

Jesse Nelsen 8/25/2013 PM
THE CHURCH IN SMYRNA
(Rev. 2:8-11)

Introduction:

1. We continue this morning in our sermon series on the seven churches of Revelation.
2. We are considering each church in regards to the criteria of the identification, the commendation, the condemnation, the proclamation, and the application.
3. This morning we turn from Ephesus to Smyrna.

Discussion:

I. The Identification.

A. Who they were.

1. The city of Smyrna was roughly 40 miles north of Ephesus. It had been rebuilt as a model city by Alexander the Great. It was known for its educational and religious institutions.
2. Marcus Aurelius said that it was the glory or “ornament” of Asia for how beautiful it was.
3. When it was destroyed by an earthquake Marcus gave a ten year remission on taxes so that it could be rebuilt
3. Aelius Aristides said: “Smyrna city was a flower of beauty, such as earth and sun had never showed to mankind.”

B. Who Jesus said He was.

1. The First and the Last (cp. 1:8; John 8:58). This is comforting to Christians undergoing persecution. He is with them, knows their works (2:9).
2. He who was dead and came to life (cp. 1:18). A word of victory to the suffering.

II. The Commendation.

A. He knew their works (cp. Gal. 5:19, 22; Col. 1:10).

B. He knew their tribulation (*thlipsis* = a pressure, pressing down upon-Thayer; Latin = *tribulus*).

1. It was selected to be the leader or center of emperor worship. It had the first temple to a Roman emperor. It was punishable by death not to bow down to Domitian during this time
2. That they were being spoken against (blasphemed) by the Jews who were not Jews (Rom. 2:28, 29).
3. Polycarp (John’s disciple) was born and burned at the stake here. When he was asked to curse Christ he said, “Eighty and six years have I served Christ and He has done me nothing but good; how then could I curse Him, my Lord and Savior?” He was then burned alive, with ten others
4. The Jews provided the bundle of wood for the fire, even though it was the Sabbath

C. He knew their poverty.

1. In times when Roman Emperor worship was enforced, those who refused would not be given a “license”, and thus could not sell or purchase goods. This may be what is described.
2. It may be that the Jews were ridiculing the Christians for not offering service to the image of the Roman Emperor.

III. The Condemnation. There is no condemnation of the church in Smyrna!

IV. The Proclamation.

A. Do not fear the tribulation to come.

1. Some will be imprisoned.
2. The tribulation will last “ten days” (meaning both the “complete” time, and a “finite” time).
3. Testing is the result of the tribulation (cp. 1 Pet. 1:6-9).

B. Be faithful *unto* (*even if it brings*, not *until*) death! And receive the crown of life (cp. 2 Tim. 4:8).

C. Overcome! And you will not be hurt by the second death (cp. Rev. 20:14; John 8:51).

Conclusion:

1. The Application.

- A. No matter what we face today we must always remember who Jesus is.
- B. No matter what we face today we must focus on the truth of our existence.

2. Invitation.