

7 LETTERS AND 7 CHURCHES (part 2)

Greetings precious ones, this week we continue this seven part series entitled “7 Letters to 7 Churches”. Each week we will take a different church that Jesus wrote to in the Book of Revelations. Though each of these 7 is real churches and existed 2000 years ago, the message that Jesus wrote to them continues to speak to the Church today.

The second church is the Church of Smyrna. Smyrna is located in what was known as Asia Minor and is now modern day Turkey. It is unknown who exactly founded the Church in Smyrna though many believe it was the Apostle Paul on one of his missionary journeys.

In Rev 2:8-11, "And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write, 'These things says the First and the Last, who was dead, and came to life: "I know your works, tribulation, and poverty (but you are rich); and I know the blasphemy of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death." '

Interestingly enough, the city of Smyrna was best known for its myrrh which comes from a shrub. You might remember myrrh was one of the three gifts that were delivered by the wise men from the east at the birth of Jesus. Also of interest is the process that must take place in extracting this fragrant perfume, it must be broken and crushed. As it is crushed a fragrant aroma is emitted. Unlike most other resins, myrrh expands and blooms when burned instead of melting and liquefying.

The Church at Smyrna was only one of 2 of these 7 churches of which Jesus did not bring a rebuke or correction to. They are known as the “suffering church” because they were suffering greatly for their testimony to Jesus Christ. Both the religious and secular world was making life very difficult for those who were followers of Jesus Christ.

True Biblical Christianity includes suffering. Unlike the popular “feel good” preachers of our day like Joel Osteen; Benny Hinn; Creflo Dollar and a score of others who proclaim a “man centered” message, suffering is a very real part of life for those who have decided to follow Jesus Christ.

Jesus promises suffering to His followers. I know this sounds totally foreign to most but this is only because ignorance of the Word of God the Bible is rampant. In John 15:20 Jesus tells us, “Remember the word that I said to you, 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you.” 2 Timothy 3:12, “Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.” Philippians 1:29, “For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake.”

There are a number of important qualities that come from suffering for Christ. One is that it purifies us of the stench of the world and like myrrh brings forth a sweet fragrance of Jesus Christ. I know to the natural mind this is an absurdity but it is God’s way. Trials and suffering cause Christ to be seen in His followers.

Suffering also separates the counterfeit from the genuine. There are aspects in the Christian’s life that do not reflect Jesus Christ and must be removed if the life of Jesus is going to shine through our life and suffering accomplishes this.

Many Christians around the world know first hand what suffering for Christ is. I have had the privilege to meet many as I travel around the world ministering to the suffering Church.

There is an erroneous idea that many Christians in America have thinking that persecution and suffering will never happen to believers in our country. I am convinced that it (persecution) is coming to a neighborhood near you soon. But only to those who are truly living for the Lord. For those who are living a compromised life you will be able to forego this but what a terrible time you will have when you stand before the Lord and have to explain why you denied His Name.

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