

The Seven Church Attitudes Revealed By Christ in the Book of Revelation

Part 2

Revelation 2:8 [NIV] *“To the angel of the church in Smyrna write: These are the words of him who is the First and the Last, who died and came to life again.”*

Jesus Christ introduces Himself as the eternal Saviour, of the church in the city of Smyrna.

First let us read the message given to this church then meditate on what was said and consider the action that needs to be taken by such a Christian or Christian fellowship.

Revelation 2:9-11 [NIV] *“I know your afflictions and your poverty, yet you are rich! I know the slander of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. 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. Be faithful, even to the point of 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 at all by the second death.”*

The city of Smyrna was about 25 miles north of Ephesus. This city was one of the most prosperous in Asia Minor. Here the Jews were unusually numerous and powerful and were bitterly antagonistic to the Christian church.

Smyrna was nicknamed the *“Port of Asia”* because it had an excellent harbour on the Aegean Sea, and the movement of goods throughout this port brought great wealth to the inhabitants.

The non-Jewish population that was loyal to Rome and supported emperor worship.

Persecution was inevitable in an environment like this.

Not being part of the wealth producing population of Jews or those faithfully following Rome, caused the Christians in Smyrna to be economically poor.

Persecution comes from Satan, and he was using the Jews to persecute the Christians so they are referred to as *“a synagogue of Satan.”*

God may even allow Satan to put Christians in prison as a result of their faithfulness to Him but He is always in charge, note *“for ten days.”*

A Christian does **not** need to be afraid even when facing death because of the promise we have from Jesus Christ if we remain faithful to Him.

Jesus commended the church at Smyrna for their faithfulness in the face of suffering.

When we experience suffering or persecution **don't** let it cause us to turn away from God, instead let it draw us towards God in greater faithfulness.

Hebrews 12:5-8 [NIV] *“And you have forgotten that word of encouragement that addresses you as sons: **“My son, do not make light of the Lord’s discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, because the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son.”** Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father? If you are not disciplined (and everyone undergoes discipline), then you are illegitimate children and not true sons.”*

God uses painful circumstances to help us mature as His children, showing the great love He has for us.

When God corrects us, see it as proof of His love and ask Him what He is seeking to teach us.

God is not only a disciplining parent but also a demanding coach who pushes us to our limits and requires our lives to be disciplined.

The “*crown of life*” is referring to the victory wreath, the trophy for the winner in the athletic games.

Smyrna was famous for its athletic games.

Matthew 5:10-12 [NIV] *“Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. “Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”*

Jesus was very honest and realistic about the life of those who followed Him.

John 15:18-20 [NIV] *“If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you. Remember the words I spoke to you: ‘No servant is greater than his master.’ If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also.”*

Because we as Christians do not conform to the society that is influenced by Satan, we will face hatred and persecution.

Believers in Jesus Christ and unbelievers alike experience physical death.

All people will be resurrected at Christ’s return or later in the “white throne judgement” [see Revelation 20:11-15].

Believers will be resurrected to eternal life, while unbelievers to a period of judgement.

If unbelievers remain hostile to Jesus Christ’s rule they will experience the “*second death*” from which there is **no** resurrection.

This adds emphasis to our meditating on and acting on what Jesus Christ is showing us in these messages to the seven churches.