

The Revelation of Jesus.

Week #4: The Church in Smyrna

January 28, 2018

The Book of Revelation describes the end of God's story. It is a book full of imagery that has caused much speculation, confusion and division in the Church. But at its very core, Revelation carries a simple and powerful message: "I, the Risen Christ, am returning soon - so be ready for my return." Of course, within that message is an equally powerful one that keeps our commitment to Jesus strong during times of great uncertainty: Christ has defeated death, and upon His return will end the madness of our world as we know it. So until then, we wait, but do so knowing fully that Christ's victory is assured ... and His victory is also our victory.

As we study the first chapters of Revelation, I ask you to prayerfully study and pray each week in order to be assured that the Risen Christ whom we worship is on the move. And be ready.

Study Questions: #4 - *The Church in Smyrna*

1. Read Revelation 2:8-11.

- What must it have been like to have had no rights, no recourse, no place of refuge if you refused to acknowledge Caesar as God?
 - How would you prepare yourself? your spouse? your children?
- Millions of Christians today are experiencing some type of persecution. Note that in the bulletin we are praying for a specific nation each week - join in praying for these nations.

2. As Christians with a Baptist theology, we are very careful to maintain the separation between the church (our faith) and the state (our nation).

- Does the Church in Smyrna help you understand how important this conviction is?
- What happens when the Church no longer separates itself from the state?
 - What happens to the gospel as it's preached to the nation, and the world?
 - What happens to the local, national church?
 - What happens to the state, as it gathers the church under its influence?

3. The Risen Jesus doesn't tell his followers in Smyrna that he's going to rescue them ... rather, He commands them to be strong and courageous as they suffer.

- How does this provide a window helping us see how our King sees faithful suffering?
- How do you explain those who preach health & prosperity, in light of Christ's suffering & death, and His Church's suffering throughout the earth from the time of Smyrna until today? Are they preaching a false gospel? Have they embraced a godless worldview call the North American Dream?

4. Jesus warns the Church in Smyrna to pay attention to the "second death".

- Read Revelation 20:11-15. One day you will experience this final judgement, and will participate in the separation of those who have been faithful to Jesus from those who have turned away from God and turned against God.
 - How does this truth impact your prayer for others, and your desire to tell them about Jesus?

5. Pray for our nation this week. It seems obvious that we live among people who formerly turned from God but are now turning against Him. Pray that you will be faithful, and that you might have opportunity to tell others about Jesus as you love them in the power of the Holy Spirit?