

Series: The Revelation of Jesus Christ

Today: "The Church in Smyrna" # 2

Rev 2: 8-11

2-7-16 Sun AM

1. In Revelation 2-3 the focus is on seven churches- The "things that are," in the Revelation outline [1:19].

These churches should be viewed as actual churches, representative of churches "to the churches", and prophetic churches, "seven periods in the church age."

They are prophetic from the Post-Apostolic church at Ephesus to the raptured church at Laodicea [96 A. D. to rapture].

2. The church at Smyrna was the persecuted or suffering church of 100 A.D. to 300 A.D. It was the one of two churches that Jesus had no complaint against, the other being, the church in Philadelphia.

Scripture does not record the founding of this church, but we know Smyrna was myrrh used as a perfume for the living and dead. When myrrh is crushed it gives off a fragrant aroma. This is why Jesus had no complaint. The name represents a very bitter time in church history of intense persecution.

TT: What did Jesus know about this church?

I. Jesus Knew Their Persecution [2:8-9a].

The word "tribulation" means pressure and is used for persecution. It means a "burden that crushes."

The church was facing intense pressure because of their faithfulness to Jesus Christ.

1. They were poor materially because of the persecution. Poor means they had nothing at all. They were extremely poor- so much for the prosperity gospel.
2. They were rich spiritually. They had what really mattered- salvation, holiness, grace, peace, fellowship, and especially Jesus. They invested in heaven. They were the poor rich church.

Matt. 6:19-21, Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: (20) But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: (21) For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

I. Jesus Knew Their Persecution [2:8-9a].

II. Jesus Knew Their Persecutors (2: 9b-10a).

The city was a leading center for the cult of emperor worship. The Christians submitted to the emperor's civil authority but refused to offer sacrifices and worship him. They would not say "Caesar is lord."

Because they refused to be involved in pagan worship and have images in their homes, they were branded as atheists.

They were blasphemed by the unbelieving Jews of Smyrna.

They were hated and rejected because of Jesus by those who were followers of Satan. They were an assembly of Satan.

They also accused Christians as being cannibals [based on the Lord's Supper], immorality [based on the holy kiss] and atheism and rebellion.

I. Jesus Knew Their Persecution.

II. Jesus Knew Their Persecutors.

III. Jesus Knew Their Perseverance [2:10b-11].

Psalms 56:11, "I will trust in God, I will not be afraid of what man can do to me."

They would be thrown into prison by the devil and God would allow the church to be tested to prove the reality of their faith and perfect their faith, and thus prove Satan can't destroy real saving faith.

Early church father Tertullian said, "The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church."

"Ten days"

1. Some see this as ten time periods of 10 Roman emperors who persecuted the church from Nero A.D. 54 to Diocletian A.D. 284. 2. Some see this as 10 years of persecution, or a brief time.

3. Probably best interpretation is 10 actual days, the time of Daniel's testing, and church waiting Pentecost "time of completion."

He gives a word of comfort.

1. Those who die for him will receive the crown of life [James 1:12]. They were given eternal life as a reward of perseverance.

2. They will not experience the second death. They may die physically but they will not suffer eternal damnation.

Rev. 20:13-15, And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. (14) And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire.

This is the second death. (15) And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.

Rev. 21:8, But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.

Principles:

1. God is in complete control of our persecution because He has a divine plan and purpose- His glory and our growth!
2. The church has forgotten Phil 3:10, "The fellowship of Christ's sufferings"
3. God sets divine limits on what Satan can do to believers.
4. Our lack of persecution is not a blessing but a condemnation.

Close with two questions-

Q- Are we willing to suffer for his name?

Q- What would a letter to Trinity from Jesus say about our willingness to suffer for Christ?