

STUDY & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR

JUNE 14, 2020

REVELATION 2:8-11 (NASB)

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

The first and the last, who was dead, and has come to life, says this:

⁹‘I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich), and the blasphemy by those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. ¹⁰Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, so that you will be tested, and you will have tribulation for ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life. ¹¹He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes will not be hurt by the second death.’

STUDY IT

- What is the difference in how Jesus describes and introduces himself to the churches in Ephesus and Smyrna? (vs.1,8)
- What do *tribulation* and *poverty* tell us about this early church community? How might those realities affect their faith? (v.9)
- How can some be both poor *and* rich? (v.9)
- What is the false teaching being rebuked?
 - What is a synagogue of Satan? (v.9, also 3:9)
 - We’ll spend more time on “Satan” in the next letter, but for now – what are the meanings and synonyms you currently have about this person/concept?
 - What might be so blasphemous and unhealthy about pretending to be Jewish?
- In verse 10, what are the two commands to the church? How do these two commands provide God’s vision for his people?
- Why do people fear suffering? How might it be possible to experience freedom from this fear? (v.10)

- Who is to blame for the imprisonment that is to come? Why is it important to recognize our spiritual battle – and not just our physical one? (See Ephesians 6:12)
- Does Jesus promise deliverance from this suffering? Why do you think that is? (v.11)
- What is the promise regarding any physical death?
 - How should this encourage God’s people?
 - What is the promise’s connection to Jesus’ declaration about himself? (vs.8 & 11)

APPLY IT

- What lessons does death teach us who are in Christ?
- What does it mean to you that God cares about (and is angered by) false teachings in our church community?
- Where have you experienced helpful correction in your beliefs about God?
- How is being a follower of Christ *dangerous* for you? If it’s not, *should it be*?
- How do you learn about and pray for those who are suffering in their faith across the world?

WORDLIST

Synagogue - a gathering of the Jewish community in worship or dialogue. By the time John wrote this, Christian communities and gatherings were mostly identified by another term, *ecclesia*. Therefore, the Lord articulates a strict delineation between the Christians and Christian-persecuting Jews.

Satan – A metaphorical enemy (“adversary” from Hebrew) or a specific spiritual force, such as the devil (ie. the fallen angel of light in Luke 10:18). Jesus holds nothing back in identifying the true enemy of the Church is not people (Rome), but evil itself.