

OBSERVATION STUDY SERIES

REVELATION

THE CHURCH IN SMYRNA

2:8-11

REVELATION OBSERVATION STUDY SERIES

Revelation 2:8-11

Jesus Writes to the Church in Smyrna

...Jesus is speaking...

And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write: The first and the last, who was dead, and has come to life, says this... Revelation 2:8

Notice how Jesus often refers to Himself in a way that points back to the vision John saw in chapter 1. His description also resonates with what He has to say to each individual church. In this case, the connection has to do with death... and it has to do with life!

I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich), and the blasphemy by those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, so that you will be tested, and you will have tribulation for ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life. Revelation 2:9-10

What was it like to live in Smyrna as a Christian? Well, they were going through tribulation and they were impoverished. Yet, what did Jesus say was true of them? They were rich! They were believers and they had everything they needed in abundance in Christ Jesus.

They were surrounded in their church by those who said they were Jews, but were not—they were actually a gathering of adversaries under the control of Satan.

The Christians in Smyrna were given a promise that their suffering would continue and increase. They were told the devil had been given authority to cast some of them into prison—and he would. They were told, however, that the suffering was to test them—it would refine them, and that it would be limited—ten days.

But they were also told something that seems even more horrific. What was going to happen to these people in the church of Smyrna? They were going to die. That is what He is telling them. He is not saying, “Be faithful even if it seems like you *might* die...” He is saying, “Be faithful right up *until death*.” They were going to die. Isn’t that amazing? They knew they were going to die shortly. The truth is, you know you are going to die, and I know I am going to die. Jesus says to us, “*Be faithful until death and I will give you the crown of life.*”

He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes will not be hurt by the second death. Revelation 2:11

Do you see how appropriate that part of the promise is to this church? They are going to die and after that, if they are not saved, eventually the second death would come. They would not be hurt by the second death. Instead they would have eternal life.

But what problem *did* they have? Fear. They were fearing what was going to be happening to them. They were fearing the tribulation that they were in the midst of. They were becoming cowardly. That cowardice, if left in place, would ultimately cause them to deny the faith. That's what they needed to repent of. The Greek actually means to "stop fearing". So they *had* been fearing—and the cowardly do not enter the kingdom of heaven.

Many years ago God revealed the understanding of being cowardly to me in a very clear way through someone who spoke some rather evil words against me. I realized that person was a coward and for the first time Revelation 21:8 made sense to me. God says that the cowardly will not enter the kingdom of heaven. I don't know that had I ever thought about it, but my previous understanding might have been being afraid of *things*—like the dark. When I thought about the verse, I read the word cowardly, but I didn't really have any understanding; I just read it and moved on. The truth is that the cowardly are those who deny His Name. The cowardly are those who have the fear of man. The cowardly are those who won't pay the price, the perseverance of God's Word. That's the cowardly.

Trials do not indicate that God has withdrawn His blessing. Suffering causes us to keep focused on God and to learn obedience. Suffering causes us to set our minds on God alone. God uses trials to conform us. Are you suffering? Will you let God use that suffering to conform you? Do not look at your circumstances.

Keep your eyes on Jesus...