

Revelation Msg 4
Poor yet Rich
6/23/2013

Key Scripture: Revelation 2:8-11

Overview

In Message 3, we looked at the letter to the Ephesians and the warning and commendations they received from Christ, who is the head of the church. In this lesson, we will look at the next letter: The letter to the church in Smyrna.

About Smyrna

Smyrna means crushed. It comes from the same root word as myrrh, an embalming spice that releases its aroma when crushed. Smyrna represents the 2nd and 3rd Century church that suffered intense persecution.

(1) The letter to Smyrna is the shortest letter

As early as 195 B.C., Smyrna foresaw the rising power of Rome and built a temple for pagan Roman worship.

In 23 B.C., Smyrna was given the honor of building a temple to the Emperor Tiberius because of its years of faithfulness to Rome.

(2) Smyrna was a center for cult emperor worship.

A center for the cult of emperor worship—a fanatical “religion” that later, under such emperors as Nero (ruled A.D. 54–68) and Domitian (ruled A.D. 81–96), brought on severe persecution for the early church. The apostle John encouraged the persecuted Christians of Smyrna to be “faithful unto death” and they would receive a “crown of life” (Rev. 2:10) (Nelson new, 1995)

in 195 B.C. In John’s day it was a city that had been “resurrected from the dead,” in that it had been destroyed 700 years earlier and had lain in ruins for 300 years.

This fact may be alluded to in Christ’s reference to His own resurrection in the greeting: who was dead, and came to life (v. 8).

In John’s time, the Christians in Smyrna, like John himself (1:9), were experiencing tribulation (v. 9) which was going to continue and, possibly, intensify.

Revelation 2:8-11

To the Church in Smyrna

8 “To the angel of the church in Smyrna write:

TITLE (Rev 2:8)

These are the words of him who is the First and the Last, who died and came to life again.

Jesus is identifying himself using words spoken by the Prophet Isaiah. He identifies himself, not this time as the Son of Man, but as God. He claims his divinity and authority once again, He also claims his human nature (I was once dead, but now alive) He is fully God and was fully human.

Look at Isaiah 41:4

Who has done such mighty deeds, summoning each new generation from the beginning of time? It is I, the LORD, the First and the Last. I alone am he.

Isaiah 48:12

“Listen to me, O family of Jacob, Israel my chosen one! I alone am God, the First and the Last.

Claims his death and resurrection

COMMENDATION (Rev 2:9)

9 I know your afflictions and your poverty—yet you are rich! I know about the slander of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan.

(3) Smyrna was commended for their afflictions and poverty for Christ’s sake

Jesus is aware of their state of poverty for his sake. This church has taken a beating. They are in a place where Christianity is literally hated by all non-Christians in this territory. This church had to live on faith, there was nothing else

Although they have lived with little in this world, Christ called them rich!

Read Matthew 5:3

“God blesses those who are poor and realize their need for him, for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs. (NLT)

(4) In Matthew 3:5, Jesus says that He blesses those who are poor

Read Matthew 10:28-31

Then Peter began to speak up. “We’ve given up everything to follow you,” he said.

29 “Yes,” Jesus replied, “and I assure you that everyone who has given up house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or property, for my sake and for the Good News, 30 will receive now in return a hundred times as many houses, brothers, sisters, mothers, children, and property—along with persecution. And in the world to come that person will have eternal life. 31 But many who are the greatest now will be least important then, and those who seem least important now will be the greatest then.”

ADMONITION (Rev 2:10)

10 Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test you, and you will suffer persecution for ten days.

(5) Jesus tells Smyrna that some will be thrown into prison by the devil to be tested

Once again, Jesus gives a warning. He tells this congregation that this church is going to suffer even more! Some of this church is about to be tested.

Who else did the devil test?

Read Matthew 4:1

Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted there by the devil.

(6) According to Matthew 4:1, Jesus was also tested by the devi

CALL (Rev 2:10)

Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you life as your victor's crown.

Read Mark 8:34

Then, calling the crowd to join his disciples, he said, "If any of you wants to be my follower, you must turn from your selfish ways, take up your cross, and follow me. (NLT)

CHALLENGE (Rev 2:11)

11 Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

PROMISE (Rev 2:11)

The one who is victorious will not be hurt at all by the second death.

Read Matthew 5:10-12

God blesses those who are persecuted for doing right, for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs. 11 “God blesses you when people mock you and persecute you and lie about you and say all sorts of evil things against you because you are my followers. 12 Be happy about it! Be very glad! For a great reward awaits you in heaven. And remember, the ancient prophets were persecuted in the same way.

(7) Smyrna - is one of only two that receives no rebuke nor call to repentance from Christ.

Answers to Handout Questions

- (1) The letter to Smyrna is the shortest letter**
- (2) Smyrna was a center for cult emperor worship.**
- (3) Smyrna was commended for their afflictions and poverty for Christ’s sake**
- (4) In Matthew 3:5, Jesus says that He blesses those who are poor**
- (5) Jesus tells Smyrna that some will be thrown into prison by the devil to be tested**
- (6) According to Matthew 4:1, Jesus was also tested by the devi**
- (7) Smyrna - is one of only two that receives no rebuke nor call to repentance from Christ.**

References

Nelson's new illustrated Bible dictionary. 1995 (R. F. Youngblood, F. F. Bruce, R. K. Harrison & Thomas Nelson Publishers, Ed.). Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, Inc.)

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