

# WHAT DOES JESUS WANT TO SAY TO OUR CHURCH

## Part Five ~ The Church of Smyrna—A Persecuted Church

Text: Revelation 2:8-11

### INTRODUCTION:

1. Smyrna was located about 35 miles to the north from Ephesus in Asia Minor (Turkey).
2. Smyrna was a wealthy city, second only to Ephesus in the entire area.
3. Unlike Ephesus, which today is uninhabited, Smyrna is still a large city of about 200,000 people and contains a Christian church.
4. In this large center was the little church to which this message was sent.
5. From history, this city was noted for its wickedness and opposition to the Christian Gospel in the First Century.
6. Smyrna's pastor at this time was a preacher called Polycarp. He was burned alive. When asked to recant his faith, 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?"

### I. JUST AS IN EPHESUS, JESUS CHRIST DIRECTS HIS LETTER TO THE PASTOR (VERSE 8)

- A. In verses 1-7, Jesus Christ is pictured as the center, upholder and light of the church. They had left their first love.
- B. Here in verse 8, Christ is presented as the eternal one, the first and last, He who was dead and is alive. There is no doubt it is the resurrected and ascended Christ who is speaking.

### II. THERE IS NOTHING HIDDEN FROM OUR GOD (VERSE 9)

- A. "I know thy works." He sees our service to Him. Work is not a dirty word to Jesus Christ.
  1. He knows the different conditions of all the churches.
  2. He knows the different warnings needed.
  3. He knows the different promises need.
  4. He knows the different corrections needed.
- B. He knows nothing but commendation for this church. There is no rebuke here.
- C. "And tribulation." The Lord saw not only their works, but also the suffering they endured to perform their good works.
  1. This was a severely persecuted church.
  2. This has always been the lot of the church that preaches Jesus Christ.
    - a. Churches have had to meet secretly throughout history to continue to serve Him.

- b. Persecution has caused these churches to thrive. There are more Christians in China today than in any country in the world. They have to meet in underground churches.

**D. "And poverty" means extreme poverty.**

1. They were poor in regard to material things.
2. They were poor because of persecution – assets were stolen from them.
3. They were poor, but right with God.

**E. "But thou art rich." To the world they were poor, but God's assessment of them was that they were rich (Spiritually rich).**

**F. "Synagogue of Satan." There were religious gatherings of people who Christ said were of the devil and not of God.**

1. The word synagogue means "gathering together."
2. The word church means "called out."
  - a. Too many so-called gatherings have never been "called out from sin and the world." They have the name "church" but they are not a scriptural New Testament church.
  - b. Satan has his churches today under the pretense of New Testament churches (Satan is the great counterfeiter – see II Corinthians 11:13-15).

**III. NO ONE EVER SAID THAT LIVING FOR CHRIST WOULD ALWAYS BE EASY (VERSE 10)**

**A. "Fear none of these things that thou shalt suffer." There will be some suffering if we live for Christ according to His Word.**

1. This kind of suffering is devil-directed.
2. This type of suffering is meant to cause fear.
3. This kind of suffering is meant to silence one's testimony.
4. This type of suffering is sure to increase as we near Christ's coming.

**B. "Behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison . . ."**

1. Satan has never ceased his attacks on churches.
2. The Devil has never ceased his efforts to exterminate the church.
3. The world and the flesh, as always, have aided him.
4. Lucifer has overlooked some congregations. Could they be Satan's congregations?

**C. "That they may be tried." God has always allowed His children to be tried and tested.**

1. Anything good ought to stand the test chambers – so ought Christians.
2. Testing is limited in duration (I Corinthians 10:13).
3. Testing is limited by God. Notice I said limited, not eliminated. Be prepared to endure trials and temptations (James 1:2-4; I Peter 4:12-19).

**D. "Be thou faithful unto death."**

1. This means to be constant, consistent, persistent.
2. This means to be willing to live and die for Christ.

3. We are to be faithful as Abraham, Moses, Daniel, Joseph, Timothy.
4. Even "unto death", if called upon. Multiplied millions have fulfilled this command in years gone by.

**E. "And I will give thee a crown of life."**

1. This is a reward for faithfulness (I Corinthians 3:14).
2. It shall never fade (I Corinthians 9:25).
3. It shall be a glorious reward (I Peter 5:4).
4. It shall be eternally precious (I Thessalonians 2:19).
5. It shall be personal (Revelation 3:11).

**IV. AGAIN THE PEOPLE OF GOD IN HIS CHURCHES ARE TOLD TO LISTEN AND OBEY**  
**(VERSE 11)**

**A. This is a warning to hear Christ speak. When Christ speaks, we must obey.**

**B. A promise is given to the saved. "He that overcometh shall not be hurt by the second death."**

1. This "overcoming" is salvation by the blood.
2. This death is more than the death of the body (Matthew 10:28).
3. This is the death that the rich man experienced (Luke 16:23).
4. This is the death that is the doom of unbelief (Revelation 20:6).
5. This is the death that spends eternity in the Lake of Fire (Revelation 20:14-15).
6. This is the death that never dies but is conscious, suffering forever (Revelation 21:8).

**CONCLUSION:** Have you been saved, have you trusted Jesus Christ as your personal Savior so that you can be forgiven of all your sins, have eternal life, have a home in Heaven, and escape Hell forever? If you truly live for God there will be some devil-directed persecution that will come your way (II Timothy 3:12).