

The Scribe

"Every Scribe which is instructed into the Kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old" - Matthew 13:52



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THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST TO THE CHURCH AGES - PART 2: THE SMYRNAEAN CHURCH AGE

This message was preached by Brother Amos on Tuesday, 27th June, 2017, at Bible Faith Tabernacle, Lagos, Nigeria. We thank God for the wonderful grace and favour that He has bestowed upon His servant, Brother Amos, to comb the corridors of Church history, as well as open up the teachings of our former *Readers*, to allow us to see His wonderful Word come to Light.

I greet everyone in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is good to be together again. I also greet all our brethren online. May God bless you all. We thank God for His faithfulness and mercy towards us all. Last Sunday, we took a look at the Ephesian Church Age, the Age that set the standard for all other Ages. It is

the Original Church, the Standard Church, and the very kind of Church that the Lord Jesus is coming back for, on the day of rapture. And so tonight, we want to continue our consideration of *The Revelation Of Jesus Christ To The Church Ages*, by taking a look at the Second Church Age, which is **THE SMYRNAEAN CHURCH AGE**. Please turn with me to Revelation Chapter 2, and we will take it from verse 8, which reads: ***“And unto the angel of the Church in Smyrna write; These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive; 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. 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. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches; He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.”Amen.

We are looking at the prophetic revelation of Jesus Christ to the Church in Smyrna, a Local Church that set a type of the Second Church Age, *The Smyrnaean Church Age*. Brothers and sisters, as we can see on our chart, Smyrna is another coastal city, for it is located by the sea, and it had a seaport. (Brother Amos points to the chart). This city is located north of Ephesus, and today, Smyrna is now called Izmir, in Turkey. Smyrna as a name, means “**bitter**”, and it is a name derived from the word Myrrh. Since Myrrh is what is used in embalming the dead, and Smyrna means bitter, this gives Smyrna a compound meaning: We

are looking at bitterness, and we are also looking at death, bitterness and death. Are you listening to me? In other words, it is an Age filled with bitterness and death, and as such, even the name itself is symbolic of the very Age to which it corresponds, that Age being the Second Church Age. How prophetic that name is, as we shall soon find out, because indeed, it was the Age of Martyrdom, and we are coming to it. The city of Smyrna, was a great hub, mainly because it had a port, a harbour, and particularly as Smyrna was known for its exports, it would have attracted a great traffic of people, because of its commerce and industry. There were many Jews living in that city at that time, and the duration of this Second Age is from around 170 AD – 312 AD. May God help me this evening, as we take Revelation Chapter 2 again, beginning from verse 8, and it records: **“And UNTO THE ANGEL of the Church in Smyrna WRITE...”** We have already established the fact, that the Lord is first addressing the local pastor of each of the Seven Local

Churches, and hence, we see the Lord first addressing the local bishop of the Church in Smyrna, who represents the “**star**” messenger to the Second Church Age. Brothers and sisters, the local “**angel**” or bishop of this very Church, is none other than Saint Polycarp, the man who received the letter addressed to the Church in Smyrna, directly from the hands of Apostle John, as confirmed overwhelmingly by Church history. Brothers and sisters, Saint Polycarp was a man full of Christian virtues, and great grace flowed from his life, being a very consecrated man, a man given to prayer. This evening, we will be taking a good look at this man, who was the bishop of Smyrna, a man who was a direct disciple of Saint John, for he sat right at the feet of Apostle John. The *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Volume 1, *The Encyclical Epistle Of The Church At Smyrna Concerning The Martyrdom Of The Holy Polycarp*, reads, and please note that ALL emphasis is mine: **“But the most admirable Polycarp, when he first heard [that he was sought for], was in no**

measure disturbed, but resolved to continue in the city. However, in deference to the wish of many, he was persuaded to leave it. He departed, therefore, to a country house not far distant from the city. There he stayed with a few [friends], engaged in nothing else night and day than praying for all men, and for the Churches throughout the world, according to his usual custom. And while he was praying, a vision presented itself to him three days before he was taken; and, behold, the pillow under his head seemed to him on fire. Upon this, turning to those that were with him, he said to them prophetically, "I must be burnt alive." Brothers and sisters, eventually, when the search party caught two of his young servants, Polycarp was betrayed by one of them, who confessed under torture, and he brought them to where Polycarp was. He could still have escaped, but he simply refused to run. And when they arrived, Polycarp, who was resting upstairs in that little home, came down to meet them,

greeted them well, and asked that food and drinks be set before them. He asked to be allowed to pray without disturbance, and he prayed for two solid hours, for his captors, the government, and the people of God, and the men sent to capture him were full of remorse, for coming after such a godly old man. When he finished, he was placed on an ass, and led into the city on that day, which happened to be a Sabbath day, to be tried with the worship of Caesar, the Roman Emperor. The record of the *Ante-Nicene Fathers* continues, stating: **"And the Irenarch Herod, accompanied by his father, Nicetes (both riding in a chariot), met him, and taking him up into the chariot, they seated themselves beside him, and endeavoured to persuade him, saying, "What harm is there in saying, Lord Caesar, and in sacrificing, with the other ceremonies observed on such occasions, and so make sure of safety?" But he at first gave them no answer; and when they continued to urge him, he said, "I shall not do as**

you advise me." So they, having no hope of persuading him, began to speak bitter words unto him, and cast him with violence out of the chariot, insomuch that, in getting down from the carriage, he dislocated his leg [by the fall]. But without being disturbed, and as if suffering nothing, he went eagerly forward with all haste, and was conducted to the stadium, where the tumult was so great, that there was no possibility of being heard. Now, as Polycarp was entering into the stadium, there came to him a voice from heaven, saying, "Be strong, and show thyself a man, O Polycarp!" No one saw who it was that spoke to him; but those of our brethren who were present heard the voice. And as he was brought forward, the tumult became great when they heard that Polycarp was taken. And when he came near, the proconsul asked him whether he was Polycarp. On his confessing that he was, [the proconsul] sought to persuade him to deny [Christ], saying, "Have respect to thy old age,"

and other similar things, according to their custom, [such as], "Swear by the fortune of Caesar; repent, and say, Away with the Atheists." But Polycarp, gazing with a stern countenance on all the multitude of the wicked heathen then in the stadium, and waving his hand towards them, while with groans he looked up to heaven, said, "Away with the Atheists." Then, the proconsul urging him, and saying, "Swear, and I will set thee at liberty, reproach Christ;" Polycarp declared, "Eighty and six years have I served Him, and He never did me any injury: how then can I blaspheme my King and my Saviour?"

"And when the proconsul yet again pressed him, and said, "Swear by the fortune of Caesar," he answered, "Since thou art vainly urgent that, as thou sayest, I should swear by the fortune of Caesar, and pretendest not to know who and what I am, hear me declare with boldness, I AM A CHRISTIAN. And if you wish to learn what

the doctrines of Christianity are, appoint me a day, and thou shalt hear them... The proconsul then said to him, "I have wild beasts at hand; to these will I cast thee, except thou repent." But he answered, "Call them then, for we are not accustomed to repent of what is good in order to adopt that which is evil; and it is well for me to be changed from what is evil to what is righteous." But again the proconsul said to him, "I will cause thee to be consumed by fire, seeing thou despisest the wild beasts, if thou wilt not repent." But Polycarp said, "Thou threatenest me with fire which burneth for an hour, and after a little is extinguished, but art ignorant of the fire of the coming judgment and of eternal punishment, reserved for the ungodly. But why tarriest thou? Bring forth what thou wilt." The proconsul asked his herald to make a proclamation around the stadium, saying: "Polycarp has confessed that he is a Christian." This proclamation having been made by the

herald, the whole multitude both of the heathen and Jews, who dwelt at Smyrna, cried out with uncontrollable fury, and in a loud voice, "This is the teacher of Asia, the father of the Christians, and the overthrower of our gods, he who has been teaching many not to sacrifice, or to worship the gods." They cried that he be fed to lions, but the show of lions was already over that day, and the lions had been returned into their cages. Then the people cried out for him to be burnt, and they started to carry wood and sticks, "the Jews especially, according to custom" (or Church history), "eagerly assisting them in it", even though it was the Sabbath, and they made the funeral pile on which he was to be burnt. "Immediately then they surrounded him with those substances which had been prepared for the funeral pile. But when they were about also to fix him with nails, he said, "Leave me as I am; for He that giveth me strength to endure the fire, will also enable me, without your securing me by nails, to remain

without moving in the pile. They did not nail him then, but simply bound him.” Then Polycarp looked up to heaven, and prayed to God, thanking Him for counting him worthy to be a martyr, and he blessed and praised the Name of the Lord for this, and for all things. *“When he had pronounced this amen, and so finished his prayer, those who were appointed for the purpose kindled the fire. And as the flame blazed forth in great fury, we, to whom it was given to witness it, beheld a great miracle, and have been preserved that we might report to others what then took place. For the fire, shaping itself into the form of an arch, like the sail of a ship when filled with the wind, encompassed as by a circle the body of the martyr. And he appeared within not like flesh which is burnt, but as bread that is baked, or as gold and silver glowing in a furnace. Moreover, we perceived such a sweet odour [coming from the pile], as if frankincense or some such precious spices had been smoking there. At length, when*

those wicked men perceived that his body could not be consumed by the fire, they commanded an executioner to go near and pierce him through with a dagger. And on his doing this, there came forth a dove, and a great quantity of blood, so that the fire was extinguished; and all the people wondered that there should be such a difference between the unbelievers and the elect, of whom this most admirable Polycarp was one...”

Now listen to the testimony of what followed Polycarp's death: *“But the envious, malignant, and spiteful enemy of the just studied to prevent us from obtaining his poor body. For some persons suggested to Nicetes, to go to the proconsul, and entreat him not to deliver the body to the Christians, 'lest,' said they, 'leaving the crucified one, they should begin to worship him.'* And they said these things upon the suggestions and arguments of the Jews, who also watched us

when we were going to take the body from the pile. The centurion, perceiving the malevolence” (the evil intention) “of the Jews, placed the body in the midst of the fire and burned it. Then we gathered up his bones – more precious than gold and jewels – and deposited them in a proper place.” The martyrdom of this old saint took place in 155 AD. Now listen to what Saint Irenaeus said about Saint Polycarp and the Apostles, as recorded in the *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Volume 1, *Irenaeus Against Heresies*, Book III, where Saint Irenaeus wrote: *“But Polycarp also was not only instructed by apostles, and conversed with many who had seen Christ, but was also, by apostles in Asia, appointed bishop of the Church in Smyrna, whom I also saw in my early youth, for he tarried [on earth] a very long time, and, when a very old man, gloriously and most nobly suffering martyrdom, departed this life, having always taught the things which he had learned from the*

apostles, and which the Church has handed down, AND WHICH ALONE ARE TRUE. To these things all the Asiatic Churches testify, as do also those men who have succeeded Polycarp down to the present time, - a man who was of much greater weight, and a more steadfast witness of truth, than Valentinus, and Marcion, and the rest of the heretics. He it was who, coming to Rome in the time of Anicetus caused many to turn away from the aforesaid heretics to the Church of God, proclaiming that he had received this one and sole truth from the apostles, - that, namely, which is handed down by the Church. There are also those who heard from him that John, the disciple of the Lord, going to bathe at Ephesus, and perceiving Cerinthus within, rushed out of the bath-house without bathing, exclaiming, "Let us fly, lest even the bath-house fall down, because Cerinthus, the enemy of the truth, is within." And Polycarp himself replied to Marcion, who met him

on one occasion, and said, "Dost thou know me?" "I do know thee, the first-born of Satan." Such was the horror which the apostles and their disciples had against holding even verbal communication with any corrupters of the truth; as Paul also says, "A man that is an heretic, after the first and second admonition, reject; knowing that he that is such is subverted, and *s i n n e t h , b e i n g* condemned of himself." There is also a very powerful Epistle of Polycarp written to the Philippians, from which those who choose to do so, and are anxious about their salvation, can learn the character of his faith, and the preaching of the truth. Then, again, the Church in Ephesus, founded by Paul, and having John remaining *a m o n g t h e m* permanently until the times of Trajan, is a true witness of the tradition of the apostles.

Since therefore we have such proofs, it is not necessary to seek the truth among others which it is easy to obtain

from the Church; since the apostles, like a rich man [depositing his money] in a bank, lodged in her hands most copiously ALL things pertaining to the truth: so that every man, whosoever will, can draw from her the water of life. For she" (who is the True Church) "is the entrance to life; ALL others are thieves and robbers."

Amen. Saints, that is the testimony of Saint Polycarp, a disciple of Apostle John. I have to say: Men have really walked with God, and may God also help us to walk with Him! Amen! Saint Polycarp has gone home, and he will receive a martyr's crown on that glorious resurrection morning, but right now, he is resting, waiting in his own lot. Because of his understanding of the Gospel, and the grace of God that was upon his life, having learned directly under the Apostles, Saint John in particular, Polycarp was given to writing, and a lot of the scrolls, the Epistles of the Apostles, were transcribed by him, and despatched all over the globe, disseminating the truth of Christ among the body of saints. However, it

is also important to point out, just as Brother Branham stated: ***“Yet, for all this great testimony, this student of John the Revelator was not militant against the Nicolaitane system, for he himself leaned toward organisation, not realising that the desire for fellowship and what appeared like a good plan to foster the work of God, was really a trick of the enemy.”*** Because in true spiritual reality, and as it is written in Amos Chapter 3, verse 3: ***“Can two walk together, EXCEPT THEY BE AGREED”*** (ON THE STRICT BASIS OF THE WORD OF GOD)?! No! Are you listening to me? Nevertheless, Saint Polycarp was a very sincere hearted, dedicated, and faithful man, with an excellent spirit. That is that about the bishop of Smyrna, the local angel to the Church in Smyrna.

Now turning back to Revelation Chapter 2, verse 8, to consider the ***“ANGEL of the Church in Smyrna”***, which gives us the Dispensational Messenger to the Smyranean Church Age, the ***“Star”*** Messenger to

this Second Age, a man who gives us the Second ***“Star”*** in the right hand of Jesus Christ, brothers and sisters, this gives us none other than Saint Irenaeus. He was a Greek, of The JAPHETIC RACE, for he was born of Greek parents who lived just about three kilometres away from Smyrna, Asia Minor, now called Izmir, in Turkey. He was born around about 120 - 140 AD., and he died probably around 200 – 203 AD. As a young man, he heard Saint Polycarp preach, and as he sat under his ministry in Smyrna, he listened to his teachings, and to his testimonies about Apostle John. He saw the grace of God upon the life of Polycarp, and he was inspired and motivated by his ministry. Saint Irenaeus became a missionary to France, and he later became the second bishop of Lugdunum (Lyon), France, after Pothinus, the first bishop of Lyon, was martyred by the heretics in 177 AD., using the political machinery of the Roman Beast, under Emperor Marcus Aurelius, whilst Irenaeus was on his way to Rome. Along with Saint Irenaeus, Saint Pothinus

had been a fellow disciple of Polycarp, and it was Polycarp that had sent Pothinus to France, as an evangelist, where he became the first bishop of Lyon, before Saint Irenaeus also went to France as an evangelist. The *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Volume 1, in the *Introductory Note To Irenaeus Against Heresies*, has this to say about the event that propelled Saint Irenaeus into his leadership role: ***“It was during this persecution that Irenaeus was sent to Rome with letters of remonstrance”*** (protest) ***“against the rising pestilence of heresy; and he was probably the author of the account of the sufferings of the martyrs which is appended to their testimony. But he had the mortification”*** (horror) ***“of finding the Montanist heresy patronised by Eleutherus the Bishop of Rome; and there”*** (in Rome) ***“he met an old friend from the school of Polycarp, who had embraced the Valentinian heresy. We cannot doubt that to this visit we owe the lifelong struggle of Irenaeus against***

heresies that now came in, like locusts, to devour the harvests of the Gospel.” Brothers and sisters, Irenaeus was a prolific Christian writer, whose writings spread all over the Churches in the Roman Empire, and he wrote to refute heresies and heretics, particularly the Gnostics, who denied the Old Testament Books. We can find his writings in the *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, under the heading: *Irenaeus Against Heresies*, Books 1-5. Another one of his major works, is titled, *Proof Of Apostolic Preaching*. Using the inspired writings of Apostle Paul and the other Apostles, with the Holy Scriptures, the Canonical Scriptures, he denounced a lot of the heretical teachings that were peddled in his day, some of which were very ridiculous, such as claiming that there are Seven Gods, and others were downright blasphemous, whilst yet, others even denied the literal death of Jesus Christ. For instance, in Book II, of *Irenaeus Against Heresies*, Saint Irenaeus declared: **“Tha t expression of Scripture, “Seek, and ye shall find,”**

they interpret as spoken with this view, that they should discover themselves to be above the Creator, styling themselves greater and better than God, and calling themselves spiritual, but the Creator animal; and [affirming] that for this reason they rise upwards above God, for that they enter in within the Pleroma”, (the fulness of the universes), **“while He”** (God) **“remains in the intermediate place. Let them, then, prove themselves by their deeds superior to the Creator; for the superior person ought to be proved not by what is said, but by what has a real existence. What work, then, will they point to as having been accomplished through themselves by the Saviour, or by their Mother, either greater, or more glorious, or more adorned with wisdom, than those which have been produced by Him who was the disposer of all around us? What heavens have they established? What earth have they founded? What stars have they called**

into existence? Or what lights of heaven have they caused to shine? Within what circles, moreover, have they confined them? Or, what rains, or frosts, or snows, each suited to the season, and to every special climate, have they brought upon the earth?” Such was the extreme madness and utter blasphemy of the heretics in that day, a legion from hell that Saint Irenaeus faced head-on.

In *Irenaeus Against Heresies*, Book 1, under the subtitle, *Preface*, Saint Irenaeus made this stand for the Word of God, declaring: **“INASMUCH as certain men have set the truth aside, and bring in lying words and vain genealogies, which, as the apostle says, “minister questions rather than godly edifying which is in faith,” and by means of their craftily-constructed plausibilities draw away the minds of the inexperienced and take them captive, [I have felt constrained, my dear friend, to compose the following treatise in order to expose and**

counteract their machinations.] These men falsify the oracles of God, and prove themselves evil interpreters of the good Word of revelation. They also overthrow the faith of many, by drawing them away, under a pretence of [superior] knowledge, from Him who founded and adorned the universe; as if, forsooth, they had something more excellent and sublime to reveal, than that God who created the heaven and the earth, and all things that are therein. By means of specious and plausible words, they cunningly allure the simple-minded to inquire into their system; but they nevertheless clumsily destroy them, while they initiate them into their blasphemous and impious opinions respecting the Demiurge” (Creator); “and these simple ones are unable, even in such a matter, to distinguish falsehood from truth. Error, indeed, is never set forth in its naked deformity, lest, being thus exposed, it should at once be detected. But it is craftily decked out in

an attractive dress, so as, by its outward form, to make it appear to the inexperienced (ridiculous as the expression may seem) more true than the truth itself. There is no doubt, that Saint Irenaeus was certainly a man that was established in the truth, and he was very militant against heresies, untruths, lifting up the Holy Scriptures. The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* has this to say about him, and please note that ALL emphasis is mine: “***Saint Irenaeus, (born c. 120/140, Asia Minor – died c. 200/203, probably Lyon... bishop of Lugdunum (Lyon) AND LEADING CHRISTIAN THEOLOGIAN OF THE 2ND CENTURY. His work Adversus haereses (Against Heresies), written about 180, was a refutation of Gnosticism. IN THE COURSE OF HIS WRITINGS IRENAEUS ADVANCED THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN AUTHORITATIVE CANON OF SCRIPTURES...***” Brother Branham also said this about him: “***He was militant against any form of organization. Also, his life history, wherein he served the Lord, was one***

of much manifestation in the Holy Spirit; and the Word was taught with unusual clarity and conformity to its original precepts. His Churches in France were known to have the gifts of the Spirit among them, for the saints spoke in tongues, prophesied, raised the dead, and healed the sick by the prayer of faith. He saw the danger of any kind of organized brotherhood among the elders, pastors, etcetera. He stood solidly for a unified, Spirit-filled, gift-manifesting Local Church. And God honoured him for the power of God manifested among the saints... Thus with his strict adherence to the Word, his wonderful understanding of Scripture, and the attendance of the power of God upon that ministry, he is the right choice for the Age. It is altogether unfortunate that the other Ages did not have in their Messengers such a balance of fruit, power, and leadership in the Holy Spirit and the Word.” Brothers and sisters, Saint Irenaeus was

a man that stood for what the Early Church Ministry stood for: A Spirit-filled, Spirit-led, Word-based Church, with signs and wonders and gifts of the Spirit working in the body of saints, and God did wonderful things through that man. He had a very clear understanding of the Godhead, and he stood gallantly for the Word of God, just as he had been taught, and God confirmed his message, as he stood against the Gnostics. Because in that Second Age, many heretics such as the Gnostics had already risen up, peddling intellectual and nonsensical religious theories, called Gnosticism. And what exactly is Gnosticism? Although some dictionaries give us a definition of what it is, however, I like the simple and explanatory definition which the website, gotquestions.org, gives, and please note that ALL emphasis is mine: ***“It is derived from the Greek word gnosis, meaning “to know” (to have knowledge). “In the case of Gnosticism, what is “known” has shifted over the thousands of years since Gnosticism first***

reared its head during the formation and solidification of the Early Church. Basically, the Gnostic believes in acquiring special, mystical knowledge as the means for salvation. According to Gnostic beliefs, there is a Great God that is good and perfect, but impersonal and unknowable. The Creator of the universe was actually a lesser deity—a cheap knock-off of the “true God”—who wanted to create a flawless material universe but botched the job. Instead of having a utopia, we ended up with a world infected with pain, misery, and intellectual and spiritual blindness; all matter is now corrupt and evil. However, when this lesser deity created man, he accidentally imbued humanity with A SPARK of the “true” God’s Spirit, making man an inherently good soul trapped in the confines of an evil, material body. Contrary to a message of salvation through Christ alone (Acts 4:12), the Gnostic Jesus brings a message of self-redemption. Man only

needs to examine his INNER “SPARK” to find the knowledge needed to free himself from his material body and reach God.” Saint Irenaeus successfully stood against this utter nonsense, this sheer heresy, pushing it back, seriously damaging the influence of the Gnostics in that day around the Roman world, for he was the Leading Christian voice in the Second Century of Christendom. This disciple of Saint Polycarp, was the Star Messenger to the Second Church Age. He was the Second ***“Star”*** conveyed in the ***“right hand”*** of Jesus Christ, in Revelation Chapter 1, verses 16 and 20, a prophetic setting we see laid out on our chart. (Brother Amos points to the chart). The material question now is this: How do we really know that he was the ***“Star”*** Messenger to the Second Church Age? There was a key given by God to William Branham, and the key is that the Star Messenger had to be the man who was closest to the Original Star Messenger, the First Star, Apostle Paul. Apostle Paul sets the standard of what the Star Messengers to the Ages

would be, the Ephesian Age, being the First Church Age, the Age of Originality and Standard, and the Church that Jesus Christ produced on the Day of Pentecost, being the very kind of crop that the Master is also coming back for. Speaking about the choice of Saint Irenaeus as the “**Star**” Messenger to the Second Church Age, Brother Branham stated: **“In order to refresh your minds, I want to point out again how we arrive at finding the names of the Messengers to the various Ages. God in His sovereign will has seen to it that the history of the New Testament Church was not lost, even as He saw to it that the history of Israel would not be lost by placing it in the Bible, and corroborating it today from multitudes of scrolls, earthen vessels and other artefacts that archaeologists have discovered and interpreted. We actually have a running commentary of Bible history from the first page up to now. Thus by reading history we can find out what man or men in the various Ages were the closest to God’s**

original pattern, the Apostle Paul. The ones that God used to bring His people back to the Word of Truth would be the ones to examine. THEN OUT OF THOSE THERE WOULD BE ONE FOR EVERY AGE WHO WOULD STAND OUT THE CLOSEST IN WORD PATTERN AND POWER. THAT ONE WOULD BE THE MESSENGER. The Ages also are found by a study of history. One simply needs to read the Ages as found in Revelation, and it all patterns perfectly with history as INDEED IT MUST. Since the Church Ages were foretold by God, and their very conditions revealed, then of necessity, the history that would follow would be as the Bible sets forth. It is that simple — but then simplicity is the key to the Word. Now with all this, I have not simply been a student and a historian, I have sought to be a Spiritual-minded man, and it was only with the definite approval of the Spirit of God that I chose the men I have chosen. This is true as God knows my heart.”

This was precisely how the prophet to this Last Age picked Saint Irenaeus, as the “**Star**” Messenger to the Smyrnaean Church Age, and we can all see the fruits of his ministry from Church history. Furthermore, apart from the various major books he wrote in defence of truth, an evident fruit of his leading ministry, Church history also testifies that Saint Irenaeus was a leading voice, a “**leading Christian Theologian of the 2nd Century**” of Christendom, and as such, brothers and sisters, we have to agree with Brother Branham, that indeed, Saint Irenaeus was “**THE ANGEL of the Church in Smyrna**”, and we thank God for that man.

Continuing with our consideration of the prophetic address of Jesus Christ to the Church in Smyrna, Revelation Chapter 2, verse 8, records: **“And unto the angel of the Church in Smyrna WRITE; These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive.”** This verse conveys the picture of the resurrected Christ, who is in full charge of his Church,

and is the beginning and the ending to the Church, **“JESUS the author and finisher of our faith”**, and as such, the Church needs fear no foe. (Heb. 12:2). We only need to always look to him, having our eyes squarely fixed on him, for he paid the full price, and won the victory for us, and as it is written: **“THE JUST SHALL LIVE BY FAITH.”** May I say this: When we look at ALL the Church Ages, this is the only Age without rebuke, any rebuke. But it was also an Age of great poverty and persecution. It was poverty stricken, and persecution riddled, because it was an Age of Martyrdom, the Age of intense persecution, on a great and persistent scale, but nonetheless, they stood true. The Lord had nothing negative to say to this Church. Look at verse 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.”** The Lord said, **“I know THY WORKS...”** These were works of faith, and they did these works to inherit a crown of life, one that cannot fade or pass

away, being an eternal crown. **“I know thy works”**, (works of faith), **“and TRIBULATION...”** Tribulation gives us nothing, other than the hard trials and intense persecutions that they faced, for they were seriously persecuted. Emperor Marcus Aurelius unleashed a great wave of persecution against the saints, and many of them were martyred. This opened up the Age of Martyrdom, which was to continue to the Dark Ages, and throughout the Dark Ages, in the Fourth Church Age, as the red horse rider of Revelation Chapter 6, verses 3-4, which gives us the spirit of the Antichrist, was released under the Second Seal. In that Age, God also gave His children the grace to take ALL that the devil threw at them, including torture and death, by the anointing of **“a Calf”**, an Ox, a beast of burden, that was released upon them in this Second Age. (Rev. 4:6-7). Faithful were these saints, despite the tribulation that they faced. And that was not all that they faced, for the Master also added: **“and POVERTY...”** Just look at it. The saints in Smyrna

were very poor, and the Lord was letting them know that he saw their condition; he saw their suffering, the hardships of life that they faced day in day out, and year in year out. They were a poor people, living in a city, the city of Smyrna, but yet poor materially and financially, having little or nothing of this world's goods. But despite their poverty, how they loved the Lord, and how they lived for him! The love of God that burned in their souls, moved them to live for God, bearing good works of faith, and that was despite their poverty! This lets us see, that we do not have to have money to have good works, works of faith. All it takes is a revealed, circumcised, grateful heart, for this will make you live faithfully for God, bearing good works. That was why, despite the fact that there were riches all around them, yet they lived in poverty, their Christian life was still very fruitful, for their trials and poverty did not discourage them, or make them give up, and neither did it make them unfruitful. It certainly did not! It was tough for them; life was really hard, because they faced a lot of persecution, a lot of trials,

and on top of that, they were poor, for they also faced poverty. If I may, therefore, ask: What excuse can we give today, living in this Laodicean Church Age, of extreme financial and material prosperity? It is an Age where the people are so rich in goods and material things of this world, and yet, they are so spiritually destitute, completely bankrupt! Think about it! The saints in the Church in Smyrna were very poor, and they could hardly afford three square meals a day, as things were very tough. But just look at what the Master said. He said in verse 9: **"I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (BUT THOU ART RICH)"**! What a testimony the Master gave to this Church! And what a comfort that must have been to those poor and precious saints! **"YOU ARE RICH!"** They were not rich in the things of this world. They did not have this world's goods, as life was hard! But they did not give up because of that, throwing in the towel, quitting the faith, because they were not fair-weather Christians! They were dedicated, committed,

steadfast, despite all they faced, because their souls had logged on to the revelation of life in Christ, which they counted much pricier than anything that this world could offer them! And the Master let them know, that notwithstanding their financial and material poverty, ***"THOU ART RICH."*** And that is very comforting, because it shows that they were rich in divine treasures! Their baskets were full; their coffers were overflowing with spiritual goods. They had laid up a store for themselves in heaven. As the hymn admonishes: *Covet not this world's vain riches,
That so rapidly decay,
Seek to gain the heavenly treasures,
They will never pass away!*
Chorus
*Hold to God's unchanging hand!
Hold to God's unchanging hand!
Build your hopes on things eternal,
Hold to God's unchanging hand!*
Brothers and sisters, the Church in Smyrna knew the value of what Jesus offered, and they counted it much more than their very lives. That was why they

lived sacrificial lives for their Maker, and for the Lord Jesus Christ, and they made sure that they laid hold of eternal life, even when it required martyrdom. And the Master told them in return: *"Yes, I know things are very hard for you. You are very poor, but, oh, how rich you are in things divine!"* And it is eternity that will show the true value of their riches, the true extent of it! Now listen to the admonition that Brother Jackson gave: ***"Brothers and Sisters, listen to me; We have passed through an era of economics like no other generation has ever known. We will have no acceptable excuse when we stand before the Lord, if we do not hold on to what He has committed to our spiritual understanding, AND LIVE ACCORDINGLY. It doesn't matter whether we have a car to drive, or whether we have all the modern conveniences in our home or not; IT IS WHAT WE DO WITH THAT REVELATION IN OUR SOUL THAT DETERMINES WHETHER WE COME OUT VICTORIOUS OR NOT. I am afraid that some who***

gauge spiritual wealth and happiness by how easy the Lord makes it for them to live, are going to come up short in that day. When the going gets hard, we should not give up; that is what the word faint pertains to. In Luke 18:1, Jesus said, "Men ought always to pray, and not to FAINT." Brothers and sisters, those saints lived and laboured for the Lord under very harsh conditions of life, and may God help us in this Last Age to be faithful, and to serve the Lord in all situations, with joyful and thankful hearts! Do not forget as it is written in Philippians Chapter 1, verse 29: **"For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, BUT ALSO TO SUFFER FOR HIS SAKE."** It is also written in 2 Timothy Chapter 2, verse 12: **"IF WE SUFFER, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us."** That is an essential part of the package of a true believer, a true Christian. Saint Paul added in Romans Chapter 8, verses 17-18: **"And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; IF SO**

BE THAT WE SUFFER WITH HIM, THAT WE MAY BE ALSO GLORIFIED TOGETHER. For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." Hence, Jesus Christ warned us in John Chapter 16, verse 33, saying: **"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."** May we always be of good cheer, sincerely appreciating the gift of life that we have from God, in Christ Jesus. Because indeed, it is given unto us on the behalf of Christ, not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for his sake! For I will tell you right now, that you cannot have a Jesus without a cross, otherwise, you are going nowhere! You did not hear what I said: You cannot have salvation without a cross that you will also carry, and that is the truth! There is a cross for you and me to carry, which means that there is a burden of suffering that we will also carry, a cup of suffering that

we will equally drink. Today, they preach a Jesus without a cross, for they are taking away the cross from the Gospel, and you cannot take away the cross from the Gospel, otherwise, it becomes a False Gospel! It is true that the life of a Christian is not all about trials, but nevertheless, the fact still remains, that it is a life also ridden with trials! There will be sunny days when God does things for you and me, to put a smile on our faces, to give us encouragement to go on. But there will still be another mountain standing right before us. We gain victory over this one, and we bless the Name of the Lord, and we breathe a sigh of relief, and there is joy in our hearts, to keep us going; but then, there is another mountain right ahead of us! But the reprieve we have just received, and the fire of the Spirit burning in our souls, just moves us to go on, because we know that what the Lord has promised, is much better than whatever this corrupt and evil world has to offer. Halleluiah!

In his prophetic address to the Church in Smyrna, the Lord Jesus added in verse

9: **“and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan.”**

What does the Master mean by this? **“... I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not”**. It is like Romans Chapter 9, verse 6, where Apostle Paul declared: **“... For they are not ALL Israel, which are of Israel”**, and that is the truth! When we look at the Book of Acts Chapter 19, Apostle Paul found some disciples of Apollos in Ephesus, and a revival was ignited for them through the ministry of Paul, which now brought forth the Ephesian local assembly, and the beginning nucleus of this Church gives us these twelve men, who were ALL Jews, followers of the message of John the Baptist. Because everywhere Saint Paul went, he first sought out the Jews dwelling there, by finding out where their synagogue was, and attending their synagogue on the Sabbath day, when he could get them. He would then preach Christ to them, before coming to the Gentiles; because the Gospel was first to the

Jews, before the Gentiles, and that was the pattern of his ministry. Therefore, in the beginning of Christendom, many Jews were brought in, as the beginning nucleus of the Church, starting with the 120 in the upper room on the Day of Pentecost. Consequently, being the race of people through whom we received the Gospel, and the race who bore ALL the oracles of God, both the New and Old Testaments, as the Gospel moved to the Gentiles, and the Gentiles started coming in, it placed the Jews in a kind of preeminent position, because people loved to hear their testimony, being favoured even by the Gentiles. Anyone who was a Jew in the assembly of the saints, was looked upon with great admiration and favour, and this gave them some sort of importance. Are you listening to me? This favoured position that the Jewish believers occupied in that day, was exactly what the devil capitalised upon, to inspire carnal minded Jews to project little errors here and there, seeking by this means to leaven the pure Word of God. Do not forget the

situation which developed in Antioch in Syria, as recorded in Acts Chapter 15, where some Jews had come from Judaea, to try to make the Gentile believers get circumcised according to the law of Moses, and Apostles Paul and Barnabas firmly resisted! Verses 1-2, records: **“And certain men”** (Jews) **“which came down from Judaea taught the brethren, AND SAID, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved. When therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question”**, in order to compare their revelation with that of the Jewish apostles, and also to find out if indeed they had sent these men. The inspired account in the Book of Galatians Chapter 2, adds further details to this issue, where Saint Paul stated in verses 1-5: **“Then fourteen years after I went up again to**

Jerusalem with Barnabas, and took Titus with me also. And I went up by revelation, and communicated unto them that Gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to them which were of reputation, lest by any means I should run, or had run, in vain. But neither Titus, who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised: And that because of FALSE BRETHREN unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage: To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the Gospel might continue with you. Therefore, we can see just how the devil was working feverishly in that First Age, desperately seeking to sow tares, but the standard of revealed faith, which the original apostolic guards who were on ground, bore, could not let him. These Jewish characters were also barraging the Church in Smyrna, but were not successful in their bid,

because the saints had been well taught by the message of Apostle Paul, by which they were founded, and upon which they were firmly established. This made these characters leave the midst of the saints, to go and establish their own assembly, a parallel assembly, still claiming to believe. This was what caused the Lord to address the Church in Smyrna, in Revelation Chapter 2, saying prophetically in verse 9: ***“... and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, BUT ARE THE SYNAGOGUE OF SATAN.”*** Remember that a ***“synagogue”*** simply means an assembly, a gathering; but the Lord is now referring to these carnal and deceived assemblies, as ***“the synagogue of Satan.”*** Whichever way we want to look at it, we have to see a parallel assembly of carnal people, instruments of the devil, just like the tares that were flushed out of the Church in 90 AD., when Apostle John turned on the heat of revealed truth, in his militant stand against the false projection of the Godhead, which made the

tares leave. This was recorded in 1 John Chapter 2, where Apostle John declared in verses 18-19: ***“Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, EVEN NOW ARE THERE MANY ANTICHRISTS; whereby we know that it is the last time. They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.”*** And exactly where do you think they went? They, no doubt, went to form their own parallel assembly that Satan would later use, after the passing away of the old original apostolic guardians of the true revealed faith of Christ! This false vine, tares, a False Church, would then be claiming to be the True Church, when they were not, and they would be doing everything in their power to discredit the True Church, and this is exactly what is going on today! In the First Age of Christendom, Satan had already established his parallel Church. Now listen to the account of Brother

Branham, where he stated: ***“Consider the thought of blasphemy. These of Satan’s synagogue were not blaspheming God in this instance (though that goes without saying), but they were blaspheming the True Church. Certainly. As Cain persecuted and killed Abel because he (Cain) was of that wicked one, and as the dead formal Judaic followers (Jesus said they were of their father, the devil) tried to destroy the Christians in the first few years of the First Age, now this same group (the false vine), is even more strongly attempting to destroy the true believer in the Second Age. That Antichrist spirit is growing. The group that inched its way ever so slowly into the Church by its DEEDS (Nicolaitanism), no longer fears exposure, but is openly organized in a group of its own assembling, and is coming against the True Church in undisguised hostility. Now when I say this was an organized Antichrist Church, I am giving you the truth from authenticated history.*”**

The first Church founded in Rome (we will trace its history in the Pergamean Age), had already turned the truth of God into a lie by introducing a pagan religion with Christian names and meaning. By the Second Age it was so pagan (though claiming to be the True Church), that Polycarp came about 1500 miles at a very old age to plead with them to turn back. They would not do it. They had a solid hierarchy and a solid organization, and a complete departure from the Word. This then, is Satan’s synagogue, full of blasphemy, in which were already the seeds of the doctrine of Nicolaitanism, and which would shortly be the actual seat or power of Satanic religion. And this is exactly right for Revelation 2:9B does NOT say these people are OF Satan’s synagogue, but it says they ARE SATAN’S SYNAGOGUE.” Do not also forget, in the second parable of Matthew Chapter 13, a parable which applies to this Second Church Age, our Lord revealed something, and we will go straight there. In verses 24-30,

Jesus declared: ***“Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field: But WHILE MEN SLEPT”,*** (the Original Apostolic Guards, the last of whom was Apostle John, who slept in the Lord around 100-101 AD.), ***“his enemy”*** (the devil), ***“came and sowed tares among the wheat”,*** (right there towards the end of the First Church Age), ***“and went his way. But WHEN the blade was sprung up, AND brought forth fruit”,*** (now in the Second Church Age), ***“THEN appeared the tares also. So the servants of the householder”*** (living in the Second Age of Christendom), ***“came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares? He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time***

of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.

We can all see from this parable, which holds a mystery of the kingdom, that Jesus Christ was referring to the Second Church Age, which gives us the Smyrnaean Church Age, where the tares were now on ground, and were to be on ground till the end time of harvest, having already been sown towards the end of the First Church Age, after the passing away of Apostle John! And from the Second Age, the two vines, the "**wheat**" and the "**tares**", were now intertwined, walking side by side, one vine of God, and the other vine of Satan, both partaking in the same blessings of God. Thank God for the revelation He gave to the chief apostle of this end time, to unveil the application of this parable to the Smyrnaean Church Age, that we may see its true prophetic projection. Saints, Brother Jackson's revelation on the first seven parables of Matthew Chapter 13, tie in perfectly with the Seven Church Ages, which

the prophet laid out strictly from Revelation Chapters 2 and 3, giving us a second scriptural witness of the truth about the Church Ages.

Brothers and sisters, from the First Age of Christendom, we see the presence of tares, and we see the evil activities of these tare characters, heretics, men ruled by the spirit of the Antichrist. The spirit of the Antichrist was already barraging the Church, trying desperately to get in, but he could not, as long as the apostles were on ground. Coming back to Revelation Chapter 2, Jesus declared to the Church in Smyrna, in verse 9, saying: "***... and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan.***" Here we have these heretics who were saying they believed, but they were not believers: They were pretenders and troublemakers! And there is no doubt, they must have met or even sat under Saint Paul, and heard Paul preach, and they looked like they believed. You must understand that something had to give them

the avenue for them to be able to preach to the saints, or to have a relationship with the body of saints. Are you with me? So, here came these Jewish characters to the Church in Smyrna, just as we read in Acts Chapter 15, but now saying, "*Oh, we are from Brother Paul and Brother Barnabas...*" Are you listening to me? And they could testify, "*Brother Paul sends his greetings...*" And the saints would be happy to have them, as this gave them an entrance into that assembly. But all the saints needed to do was to hear them preach, and by the time they started preaching, there was just something that did not sound right; and there is always something they put in there that is not right, and that sounded a warning bell: Because that was an Age of Pure Seeds! It sounded an alarm, and they realised, "*Something is certainly wrong with this message.*" And no sooner had they finished, they told them, "*You are definitely not preaching what Brother Paul taught. You are a false preacher. Goodbye!*" In that day, they were already facing lots of barrages from the Antichrist spirit, and the

fact that they were Jews gave them leverage, great influence; and the devil capitalised on the influence which the Jews had over the Gentile believers, because the Gentiles held them in high esteem! So, the devil realised, *“Since the Jews are held in such high esteem by the Gentiles, I will raise up some Jews for my purpose.”* And that was how the devil raised these characters, for we must not forget that the Jews were in diaspora, and that they were all over Asia, including Smyrna. They were the ones that helped to carry the wood for the burning of Saint Polycarp, even though it was even on the Sabbath! Do not forget that! So these Jews in Smyrna said they believed, but they were not spiritual Jews. Brothers and sisters, they were trying to sow leaven, and they uttered a lot of nonsensical things, blasphemies, about the faith! That was why in 96 AD., the Master said: *“... and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan.”* Why? Because they were deceivers! They were

heretics, a gathering of deceivers! This lets us see that the devil was already bombarding the Church in Smyrna before 96 AD., and we can only imagine the encouragement and boldness that this prophetic writing would have given this body of saints in Smyrna, when they received it from the hands of Saint Polycarp, the bishop of Smyrna, who represented Saint Irenaeus, the Star Messenger to that Second Age! How many see the point? We can only imagine what boldness and courage it also gave to the bishop of Smyrna himself, when he received his own letter in 97 AD.! We have to realise that he would have known exactly how to deal with all these elements of people! We have to see that! But this only lets us see the spiritual condition of things even in 96 AD., how the devil went about bombarding the Church, seeking an entrance. And the Church in Smyrna laboured under intense pressure. Now look at what the Master still had to say to them in verse 10: *“Fear none of those THINGS which thou shalt suffer:”* Did you hear that? It was a

very gentle, kind, and soft way of saying that more trouble and suffering was still to come their way! It was said in a way that built faith in them, declaring: *“FEAR NONE of those things which THOU SHALT SUFFER: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, THAT YE MAY BE TRIED...”* When we are tried, what is really being tried? It is our faith! It is our faith that is being tried, to show what quality it is made of, what sort of faith we have, whether it is the genuine article, or whether it is just a mere profession, which can only take fair weather! What did Apostle Peter say about the trial of our faith? He said in 1 Peter Chapter 1, verses 6-7: *“... ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations”,* (manifold trials; and exactly what is the divine objective for the trials): *“That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.”* And that is why I will warn you tonight, that there is nothing you will do

by way of faith; there is no step of faith that you will take, that you will not be tried for. It is to show whether it is truly a revelation, or that you are just trying to impersonate another person. And we cannot impersonate Christianity, for as it is written: **“Be not deceived; God is not mocked.”** (Gal. 6:7). If you do not have the genuine article, true faith, your faith is just not going to hold. Period! For it is not you that is being tried, but it is the faith that is in you, that is being tried. What happened to Job? It was his faith that was tried! There was a discussion in heaven concerning him, and God asked Satan if he had seen Job, that he was a faithful and righteous man, and Satan replied God, *“Is he serving you for nothing? It is for the benefit of all that you gave him. Take away what he has, and see if he will still serve you.”* God said, *“Alright, go and try him, but you cannot kill him though. Do not even touch his body: Everything else that he has is yours; take them.”* And the devil came and took all the children of Job in one day, took all of his businesses in one day, and Job lost everything in

that one day! That man still fell on the ground and worshipped God, saying, *“The Lord giveth, and the Lord taketh. Blessed be the name of the Lord.”* Brothers and sisters, Satan ran away, for he could not believe what Job just did! What was tried? It was Job's faith! It is our faith that is being tried, to know what sort it is, because anybody can believe when the weather is fair. But when all the chips are down, will you still believe? Will you still stand? So the Master told the Church in Smyrna: **“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...”** And that was prophetic, because the Lord was speaking to them about what was literally going to happen to them, saying: *“You are going to have tribulation for ten days.”* Church, this very tribulation that the Lord foretold in 96 AD., brings us directly to the hour of Gaius Diocletian, who took over the throne of the Caesars, as the Emperor of the Roman Empire in 284 AD., and in later years,

beginning from 302 AD., for ten years, Emperor Diocletian unleashed hell against the Christians! Brothers and sisters, it was a very bloody onslaught against Christians in history, and the fulfilment of this prophecy, further vindicates the truth, that the prophetic revelation of Jesus Christ to the Seven Local Churches in Asia, is prophetic of the Seven Church Ages, for it shows its dispensational application! Otherwise, the prophecy of **“ten days”**, which was ten years, and which only came to pass under the reign of Emperor Diocletian from 302 AD., would not have fulfilled, if it did not have a dispensational application! How many see the point? Because all the saints in Smyrna who received this prophetic message in 97 AD., did not live to see that horror, however, the address given by Jesus Christ in the prophecy would have emboldened them to face their own hardship in their day! None of them did, even though they too suffered greatly under Emperor Domitian, as well as under Emperor Marcus Aurelius, even as Church history bears out,

and as we will later show from the testimony of the *Foxe's Book Of Martyrs!*

Brothers and sisters, it was ten prophetic days, ten years, from 302 – 312 AD., that the saints of God faced intense persecution, as they were slaughtered with the sword, maimed, burnt on stakes, fed to lions, thrown into prison, had their body joints pulled apart, tortured with searing red hot irons by that demon-possessed, blood-thirsty pagan emperor, as inspired by the devil, the opposer of God's people! Church history calls it "**The Diocletianic or GREAT PERSECUTION**", and what a horrible period it was! The *Foxe's Book Of Martyrs*, gives us this testimony about the persecution that took place in Lyons, France. Please note that ALL quotes used in this message from the *Foxe's Book Of Martyrs*, is from the 1981 edition by Whitaker House, Chapter One, titled, *The Early Christians*. The testimony states on pages 25-26: "***In the same persecution suffered the glorious and most constant martyrs of Lyons and Vienne, two cities in France; giving a***

glorious testimony, and to all Christian men a spectacle or example of singular fortitude in Christ our Saviour. Their history is set forth by their own Churches, where they did suffer: - The whole fury of the multitude, the governor, and the soldiers, was spent on Sanctus of Vienne, the deacon, and on Maturus, a late convert indeed, but a magnanimous wrestler in spiritual things; and on Attalus of Pergamos, a man who had ever been a pillar and support of our Church; and lastly on Blandina, through whom Christ showed that those things that appear unsightly and contemptible among men are most honourable in the presence of God, on account of love to His Name exhibited in real energy, and not in boasting and pompous pretences. For – why we all feared, and among the rest while her mistress according to the flesh, who herself was one of the noble army of martyrs, dreaded that she would not be able to witness a good

confession, because of the weakness of her body; - Blandina was endued with so much fortitude, that those who successively tortured her from morning to night were quite worn out with fatigue, own themselves conquered and exhausted of their own apparatus of tortures, and were amazed to see her still breathing whilst her body was torn and laid open. The blessed woman recovered fresh vigour in the act of confession; and it was an evident annihilation of all her pains, to say – 'I am a Christian, and no evil is committed among us.' Sanctus, having sustained in a manner more than human the most barbarous indignities, while the impious hoped to extort from him something injurious to the Gospel, through the duration and intensesness of his sufferings, resisted with so much firmness, that he would neither tell his own name, nor that of his nation or state, nor whether he was a freeman or a slave; but to

every interrogatory he answered, 'I am a Christian.' This, he repeatedly owned, was to him both name, and country, and family, and everything." The next testimony we will look at, is that of Saint Alban, and the Foxe's Book Of Martyrs, has this to say of him on pages 31-33: "Alban was the first martyr that ever in England suffered death for the name of Christ. At what time Dioclesian and Maximian the emperors had directed out their letters with all severity for the persecuting of the Christians, Alban, being then an infidel, received into his house a certain clerk, flying from the persecutors' hands, whom when Alban beheld continually, both day and night, to persevere in watching and prayer, suddenly by the great mercy of God he began to imitate the example of his faith and virtuous life; whereupon, by little and little, he being instructed by his wholesome exhortation, and leaving the blindness of his idolatry, became at length a perfect Christian. And

when the aforementioned clerk had lodged with him a certain time, it was informed the wicked prince, that this good man and confessor of Christ (not yet condemned to death) was harboured in Alban's house, or very near unto him. Whereupon immediately he gave in charge to the soldiers to make more diligent inquisition of the matter. As soon as they came to the house of Alban he, putting on the apparel wherewith his guest and master was apparelled, offered himself in the stead of the other to the soldiers; who, binding him, brought him forthwith to the judge. It fortuned that at that instant when blessed Alban was brought unto the judge, they found the same judge at the altars offering sacrifice unto devils, who, as soon as he saw Alban, was straight-ways in a great rage, for that he would presume of his own voluntary will to offer himself to peril, and give himself a prisoner to the soldiers, for safeguard of his guest whom he harboured; wherefore he

commanded him to be brought before the images of the devils whom he worshipped, saying: 'For that thou hadst rather hide and convey away a rebel, than deliver him to the officers, that (as a contemner of our gods) he might suffer punishment of his blasphemy; what punishment he should have had, thou for him shalt suffer the same, if I perceive thee any whit to revolt from our manner of worshipping.' But blessed Alban, who of his own accord had betrayed to the persecutors that he was a Christian, feared not at all the menaces of the prince; but being armed with the spiritual armour, openly pronounced that he would not obey his commandment. Then said the judge, 'Of what stock or kindred art thou come?' Alban answered, 'What is that to you, of what stock I come? If you desire to hear the verity of my religion, I do you to wit, that I am a Christian, and apply myself altogether to that calling.' Then said the judge, 'I would know thy

name, and see thou tell me the same without delay.' Then said he, 'My parents named me Alban, and I worship the true and living God, Who created all the world.' Then said the judge, fraught with fury, 'If thou wilt enjoy the felicity of prolonged life, do sacrifice (and that out of hand) to the mighty gods.' Alban replieth, 'These sacrifices which ye offer unto devils, can neither help them that offer the same, neither yet can they accomplish the desires and prayers of their suppliants.' The judge, when he heard these words, was passing angry, and commanded the tormentors to whip this holy confessor of God, endeavouring to overcome with stripes the constancy of his heart against which he had prevailed nothing with words. And he was cruelly beaten, yet suffered he the same patiently, nay rather joyfully, for the Lord's sake. Then when the judge saw that he would not with torments be overcome, nor be seduced from the

Christian religion, he commanded him to be beheaded."

Brothers and sisters, in that Age, many of the saints of God died a martyr's death, and even a whole city, the city of Phrygia, populated with only Christians, was burnt to the ground, and all its inhabitants burnt to death in the flames, for it was the Age of Martyrdom, an Age when the red horse rider was on the loose. That was precisely why the Master said in Revelation Chapter 2, verse 10: **"... 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"** (B Y MARTYRDOM), **"AND I WILL GIVE THEE A CROWN OF LIFE."** Halleluia! There is a crown of life eternal that awaits all the martyrs of faith, and when they receive this crown on that glorious resurrection morning, it will be worth it all! As it is written in Hebrews Chapter 12, verse 2: **"Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay**

aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him ENDURED THE CROSS, DESPISING THE SHAME, AND IS SET DOWN AT THE RIGHT HAND OF THE THRONE OF GOD."

Let us have the same mind, therefore, knowing that there is a payday awaiting us in heaven, and it is a payday that comes with a great eternal glory, for all who live faithfully for the Master. Look at what the Bible says in 2 Corinthians Chapter 4, and we will take it from verse 16: **"For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day."** Watch verse 17: **"For our LIGHT AFFLICTION, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more EXCEEDING AND ETERNAL WEIGHT OF GLORY."** Saint Paul called it a **"light affliction"**. The trials, the tribulations, the tests, the hardships, the problems of life we face for his Name's sake, is only but

a **“light affliction”**, compared with the **“far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory”**, that all of these troubles will earn for us, if we remain faithful and faint not, an exceeding weight of glory that God has prepared for all those who love Jesus Christ, and live for him through thick and thin! They do not preach this truth out there, as it is all about the money and materialism they peddle, bombarding the world with a carnal material gospel of utter deception! But whether they preach it or not, it is still the truth, being an integral and indivisible part of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, that tests and trials adorn the pathway of the righteous! Look at what Jesus said in John Chapter 15, and it will do us good to give heed. Beginning from verse 18, Jesus admonished us, saying: **“If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.”** Do you sometimes wonder why you are hated at your place

of work, why colleagues even gang up against you, when you have done absolutely nothing wrong? Do you not wonder why, when you enter that bus or train, somebody just looks at you, and hisses at you out of the blue? It is because of your very presence, the way you dress and appear as a saint of God, with your body fully covered up, bringing condemnation to them as unbelievers. So, they just hate you because you look holy; you look righteous; you dress chastely; you do not look worldly with tattoos and long painted nails (claws); you do not have false eyelashes, and you are not wearing lipstick, and neither have you painted your face, looking like a drag queen, nor do you have your breasts out open like people of the world, who sell their wares like prostitutes. Everything about you convicts them, and everything about you condemns them. They look at you on the street, and they hiss at you, or they cut their eyes at you; and you wonder, **“What have I done to this person? We do not even know each other.”** It is nothing you did wrong. It is the spirit in them that hates

the Spirit of God in you, for it is a war of the two spirits. Why do you think Cain killed Abel? Why did he hate Abel to the extent of killing him in cold blood, and without any prick of conscience? In Genesis, a law of enmity was spoken between the two seeds, God's children, who love God and His Word, and the seeds of the devil, who hate God and His Word, and that law of enmity works even as we speak, as it is now coming to its head, for we are facing the final conflict between the children of Light, and the children of Darkness. In Genesis Chapter 3, verse 15, it is written: **“And I will put enmity between THEE”**, (the serpent creature in the garden of Eden), **“And the WOMAN”**, (Eve), **“and between THY SEED”**, (the seed of the serpent, who was Cain), **“and HER SEED”**, (the seed of the woman, who was Abel); **“IT shall bruise thy head, and THOU shalt bruise his h e e l”**, (speaking prophetically and respectively of the two prophetic seeds, Jesus Christ, the prophetic seed of Eve, the serpent bruiser, on one side, and Judas Iscariot, along with the

coming Antichrist, the two prophetic serpent seeds, on the other side). It shows that there will always be enmity between the two seeds, the two vines, because of the two opposing spirits that rule their lives, and that control their souls: The Spirit of God, which is the Spirit of Truth, the Spirit of Light, and the spirit of Satan, which is the spirit of Error, the spirit of Darkness, until the seeds of the serpent are vanquished on the Day of the Lord. Consequently, Satan, who is the god of this evil world, the prince or the ruler of this evil world, works through all the political systems that he has established on the earth, which he controls, and he uses his seeds, who are the ones in charge, to hate and persecute the seeds of God, implementing Anti-Christian laws, even though they have done practically nothing wrong in the society, for it is the war of the two spirits, and we must understand this fact, as the elect seeds of God. That was why in John Chapter 15, Jesus continued to warn in verse 20: ***“Remember the word that I said unto you, The***

servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also. But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not Him that sent me.” The Lord continued this thought in John Chapter 16, from verse 1, declaring: ***“These things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended. They shall put you out of the synagogues”,*** (out of the assemblies, out of the Churches): ***“yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service.”*** (They will feel very justified in doing these things. They will even be happy, and they will thank God for giving them the boldness and the courage to do what they are doing to you, thinking that God will bless them for it, because they are under the spirit of the Antichrist, which is the spirit of total delusion! Verse 3): ***“And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor me. But these things have I told you, that when***

the time shall come, ye may remember that I told you of them. And these things I said not unto you at the beginning, because I was with you.” That is why the Master gave the blessedness that he issued, that we may be encouraged, and it is recorded in Matthew Chapter 5, starting from verse 10: ***“Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.”*** It is the war of the two spirits, and it is always the seeds of the devil that hate and persecute the seeds of God, and never the other way round. The seeds of God hate no one, and they persecute no one, but are always full of love and good works, being dutiful, peaceful, and law abiding citizens, seeking only to live for their God, and to

worship Him in the light of His Word, which is the Holy Scriptures! And that is precisely the very reason that they are hated and persecuted: Their unfettered love for God and for His Word! They are hated because they are seeds, the elect seeds of God!

Brothers and sisters, you have to see the spirit of error; you have to see the spirit of the enemy of our souls, the devil, for he will always go against that precious soul, to bring him or her back into bondage, because he does not want anyone to be saved, as he knows his own end, which is the Lake of Fire. Therefore, he wants to carry as many as he can take with him to the Lake of Fire, and he uses the spirit of deception, the spirit of error, to do it; and if that does not work, he uses the political machinery of the world which he controls, to deal ruthlessly with the children of Light. You have to understand just how this world works, for we are the children of Light. This world has never been, and it will never be, a friend to grace, for Christianity is not a bed of roses! It is a war, a great

spiritual battle, because the spirit of the devil does not want us to make it to heaven. Hence, speaking with strict reference to the devil, Jesus warned in John Chapter 10, verse 10: ***“The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy...”***, seeking out the precious souls of the children of God, who are the children of Light. Consequently, we are implored in 1 Peter Chapter 5, from verse 8: ***“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world. But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.”*** Amen. So, I am making a point tonight, and that is that tribulations, tests, trials, and persecution, have always been the portion of a believer, a true believer. Always! And the persecution is not because

of any evil that he has done, but just because of WHO he is, the TRUTH of God that he stands for, and the True GOD that he serves. Period! And you must always remember, that most of God's people have always been poor people. In the First Church Age, they were poor, and in this Seventh Church Age, they are still poor. It does not matter how rich Laodicea is, most of God's people have always been poor people, and it will remain so till the Lord comes for the Bride. Look at what Apostle Paul said in 1 Corinthians Chapter 1. Do not listen to the false preachers out there in the religious world, who are peddling antichrist doctrines, carrying a material gospel, deceiving the people for mere material gain; preachers who are making merchandise of the Gospel of Christ. In 1 Corinthians Chapter 1, from verse 26, Apostle Paul plainly declared: ***“For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath***

chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty.” Because the children of God are nothing in this world: They are majorly poor and uneducated, having not much of the things that this world has to offer, and with no big connections. Are you with me? They are the outcasts of this world, but how they love the Lord and His Word! Verse 28: **“And base things of the world, and things which ARE DESPISED...”** Why are they despised? Because they are very poor, and they have no education, for in the main, they are poor and uneducated people, people who are considered illiterates! They are people who have no big names, and no big titles that the society recognises! Are you with me? They are poor, humble people of God, who love the Lord and His truth, and who just want to live for God. And they are the ones that will stand for the true revealed Word of God! All the big shots, and all the nobles, even if they make a profession of faith, only compromise the Word of God, when it is not convenient for them to stand for the faith, because

of what it will cost them: Their money, their possessions, their position, their popularity (fame), and their influence! In the main, because of their fame and money, they are the class of people that feel that this revealed way is beneath them, and they blatantly trample upon the Word of God. As if God cares for who they are; as if God considers the personality of men, or that He recognises human persons! Brothers and sisters, our God is not a respecter of persons! (Acts 10:34). Who are you?! That is why, brothers and sisters, there is no one with enough money to buy one ounce of divine revelation. 1 Corinthians Chapter 1, verse 28, concludes: **“And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: That no flesh should glory in His presence.”** Halleluia! Brothers and sisters, that is the truth! You have to see the base things, the poor things of this world, the foolish things, the uneducated things, the unlearned people, people with no big names and titles, and with

no worldly connection, for they are the ones God chooses; they are the elects of God. But they are the ones that hear the Gospel of Jesus Christ gladly, and they joyfully and faithfully follow Jesus Christ. In total contrast, it is not these rich and arrogant educated ones who will follow one man who has no roof over his head, a man who was born in a manger, in a barn! They do not have the time for that; they are too busy, too rich, and too big, to follow a man like Jesus of Nazareth! That was why in Acts Chapter 24, Governor Felix told Apostle Paul in verse 25: **“... Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee.”** They are big men, and have no time for such issues as the salvation of God. Brothers and sisters, as it is clearly written: **“For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake.”** (Phillip. 1:29). And only if we suffer with him, will we also enjoy glory with him, for as the saying goes: **“No pain No gain!”** (Rom. 8:17). This way will certainly cost us something! This way of

revealed faith is free, but it has a price: It will cost us something, even though it is not money. And if we cannot pay the price, then we will certainly not have the eternal glory that goes with it either. Look at what God told the children of Israel in the Book of Malachi Chapter 1, from verse 1: ***“The burden of the word of the Lord to Israel by Malachi. I have loved you, saith the Lord. Yet ye say, Wherein hast thou loved us?”*** That is what the children of God are saying to God: *“We passed through many tribulations, and things have been hard for us.”* Are you listening to me? So they are now questioning God's love for them. Remember it is the Spirit of God speaking out the mind of the people of Israel, questioning God's love, who say or think: *“How has God loved us? The enemy came and conquered us. Look at all the evils that are happening to us.”* Are you listening to me? Brothers and sisters, you can put yourself in that picture, and say, *“I cannot even pay my rent or my mortgage; I cannot pay my children's school fees; things have been so bad for me, and it*

has been bad for a long time. I am facing hardship every day, and I go to bed hungry, because of my poor state, for nothing is working for me. And yet, you say that God loves me!” That is why the world cannot understand how God loves His people, and yet, He allows bad things to happen to them, because He allows them to go through hardships, and great persecutions, even martyrdom! That is the mystery of the kingdom! Carnal minds think: *“How can you say God loves a people, and yet, look at what is happening to them?!”* Brothers and sisters, what they are not seeing, and what they cannot see, are the great riches of heaven that He has given His people. That is what they cannot see, all because they are spiritual gems, and carnal men can only see the carnal things of this world. Moreover, they do not understand, that spirituality is not determined by the abundance of a man's possession, but by the depth of the revelation of life that his soul is adorned with, and by which he lives. That is why the Lord Jesus warned in Luke Chapter 12,

verse 15: ***“And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.”*** Out there, they preach money and material possessions, and teach that material gain is godliness, even though it is a blatant lie, for they carry a material gospel, which is a totally perverted gospel! They need to preach this blatant lie, in order to build the empires that they are building on earth out of the gospel. But we all know that that is not the real gospel, but a perversion! For as it is written in Romans Chapter 14, verse 17: ***“For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.”*** But that is not what they are preaching out there! So I ask you: Who is rich? Is it a man who has lands and houses more than he needs and can use, and has cars, until he does not even know where to park them? Is that really a rich man, whose life is hanging in the balance? Because if God should call for his soul tonight, he would not only be the most

miserable of all men, but he would also be the poorest of men! Because we came to the world with nothing, and we leave with nothing: We came naked into the world, and naked we will most certainly leave it! But the material point is, what is the state of our souls? What is adorning our souls? Are our souls rich towards God, or are they poor towards God? That is the main issue, for that is what really matters! Is your soul rich in divine treasures? Is it adorned with the treasures of heaven, or is it devoid of the treasures of heaven? Does God live in that fleshly temple of yours, or is it devoid of God?! I have to ask, because that is the only thing that you can take away from this carnal world! Already, we came into this world naked, and we are also going to leave it just as naked! However, the only way to go back clothed, and not naked, is to have your souls clothed with God's own righteousness, which we have in Christ Jesus! It is for your souls to be adorned with the invaluable treasures, the rich bounties of heaven, laying treasures, eternal

treasures, up there for yourselves! Brothers and sisters, this is the True Gospel of Jesus Christ: It is the message of salvation that there is a cross that we must carry! When we take away the cross from the message of Christ, we certainly do not have Jesus **"The Christ"**, because salvation that does not give us a cross, is utter deception, being a false gospel! We most certainly cannot have Jesus without a cross! That is why Jesus declared to the rich man, as recorded in Mark Chapter 10, verse 21: **"... go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and COME, TAKE UP THE CROSS, AND FOLLOW ME."** In this revealed way, there is a cross that we will definitely carry, for this way is not a bed of roses. Otherwise, we will become like the seed that was sown in the midst of rocks. Oh, he received the message with joy, but he had no depth of understanding. Unfortunately, the sun came up, trials came, tests came, persecution also came, and because he had no depth, his faith withered out, and he packed up! That

is the truth! So, brothers and sisters, we do not want to be like the man whose heart is like the rocky ground, because that parable shows the various states of the hearts of men; we want to be the good ground, one that bears much abiding fruit to the glory of God. I am sorry that I am going down this way, but we do not want to be people with just a head filled with knowledge, having no revelational understanding of anything, for as it is written: *"Knowledge puffs up, but charity, which is divine love, edifies, it builds up."* (1 Cor. 8:1). May God help me tonight. What did Jesus enjoin us to do in the Gospel of Saint Matthew Chapter 6? In Matthew Chapter 6, verses 19-21, the Lord said: ***"Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."*** Therefore, we are to

lay up eternal treasures for ourselves, particularly when we see just how late the day has become, for we are most certainly now living at the very end.

Coming back to finish up the total lack of appreciation which the children of Israel showed towards God, in the Book of Malachi Chapter 1, let us continue with where the Spirit of God was speaking on behalf of Israel, saying in verse 2: ***“I have loved you, saith the Lord. Yet ye say, Wherein hast thou loved us?”*** (Now the Lord answered them, saying): ***“Was not Esau Jacob's brother? saith the Lord: yet I loved Jacob, And I hated Esau, and laid his mountains and his heritage waste for the dragons of the wilderness.”*** Exactly! Consider this: God gave Israel ALL His oracles to carry, and He gave Israel the Covenant of Life. He could have given ALL of it to Edom, but He did not. He could have given ALL of it to Esau, but He did not give it to him! But He gave Jacob the Covenant of life, and made them a marvel to the world, a peculiar people, and yet, they still said:

“Wherein hast thou loved us?” And as the Bride of Christ, we also have the Covenant of Life, that was sealed with the most precious blood of Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, which is better and greater than that of the Old Covenant. Our souls are not naked, but our souls are adorned, richly adorned with the precious treasures of heaven! God has given us the invaluable riches of heaven, things that Bill Gates, with all his billions, cannot buy! So, how can Israel say that God does not love her? Why would Israel say that God does not favour her? And why would we, as Bride saints, also say that God has not been good to us? What of the unparalleled divine revelation of life that is richly adorning our souls, whilst the religious world are totally shut out of accessing it, walking in total blindness, with their souls completely stark naked?! The Lord in His infinite love and mercy has made our lives very rich, truly rich, possessing true and enduring riches, the gems of life; but all what men see are the hardships and the persecution that we face, evils that cease at

death, being only ***“light afflictions”!*** In 1 Corinthians Chapter 2, from verse 6, the Holy Bible records: ***“Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect: yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought: But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, EVEN THE HIDDEN WISDOM, WHICH GOD ORDAINED BEFORE THE WORLD UNTO OUR GLORY: Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. BUT AS IT IS WRITTEN, EYE HATH NOT SEEN, NOR EAR HEARD, NEITHER HAVE ENTERED INTO THE HEART OF MAN, THE THINGS WHICH GOD HATH PREPARED FOR THEM THAT LOVE HIM. BUT GOD HATH REVEALED THEM UNTO US BY HIS SPIRIT: FOR THE SPIRIT SEARCHETH ALL THINGS, YEA, THE DEEP THINGS OF GOD.”*** And that is precisely why nothing else matters to us, for nothing else can be compared with the future glory that is to be revealed

in us, at the physical return of Jesus Christ to earth, in the Millennium, following which there is still an eternal glory awaiting us, right there in the Eternal Age! Think about it! That is why Jesus told the Church in Smyrna: ***"I know your poverty, BUT YOU ARE RICH"***! God sees ALL that His children go through; but He also knows what He has invested in us, things that have no comparison, irrespective of the trials of life that we may face. Is that not wonderful? These are things that the world cannot understand, how you can profess that you are a child of God, that you are in tune with God, and yet, things are very hard for you. They cannot relate to that, and they stumble on it, because it takes a revelation, and further, because carnal men measure things strictly from a carnal material perspective! They cannot see the revelation that is burning in your soul, the awesome richness of it, how most invaluable it is, for they cannot see the spiritual kingdom that God is offering, which you possess by the infilling of the Holy Ghost! Do not forget that our kingdom is not a physical kingdom, but

it is a spiritual kingdom that we possess as we speak today. The physical kingdom is coming in the Millennium; but as it stands today, Jesus Christ did not give us a physical kingdom: It is a spiritual kingdom that we have of him right now, one which we possess by the infilling of the Holy Spirit. And if you miss that, you miss everything, for of all men, we are highly favoured, and are most richly blessed, being called into the highest class of sainthood that there is within God's entire redeemed family! And as we now turn back to finish up the prophetic revelation of Jesus Christ to the Church in Smyrna, in Revelation Chapter 2, the Lord stated from verse 11: ***"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"***, (Not faithful until death comes, but faithful ***"UNTO DEATH"***, which is to be faithful to face martyrdom), ***"and I will give thee A CROWN OF LIFE."*** Halleluia! A crown of life! That makes all the

difference, brothers and sisters, and that is what we are labouring for, that crown of life eternal. And we dare say, that this crown of life is worth dying for! No wonder, when we read the *Foxe's Book Of Martyrs*, the saints gladly accepted to die, and they died in ways that simply defy human comprehension, that even unbelievers had to admire them, even in death! They took whatever the devil threw at them, with total confidence and audacity, a holy audacity, and with an inextinguishable divine joy, knowing that there was a better resurrection waiting for them, for God enabled them by His anointing, to triumph over death, giving praise to God, who counted them worthy of martyrdom! Like Abel, they sealed their sacrifice, their testimony, with their own blood, at the hands of Cainites! Glory to God! Church, I cannot exclude the testimony of this other sister, a hero of faith, who also bears the name Blandina, and it is the second to the last testimony that we will consider, as we bring this message to a close, for she was indeed ***"faithful unto death."*** The *Foxe's Book*

Of Martyrs, has this to say about her on page 28: ***“The blessed Blandina, last of all, as a generous mother having exhorted her children, and sent them before her victorious to the king, reviewing the whole series of their sufferings, hastened to undergo the same herself, rejoicing and triumphing in her exit, as if invited to a marriage supper, not as one going to be exposed to wild beasts. After she had endured stripes, the tearing of the beasts, and the iron chair, she was enclosed in a net, and thrown to a bull; and having been tossed some time by the animal, and proving quite superior to her pains, through the influence of hope, and the realising view of the objects of her faith and her fellowship with Christ, she at length breathed out her soul.”*** What a grand and glorious exit! Again, the *Foxe's Book Of Martyrs* gives us a general account of what the True Christians, the saints of God, passed through, and it is a testimony that we promised earlier to give, a testimony which includes the martyrdom of Saint

Ignatius, the last martyr that we will consider, in the day when the Local Church in Smyrna still had its existence, for it was shortly after they had received the prophetic address from the hands of Apostle John. It states on pages 17-20: ***“The causes why the Roman emperors did so persecute the Christians were chiefly these – fear and hatred. First, fear, for that the emperors and senate, of blind ignorance, not knowing the manner of Christ's kingdom, feared and misdoubted lest the same would subvert their empery; and therefore sought they all means possible, how, by death and all kinds of torments, utterly to extinguish the name and memory of the Christians. Secondly, hatred, partly for that this world, of its own natural condition, hath ever hated and maliced the people of God, from the first beginning of the world. Partly again, for that the Christians being of a contrary nature and religion, serving only the true living God, despised their false gods, spake against their idolatrous worshippings, and many***

times stopped the power of Satan working in their idols: and therefore Satan, the prince of this world, stirred up the Roman princes and blind idolaters to bear the more hatred and spite against them. Whatsoever mishappened to the city or provinces of Rome, either famine, pestilence, earthquake, wars, wonders, unseasonableness of weather, or what other evils soever, IT WAS IMPUTED TO THE CHRISTIANS. The tyrants and organs of Satan were not contented with death only, to bereave the life from the body. The kinds of death were divers, and no less horrible than divers. Whatsoever the cruelty of man's invention could devise for the punishment of man's body, was practised against the Christians - stripes and scourgings, drawings, tearings, stonings, plates of iron laid unto them burning hot, deep dungeons, racks, strangling in prisons, the teeth of wild beasts, gridirons”, (an instrument of torture on which people were

secured before being burned by fire, roasted to death like steak meat), **“gibbets”**, (a human-shaped cage, suspended from a post, where the hanged or gibbeted body was observed, and left to rot), **“and gallows, tossing upon the horns of bulls. Moreover, when they were thus killed, their bodies were laid in heaps, and dogs there left to keep them, that no man might come to bury them, neither would any prayer obtain them to be interred. And yet, notwithstanding all these continual persecutions and horrible punishments, the Church daily increased, deeply rooted in the doctrine of the apostles and of men apostolical, and watered plenteously with the blood of the saints. In the third persecution Pliny the second, a man learned and famous, seeing the lamentable slaughter of Christians, and moved therewith to pity, wrote to Trajan”**, (Emperor Trajan, who reigned from 98 AD. – 117 AD.), **certifying him that there were many thousands of them daily put to death, of which**

none did any thing contrary to the Roman laws worthy of persecution. 'The whole account they gave of their crime or error (whichever it is to be called) amounted only to this, - viz. that they were accustomed on a stated day to meet before daylight, and to repeat together a set form of prayer to Christ as a God, and to bind themselves by an obligation - not indeed to commit wickedness; but, on the contrary, - never to commit theft, robbery or adultery, never to falsify their word, never to defraud any man: after which it was their custom to separate, and reassemble to partake in common of a harmless meal.'

In this persecution, suffered the blessed martyr, Ignatius, who is held in famous reverence among very many. This Ignatius was appointed to the bishopric of Antioch next after Peter in succession. Some do say, that he, being sent from Syria to Rome, because he professed Christ, was given to the

wild beasts to be devoured. It is also said of him, that when he passed through Asia, being under the most strict custody of his keepers, he strengthened and confirmed the Churches through all the cities as he went, both with his exhortations and preaching of the Word of God. Accordingly, having come to Smyrna, he wrote to the Church at Rome, exhorting them not to use means for his deliverance from martyrdom, lest they should deprive him of that which he most longed and hoped for. 'Now I begin to be a disciple. I care for nothing, of visible or invisible things, so that I may but win Christ. Let fire and the cross, let the companies of wild beasts, let breaking of bones and tearing of limbs, let the grinding of the whole body, and all the malice of the devil, come upon me; be it so, only may I win Christ Jesus!' And even when he was sentenced to be thrown to the beasts, such was the burning desire that he had to

suffer, that he spake, what time he heard the lions roaring, saying, "I am the wheat of Christ: I am going to be ground with the teeth of wild beasts, that I may be found pure bread."

Brothers and sisters, all these saints, heroes of faith, martyrs of Jesus Christ, endured all the fury of hell, because they had the hope of a better resurrection, and they did it to obtain the "**crown of life**"! We can all see, not only what the saints in the Local Church in Smyrna went through, in that First Age of Christendom, but also what the saints went through, in the Second Church Age that that Local Church in Smyrna represented, ALL for their love of Jesus Christ, bearing the fruits that endured unto everlasting life.

The Lord closed his prophetic address to the Church in Smyrna, which gives us the Second Church Age, the Smyranean Church Age, in Revelation Chapter 2, verse 11, warning seriously: "**He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the**

Churches..." Now this verse lets us see undoubtedly, brothers and sisters, that this address is prophetic of the corresponding Age or Dispensation, because this very verse, takes its application away from being just an address to a local assembly, and puts it in its dispensational setting, as an address to the Age. How many see the point? That is precisely why the address ends with: "**He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith UNTO THE CHURCHES**" (PLURAL, TAKING IN ALL THE CHURCHES OF JESUS CHRIST THROUGHOUT THE GLOBE, IN THAT SECOND AGE)! So, it vindicates the truth, that this is a prophetic message, that not only applied to the local assembly in Smyrna, but it also had a dispensational prophetic application, to the corresponding Smyranean Age. And as he did to the First Church Age, Jesus now gave his Unfailing Word of promise to this Second Age, in closing out his address, saying: "**He that overcometh SHALL NOT BE HURT OF THE**

SECOND DEATH." It simply means that whoever overcomes, will come into Life Eternal. Period! Consequently, he will not experience the most horrible and unimaginable second death. And exactly what is the second death? The second death is death in the Lake of Fire, right after the White Throne Judgment has been executed, when ALL the unbelieving and wicked souls are thrown into the Lake of Fire where they will burn, for only God knows how long, and then eventually, they will be annihilated, burnt out of existence, thereby suffering eternal damnation, which is eternal separation from God! The Lord helping us, our Scribe dealing with the *Pure Seed Doctrines* will soon be produced, and we hope to lay out this doctrine most succinctly in it, by the grace of God. Revelation Chapter 20, verses 14-15, concludes, declaring: "**And death and hell were cast into the Lake of Fire. THIS IS THE SECOND DEATH. AND WHOSOEVER WAS NOT FOUND WRITTEN IN THE BOOK OF LIFE WAS CAST INTO THE LAKE OF**

FIRE.” FULL STOP! The Lake of Fire is the end portion of ALL haters and opposers of God and Jesus Christ, and is the end portion of ALL opposers of truth and righteousness! And just as the promise of the Lake of Fire is true, so is the promise of the Crown of Life, for it is just as true, for the Word of God cannot fail, and it does not fail. Therefore, let us labour to receive this glorious crown of life. The crown of this world corrupts and is temporal; but the crown of life is incorruptible and eternal. And yet, look at how much labour and toil people invest, just to get a corruptible crown! I pray we live for God with all our hearts, for the days are extremely evil. Moreover, nothing can be compared with what God has in store for all who love Him, all who await the return of Christ, waiting faithfully and patiently in the light of His Holy Word. Saints, we see that that little Church in Smyrna suffered a lot, and they bore it commendably, standing firmly and faithfully, and all we need to do, is to just transpose that to the Smyrnaean Church Age. Yet, Smyrna was not a poor city. It was not! It had a

port, and was a city with great attractions. And despite the money and riches that abounded all around them, the saints were a poor people. And can we not see ourselves in the same scenario today? There is money everywhere around us, and there are new buildings all around us, being put up every day, lots of new big building construction works, and yet, we cannot afford anything, for truth has no roof over its head. It is always like that! Welcome to the straight and narrow way! Brothers and sisters, I can see by the eye of faith, when the bishop of Smyrna received this letter from Saint John in 97 AD.; when Polycarp received this letter in that day, I can see him set that Church on fire with it. Halleluia! Indeed, I can see him set the Church on fire, bolstering their faith for what was to come; but he also had to go, for he too was martyred. Everything, however, has to take on a dispensational level, as we have to transpose this letter to its dispensational plane. It just lets us see that the Smyrnaean Church Age, was an Age where the saints had very little, they

were very poor, and they faced hell! For the Second Church Age brings us straight to the Age of Martyrdom. Why do we call it the Age of martyrdom? Because it was when the devil opened the door of intense persecution against the saints. It takes us to Revelation Chapter 6, under the Second Seal, which gives us the second horse rider, the red horse rider. We must understand, brothers and sisters, that we cannot talk about the Church Ages, without bringing in the seals, to give us a fuller and detailed picture of the reality of what happened in the Ages, particularly when the Lord has already given us the revelation of the seals, through Brother Branham. Are you listening to me? The First Church Age was when we had the first horse rider, the white horse rider, a time when the spirit of the Antichrist went forth in deception, with a bow, but without an arrow, and yet, he went forth conquering, and to conquer. But when he realised that deception would not work, because of the apostolic guards who were on ground with “**a lion**” anointing, and the awesome and invincible

power of the pure light of Jesus Christ that they bore in that day, he had to change his tactics. He decided to kill all true believers, and thereby wipe out True Christianity. So, in the Second Age, he changed his horse, and he went from a white horse to a red horse, instituting a great bloodbath, which opened up the Age of intense persecution, the Age of Martyrdom. So, in the Second Church Age, which is the Smyrnaean Church Age, the door of serious and intense persecution was opened up, as the devil sought to exterminate True Christianity, by wiping out ALL true Bible believers with persecution and death! Brothers and sisters, God gave His children grace, for He anointed them with the anointing of **“a calf”**, a beast of burden, and they bore whatever the devil threw at them, even death, and they were martyred in great numbers! Saints, Emperor Diocletian was indeed a monster, who instituted the bloodiest persecution against Christians in the Second Church Age, and they were martyred big time, for those ten years were simply horrible! That was why even history calls it **“The Great Persecution”**! The Second Age was an Age of Martyrdom, the Age of intense persecution, when the red horse rider stepped on the scene, and he rode all the way to the Dark Ages, and through the Dark Ages, in that Fourth Church Age! It was just torture, persecution, and death; for the blood of the saints flowed everywhere, richly watering the seed of the Word. And in this Second Age, the saints of God stood tall for the faith of Christ, because by the eyes of faith, they had logged on to the promise of life, which the faithful Lord will give them on that glorious resurrection morning, for they will receive the crown of life. Amen. Shall we bow our heads in prayer. (Brother Amos prayed).

The Lord bless you.

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Announcement

Our Convention dates for 2019 are as follows:

November Convention: 14th - 17th, 2019.

NOTE: Our email address has changed.

All are welcome to the meetings. If you need more information, or if you have any questions or any comments, please feel free to contact us. All correspondence should be addressed to:

pastorbft@yahoo.com

For those who prefer to write, our postal address is at the bottom of this page. We look forward to hearing from you.

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*Stand by the Rock of revealed Truth.
It makes the difference!
Matt. 16:15-18*

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