

Revelation 2: 8-11 The Persecuted Church (Smyrna)

Smyrna was a large port city of 250,000 people. It was a major commercial centre, fighting for economic supremacy within its region. It described itself as the “First City of Asia Minor.” But it also was proud to be a city that practised emperor worship and passed laws to make such worship a requirement on all its citizens. Even most of the Jews within the city followed these statutes. To not do abide by these rules would mean certain economic hardship and could lead to torture and death.

1. How does Jesus describe himself? Why was this description particularly relevant to the church at Smyrna? What does it mean? What does it say to the people of Smyrna?
2. Jesus says “I know your tribulations and your poverty.” Why would He say this? Why is such a statement important?
3. What poverty and tribulations were being experienced by the church of Smyrna?
4. What did Jesus say was the result of Smyrna’s suffering? Why?
5. David said Jesus wouldn’t say this same thing about PCC. What might he say instead?
6. David spoke about a “theology of suffering.” Do you see that such a theology is part of the Christian faith? What did David say was the reason that suffering is allowed?
7. What did Jesus instruct the church of Smyrna to do in the face of this suffering?
8. How did Jesus encourage the church?
9. David encouraged people to get a copy of Fox’s “The Book of Martyrs” and to pass stories such as these down to our children and grand children. What impact might this have?

What was the fault of this church? Are we falling into this situation in our church and if so what is the evidence of it? How can we protect against this?

At the end of each description of each of the seven churches we read the same words “He who has an ear let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches”. In the next sentence in each of these verses we have a different promise given to the persons of each church who overcome. What is the promise in verse 11 and what does it mean?