

Revelation 2:8-11

REVIEW...

- Outline of Revelation...
 - PAST - the things John HAD seen – vision of Jesus – **Revelation 1**
 - PRESENT - the things which ARE – the SEVEN churches – **Revelation 2-3**
 - FUTURE - the things AFTER this – the rapture – wrath – and return of Jesus – **Revelation 4-22**
- SEVEN letters...
 - Given by Jesus – written down by John – with THREE possible interpretations...
 - SEVEN literal churches in Asia Minor [modern day Turkey]
 - Different KINDS of churches – the TOTAL [seven] church...
 - The HISTORY of the church – from PENTECOST to the RAPTURE!
- Ephesus – Loveless church...
 - A church that had a SOLID foundation – started by the Apostle Paul – Pastored by John...
 - A church that had a LOT of GOOD works – stood up against FALSE teachers...
 - But they had ONE thing WRONG – their MOTIVE – they FORGOT about LOVE...
 - As a result – if they did not REPENT – God would remove their LIGHT!

THE PERSECUTED CHURCH...

- 1ST – INTRODUCTION... vs. 8
 - FOUR sections
 - Each of the LETTERS to the churches contains FOUR sections...
 - Introduction – Positive – Negative - and Encouragement...
 - Not all of the churches receive all FOUR sections...
 - TWO of the churches receive no NEGATIVE – Smyrna and Philadelphia
 - ONE of the churches did not get any POSITIVE – Laodicea!
 - 2nd – The Angel...
 - [To the angel!](#)
 - As you will recall – there are TWO thoughts on WHO this ANGEL was...
 - FIRST – a guardian ANGEL – who watched over Smyrna - **Psalm 91:11**
 - SECOND – it could be the PASTOR of the church...
 - ANGEL [ἄγγελος] – means messenger – one who gives Gods WORD...
 - Therefore Jesus could be talking about the PASTOR – who gave the church His Word!
 - 3rd – The City...
 - [The church of Smyrna write!](#)
 - SMYRNA [σμύρνα] – comes from the root word MYRRH...
 - MYRRH – is an expensive fragrant perfume - extracted from crushing a tree [Commiphora]
 - It was one of THREE gifts given to Jesus as His birth – **Matthew 2:11**
 - **But it is also a beautiful picture of the PERSECUTED church...**
 - **When we SUFFER for our FAITH in Jesus – when we are CRUSHED...**
 - **We give off the FRAGRANCE of CHRIST – which is TREASURED by our LORD!**

- **II Corinthians 2:14** – “Now thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ - and through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place.”
- Izmir...
 - Smyrna – located about 80 milometers north of the city of Ephesus...
 - The only city of all the SEVEN churches that is still a MAJOR city today...
 - Modern day Izmir – has a population over FOUR million – THIRD largest city in Turkey...
 - It is a major PORT city – located right on the Aegean Sea [Mediterranean]
 - But although the CULTURE is very EUROPEAN...
 - The main RELIGION – as is all of TURKEY – is ISLAM!
 - This is the ONE church we were NOT able to see all of...
 - We stopped by here on the LAST day of our TOUR – and the TRAFFIC was horrible...
 - HALF the group missed it – the other HALF just saw the SITE from behind BARS...
 - So our TRIBULATION – was TRAFFIC that ended up putting us behind BARS!
- Roman city...
 - The City of Smyrna has a LONG history of FALSE faiths...
 - From the time of the writing of the Book of Revelation – they persecuted Christians...
 - They were the HEART of EMPEROR [Tiberias] worship in the eastern Roman Empire...
 - The penalty for refusing to WORSHIP the EMPEROR – was DEATH...
 - Which is no doubt the source of much of their TRIBULATION!
- o 4th – The TONE...
 - Describing Jesus...
 - In His INTRODUCTION to each of the Churches - Jesus looks back...
 - Highlighting specific CHARACTERISTICS of the Vision from - **Revelation 1:11-18**
 - The choice of CHARACTERISTICS - will set the TONE for the LETTER to that church...
 - With SMYRNA – Jesus will highlight the fact that DEATH is not the END!
 - These things says the First and the Last - who was dead - and came to life!
 - The FIRST and the LAST – is a TITLE for GOD [יְהוָה] - **Isaiah 41:4**
 - God [Jesus] - was PERSECUTED – He SUFFERED – and He DIED for the Gospel...
 - Which would have been a VERY relatable message for the church in SMYRNA...
 - As no doubt many of them were PERSECUTED – and even KILLED for their FAITH...
 - But Jesus did NOT stay DEAD – He was RESURRECTED – He is ALIVE!
 - I always LOVE going to the GARDEN tomb in Israel...
 - Because you do not LOOK into the grave to see a BODY – it is EMPTY...
 - Because Jesus is NOT dead – He is RISEN – **Luke 24:5-6**
 - DEATH is not the END...
 - **I Corinthians 15:20** – “Christ is risen from the dead - and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.”
 - The Bible uses the word SLEEP - to describe the DEATH of a believer...
 - Because for us it is not the END - we have the hope of eternal LIFE to come...
 - Jesus was the FIRST to be resurrected - but all who believe will follow His example!
 - Most of the world lives their LIVES – like this life is all that matters...
 - Their choices – their priorities – all revolve around what happens NOW...

- But life does NOT end when we DIE – DEATH is just the beginning...
- And if we have the RIGHT perspective – we will CHOSE to live for ETERNITY!

● 2ND – THE POSITIVE... vs. 9-10

o 1st – Jesus KNOWS...

- I know your works!
- KNOWS [εἶδω] – to SEE and UNDERSTAND...
- Jesus will make this statement to all SEVEN churches – He sees EVERYTHING!
- GOOD and BAD – nothing [perfect] is hidden from our Lord!
- **Hebrews 4:13** – “There is no creature hidden from His sight - but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.”

o 2nd – Tribulation...

- I know your... tribulation!
 - TRIBULATION [θλίψις] – to press or CRUSH – like GRAPES in a wine press...
 - The church in SMYRNA was being PRESSED for their FAITH in Jesus...
 - They were trying to STAND up for Jesus – in a CITY sold out to worshiping CAESAR!
- What causes TRIBULATION...
 - **John 15:18** – “If the world hates you - you know that it hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world - the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world - but I chose you out of the world - therefore the world hates you.”
 - The world hates Jesus because He convicts the world of their SIN...
 - Because men LOVE sin - they hate the LIGHT that reveals their sinfulness - **John 3:19-20**
 - What we have to ask ourselves – is do we make an unbelieving world uncomfortable...
 - Because if we do not face TRIBULATION – then is Jesus is really in us!
- Why does God allow TRIBULATION...
 - When Paul was in Asia [Ephesus] – likely the RIOT of Demetris – **Acts 19:31**
 - He tells us that he experienced great TRIBULATION...
 - But he goes on to tell us WHY God would allow that to happen!
 - **II Corinthians 1:8-9** – “We do not want you to be ignorant... of our trouble [θλίψις] which came to us in Asia [Ephesus]: that we were burdened beyond measure - above strength - so that we despaired even of life. Yes - we had the sentence of death in ourselves - that we should not trust in ourselves but in God who raises the dead!”
 - TRIBULATION allows us to be CRUSHED – so that we learn NOT to trust in ourselves...
 - We learn instead to depend on the strength of God – **II Corinthians 12:9**
- What is the RESULT of TRIBULATION...
 - Rewind several decades and the church in Nepal only number around TEN thousand...
 - The cost to being baptized in Nepal – was a SEVEN year prison sentence...
 - The one who baptized a believer – got a FOURTEEN year prison sentence...
 - But these believers would tell other prisoners about Jesus...
 - And when these new believers were released – they shared with their families...
 - So their families got saved – then baptized – and ended up back in prison...

- For years Nepal had to build HUGE prisons – just to hold the church!
 - Today there are over SEVEN hundred thousand Christians in Nepal!
 - When times are easy – we are WEAK because we depend on OUR abilities...
 - And the church is WEAK – because it is full of people who are NOT sold out for Jesus...
 - But when we are ARRESTED for preaching Jesus – PERSECUTED for our faith...
 - We can NO longer DEPEND on ourselves – we are forced to DEPEND on God...
 - And when we are DEPENDENT on God – that is when we are UNSTOPPABLE!
- o 3rd – Poverty...
- I know your... poverty!
 - POOR [πτωχεία] – to be a BEGGAR – have no EARTHLY wealth...
 - There was a PRACTICAL consequence for the FAITH of the Christians in Smyrna...
 - People would NOT hire them – they would NOT give them business...
 - As a RESULT – they became very POOR!
 - When we REJECT worldly MORALS – and instead live by what is RIGHT...
 - It may mean we are OVERLOOKED for a promotion - or we may not get the CONTRACT...
 - Because we REFUSE to play the game the world does – LIE – CHEAT – STEAL!
 - But you are rich!
 - Jesus throws a POWERFUL contrast into His statement...
 - The BELIEVERS in SMYRNA were POOR – in worldly terms – they had no MONEY...
 - But they were RICH in others ways – they were RICH in FAITH...
 - They had more WEALTH in the KINGDOM of God – than any earthy sum could compare to!
 - We only have so much TIME in life – where do we USE it...
 - If spend all of our TIME – seeking after the riches of THIS life – we waste it...
 - How much better to spend our TIME – becoming RICH in the KINGDOM of God!
 - **Matthew 6:19-20** – “Do not [store] for yourselves treasures on earth... [store] for yourselves treasures in heaven!”
- o 4th – Synagogue of satan...
- I know the blasphemy of those who say they are Jews!
 - The BELIEVERS in SMYRNA – no doubt looked to the JEWS as allies...
 - As the CHOSEN people of God – they should have been the FIRST to respond to the Gospel...
 - But many REJECTED the message – and instead COMPROMISED – **Acts 18:6**
 - Perhaps like the JEWS who crucified Christ – they BLASPHEMED and said:
 - **John 19:15** – “We have no king but Caesar!”
 - [They] are not [Jews] - but are a synagogue of Satan!
 - SYNAGOGUE [συναγωγή] – where Jews would GATHER to worship God...
 - SATAN [Σατανᾶς] – the word means the ACCUSER...
 - This could refer to the JEWS in SMYRNA – literally worshiping SATAN...
 - Perhaps by COMPROMISING their FAITH – as they accepted the worship of CAESAR...
 - Or it could refer to them ACCUSING Christians who refused to bow to CAESAR...
 - Either way – they were not TRUE Jews – because of their ACTIONS!
 - Attacks on our FAITH do not ALWAYS come from without...
 - Sometimes – people who we think are our BELIEVERS – cause the most TRIBULATION...

- Just because someone goes to CHURCH [συναγωγή] does not mean they follow Christ...
- We need to look at the FRUIT coming from their LIVES...
- If they are not DRAWING us closer to Jesus – they might well be from the ENEMY!
- **Luke 11:23** – “He who is not with Me is against Me - and he who does not gather... scatters.”

• 3RD – THE NEGATIVE... VS. 10

o 1st – No need to FEAR...

- No NEGATIVE...
 - The church in SMYRNA – is one of TWO churches [Philadelphia] – that have no NEGATIVE...
 - A church that was under CONSTANT persecution – was a HEALTHY church...
 - Because their TRIBULATION caused them to CLING to Jesus...
 - Although there is no NEGATIVE – there is a COMMAND!
- Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer!
 - Do NOT [imperative] FEAR [φοβέω] – ANYONE [μηδείς]
 - Anytime the Bible says NOT to be AFRAID – it is a guarantee we are TERRIFIED...
 - And as we will see – there was GOOD reason for the CHURCH to be AFRAID...
 - There was a LOT more intense PERSECUTION that was still coming!
 - But FEAR is not a response – it is a CHOICE – we chose based on what we are looking at...
 - If we are looking at our circumstances – then we CHOOSE to be AFRAID...
 - If we look to the Lord – then we by FAITH – have nothing to FEAR!
 - **Romans 8:31** – “If God is for us - who can be against us?”

o 2nd – Persecution with a purpose...

- Indeed - the devil is about to throw some of you into prison!
 - INDEED [εἶδω] – Jesus commanded [imperative] the church to LOOK...
 - The DEVIL [διάβολος] – the FALSE accuser – our ENEMY...
 - Would put BELIEVERS into PRISON [refusing to bow to Caesar]
 - Jesus wanted the church to LOOK at the DEVIL casting them into PRISON...
 - Because He wanted the church to know WHY He allowed it!
- That you may be tested!
 - TEST [πειράζω] - can alternately be translated as TEMPTATION...
 - How can we tell the difference between a TEST [trial] or a TEMPTATION...
 - A TRIAL is a TEST from God – but a TEMPTATION comes from our own lust – **James 1:13**
 - After Israel entered the Promised Land - a new generation rose that did not know God...
 - They found themselves in a Land littered with godless people...
 - GOD used these enemies to give Israel an OPTION - whom did they want to serve...
 - The pagans would be a TEST for Israel - see whether or not they would obey the Lord!
 - **Judges 2:22** - “Through them I may test Israel - whether they will keep the ways of the Lord...”
 - We do not get to really know who someone is when life is easy...
 - The real test of character is how they act when life falls apart...
 - God uses TRIALS in life to TEST our heart – let us see what we are made of...
 - God already knows - but He wants US to see what is in OUR hearts!

o 3rd – Persecution with an end...

- You will have tribulation ten days!

- Jesus put a LIMIT on the LENGTH of the PERSECUTION of the church in SMYRNA...
- There is quite a bit of DEBATE one what these TEN days represent:
- FOUR views:
 - FIRST – it could be TEN literal days – but that seems unlikely [to short a time frame]
 - SECOND – it could be a Jewish EUPHEMISM for a short period – [seems to vague]
 - THIRD – it could be referring to TEN Roman Emperors – who would persecute Christianity...
 - This one seems more likely – as the worship of Caesar was the root of their PERSECUTION...
 - FOURTH – the number TEN is used in the Bible to describe the Governments of MEN...
 - The TEN horns of the beast in **Daniel 7:24** – the TEN heads – **Revelation 12:3**
 - The idea might be that as long as MEN rule on earth – there will be PERSECUTION!
 - No matter which VIEW you like – the point is the SAME...
 - The PERSECUTION does not LAST – it has a LIMITED amount of time!
- o 4th – Persecution with a reward...
 - Be faithful until death - and I will give you the crown of life!
 - Have [imperative] FAITH until DEATH – meaning the persecution might cost their LIVES...
 - But even if they DIED – they would have a great REWARD – the CROWN of life!
 - What is the CROWN – TWO possibilities...
 - **I Corinthians 3:12-14** – “Each ones work will become clear for the Day will declare it - because it will be revealed by fire... If anyones work... endures he will receive a reward.”
 - Anything done with a selfish motive is wood - hay - and stubble – burned up in the fire...
 - But anything we do out of a RIGHT heart will be gold - silver - and jewels – not burned...
 - Then at BEMA seat of Christ - **II Corinthians 5:10**
 - We will receive rewards - CROWNS - for the good things done for the Lord...
 - We can then throw the Crowns at the feet of Jesus - **Revelation 4:10**
 - The problem with CROWNS as rewards...
 - CROWN [στέφανος] - is only described FIVE times in the Bible...
 - **I Corinthians 9:25 - II Timothy 4:8 - James 1:12 - I Peter 5:4 - Revelation 2:10**
 - FIRST - CROWN is always SINGULAR – NOT crowns – meaning there is only ONE...
 - SECOND - the description of the CROWN – suggests it is ETERNAL life...
 - Eternal Crown - Crown of Righteousness - Crown of Glory - Crown of Life...
 - THIRD - the idea of CROWNS as REWARDS - focuses on the wrong thing...
 - We are looking to receive a REWARD from the Lord – as if He owes us!
 - Our CROWN is Eternal life...
 - As Steven was stoned to death after confronting the Jews – **Acts 7:56**
 - He looked up and saw Jesus – STANDING at the right hand of the Father in heaven...
 - Jesus does not STAND at the right hand – He SITS – **Colossian 3:1 / Hebrews 8:1**
 - Jesus stood because He was PROUD of His son – He was cheering him as he came home!
 - Whether we are saved young or old – we have a CROWN - **Matthew 20:1-16**
 - Whether we were a famous Apostle – or no one knows our name – we have a CROWN...
 - ANYONE who holds to the FAITH – even though they suffer PERSECUTION...
 - Will one day get to hear the WORDS – well done good and faithful servant...
 - Not because of what we did for the Lord – but because of what Jesus did for us...

- And every hardship - sorrow in this life will have been worth it – because we are home!

● 4TH – THE ENCOURAGEMENT... VS. 11

o 1st – Listen...

- He who has an ear - let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches!
- This was NOT written just for the church in SMYRNA...
- It is for ANYONE who has an EAR – they MUST [imperative] LISTEN...
- Because the SPIRIT of God is SPEAKING [present] to ALL churches [plural]
- This LETTER is for us – Jesus is writing to us TODAY...
- If we are willing to LISTEN to what His SPIRIT has to SAY...
- He tells us NOT to FEAR – any TRIBULATION we go through has a PURPOSE...
- He is using it to TEACH us to depend on Jesus – TEST our hearts...
- But it will NOT last – and in the END – we will receive a CROWN!

o 2nd – Second death...

- He who overcomes!
 - This same CONCLUSION - is given to all SEVEN churches...
 - There are a variety of REWARDS described – but all with the same CONDITION...
 - OVERCOME [νικάω] – to those who have VICTORY [present]
 - For SMYRNA – VICTORY – meant not FEARING the PERSECUTION...
 - And the reward for doing that – was NOT being HURT by the SECOND death!
- Shall not be hurt by the second death!
 - God does NOT promise that we will NOT die for our FAITH...
 - He does promise – that will NOT have to face the SECOND death...
 - The SECOND death – is a reference to the LAKE of fire – **Revelation 21:8**
- Polycarp was a DISCIPLE of the APOSTLE John...
 - The PASTOR of the church in SMYRNA – he was arrested when he was 86 years old...
 - He was given a chance to RENOUNCE his faith – so his life could be spared...
 - [Jesus] has done me no wrong. How can I blaspheme my King and my Savior!
 - He was threatened – if he did not RENOUNCE – he would be fed to wild animals...
 - It is unthinkable for me to repent from what is good to turn to what is evil!
 - He was given one last chance – if he did not RENOUNCE – he would be BURNED...
 - You threaten me with fire which burns for an hour - and is then extinguished...
 - But you know nothing of the fire of the coming judgment and eternal punishment!
 - So they lit the FIRE – but it did NOT burn Polycarp...
 - Instead it formed a circle around him – and the sweet fragrance [MYRRH] filled the air...
 - Unwilling to let him LIVE – the ROMANS drove a sword into him – sending him HOME...
 - But it is said that his BLOOD – put out the FIRE...
 - And it was his DEATH – that ended the PERSECUTION of the church in SMYRNA!
 - Should Jesus tarry – we will all one day DIE...
 - But the question we have to ask – is did we use our time here to LIVE for Jesus!