



The Book of Revelation: Week 5

Smyrna:

The Church Without Rebuke

Media & Notes at:

www.htchurch.com/revelation

Video also available at:

www.htchurch.tv

Review

- We began with a discussion of number in Scripture.
- We then talked about the Church at Ephesus, the first of the seven churches to which the Lord Jesus is speaking in the Book.
- The Lord had specific reasons for choosing these churches. In addition to speaking into their current situations, Jesus was using them as examples of conditions and situations that the Church would face down through history.
- As Jesus addresses each of the churches, He identifies Himself. He calls attention to one of his titles or characteristics.
- Jesus demonstrates his knowledge of that church and its condition.
- In each letter, Jesus either praises the church, or rebukes the church, or both.
- He makes promises to those who overcome, and also may give warnings.

- One of the key things in Revelation is the importance of repentance.
- The Gospels show us that Jesus' first message was that we should repent, and in Revelation the message of repentance is also His last word to the Church.

Letter to the Church of Smyrna: Revelation 2:8-11 (NKJV)

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:
 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.”’*

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. A bit about Smyrna.

- Of all the seven cities it's the only one which still exists today in any size.
- Smyrna was famous for being faithful to Rome, and that was the problem.
- This was an extremely difficult environment for Christians to live in, to work in, and certainly to live as Christian people.

2. Jesus identifies Himself and identifies with them.

- Jesus first identifies Himself to this persecuted church as the first and the last.
- Notice that the Lord also identifies himself as the one who died and is alive.
- Who is the One we should fear?

3. Jesus' Knowledge of the Church.

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.

- Jesus said, “I know your works.” He was well acquainted with their service.
- Jesus said, “I know your tribulation.”
- He was in the midst of that suffering with them. This has always been God’s heart for His people.
- *“In all their affliction He was afflicted, and the Angel of His Presence saved them; in His love and in His pity He redeemed them; and He bore them and carried them all the days of old.”* (Isaiah 63:9 NKJV)
- Jesus says, “I know your poverty.” And He knew what poverty was as well. He says that this church is experiencing poverty. (Extreme poverty.)
- We don’t know why the Church at Smyrna was poor, but this isn’t unusual.

4. Jesus' Assessment of Their Real Condition.

- Seeing them from Jesus' perspective... they were rich!
- A special closeness to the Lord Jesus in persecution?
- In the early Church, the Christians accepted loss of material things with joy in their hearts:

"...joyfully accepted the plundering of your goods, knowing that you have a better and an enduring possession for yourselves in heaven. Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise: "For yet a little while, and He who is coming will come and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith; but if anyone draws back, my soul has no pleasure in him." (Hebrews 10:34-38 NKJV)

Thinking about our own situation and that of Christians in many places around the world in countries like Nigeria, Indonesia, Egypt, and many other places. We are brothers and sisters, united in Jesus.

5. The blasphemy of men.

- Jesus He knew the blasphemy of those who said they were Jews and were not, but were a *synagogue of Satan*. Jesus knows what men are saying about us.
- The tongue can be an instrument of healing or of pain, and God knows this.

6. Enemies of the Church of Christ.

- The church faced opposition and even persecution from three places:
 - The Jewish people (though not all).
 - Pagan people, represented by the Roman government.
 - Internal danger from heretics.
- Language like this has been tragically misused by anti-Semites.
- The fact of persecution in the earliest times of the Church does not justify any counter-response in the same vein.
- All we know of these people is that they claim to be in covenant with God, but their actions say otherwise.

7. Why persecution?

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.

- Would we tolerate such a word in America? Why does the Lord allow such persecution, even to the point of telling the church that it's coming?
- God can release a grace and a life through martyrdom that it seems He can't release in any other way.
- How can we overcome Satan? By not "loving not our lives to the point of death."
- Martyrdom is the ultimate proof that you love Jesus more than anything else that the world or the devil can tempt you with.

- The early church father Tertullian said that the blood of martyrs is the seed of the church. Paul said that we are the fragrance of life.

8. Ten Days of Persecution.

- Different interpretations of what this means.
- In any case, the persecutions are on God's terms.

9. Faithful Unto Death.

- With that difficult command came a tremendous promise, the promise of the reward of the crown of life.
- It's not an honor which our flesh would seek, but it's a honor nonetheless.

10. Make sure you only die once.

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." '

- What is the second death?
- How do we overcome and avoid this?

37 He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. 38 And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. 39 He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it. (Matthew 10:37-39 NKJV)
