

Revelation 2:8-11—Smyrna

I. Context

- a. Smyrna—vying to be faithful to Rome; on coins: First of Asia in beauty and size
- b. Not conquered by Rome but willingly became allies—193BC—built temple to goddess Roma; Rome built aqueduct to the city to show appreciation
- c. Smyrna won the right to build first temple to Tiberias Caesar
- d. Christians in the city were not willing to go along with this and pressure was put on them to ‘get into line’

II. To the angel write...

- a. First and Last—contrast to Roma Aeterna (Eternal Rome)
- b. Who died and came to life; Jesus obedient even unto death

III. V. 9

- a. Jesus: *I know...* he is present with them (c.f. 2:1) and understands (Heb. 4:15)
- b. Afflictions—hardships; promised by Jesus (*John 16:33*)
- c. Poverty—they left everything to follow Jesus; c.f. *Mark 10:28-30; Matt. 6:19-24*)
- d. Slander—great animosity of Jews toward Christians in first century
 - i. Jews in city must have been adding to persecution; using synagogue leadership to work against God’s purposes
 - ii. Be careful not to misuse this statement (Christian’s revenge on Jews)
- e. Religious institutions that were once working for God can work against God

IV. V. 10—Do not be afraid of what you about to suffer...

- a. The Smyrnan believers would be tested; there is a devil who does this (*Eph. 6:12-13*)
 - i. Slander, imprisonment, possibly death
- b. God will use this time to build their faith and bring honor to Christ’s name
- c. The call: be faithful (don’t denounce, compromise, or become hateful)
- d. The promise: The Crown of Life; with Jesus we will live forever—a place of perfect peace (*Rev. 21:1-5*); c.f. *1 Cor. 9:24-25*

V. V. 11—Whoever has ears, let him hear...

- a. Those who are God’s have the Spirit to help us listen; He speaks to our hearts and minds
- b. The one who is victorious—this is all of us in Christ; a seeming irony when one is persecuted and possibly imprisoned; but in defeat we actually conquer
- c. Second death? Revelation 20—the final judgement—All people will stand before God; the Lake of fire is the second death

VI. So what?

- a. In what ways does our society put our faith to the test?
- b. Expect that you may have times of testing. How can you stay faithful (not denounce, compromise, or grow hateful). What might it look like practically for you?

- c. Do not be discouraged with trials; God's love and presence is real; you have the opportunity to mature in faith and honor Jesus!
- d. How has God strengthened you so that you can be victorious?