

Revelation 2:8-11 –Satanic Verses in Smyrna

Nelson, Vincent, Handfuls, TSK, GreekLexicon, Henry, Robertson, JFB, PNT, Rienecker, Poole, Gill, Family, Barnes, Chilton,
Beloved in Jesus Christ: **Even the mightiest men can fall into sin.** Consider 2 such examples:

The great prophet Elijah ran from his duties and hid when he **faced persecution** from King Ahab and Queen Jezebel.

The godly prophet God sent to Jeroboam was **easily deceived by a false prophet** and was killed by a lion.

In short, **Elijah abandoned his call when he faced physical threats.** The other **prophet abandoned his call when he was deceived.**

Threats and deceptions, effective weapons of the Devil, were the same 2 dangers the church in Smyrna faced. So the Lord wanted to adequately **prepare the Smyrnians so they would not abandon him when troubles and deceptive teachings came.**

Our headings are:

The **Commendation**

The **Concern**

The **Challenge**

The **Comfort**

Our goals are: Even as you receive assurances of Christ's love, that **you will be prepared to fight threats and deceptions so the church will continue to shine as lights for Jesus.**

The Commendation

8 "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:**

1. Smyrna, which means "myrrh," was North of Ephesus, on a gulf of the Aegean Sea.

It was one of the great cities of Asia Minor, and a **seat of emperor-worship with a temple to Tiberius.**

Many people in Smyrna were dedicated to the "emperor cult" and practiced emperor worship. They burned incense to him.

2. Jesus reminded the church in Smyrna of 2 things – before he commended their good deeds!

a. He was eternal...he would live forever. Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

b. He had all power...even power to come alive from the dead.

Christ, their Savior, was eternal and all-powerful! This meant he was able and willing, for all eternity, to be with his church and keep them safe...even raising them from the dead if they were martyred. What an introduction!

9 "I know your **works, tribulation, and poverty** (but you are rich)...

3. Jesus knew and commended the Smyrnians for their good works ("good" is implied).

They **preached the word faithfully, administered the sacraments carefully, and exercised discipline decisively.**

4. Jesus knew and commended the Smyrnians for enduring tribulations on account of their faith.

These tribulations came from **both Jews and the Romans**, but especially from the Jews who lived in Smyrna.

The Jews had joined in the later martyrdom of Polycarp, an ancient church father. First they wanted him to be eaten by lions, but when they were forbidden they had him burned and carried the wood for the fire. The Smyrnian Christians were beaten, imprisoned, and killed.

5. Jesus knew and commended the Smyrnians for their enduring of poverty in the midst of a very rich city.

The Smyrnians' goods were plundered and businesses boycotted because they refused to burn incense to the emperor. Often the goods of the Christians were destroyed!

The emperor did not ban them from worshipping God...just that they burned a little (a pinch of) incense to him as a 2nd god!

6. Jesus commended them for their wealth – even though they were poor!

They had riches that would never fade away...riches that were stored up in heaven... where the Moors could not overrun the city and steal them.

Smyrnians had become rich in faith, love, and hope... More, they were kings and priests of the Most High God.

Like their name "myrrh," there was bitterness – sadness - sorrow, and yet they were sweet and blessed.

2Corinthians 6:10 as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.

1Timothy 6:18 *Let them* do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share,

7. Lessons:

a. Your God is the only true God in all the earth...and your God is eternal and all-powerful! Receive this truth and all worries are gone! You won't panic or worry for anything...not for health...wealth...or the future!

b. Jesus knows everything about you. He knows every good thing you do and has a record to reward you in due course, and Jesus also knows your suffering (which seems to be increasing daily from religious and political forces).

c. Don't give in to the pressure to compromise. Don't avoid disciplining your children to please the government. Don't acknowledge the validity of murdering children to get government grants. Don't accept perverted lifestyle as a legitimate alternative to get a job. Don't accept socialism as a good means to make everything equal for the underprivileged.

d. When there is spiritual plenty, Christians are able to bear with physical poverty.

The Concern

9 "... and I know **the blasphemy of those who say they are Jews and are not**, but are a synagogue of Satan.

1. Like the church in Ephesus, there were pretenders creeping into the church at Smyrna and causing troubles.

2. These people were from Satan's church, pretending to be real Jewish Christians, and preaching Satan's lies!

The true Jew is the one who believed as Abraham and Moses, who believed in Jesus in the heart. These were not!

Romans 2:28 For he is not a Jew who *is one* outwardly, nor *is* circumcision that which *is* outward in the flesh;

Just as the Jesus has his true church, so the Devil also has his own church...and the goal of the Devil's church is to win all those who are in the Jesus' church...by deception...false teaching. **That was what was happening here!**

John 8:44 "You are of *your* father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and *does not* stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it.

The unique thing about the Devil's church is it **pretends** to be worshipping the true God, while preaching falsehoods! This is what makes it dangerous. **And what could one expect from the Father of Lies with his Satanic Verses? Lies can be sweet but deadly!**

3. Lessons:

a. Be aware of false teachings pushed in churches today! Learn about those who are promoting a **watering down of worship** to make it more appealing to others, who **ignore Psalm singing**, who talk **less about sin** and **more about self-affirmation**, and who take in **women into leadership**. **Satanic Verses seem sweet, but they undermine the strength of the church and keep it as a shell! This, to me, is the greater danger the church faces, rather than the dangers from the outside.**

The Challenge

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...**

1. Jesus told the Smyrnians Christians they were going to face more challenges, not only from the false teachers, but from other sources as well.

2. Jesus told the Smyrnians they were not to fear as those things and people who had no ultimate power.

(You see why he began by tell them of his eternal power!)

Yes, some Smyrnians would be put into cold, dark, disease infested prisons...but they were not to fear or give in. These trials were tests to prove their really loved and served Jesus.

3. The tests they would experience had an end-date; they would not continue forever!

“Ten days” meant a limit. So there was hope!

4. Lessons:

a. Are you willing to die for Jesus and show your love for him? Are you willing to lose your home, job, or business for Jesus? Would it tear your heart open if people were to burn down your house because you are a believer in Jesus? Jesus gave his life for you. Die, if you must!

b. “How” you suffer is no less significant than suffering itself! So don’t complain as you suffer! That reduces your reward.

The Comfort

10...Be faithful until death, and I will give you the **crown of life**.

1. Jesus told the Smyrnians they would receive a reward if they remained faithful throughout their present and coming ordeals.

Remember, he had eternal power...so he was able to do what he promised.

2. What was this reward?

The reward was a crown of life...a life that would never end. (This church in Smyrna is still around today.) “Crown of life” is a picture drawn from the rewards given to winners at the Olympics and the crowns on the emperors’ heads. Earlier, **Jesus told the Ephesians they would get the tree of life** while talking about the golden lampstand that looked like a tree. Now he **told the Smyrnians they would get a crown of life** as he was talking about emperor worship.

These rewards were not different; they were just different illustrations to speak of the same thing. So John was using it to teach of the rewards the **Smyrnians** would get for **continuing faithfully and perseveringly in their poverty and oppression.**

James 1:12 Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, **he will receive the crown of life** which the Lord has

promised to those who love Him.

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."

3. And as with other churches, Jesus challenged the Smyrnians to listen carefully to what he was saying, as opposed to the lies they were hearing from the Synagogue of Satan.

4. Further, because the reward is a "crown of life, the Smyrnians, like all Christians, would not have to face the horrible 2nd death that non-Christians will have to face.

After their physical death, the Smyrnians would be immediately translated into a perfect life that would never end. And no one would be able to harm them there. Hallelujah!

5. Lessons:

a. Don't work for the world's approval or acclaim; work for Jesus and the eternal reward he has promised. This will bring blessings in this life and in the world to come!

b. Don't be disappointed if the work you do in this life is ignored. If you raise godly children and are ignored, don't be surprised. The world doesn't think that is an important thing. If you are faithful to your spouse, the world doesn't care! But God does! If you worship the Lord each Sabbath, you might look kind of foolish to the world. That's okay! You aren't living for them! If you buy your clothes at Value Village so you can support suffering Christians overseas, smile when people tease you!

c. Long for heaven! There will be eternal rest there.

Conclusion:

Jesus knew the internal and external tribulations of the Smyrnians. He knew of their deep poverty. He knew more tribulations were coming. He knew the false teachers and the lies they were spreading. He knew of the Romans who put them in prisons and even killed some of them. So Jesus encouraged them to continue to face those troubles. He reminded them he was always with them as their eternal and all-powerful God. He reminded them they too would live eternally and with plenty one day. I can only imagine how often they read this book as they faced Nero's onslaught. Christ's words gave them hope!

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ:

1. Christ's word is what keeps the persecuted church enduring when the Moslems of Saudi Arabia cut off their heads for becoming Christians. This is what keep Christians going when the government and courts in Egypt, Sri Lanka, Iran, and India desperately try to stop people from becoming Christians. This is what keeps Christians in Nigeria going when their houses and church buildings are burned by Fulani, Boko Haram and al-Shabab Muslims. This is what will keep you going when you face threats from our civil authorities for what you teach and how you discipline your children...or for when you oppose the indoctrination of your children. You might lose your job, be denied promotions, not allowed to bid on government contracts, or denied acceptance in universities when you don't acknowledge all religions and alternative lifestyles as valid. **But you**

know you ARE rich and you will receive a full reward in heaven! So face your challenges now!

2. Watch out for pop-preaching! This is a way more dangerous enemy than we realize. There are too many who want the church to remain but take the power of the Gospel out of it. They shy away from preaching about sin. They water down worship. They simply try to make worship about man, rather than about God. Fight them. These are really fighting the battle Satan and reading from his bible, from Satanic Verses. They are snakes in the church!

3. The way to conquer the enemy of the church is to preach and support the preaching of the Gospel to them. How well are you working to conquer them? To defend it to lose. Conquer the world with truth! Jesus is truth.

Finally, maybe you are not a persecutor of the church, but you will receive no heaven or heavenly rewards outside of God's church. I urge you to see your need for God's salvation, believe in Christ, and join his church.