

## How to read letters (Cyprus Training 1, session 15)

Start study by reading it all in one go...

### Revelation 2:8-11 ESV

“And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write:

“The words of the first and the last, who died and came to life.

<sup>9</sup> I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich) and the slander of those who say that they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. <sup>10</sup> Do not fear what you are about to suffer.

Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and for ten days you will have tribulation.

Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life.

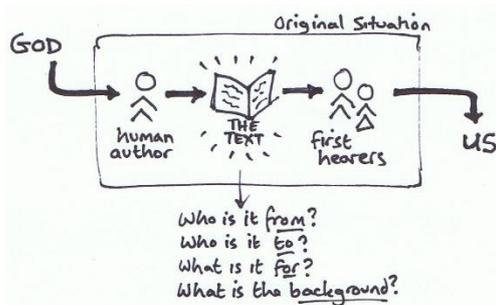
<sup>11</sup> He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

The one who conquers will not be hurt by the second death.’

1) Who is the letter **from**?

2) Who is the letter **to**?

3) What is the **situation**?



4) **Quick detour.** Reading a Bible passage, three vital words

context...

content...

conduct...

Building up the *context*, but using the *content* to do so...

4a) What was the church in Smyrna facing?

Join up the dots...

5) **Why** is the writer writing? [= purpose? trying to achieve?]

How to find out?

6) What **exhortations** (commands, requests) does the writer give?

Continue trying to build up a picture...

7) How do all the various parts of the letter **fit together**

...and fit into the situation and the purpose?

7a) Why might they be afraid?

7b) What was the *ultimate* source of the trouble they faced?

7c) How might the opening words of **v9** help them?

7d) How might Jesus' self-description in **v8** help them?

7e) Why would Jesus' words "I know the slander" be an encouragement?

7f) In **v9**, how does Jesus describe the church?

Natural follow-on Question...

7g) What encouraging thing does **v10** tell us about Jesus?

7h) *What reason* does Jesus give them not to be fearful but to be faithful?

i.e. we're asking,

8) What is the **flow of thought**?

But v11 raises another Question: What is "the second death"?

9) Does the writer use the same **word / phrase** elsewhere?

20v6; **20v11-15** (v14 & 21v8).

10) What are the **key themes**, ideas and vocabulary?

11) What is the **tone and feel** of the letter?

12) How would you **sum up**?

"Don't be fearful, but be faithful because...

Jesus knows what his people suffer

Jesus knows the reality, whatever people say

Jesus is well able to sympathise

Jesus says you are rich!

Jesus knows the future – the troubles & the timescales

All the trouble now is worth it, to avoid the ultimate trouble

All you might lose now is worth it, to gain the crown of life."