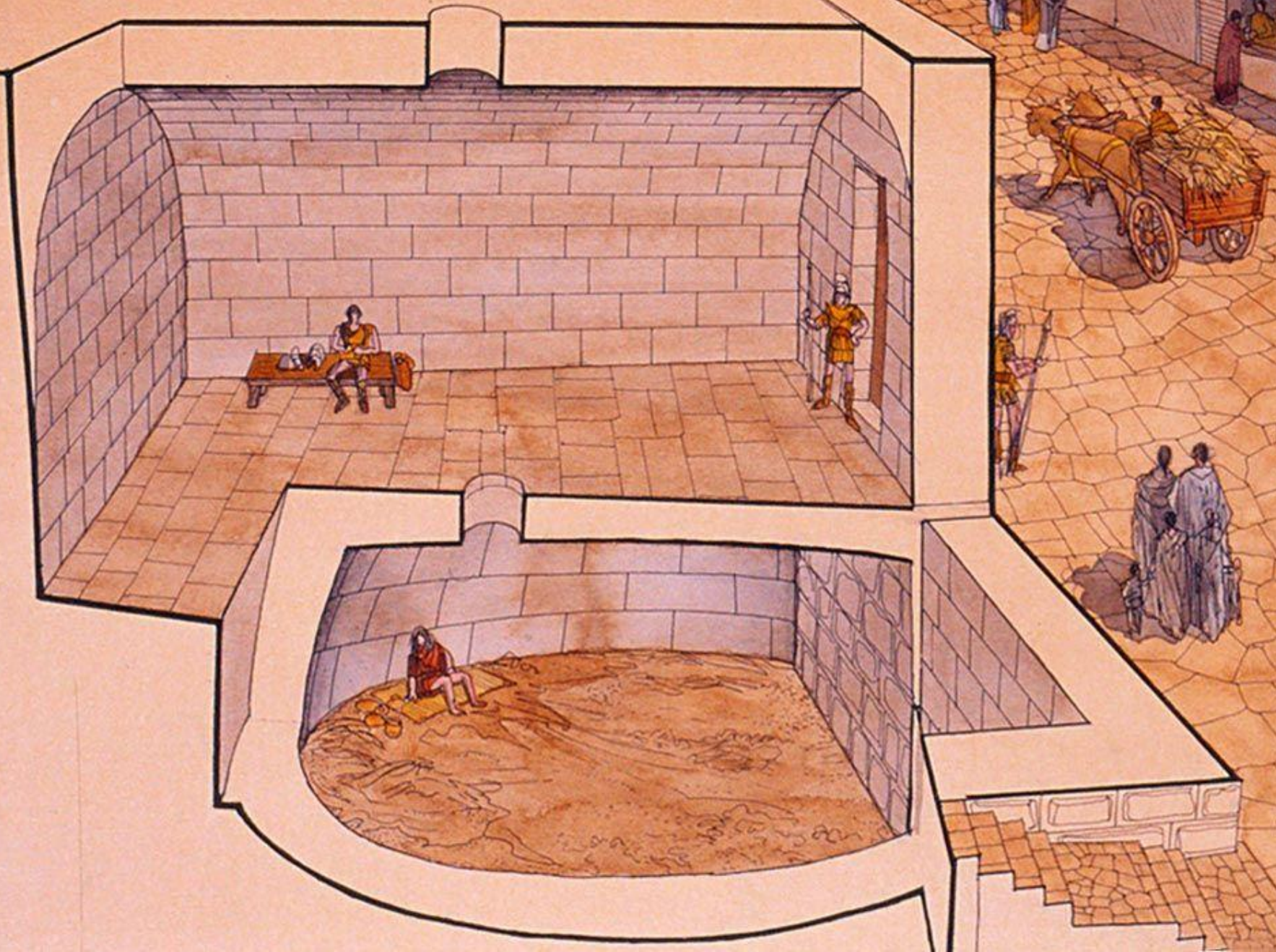
- Read John 8:39-44. also read John 5:46
- Keep reading – Romans 2:28, 29; Philippians 3:2-3
- Jesus is the inheritor of the promises to Abraham. Jesus possesses the Covenant blessing – read Romans 11:11-24; Galatians 3:7-9, 26-29

- The ‘**ten days**’ ties into several OT connections
 - See Daniel 1:11-21- in favor of this – both Daniel, the 3, and the Smyrna Christians face food tests
 - Others want it to be tied to Rebekah in Genesis 24:55
 - I’ve also read attempts at relating the 10 days to the period between the Feast of Trumpets till the Day of Atonement

- Poverty and slander were two experiences of tribulation that the church of Smyrna was already enduring
- There two worse trials to come. Read v. 10

- “**prison**” – the early church, especially the apostles saw the insides of a lot of jails
 - Jerusalem
 - Caesarea
 - Philippi
 - Rome

The Mamertine Prison, Rome





- The fourth trial of tribulation was **‘death’**
 - Opposition to the gospel was so fierce that martyrdom was a real possibility
 - The application of this call to suffer is timeless. In the NT suffering was an indispensable mark of every true believer. Recall the pain that is reflected in the Beatitudes – “**poor**”, “**mourn**”, “**persecuted**”

- “What Christ taught, the NT apostles both echoed in their writings and endured in their ministries. The catalogue of sufferings included by St. Paul in his second letter to the Corinthians makes us lesser mortals tremble. He was imprisoned, flogged and shipwrecked; he braved the dangers of travel by sea, river and land, and was exposed to the savagery of innumerable enemies (11:23-27). No wonder he could write to Timothy: “all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted” (II Tim. 3:12), and to the Philippians: “It has been grated to you that for the sake of Christ” (1:29). It is given to every Christian to believe in Christ, and to every Christian to suffer for Christ.” Stott, What Christ Thinks, p. 42

- Salutation
- Commendation
- **Accusation – There isn't one!**
- Admonition
- Exhortation
- Declaration

- Salutation
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- Salutation
- Commendation
- Accusation
- Admonition
- **Exhortation – v. 10**
- Declaration

- In v. 10 the church is exhorted to **“be faithful, even to the point of death”**
 - This isn’t directed at some unusually consecrated class of Christians
 - All Christians are to be faithful until death
 - Matthew 10:22
 - II Timothy 2:12

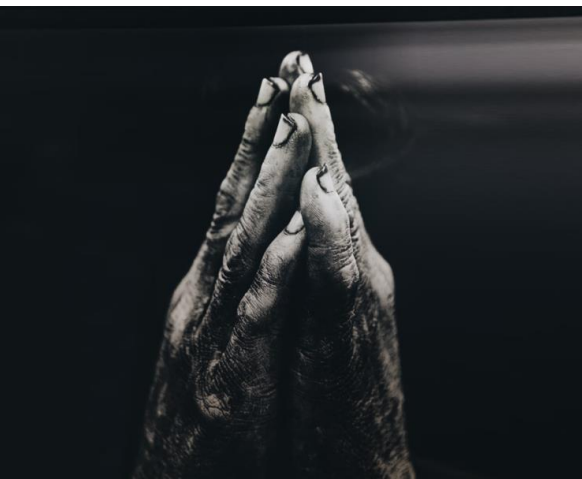
- Salutation
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- Exhortation
- **Declaration – v. 11**

- v. 11 – to the one that ‘**overcomes**’, Jesus promises that they will not ‘**be hurt at all by the second death**’
 - This refers to the ‘first’ death under Adam
 - See Ephesians 2:1, 4-6
 - I Corinthians 15:22-28
 - The ‘**crown of life**’ and the promise regarding the ‘**second death**’ is salvation itself

John 5:24

²⁴ “Very truly I tell you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be judged but has crossed over from death to life.

Tribulation's timelessness



CHRISTIAN PERSECUTION TODAY

340 MILLION

CHRISTIANS SUFFER HARASSMENT OR PERSECUTION



1 OUT OF EVERY 8 CHRISTIANS
— suffers a severe form of persecution

NUMBER OF COUNTRIES
WHERE CHRISTIANS ARE
SUFFERING PERSECUTION



Pew Research Center

BETWEEN

JUNE
2016
and
2018

particularly grave
violations of religious
freedom took place in

38 COUNTRIES,

in **17** of which minority **FAITHS**
— and **CHRISTIANITY** figuring
most prominently among them
—suffered instances of severe

DISCRIMINATION

Radical, **EXTREMIST ISLAM** is responsible for the persecution of Christians in **22 OF THE WORST-OFFENDING COUNTRIES.**

at least

75 PERCENT

of all religiously-motivated

VIOLENCE and OPPRESSION

is suffered by Christians



Aid to the
Church in Need
ACN UNITED STATES

CHRISTIANS PERSECUTED IN NIGERIA

18,000

CHURCHES BURNED SINCE 2009

50,000

KILLED SINCE 2009

5 MILLION

DISPLACED SINCE 2009

7,000

KILLED IN 2025

INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR CIVIL LIBERTIES AND RULE OF LAW



WORLD ALARMED BY CHRISTIAN PERSECUTION IN NIGERIA

FOX & FRIENDS WEEKEND