

Lesson 5

The Letter to the Church at Smyrna: Remain Faithful Through Suffering

Revelation 2:8-11

Invite the Holy Spirit to teach and speak to you through the Word of God as you meditate on Revelation 2:8-11 every day this week.

As you read through the verses presented this week, look for a special verse to make your memory verse for the week. We will share our verses at the end of our discussion time.

“...be faithful until death and I will give you the crown of life.”

Revelation 2:10

1. What was a new or interesting thought from last week’s lesson?

The church of Smyrna was persecuted on all sides. The Romans required worship at the pagan temples by law. Emperor worship was mandatory. Those who would not participate were severely punished. In 155 AD, the bishop of Smyrna, Polycarp, was burned alive for refusing to worship Caesar. The Jewish population also persecuted the believers of Jesus. The very name Smyrna means *myrrh*, a plant that is associated with death and suffering.

Historically, the church at Smyrna may represent the church from about 100AD to 313AD. During this time the worldwide church was aggressively persecuted until Constantine made Christianity the official religion of the Roman Empire in 313 AD.

Notice that Jesus only brings words of commendation to this church; there are no words of rebuke or warning for the church of Smyrna.

2. How does Jesus describe Himself in Revelation 2:8? Why would these characteristics encourage the persecuted believers of Smyrna?
3. Discuss I Corinthians 15:12-20. What difference does the resurrection of Jesus make?

4. From Hebrews 4:13 and 15, do you think that Jesus knows what is happening in your life and understands your situation?
5. Describe what happened to the believers depicted in Hebrews 10:32-39. What are they encouraged to do? Discuss.
6. Should we expect persecution in this world? Read and discuss John 1:32, Acts 14:22 and I Peter 4:12-16.
7. Persecution may greatly affect finances. Who should we place our trust in? Who owns the riches of this world according to Haggai 2:7-8?
8. Even though the church at Smyrna was financially poor, they were spiritually wealthy. Read Ephesians 1:1-14 and discuss some of the spiritual blessings that believers receive.
9. What do the instructions in Matthew 6:31-34 and I Timothy 6:17-19 mean to you?
10. What do you think Jesus is talking about when He says “who say they are Jews and are not...” in Revelation 2:9? See John 8:31-45.
11. Has the Lord ever used persecution and tribulation in your life to bring you closer to Him? Share with your group if you feel comfortable.
12. In Revelation 2:10 why do you think Jesus told the church in Smyrna about the coming persecution?

13. Did the Lord understand what He was asking them to endure? See John 15:18-21 and I Peter 2:21-24.

14. What practical instruction is given in I Peter 5:6-11?

15. Read John 16:1-4. In this passage Jesus teaches that those who persecute believers may think they are doing the work of God. According to Revelation 2:8-11, whose work are they actually doing?

16. Overall, who is in control and who should we fear according to Matthew 10:28? Discuss what this means to you.

Revelation 2:10 talks about “a tribulation for ten days.” This may refer to the Roman gladiator contests, which were ten day events where Christians were thrown to the wild beasts, or it may prophetically refer to ten periods of harsh persecution of Christians under Roman emperors from 64 AD-313 AD.

17. What is the promised reward in Revelation 2:10 for those who are faithful until death? See also James 1:12 and discuss.

18. Do you think rewards motivate the human heart? Give some examples from secular life to make your point.

19. Write down what you learn about the second death from Revelation 20:14-15 and 21:8. What is the promise to the one who overcomes?

20. Turn to the chart in Section IV. Complete the portion that relates to the Church of Smyrna.

21. Share the memory verse that you found through this week's study and why you chose it.

22. From your meditation this week on Revelation 2:8-11, what do you want to remember?

Lecture Notes: