

## Remember Jesus in Trials

Revelation 2:8-11<sup>8</sup> “And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write: ‘The words of the first and the last, who died and came to life.’<sup>9</sup> “I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich) and the slander of those who say that they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan.<sup>10</sup> Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and for ten days you will have tribulation. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life.<sup>11</sup> He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. The one who conquers will not be hurt by the second death.’

### ❖ Recap

#### ➤ Chapter 1 – Do You See Jesus

- 1) Sees Jesus Walking and Working in His Church
- 2) Sees Jesus as the Son of Man
- 3) Sees Jesus as our Priest
- 4) Sees Jesus as the Eternal, Wise and Holy God
- 5) Sees Jesus as All-Knowing
- 6) Sees Jesus as the Great and Powerful Judge
- 7) Sees Jesus as the Great Authority
- 8) Sees Jesus in Control of His Church
- 9) Sees Jesus as the Protector of His People
- 10) Sees the Glory of Jesus
- 11) John Sees Himself in the Light of who God Is

#### ➤ Church at Ephesus

- **The Cold Love Church**
- Commends them on many wonderful deeds and trust in His Word
- They left their first love.
- **Calls them to Repentance**
  - Remember from where you have fallen
  - Repent
  - And Do the Things You Did at First

### ❖ Introduction

#### ➤ The Suffering Church of Smyrna

- This church was alive during a time of great persecution....
- And Jesus offers no rebuke to this church
- Jesus only brings them comfort and promises

#### ➤ My desire is that you See and get to Know Jesus better through this series

- Jesus is writing to these seven Churches
- And He has something specifically to say to each one
- **But it applies**
  - To all of the 7 churches
  - And to the individuals that make up the churches
  - It continues to speak to us today
  - To the churches in the 21<sup>st</sup> century
  - And to the Individual Christians today...

#### ➤ So, Jesus is writing to Smyrna through John...

- And He is revealing Himself to this Church
- Giving them Comfort
- Giving them Truth
- Giving them Promises....

#### ➤ You need to Understand who Jesus is....

#### ➤ Pay Attention to His Introduction, and share with me how he would begin a letter to us

The words of the first and the last, who died and came to life.

## ❖ 1) Jesus is the First and the Last (His Introduction)

### ➤ First and Last

- He spoke of Himself like this to John when John saw Him in Rev 1
- Revelation 1:17-18 <sup>17</sup>... "Fear not, **I am** the first and the last, <sup>18</sup> and the living one. I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades.

### ➤ A Very Clear Statement of His Divine Nature (He is and has always been God)

#### ▪ This is How God described Himself in the Old Testament (Please Mark this and Meditate on it)

- Isaiah 44:6 <sup>6</sup> Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel and his Redeemer, the LORD of hosts: "I am the first and I am the last; besides me there is no god.
- Isaiah is quoting God here....
  - ◆ He says, thus says... The Lord (Yaweh), the King of Israel.... And His Redeemer, The Lord (Yahweh) of Hosts
    - He mentions two beings....? That is odd... right?
  - ◆ Then They Speak... But... it is in the 1<sup>st</sup> person... Instead of We.... They say I AM...
    - I AM – Which is the God's personal name... meaning I Exist essentially....
  - ◆ I AM and I AM– I am the first and I am the last...
- **Now that is a clear, and very clear Statement showing the distinct persons of the Godhead**
  - ◆ While still affirming their Oneness...
- **Besides me there is no god....**
  - ◆ Says, there is no other god.
  - ◆ Ok... You got that.... He describes Himself, and explains who He is...
  - ◆ By saying... I am the first and the last...

#### ▪ Then Here comes Jesus in the Book of Revelation....

- And He calls Himself the same thing...
- Isn't it clear?
- He calls Himself the First and the Last....
- The Same thing we hear God calling himself to the Old Testament Prophets...
- **And to top it all off Jesus says... "I AM"**
  - ◆ And that statement, in case you do not know this...
  - ◆ Is a statement that any Jewish person would hear and saying, "He is calling Himself God"
  - ◆ Which is exactly why they killed Jesus...

#### ▪ Question: How can we see God talking in Isaiah as if there is more than One, but then say (in the singular first person) I AM God, and there is none else..... And then Jesus come along and call himself the same thing in Revelation?

- It is because Jesus IS the very same God as we see in the Old Testament...
- I am not asking you to understand fully the Doctrine (Teaching) of the Trinity.... The Three in One nature of Go...
  - ◆ But I am urging you to believe it...
  - ◆ We will never fully understand God... He is too big for us... But we can believe Him.

### ➤ So, Jesus wants the Christians in the Church at Smyrna

- To know He is God... and He is the first and the last.... He is eternal...
- And they will need to cling to that... and Find Hope in that...
- And many of you here today need to also....

who died and came to life.

## ❖ 2) Jesus Died and Came to Life (His Introduction)

### ➤ Died and Came to Life

- **First, -A Clear Statement of His Humanity** - He is relating to their humanity, with His...
- **Although as Phil 2 says**

- He is God, equal with the Father
- He humbled Himself to become a man...
- And to be obedient unto death....
- Even death on a cross
- **He came as a Man.....**
  - While retaining His Divinity....
  - Never did he ever stop being God....
  - He just took on a new nature.... A Human Nature...
    - ♦ **Colossians 1:19<sup>19</sup> For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell,**
- **The People of Smyrna are facing Death**
  - Jesus wants to Remind them of who He is....
  - He is saying, I am the One who Died and Came to Life....
  - This is the premise of all the things I am about to say to you....
  - Hold on to this truth about me above all things....
- **Jesus Died and Came to Life....**
  - The Death and the following Resurrection of Jesus is the basis for our belief...
  - Never before and never after had someone died in their body,
  - and had their body raised to live forevermore...
    - Not Lazarus... because He eventually died...
    - Only Jesus...
- **Jesus is Reminding them of Who He is.... And What they believe in...**
  - He died, and was buried for three days....
  - He descended into the grave....
  - **The Jews had the Romans set guards outside of His tomb...**
    - He was placed in a Rich man's tomb
    - It was easily accessible and in a well known place...
    - So these Roman guards who were soldiers of the greatest army on Earth
    - They guarded the Tomb...
  - **But When Mary went to check on the Tomb...**
    - The Rock was rolled away
    - And Jesus Body was no where to be found...
  - **Soon.... This badly beaten Jesus.... Who had been nailed on the cross and beaten until He was unrecognizable**
    - Was walking around Jerusalem
    - And appearing to His followers
    - Hundreds and thousands of people saw a Healthy risen Jesus
- **Casual Christian believers... Or Family Christians... you just believe what your family believes...**
  - You believe that Jesus died... and you believe in the miracle of His resurrection....
  - But this has never truly sunk in and hit you...
- **Do you know what this means...?**
  - Our Faith is not in vain... it is real
  - We serve a real God
  - Who sent a real Savior
  - Who died a real death
  - For our Real sins
  - That are really offensive to Him...
  - And He calls us to Real repentance
  - And real life in Him
  - And offers a Real Eternal Life in Heaven...
- **Application Today**
  - This Church needed to place their hope in Jesus' bodily Resurrection (So do you)
  - Remember.... Jesus Died and Came to Life...

- Put your Hope in that....
- Especially in light of what we are about to see they are facing...

<sup>9</sup> “I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich) and the slander of those who say that they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan.

### ❖ 3) Jesus Knows

#### ➤ Tribulation

- Persecution... they were being persecuted because they were Christians...

#### ➤ Poverty

- Not only were they being persecuted....
- They were very poor... This word brings in the idea of begging...
- So poor they had to beg
- **Being Poor-**
  - What a difficult state to be in....
  - Not being able to pay all of your bills....
  - Not being able to buy the food for your children you know they need...
  - Not being able to buy them the clothes they need...
  - Not being able to get those essential things you need
  - Living from small paycheck to small paycheck...

- It was a terrible state for them to be in....

#### ➤ Slander (of those who say that they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan)

- **We get a clear example of the persecution they were going through...**
  - They were being slandered by Jewish people that had not become Christians...
  - As you know, much of the early church was Jewish....
  - As the church spread, many non Jewish people became Christians...
- **This Church... (These people) – I want you to see it personally....**
  - Individuals in this church were being slandered by those that claimed to be Jews....
  - **In Romans Paul teaches that not all Jewish people are Jews in God’s eyes...**
    - ◆ Not those that are outwardly Jews...
    - ◆ But the real people of God are those that are Jews by the change of their heart.
    - ◆ It is the person’s heart changed by the Holy Spirit, that reveals to people of God.

#### ➤ Those who say they are Jews but are not.... But are a synagogue of Satan...

- **Jesus never holds back... He does not say the easy things... he just tells the truth**
  - Doesn’t He?
- **He does not say....**
  - These guys are just a little misinformed...
  - They just do not understand...
  - They are really ok....
- **They are a synagogue of Satan...**
  - Synagogue – is an assembly of people...
    - ◆ It is a congregation... a group of people coming together for worship....
    - ◆ Only problem for them is... it was one...
  - Of Satan
    - ◆ Belonging to Satan....
    - ◆ Their god, and their father is Satan...
    - ◆ Although claiming to know the One true God..... they are following His greatest enemy
  - They surely did not call themselves:
    - ◆ Satan’s Synagogue... although a catchy alliteration... weren’t going to get many people
    - ◆ They thought themselves right....
  - Many churches and false religions are like this today....
    - ◆ We give them other names... but Jesus had it right... they are Of Satan...

- **Oh its Just Slander – What is the big deal?**
  - **Peter touches on this a bit as a form of persecution....**
    - 1 Peter 4:3-4 <sup>3</sup> For the time that is past suffices for doing what the Gentiles want to do, living in sensuality, passions, drunkenness, orgies, drinking parties, and lawless idolatry. <sup>4</sup> With respect to this they are surprised when you do not join them in the same flood of debauchery, and they malign you;
  - Saying terrible untrue things about people is bad enough...
  - But when you combine these lies with the **government of the time....**
    - These people in Smyrna were having a really tough time.
- **Smyrna in that Day**
  - They loved Rome greatly....
  - They even built a temple for the worship of Rome...
  - Then they built a new temple dedicated to the Emperor Tiberius
  - Then they had numerous temples for false Greek gods....
  - The city is still there today as the city Izmir in Turkey...
  - **This was all a problem for Christians...**
    - They refused to worship the Emperor... although obedient to civil laws
    - Refused to worship false gods...
    - So they got in a lot of trouble
- **America in our Day**
  - **Take a stand for Jesus... a real one... see what happens when you do so**
    - Not among Christians, but non Christians
  - **Tell people (even in a loving way) that there is sin, and it sends people to hell....**
  - **Tell people there is a hell...**
    - You will be labeled by many as a harsh extremist... trying to scare people to follow your religion
  - **Tell people there is only One Way to get to heaven...**
    - You will be called narrow minded and an exclusivist
  - **Tell people that abortion is killing child being made in the image of God...**
    - They will hate you
  - **Live righteously among your family, friends, co-workers, and even strangers...**
    - Very often you will be ridiculed for taking a stand....
    - This is why so few believers make an impact...
    - They are fearful... They do not want to go through what comes with being Godly....
- **Church at Smyrna's Persecution...**
  - **Slandered....**
    - Said they were cannibals because of the Lord's supper
    - Said they broke up marriages... conflict of Christian and non Christian home
    - Immorality – because of their Holy Kisses in greetings
    - Atheism – because they did not worship the multitude of gods
    - Politically disloyal and rebellious since they did not worship emperor
  - **So this assembly of Satan, that claimed to follow the God of Israel**
    - Would report this to the roman authorities...
    - And they would be beaten, eaten by animals, burned at stakes...
    - Lose their businesses...
    - And would live in great poverty...
  - **It was difficult for them....**
    - **So Jesus says...**

<sup>10</sup> Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and for ten days you will have tribulation.

- ❖ **4) Because of Jesus You Will Suffer**
  - **Polycarp**

- **Polycarp is one of the most fascinating figures in the early church**
  - You will not find his name in the Bible, but...
  - We are 100% certain that he was the Bishop or Pastor of the Church in Smyrna
  - There were numerous writings from the early church time about him and to him
- **Polycarp was known to have sat under the teachings of the Apostle John...**
  - And it is because of John that Polycarp is ordained at the Pastor at Smyrna...
- **We can assume correctly that Jesus has in mind Polycarp when sending this letter...**
  - He sends this letter to the messenger of Smyrna (Polycarp)
  - Can you imagine how great it was for Polycarp to see Jesus say he's being held in Jesus right hand
- **Polycarp was eventually Martyred for His faith in Jesus...**
  - The Smyrneans wrote a letter on the Martyrdom of Polycarp....
  - They wrote down what happened to their Pastor as he was faithful to Jesus...
    - He was possibly over 100 years old when he killed him....
  - The letter begins....
    - **Polycarp 1:1**  
We write unto you, brethren, an account of what befell those that suffered martyrdom and especially the blessed Polycarp, who stayed the persecution, having as it were set his seal upon it by his martyrdom. For nearly all the foregoing events came to pass that the Lord might show us once more an example of martyrdom which is conformable to the Gospel
  - **Polycarp's crime:**
    - When Christians refused to burn incense to the emperor of Rome as god,
    - they were accused of treason and sentenced to die.
    - Polycarp, an elder of the church at Smyrna, was martyred for this very crime.
  - **Polycarp's Arrest**
    - They tried to find him.... And his friends told him to hide, but he did not want to... but did as they wished..
    - He was betrayed by two young men who were tortured...
    - He decided He would hide no more...
    - So they came to where he was staying...
    - He brought them in and fed them....
    - They were amazed by him,
    - He asked to be able to pray before they left... so they said yes....
      - ◆ He prayed for two hours, and many of these men repented that they came to get him...
  - **They tried to get Polycarp to Recant...**
    - The Roman Proconsul commanded him to swear allegiance to Caesar, saying,
    - *"Swear, and I will set thee at liberty; reproach Christ."*
    - How courageous was Polycarp's reply: *"Eighty and six years have I now served Christ, and he has never done me the least wrong; how, then, can I blaspheme my King and my Savior?"* Further efforts to make him deny his Lord failed, and Polycarp was condemned to be burned at the stake.
  - **Polycarp's Death**
    - They wanted to nail him to a stake, but he said
    - "Let me alone as I am: for He who has given me strength to endure the fire, will also enable me, without your securing me by nails to stand without moving in the pile."
    - He was then not nailed to the stake but only tied to it with his hands behind his back.
    - He died on Saturday, February 23rd, 155 A.D. Crowds of Jews broke the Sabbath law by carrying wood for his fire.
- **The devil is about to throw some of you into prison that you may be tested and for ten days...**
  - So they went through being thrown into prison
  - Tested ten days...
  - Could be ten years... or 100 years.... Don't know for sure...
  - But 10 periods of time...
- **But..... Do not Fear...**

- Why? Because : He is the First and Last... the One who died and came to life....

(but you are rich)

#### ❖ 5) In Jesus You are Rich

##### ➤ Despite their earthly poverty and lack

- They didn't own many clothes
- Had no land to speak of
- Their homes were small
- Had very little money in their pockets...

##### ➤ Their Faith in Jesus made them Rich...

- Their Faithfulness in persecution gave them great rewards....
- They were storing up treasures in heaven where they would not fade away....

##### ➤ Let this be a lesson for you today...

- Forget the American lust for money and power...
- Live your life in such a way that the Kingdom of God is built...
- Not the kingdom of You....
- That will soon perish at your death

##### ➤ Jesus was going to clothe them with elegant White Robes

- Jesus was preparing for them mansions in heaven...
- Jesus was going to reward them with crowns....
- They were rich in Salvation.... For eternal life
- Jesus said in **Matthew 5:11-12** <sup>11</sup>“Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. <sup>12</sup>Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life.

#### ❖ 6) Jesus Will Give You the Crown of Life

##### ➤ Be Faithful Unto Death...

- This leaves out those who fall away (because their faith was in vain.... A false faith)
- This leaves out those who end in an unfaithful manner...

##### ➤ This Faithfulness is in the face of death....

- Do we not think that this applies to us this morning...
- When we are faced with much less than death....
- We must be faithful to Christ in all circumstances...
- Even in the face of death...

##### ➤ Jesus will keep all of His followers.... He assures us of this...

- “I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand” (John 10:28–29)

##### ➤ He will give us the crown of life !

- The victor's Crown....
- The Crown is the Reward of God...
  - James 1:12 <sup>12</sup> Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him.
- **Of Life....**
  - Life.... Not just to live... but an eternal, purposeful, wonderful, real, LIFE....
  - With no Mourning, Crying, Suffering, Pain, Tears....
  - Eternal freedom from: Depression, Guilt, Anxiety, Boredom, Dissatisfaction, Addictions...

<sup>11</sup> He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. The one who conquers will not be hurt by the second death.’

## ❖ 7) Jesus Will Keep You From the Second Death

### ➤ **Him who has an ear... Hear what the Spirit says to the churches...**

- **1<sup>st</sup>... A clear indication of the three in one nature of God.... The Doctrine of the Trinity...**
  - Wasn't Jesus Speaking?
  - Now Jesus is saying it is the Spirit speaking to the churches...

### ➤ **Hear the Spirit of God this Morning...**

- He is speaking and moving in your hearts...your minds...

### ➤ **The one who conquers**

- **Romans 8:37-39** <sup>37</sup> No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. <sup>38</sup> For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, <sup>39</sup> nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.
- **It is he who: trusted in Jesus.... Repenting of their sins, and placing faith in Jesus...**
  - And they continued in Christ... Abiding or living in Him...
  - They are the conquerors...
  - Because they came Through Jesus...

### ➤ **Will not be hurt by the second Death...**

- **The first death comes to all men...**
  - The consequences of our first sin... Death passed to all men... we will all die someday someway
- **The Second Death comes to those who do not overcome.... Those who reject Jesus...**
  - Not only those terrible people...
  - But those good people who never thought they were bad enough to need saving...
  - Or those who were fearful.... For whatever reason to Stand up for Jesus...
- **The Second Death is an eternity in the Bottomless Pit....**
  - It is filled with fire, and eternal torment...
  - That is the description Jesus gives it... And He came to deliver us from that fate.
- **Revelation 20:14-15** <sup>14</sup> Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. <sup>15</sup> And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

## ❖ Your Choice this Morning

### ➤ **Take what the world has to offer... Freedom from persecution**

- The Freedom to live as you please...
- No Responsibility to your Creator....
- And Your End will be destruction...

### ➤ **Take what Jesus offers...**

- Eternal Salvation...
- With Persecution and Slander at times...
- As they treated Jesus, so will the world handle his followers...
- Responsibility to our Creator
- A Crown of life and protection from the second death...