

Wednesday in the Word
Digging Deeper
April 27, 2022
Smyrna

Revelation 2:8-11 KJVS

[8] And unto the angel of the church in Smyrna write; These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive; [9] I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan. [10] Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life. [11] He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.

There are a number of ways that teachers and commentaries suggest we modern Christians view these seven churches. Seven Historical Churches down through time. All Churches in seven various ways. Seven types of Churches today. All Individual Christians in seven various ways. Seven types of Christians today. Some even suggest these were symbolic representations of the final churches that will be subject to the end of days. Many would be raptured. Many left behind. Thus these chapters would be preserved into the Tribulation to guide those who find themselves suffering under the wrath of Satan and dieing for their faith in Christ. We won't attempt to argue a case here but we will make common sense of what the Lord is telling us today. Some scary things are more acceptable when they seem intended for others. Let's look at tonight's passage and apply it in the only purely sensible way that applies to Christians who study this here and now. Compare these praises and admonitions to yourself. If the shoe fits...

We start with the last verse first. Each letter to the seven churches finishes with this phrase; "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches". He then goes on to say "To him that overcometh..." You can almost hear your Mom saying; "Are you listening to me!?" Jesus seems to be saying He is making His most serious point. He's grabbing us by the ears and peering into our souls to be certain that we do not miss or misunderstand the intensity of His admonition. He then takes each of His beloved congregations to His Great Bema Seat of Christian Judgement where He will bestow crowns of glory to His faithful. The following is excerpted from an article on biblestudytools.com.

The Bema Seat is the title given the Judgment Seat of Christ (2 Corinthians 5:10, Romans 14:10). The judgment of each Christian is not a determination of who will enter heaven, because the Bible says we are forgiven at the moment of salvation (Psalm 103:10-12). Those judged at the Bema Seat are believers in the Lord, but the Bible says God will reward believers based upon their actions done for Him (Psalm 62:12). This truth parallels what James says in his epistle (James 2:14-26), for faith without works is dead. We respond to our Lord in faith because He imputed His righteousness to us (Romans 1:17). We will receive rewards based upon what we did with our lives as ambassadors for Christ (Matthew 16:27, 1 Corinthians 3:10, 12, 13).

It might be noted that these crowns refer to ancient Olympic awards but may be symbolic of the wonderful privileges presented to the joint heirs of Christ. In verse 10 we are blessed with the "crown of life". Is it a crown that we wear or do we wear eternal life itself? More on this in further studies.

Finally Jesus tells each of His candlesticks to overcome. This word from the Greek is *nikaō*; to subdue, conquer, overcome, prevail, get the victory. Each overcomer is then promised a specific blessing that only those who belong to Him can acquire. This overcoming is best addressed in God's Word. See 1 John 2:13 and Revelation 12:10-11. Our old enemies, the world, the flesh and the devil are serious and cannot be ignored. We must work out our salvation with fear and trembling. Philippians 2:12. Getting us saved is Jesus' job. Overcoming happens only through His blood, our testimony and our willingness to die rather than deny Christ. The suffering church of Smyrna, urged to overcome, is promised in verse 11 to expect no pain from the Second Death. The suffering and loss of our human body is a minor thing when compared to escaping the Second Death. Revelation 20:6,14,21:8.

Let's dig into the details Jesus dictates to John concerning Smyrna. Verse 8. Jesus is the beginning and end of all creation existing through all eternity and beyond. Revelation 1:8, John 1:1, Isaiah 44:6. He was dead and is alive. Now! Today! In fellowship with your departed loved ones as well as with us here and now. Revelation 1:18, John 11:25. Verse 9. What are you going through for Christ? He sees your hard work, unnoticed by others. He knows the pressure you are under, the tribulations of life. Things only you alone can know. He cares what you are doing without to give to others or to live for Him. Endure! Overcome! Jesus reassures you that you are rich in His inheritance. 2 Corinthians 8:9, Matthew 6:19-20. When we commiserate about dead religious practices and phony so-called believers we can unwisely judge them. Leave Judgement up to Jesus, the Righteous One. He knows better than we can where the truth lies. It's a long read but study Matthew 23. Jesus is fully aware of false teachers and fake believers. Let Him do His job and beware that none of that chapter speaks of you! Verse 10 may be warning us of what's coming to America. This country is quickly becoming less tolerant of Christ and His people. The horrors described for us have been and are now suffered by our brothers and sisters through time and around the world. If things get that bad here we are instructed to be "faithful unto death". May God strengthen and bless us when we suffer for Him. May you be ever in prayer to seek to be in His will and to share in The fellowship of His Sufferings. 1 Peter 4:19, 2 Timothy 3:12, Philippians 3:10. God bless us all.