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THE BOOK OF REVELATION
INTRODUCTORY NOTES ON REVELATION 2
October 13, 2021

YOUR CHURCH CAN CHANGE THE WORLD

“Does God care about your church? If you are tempted to doubt it, look more closely at these seven letters. The Lord of the universe knew each church and its precise situation. Jesus told John to write about specific people, places, and events. He praised believers for their successes and told them how to correct their failures. Just as Jesus cared for each of these churches, he cares for yours. He wants it to reach its greatest potential. The group of believers with whom you worship and serve is God’s vehicle for changing the world. Take it seriously – God does.”

(Life Application Bible Commentary)

THE MESSAGES TO THE SEVEN CHAPTERS, 2:1-3:22

The Church of Smyrna

CHRIST COMMENDS THE CHURCH OF SMYNA FOR ENDURING TRIBULATION AND ENCOURAGES IT TO CONTINUE TO BE FAITHFUL IN ANTICIPATION OF IMMINENT, MORE SEVERE PERSECUTION, IN ORDER TO INHERIT ETERNAL LIFE AND HEAVENLY KINGSHIP (2:8-11)

(G.K., Beale, The Book of Revelation)

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OUT OF SUFFERING

“John predicted that the church in Smyrna would be persecuted (2:10). Pain is part of life, but it is never easy to suffer, regardless of the reason. Jesus commended the church at Smyrna for its faith in suffering. He then encouraged the believers that they did not need to fear the future – if they remained faithful. Don’t let difficult times turn you away from God. Remember that when you suffer, Christ

suffers with you because you belong to him (Philippians 3:10). Allow your suffering to draw you toward greater faithfulness. Trust God and remember your heavenly reward (see also 22:12-14). Out of suffering will come the crown of life."

(Life Application Bible Commentary)

Smyrna is the only city that has continued to the present day, having the modern name Izmir. Another harbor city with a thriving export trade thirty-five miles north of Ephesus, it was renowned for its beauty and its civic pride, calling itself "the first in Asia" as well as the birthplace of Homer (disputed by other cities). It maintained an excellent relationship with Rome and was one of four cities (with Ephesus, Pergamum, and Sardis) to host the provincial assembly. Because of its long loyalty to Rome, it beat out ten other cities for the privilege of building a temple to the emperor Tiberias. In succeeding decades, it became a center of the imperial cult. Its architecture made it one of the most pleasing cities in Asia: famous temples (the temple of Zeus and Cybele were connected by a mall that was the envy of the ancient world), a group of buildings called "the crown of Smyrna," an acropolis on Mount Pagos, and a beautiful roadway called "the Street of Gold."

It had a large Jewish population that virulently opposed Christians. This may have been occasioned by the destruction of the temple and consequent anti-Jewish feeling in the Roman Empire. Christianity thus became a double threat, not only religious but political. It is common to theorize that the edict under Domitian demanding emperor worship made it easy to persecute Christians, and that the Jews were active in denouncing Christians to the authorities, possible to deflect attention from themselves. Rome had given the Jews the right to practice their religion, and they did not want this precious privilege threatened. In addition, in the 80s Judaism had excommunicated the Christian "heretics" from their synagogues, and they wanted nothing to do with them. In A.D. 155 the famous bishop of Smyrna, Polycarp, was burned alive for refusing to call Caesar "Lord" during an extensive persecution instigated by the Jews. The Smyrna church itself had been founded either by some returning Jewish traveler present at Pentecost or (more likely) during the Pauline mission of Acts 19.

(Grant R. Osbourne, Revelation)

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Revelation 2:8-11

2:8: And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write:

Καὶ τῷ ἀγγέλῳ τῆς ἐν Σμύρνῃ ἐκκλησίας γράψον·

These things says **the first and the last**, who **became dead and came alive**.

Τάδε λέγει ὁ πρῶτος καὶ ὁ ἔσχατος, ὃς ἐγένετο νεκρὸς καὶ ἔζησεν·

2:9: I know your tribulation and poverty,

οἶδά σου τὴν θλίψιν καὶ τὴν πτωχείαν,

but **you are rich**, and the blasphemy

ἀλλὰ πλούσιος εἶ, καὶ τὴν βλασφημίαν

of the ones saying [that] they themselves are Jews

ἐκ τῶν λεγόντων Ἰουδαίους εἶναι ἑαυτοὺς

and they are not but [are] a synagogue of Satan.

καὶ οὐκ εἰσὶν ἀλλὰ συναγωγὴ τοῦ σατανᾶ.

2:10: **Do not fear** what you are about to suffer.

μηδὲν φοβοῦ ἃ μέλλεις πάσχειν.

Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison

ἰδοὺ μέλλει βάλλειν ὁ διάβολος ἐξ ὑμῶν εἰς φυλακὴν

in order that **you might be tested** and you will have tribulation ten days.

ἵνα πειρασθῆτε καὶ ἔξετε θλίψιν ἡμερῶν δέκα.

Be faithful until death, and **I will give to you the crown of life**.

γίνου πιστὸς ἄχρι θανάτου, καὶ δώσω σοι τὸν στέφανον τῆς ζωῆς.

2:11: The one having ears, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches!

Ὁ ἔχων οὖς ἀκουσάτω τί τὸ πνεῦμα λέγει ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις.

The one overcoming will never ever be hurt by the second death.

Ο νικῶν οὐ μὴ ἀδικηθῆ ἕκ τοῦ θανάτου τοῦ δευτέρου.

The Meaning of Suffering

Mark 10:29-30 (**Reward**)

Philippians 3:10 (**Paul's Example**)

1 Peter 4:1-19 (12-19) (**Suffering and Discipline**)

Hebrews 12:4-11; 1 Peter 1:6-7 (**Discipline and Holiness**)

Psalms 46:1-11 (1-3) (**Promise of Victory**)

"Lectio Divina"

Divine Reading

Reflect: Can you think of a time when you suffered for your testimony of God's work in your life? When have you lost a position or a relationship due to your serious commitment to Jesus Christ as Lord? Have you ever suffered for doing the right thing?

Pray: Dear Lord, I count it an honor to suffer for your sake. I am blessed, Dear Lord, when the enemies of truth and faith oppose me or the work you are doing through my life, because I am united with the sufferings of Christ. Give me strength to be faithful to your Word and your way. Amen

Act: I will search the Bible and find examples of those who have suffered for the Lord and have overcome. I will research the historical records and read about people who have paid the price for discipleship and working for good in the world. And then meditate on the meaning of sacrificial love.

Resources for this study:

Life Application Bible Commentary

Revelation, Grant R. Osborne

Reading Revelation, C. Marvin Pate

Revelation, N.T. Wright

Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament: Revelation, Buist M. Fanning

Revelation, Mitchell G. Reddish