

THE UNVEILING OF JESUS CHRIST

"The Suffering Church"

Revelation 2:8-11

INTRODUCTION:

1. **Proverbs 6:16-19**

2. Vary rarely do Americans experience depravation because of their faith.

3. What would happen if we suddenly lost everything on account of our testimony for Christ?

a) That would be the church of Smyrna.

4. Some pertinent historical background about Smyrna.

a) Smyrna was founded in 1000BC

b) It was destroyed in 600 BC

c) And rebuilt by Lysimachus one of Alexander the Greats generals.

5. The name of the city, Smyrna, means "myrrh" an ordinary perfume. **Matthew 2:11**

a) It was also used in the anointing oil of the tabernacle.

a) **Exodus 30:22-25**

b) It was used to deaden the pain- an anesthetic

a) **Mark 15:23**

c) And for embalming the dead.

a) **John 19:39**

6. Now watch this - Isaiah 60:6 - WOW

7. **NOW WATCH THIS:** It was a matter of pride to the city that it had DIED AND RISEN to life again.

a) And it was considered the most beautiful cities the Greeks ever built.

b) Smyrna sat on a hill rising from the sea so that it looked like a crown.

c) Smyrna was called "**The Glory of Asia**" because of its pride and beauty.

8. During the Roman period, Ceasar worship in Asia was created in Smyrna.

a) The city was a place of wisdom, beauty, and commerce.

b) It was also the location of the church of Jesus Christ.

I. THE CHURCH AT SMYRNA

1. We don't know much about the founding of the church...

a) **Vs 8**

b) However we do know they suffered great persecution for their faith in Christ.

2. This letter to Smyrna is the shortest of the seven letters and contains no CONDEMNATION.

a) Cf 2:4

II. WHY THEY SUFFERED

A. BECAUSE OF THEIR INSIGNIFICANCE

1. There was a street in Smyrna called "The Street of the Gods".

a) It was lined with temples to Greek and Roman deities.

b) Beautifully ornate structures which competed with each other for attention and acclaim.

2. Christians in Smyrna were experiencing the bitterness of suffering, their faithful testimony was like myrrh of sweet perfume to God.

B. BECAUSE of EMPEROR WORSHIP

1. The citizens of Rome didn't feel that way!!! Why???

a) Because of the Pax Romana = The Peace of Rome.

2. The Romans believed in peace through strength.

a) The Pax Romana extended throughout the Mediterranean and removed the threat of war and there was relative peace for about 200 years.

b) AND the citizens of Rome were grateful.

3. **Now watch this:** This is what we need to understand.

a) Emperor worship grew out of a patriotic and grateful attitude on the part of the people for what Rome provided for them.

4. **WOW!!!** To fail to worship the emperor was to be an ungrateful and unpatriotic member of the Roman Empire.

a) THEREFORE Christians were in constant jeopardy of being bad citizens.

1) They were tortured on the rack - image

2) Boiled alive in oil.

3) Burned alive at the stack.

4) Fed in the coliseum to wild beasts.

b) All of these were a form of entertainment for the citizens of Rome.

III. CHRIST'S ENCOURAGEMENT TO THE CHURCH

A. JESUS KNEW THEIR PRESSURE

1. Vs 9

a) *"I know your tribulation"*

1) *"tribulation"* - means pressure (boulder on chest) unrelenting

2. The pressure the Christians were under was unrelenting, unnerving, day after day, nonstop pressure of not knowing *"If this will be the day"*.

3. We have no idea what it's like to live under that kind of pressure where physical torture might be the end result @ any moment.

B. JESUS KNEW THEIR POVERTY

1. Vs 9

a) *"I know your tribulation and poverty"*

2. There are two words in the New Testament for poverty.

a) *"penes"* - sounds like penny

1) It carries the idea barely getting by.

b) *"ptocheia"* - means to be destitute

1) You have nothing!!!!

2) No resources at all.

C. JESUS KNEW THEIR PERSECUTION

1. Vs 9

a) *"and the slander"*

1) *"slander"* - accusations based on hear-say, rumors.

2. Vs 9

a) *"of those who say they are Jews and are not"*

b) *"but are of the synagogue of Satan."*

IV. JESUS COUNSEL TO THE CHURCH

A. BE FEARLESS

1. Vs 10

a) *"Do not fear what you are about to suffer"*

2. **WOW!!!** Listen Up!!! What Jesus said was "Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer!!!"

a) Not just *"Don't be afraid"*. *"Don't be afraid of what you are facing."*

3. *Psalm 23:4*

a) *"Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me."*

4. *Vs 10b*

a) *"Behold the Devil is about to throw some of you into prison"*

5. *Romans 8:18*

B. BE FAITHFUL

1. *Vs 10c*

a) *"be faithful until death"*

2. Jesus counsel is for us to stay right in the middle of the PREESURE, POVERY AND PERSECUTION....and be faithful.

CONCLUSION:

1. *Vs 10*

a) *"Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life"*

2. There are **FIVE CROWNS THAT WILL BE GIVEN OUT AT THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST**

a) The **IMPERISHABLE CROWN** - *1 Corinthians 9:24-25; 1 Peter 1:4*

1) Those who win the victory over self.

b) The **CROWN OF REJOICING** - *1 Thessalonians 2:19*

1) For those who win souls to Christ.

c) The **CROWN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS** - *2 Timothy 4:8*

1) Given to those who love the Lord's appearing.

d) The **CROWN OF GLORY** - *1 Peter 5:4; John 21:16*

1) Given to shepherds who feed the flock.

e) The **CROWN OF LIFE** - *Revelation 2:10*

1) For people who are faithful unto death and resist temptation.