

THE CHURCH IN SMYRNA (THE SUFFERING CHURCH)

Rev. 2: 8 – 11

INTRODUCTION:

1. Smyrna was a great trade city.

(1) It stood on a deep gulf about 35 miles to the north of Ephesus.

(2) It had an especially rich trade in wines.

2. Smyrna was an outstandingly beautiful city.

(1) It claimed to be the “Glory of Asia”.

(2) Several temples of idol gods were in this city.

3. Politically, Smyrna was an important city.

(1) It had chosen the right side in all the civil wars (for this, Rome was grateful).

(2) It claimed to be the first in beauty.

(3) It claimed to be first in Caesar worship.

(4) It claimed to be the birthplace of Homer.

(5) Smyrna looked with contempt on poor and humble Christians, and despised them as of no importance.

4. Smyrna had two characteristics which made life for the Christian a constant and continued peril.

(1) Smyrna was one of the great centers of Caesar worship.

a. In the days of Domitian, Caesar worship became compulsory.

b. Once a year, the Roman citizens must burn a pinch of incense on the altar to the godhead of Caesar.

c. Having done this, a certificate was given.

d. Nowhere could life have been more dangerous for a Christian than in Smyrna.

e. For a man to become a Christian was to be considered an outlaw.

(2) The second characteristic was the peril of the Jewish population.

I. THE DESCRIPTION OF THE SPEAKER: verse 8

1. “*The First*”...

(1) Self-existent being, who is the origin of all things. John 1:1; 8:58; Col. 1: 15 – 17

(2) Christ should be first with man. Matt. 6:33

a. He is not, most of the time. II Tim. 3:4

2. “*The last*”... Rev. 22: 13

(1) His eternal nature. Ps. 90:2

(2) His dependability. II Tim. 1:12; 2:13

3. “*Which was dead and is alive*”...Rev. 1:18; Rom. 6:9

(1) He had been through what they were experiencing.

(2) His death, burial, and resurrection are fundamental facts of the gospel. I Cor. 15: 1 – 4; Rom. 1:4

(3) He died for our sins. Rom. 5:8

II. “I KNOW”... verse 9

1. Assurance that Christ was possessed of a complete and perfect knowledge of their needs and character. Heb. 4:13

2. There is no chance of deceiving the Lord about the character and accomplishment of the church anywhere. Gal. 6:7 “*God is not mocked*”...

III. WHAT IS RIGHT WITH THE CHURCH. Verse 9

1. “*Thy works*”...

(1) Will be judged according to works. Rev. 20:12; Heb. 6:10; James 2:24; Matt. 25:34 – 40

2. “Thy tribulation”...

- (1) The source of much of their tribulation: “Them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan”... Rev. 2:9**
- (2) There will be tribulation if we live as God would have us live. Matt. 5: 11 – 12; II Tim. 3:12**
- (3) When we suffer for His cause, we are having fellowship with Him. Phil. 3:10**
- (4) Paul says Christians should glory in tribulations. Rom. 5: 3 – 4**
- (5) Paul tells what tribulation does. Rom. 5: 3 – 4**
- (6) James tells – James 1: 3 -4**
- (7) Peter tells – I Pet. 1: 6 – 7; 4:16**

3. “Poverty”...

- (1) Physical poverty.**
- (2) The churches of Macedonia were poor. II Cor. 8: 1 – 5**
- (3) One probable reason for their poverty. Heb. 10:34**
- (4) “But thou art rich”...**
 - a. Rich in spiritual things.**
 - b. To a rich church physically, He said it was poor. Rev. 3: 17 – 18**

4. “Blasphemy”...

- (1) It would be better to translate it SLANDER.**
- (2) The Jews had the ear of those in high places, so they would whisper their slander against the Christians into the ears of the Roman authorities.**
- (3) The fleshly Jews were no longer God’s people. Rev. 2:9; Rom. 2: 28 – 29**
- (4) They claimed to be God’s people, but they were the devil’s. Rev. 2:9**
- (5) Many today do the same thing. II Cor. 11: 13 – 15**

IV. THE ADMONITION. Verse 10

1. *“Do not fear what you are about to suffer”... NASV*

2. Their suffering was going to get worse.

V. THE PROMISED REWARD. Verse 10, 11

1. Crown of life.

2. *“Shall not be hurt of the second death”... Rev. 20: 14 – 15*

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