

SMYRNA: BE FAITHFUL REVELATION 2:8-11

Stand with me please:

Read Revelation 2:8 – 11 “And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write, ‘These things says the First and the Last, who was dead, and came to life: 9 “I know your works, tribulation, and poverty (but you are rich); and I know the blasphemy of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan.10 “Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.11 “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death.” ’

ARE YOU LISTENING TO THE MESSAGE OF JESUS ?

Seeing Jesus and Discovering the MESSAGE OF JESUS challenging me to have Him as all I POSSESS (Smyrna)

If you will listen carefully this morning, you can hear the voice of Jesus. He is speaking to all of us here who have ears, spiritual ears, to receive His still small voice. He speaks through His Word, He speaks to us. Will you listen?

In our journey through this Book of Books we have seen Jesus in so many wondrous ways. Have you hard Him as He has spoken from the pages of His Book to you and to me? Let me repeat what He has said. Come and:

Discover My GLORIOUS MAJESTY.
Discover My INEXHAUSTIBLE PEACE .
Discover My INFINITE GLORY .
Discover My PERFECT MINISTRY .
Discover My PRECIOUS BLOOD .
Discover My SPECIAL PLAN .
Discover My ALL SEEING EYES .
Discover My COMFORTING VOICE .
Discover My RESTORING TOUCH .

Discover My PERSONAL MESSAGE .
Discover My ABSOLUTE JEALOUSY.
Discover My WONDERFUL HOPE.

SMYRNA WAS UNDER A WAVE OF PERSECUTION

Let's set the stage to see what is going on...what is the wave they must duck or get crushed by? Emperor Worship.

ACT 1

In 26 AD (During the Life of Christ) an altar to Tiberius (who was on the throne as Emperor) was built there in Smyrna (just 40 miles north of Ephesus)

ACT 2

To stay a happy part of the Empire one had only to stop by the temple and scoop a pinch of incense and put it on the fire--a certificate was given---like our auto inspection stickers that certified you passed. That was the one act that unified the masses of peoples in the Roman Empire.

ACT 3

Meet the villain. He was just three years old when his father died. It was little loss to the boy, for his father had been a killer, a bully and a cheat. His mother took over the family trade and continued the boy's education. She murdered his stepfather with a dish of poisoned mushrooms. He was reared in squalor and proved a notable son to his parents. While still young, he committed his first murder, killing a teenage boy who stood in his way, and watching him die with callous indifference. He married at fifteen but soon had his wife killed. He married again, and slew his second wife too. In order to marry a third time, he murdered the husband of the woman he wanted. His mother annoyed him; so he arranged her murder, first by guile, but when that was unsuccessful, without pretense. He was an ugly man with a bull neck, beetle brows, a flat nose, and a touch mouth. He had a pot belly, spindly legs, bad skin and offensive odor. At the age of thirty-one, he was sentenced to death by flogging. He fled to a dingy basement and, in the house of a slave, cut his own throat. He gave the infant church it first taste of things to come. His name was Nero. He was the first of the persecuting Caesars of Rome.

His successor 30 years later is on the throne - it's 94 AD and Domitian says, get the Christians to go with the flow or pay the price.

THE MESSAGE OF JESUS PART ONE MEET THE ASSEMBLY

v. 8

In the first place, the seven Churches represent seven phases or periods in the Church's history, stretching from the time of the apostles to the coming again of Christ, the characteristics of which are set forth partly in the names of these churches, but more fully in the epistles addressed to them.

- ✓ There was the **Ephesian period**--30-60 AD a period of warmth and love and labor for Christ, dating directly from the apostles, in which defection began by the gradual cooling of the love of some, the false professions of others and the incoming of undue exaltations of the clergy and church offices.
- ✓ Then came the **Smyrna period**--60 -300 AD the era of martyrdom, and of the sweet savor unto God of faithfulness unto death, but marked with further developments of defection in the establishment of castes and orders, the license of Judaizing propensities, and consequent departures from the true simplicities of the Gospel.

Now to the text - Start with verse 8. "Smyrna" (stop) This is a word. You all know it's the name of this assembly.

Smyrna is a very interesting word because the Greek word smuma is translated "myrrh". It is a substance taken from a thorny tree and was the chief product of this city, the seaport of Myrrh.

- ✓ At Christ's Birth HE SUFFERED POVERTY FOR US = HIS SERVANTHOOD In Matt. 2:11, wise men came from the East and brought Christ gold, frankincense and myrrh.
- ✓ At Christ's Crucifixion HE SUFFERED PAIN FOR US = HIS SUFFERING According to Mark 15:23, while Christ hung on the cross, He was offered wine mixed with myrrh. It served as an anesthetic. His crucifiers were trying to dull His senses so the pain wouldn't be so bad.
- ✓ At Christ's Burial HE SUFFERED PLAN FOR US = SALVATION According to John 19:39...a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about an hundred pound weight, was used to prepare the body of Jesus Christ for burial after He had dies.
- ✓ At Christ's Return in Glory. Myrrh is associated with the suffering present at Christ's birth, death and burial. But, when Christ comes again, He shall be presented with gold, frankincense, but not myrrh (Isaiah 60:6). Then He will appear as the might sovereign, not the Sufferer.

Isaiah 60:6 The multitude of camels shall cover your land,
The dromedaries of Midian and Ephah; All those from Sheba shall come;
They shall bring gold and incense, And they shall proclaim the praises of the Lord.

SMYRNA LEARNING HOW TO DIE

The most important decision you will ever make in life is how you want to die! The saints at Smyrna wanted to die in Jesus.

Let me give the last moments of one of the pastors as Smyrna - the last one living that knew the apostle John. Death of Polycarp The Jews in Smyrna were blaspheming and persecuting the Christians. That is not mere speculation because history has left us with an account of the death of one of the Smyranean Christians: Polycarp, the pastor of the church in Smyrna.¹

The account follows: "It was the time of the public games; the city was crowded; and the crowds were excited. Suddenly the shout went up: Away with the atheist; let Polycarp be seached for. They came to arrest him...not even the police captain wished to see Polycarp die. On the brief journey to the city he pled with the old man: What harm is it to say, "Caesar is Lord" and to offer sacrifice to be saved? But Polycarp was adamant that for him only Jesus Christ was Lord. When he entered the arena...[the] proconsul gave him the choice of cursing the name of Christ and making sacrifice to Caesar or death. Eighty and six years have I served Him said Polycarp, and He has done me no wrong. How can I blaspheme my King who saved me? So the crowds came flocking with faggots from the workshops and from the baths, and the Jews, even though they were breaking the Sabbath law by carrying such burdens, were foremost in bringing wood for the fire. They were going to bind him to the stake. Leave me as I am, he said, for He who gives me power to endure the fire, will grant me to remain in the flames unmoved even without the security you will give by the nails. So they left him loosely bound in the flames."

Polycarp dies for Christ. that was just one incident in the life of the Smyranean church.²

HOPE IN JESUS WHEN LIFE IS PAINFUL

The message Christ gives is so simple in verse 10. Don't fear, be faithful and I will crown you!

10 "Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life

Every word of this brief letter is so vital as is every word of God. But because of the urgency there is an economy (this is the shortest only four verses/127 words vs. 12 verses to Thyatira.)

PART TWO

¹MacArthur, *Church In Prophetic Prospective*

²William Barclay, *The Revelation of John*, vol. 1 [Philadelphia: The Westminster Press 1976] pp. 76-77

MEET THE AUTHOR
JESUS CHRIST
Quoting 1: 17 - 18

- These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive (2:8).
- ✓ He thus reveals Himself to them in the way best suited to comfort them in their sorrow and to encourage them in their sufferings.
 - ✓ He would console them by reminding them that He had passed through suffering and death and had triumphed over it.

PART THREE
THE APPROVAL

9 "I know your works, tribulation, and poverty (but you are rich); and I know the blasphemy of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan.

- ✓ Remember Polycarp?

PART FOUR
LISTEN TO THE ADMONITION
v. 10a

10 "Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life

Look out trouble is coming!

The early Church did indeed have just ten great persecutions under the Roman emperors, beginning with Nero and ending with Diocletian, whose last persecution and probably the most terrible of all, was just ten years long ! Nero, Domitian, Trajan, Marcus Aurelius, Severus, Maximum, Decius, Valerian, Aurelian and Diocletian, were the ten principal pagan persecutors. However, there was constant, though not always general trouble until Constantine's edict of toleration.

PART FIVE
THE APPEAL
v. 10b "Be Faithful Unto Death"

10 "Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life

G.C. Morgan notes that "Faithful" means be convinced.

- ✓ Revelation 1:5 is the faithful witness.
- ✓ Christ is faithful so faithful saints are convinced they must rest on Him depending on what he says.,
- ✓ Be convinced of Him, He will be your strength and courage.

Be faithful! Why? Because Christ is the one giving out the prized - crowns! The faithful will be specially crowned: Saved and triumphant!

- The victorious warrior - with the crown of righteousness. (II Tim. 4:8)
- The steadfast racer--with the unfading crown (I Cor. 9:25-27)
- The one faithful unto death--with the crown of life (Rev. 2:10, Jas. 1:12)
- The unselfish worker--with the crown of honor (I Thess. 2:9, comp. 3-6; Phil. 4:1)
- The example to the flock--with the crown of glory (I Pet. 5: 3, 4)

And unless Christ returns soon all of us face the inevitability of death. Are you ready? Have you planned for the spiritual aspects of your death? So many only get the funeral arrangements and life insurance in order. There is so much more to plan and prepare for as a Christian. The Bible teaches us much about Dying Right! In the Scriptures we find seven good ways to die:

I. JACOB DIES TRUSTING THE PROMISES OF GOD.

A. HE LOOKED FOR THE LAND OF PROMISE TO THE END! Genesis 47:29 And the time drew nigh that Israel must die: and he called his son Joseph, and said unto him, If now I have found grace in thy sight, put, I pray thee, thy hand under my thigh, and deal kindly and truly with me; bury me not, I pray thee, in Egypt: (KJV)

B. HE FOLLOWED HIS SHEPHERD ALL THE WAY! Genesis 48: 15 Then he blessed Joseph and said, "May the God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked, the God who has been my shepherd all my life to this day,

C. HE TRUSTED HIS REDEEMER TO CARE FOR HIS SIN! Genesis 48:16 the Angel who has delivered me from all harm -- may he bless these boys. May they be called by my name and the names of my fathers Abraham and Isaac, and may they increase greatly upon the earth." (NIV)

II. JOSEPH DIES POINTING TO THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD.

Genesis 50: 24 Then Joseph said to his brothers, "I am about to die. But God will surely come to your aid and take you up out of this land to the land he promised on oath to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob." (NIV)

III. DAVID DIES EXHORTING HIS FAMILY TO FOLLOW GOD. 1

Kings 2: 1-4 When the time drew near for David to die, he gave a charge to Solomon his son. "I am about to go the way of all the earth," he said. "So be strong, show yourself a man, and observe what the LORD your God requires: Walk in his ways, and keep his decrees and

commands, his laws and requirements, as written in the Law of Moses, so that you may prosper in all you do and wherever you go, and that the LORD may keep his promise to me: ` If your descendants watch how they live, and if they walk faithfully before me with all their heart and soul, you will never fail to have a man on the throne of Israel.' (NIV)

- IV. **STEPHEN DIES PRAISING GOD.** Acts 7:59-60 While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Then he fell on his knees and cried out, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." When he had said this, he fell asleep. (NIV)
- V. **PAUL DIES FINISHING THE PLAN LAID OUT FOR HIM BY GOD.** 2 Timothy 4:6-8 For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time has come for my departure. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day -- and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing. (NIV)
- VI. **PETER DIES REMINING THE SAINTS ABOUT THE WORD OF GOD.** 2 Peter 1:12-15 So I will always remind you of these things, even though you know them and are firmly established in the truth you now have. I think it is right to refresh your memory as long as I live in the tent of this body, because I know that I will soon put it aside, as our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me. And I will make every effort to see that after my departure you will always be able to remember these things. (NIV)
- VII. **CHRIST DIES POINTING THE WAY FOR ANOTHER TO GOD.** Luke 23:43 And Jesus said to him, "Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise." (NKJV)

PART SIX: THE ASSURANCE

THE SPIRITUAL MESSAGE: JESUS HAS A WONDERFUL PLAN FOR EVERY TRUE BELIEVER I ALWAYS OFFER THE BEST TO YOU !

The last message Jesus has for us this morning is His wonderful plan. He has spelled out what He wants us to be like. He has detailed how He by His grace will enable us to live! This morning Jesus is here. CHRIST SEEKING OUT HIS CHURCH: Our Lord Jesus Christ came to give so much. Have you received what Jesus came to give every one of His own born again children?

- 1. **TRUE BELIEVERS HAVE AN ABUNDANT LIFE** Revelation 2:7 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God. (KJV)
- ✓ **AN OVERFLOWING LIFE:** John 7:38 Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him." (NIV)

- ✓ AN EXTRAORDINARY LIFE: John 10:10 The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have [it] more abundantly. [perissos exceeding some number or measure or rank or need, over and above, more than is necessary, superadded, exceeding abundantly, supremely something further, more, much more than all, more plainly, superior, extraordinary, surpassing, uncommon, pre-eminence, superiority, advantage, more eminent, more remarkable, more excellent]
- 2. TRUE BELIEVERS HAVE AN INDESTRUCTIBLE LIFE Revelation 2:11 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. (KJV)
 - ✓ SECURE FROM ANY PHYSICAL ADVERSARY: John 10:28-29 And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any [man] pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave [them] me, is greater than all; and no [man] is able to pluck [them] out of my Father's hand. (KJV)
 - ✓ SECURE FROM ANY SPIRITUAL ADVERSARY: Romans 8:38-39 For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (KJV)

So is Jesus your HOPE? It is all you can hold onto as he shadows of death creep up on us.

THIS MORNING WILL YOU RISE AND AFFIRM WITH ME, LIKE -

- I. Like JACOB I WILL SEEK TO LIVE TRUSTING THE PROMISES OF GOD.
 - A. He Looked for the Land of Promise to the end! Genesis 47:29
 - B. He Followed his Shepherd all the way! Genesis 48:15
 - C. He Trusted his Redeemer to care for his sin! Genesis 48:16
- II. Like JOSEPH I WILL SEEK TO LIVE POINTING TO THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD. Genesis 50:24
- III. Like DAVID I WILL SEEK TO LIVE EXHORTING HIS FAMILY TO FOLLOW GOD. 1 Kings 2:1-4
- IV. Like STEPHEN I WILL SEEK TO LIVE PRAISING GOD. Acts 7:59-60
- V. Like PAUL I WILL SEEK TO LIVE FINISHING THE PLAN LAID OUT FOR HIM BY GOD. 2 Timothy 4:6-8
- VI. Like PETER I WILL SEEK TO LIVE REMINDING THE SAINTS ABOUT THE WORD OF GOD. 2 Peter 1:12-15
- VII. Like CHRIST I WILL SEEK TO LIVE POINTING THE WAY FOR ANOTHER TO GOD. Luke 23:43