

4.

To the Church in Smyrna Revelation 2: 8-11



Read Revelation 2: 8-11

1. What can we tell about the situation in Smyrna from the text?

2. What is the revelation here? i.e. what does Jesus reveal to them about their present?

About their future?

3. Upon what does this reversal of their fortunes depend?

4. How does this letter affect the way we pray for those who are suffering as Christians around the world?

5. What other lessons can we learn as a church or individuals from this letter?



Apocalypse Now and Then

By Paul Barnett
Pages 52-54

Smyrna (2: 8-11)

Sixty kilometers to the north of Ephesus lay Smyrna, population 250,000. Located on a magnificent, easily defended harbor, Smyrna stood at the end of the Hermus valley. Like Ephesus it had very considerable maritime and overland trade passing through it. Also like Ephesus it was both a *free city* and an *assize city*. Smyrna was famous throughout the province and beyond for its town planning and architecture; it was known as “the glory of Asia”. It boasted a famous stadium, a famous library, and the largest amphitheater in Asia. There were impressive temples of Apollo, Asklepius, Aphrodite and for the Cybele mystery cult. It competed with and defeated Sardis for the honour of erecting a temple in honour of the Roman Emperor.

Christians were extremely vulnerable at that time since they could not, in conscience as Christians, participate in municipal pagan religion nor in worship of the emperor. From their protected positions, however, Jews were about to “slander” the Christians as disloyal to the authorities and to Rome. John writes that they are not, in truth, Jews, not truly

6. This letter is an encouragement to all Christians who undergo suffering, slander, and persecution for their faith. It shows clearly that when we are suffering as Christians, nothing is quite as it seems. Persecution does not mean Jesus has lost control of the situation. We need to adjust our vision, so that we see it in the proper perspective through Jesus' eyes. And this readjusted vision will spur us on to endure to the end.

7. How is the devil at work behind those who persecute or slander or attack Christians in some way today? What is a Christian response to such persecution?

THINK &
APPLY



8. The reversal of the church's fortune does not depend on its faithful perseverance alone, but ultimately on Jesus. It is he who promises to change their death to life, and he who sends this revelation to spur them on. God's initiative remains key, even while a response from us is demanded: we respond as we hear the Spirit's voice (v.11).



PRAYER

Praise God for the challenges raised by God's word through this study Pray for others in your group



FAMILY
DISCUSSION

How do we apply this passage in our daily life?

the people of God. Theirs' is a *synagogue of Satan*. In their rejection of God's messiah, Jesus, and in their collaboration with pagan authorities against Christians they are really in league with Satan, not God.

In consequence of Jewish slander, Christians in Smyrna are about to *suffer*. *Prison, persecution and death* are mentioned by Jesus (vs. 10-12).

Presumably John has received up to date information on Patmos about the sufferings which are about to occur in Smyrna.

PRAISE GOD that Jesus suffering is a basis of our "crown of life"

CONFESS TO GOD that in hardship we think that God has lost control

PRAY for courage and strength in the face of increasing opposition to the Christian gospel

PRAY ALSO for the persecuted Church



READ AHEAD

Next Week:
Revelation 2: 12-17