

Study Four – Revelation 2:8-11

8 "To the angel of the church in Smyrna write: These are the words of him who is the First and the Last, who died and came to life again.

Jesus closely identifies with His death and resurrection. It seems to be His "calling card" and the credentials that most qualify Him to speak to the Church and that require the Church to pay attention.

It states in Acts 26:33, **"And so, having obtained help from God, I stand to this day testifying both to small and great, stating nothing but what the Prophets and Moses said was going to take place; that the Christ was to suffer, {and} that by reason of {His} resurrection from the dead He should be the first to proclaim light both to the {Jewish} people and to the Gentiles" (NAS).**

We don't know anything about the church in Smyrna. This is its only mention in the New Testament.

What are some of the important points to consider about the resurrection?

1. Jesus was truly dead. He didn't appear to be dead or faint, as some throughout history have maintained. He died!
2. Jesus died in faith that the Father would raise Him up. **"Brothers, I can tell you confidently that the patriarch David died and was buried, and his tomb is here to this day. But he was a prophet and knew that God had promised him on oath that he would place one of his descendants on his throne. Seeing what was ahead, he spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to the grave, nor did his body see decay. God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact (Acts 2:29-32 NIV).**
3. Jesus' resurrection is proof that we too will attain to resurrection life. The Father did not raise Jesus because Jesus was God; He raised Him to prove that He could do it so that our faith would rest in Him. Jesus said, **"I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies" (John 11:25NIV)**
4. The Holy Spirit has been given as a down payment that we will indeed be raised from the dead. **"Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear" (Acts 2:33 NIV).**

5. When Jesus was raised, He had a glorified body, but it was still flesh. He could eat, travel, pass through closed doors, and speak. He had memory of what had happened to Him prior to His death and His body bore the scars of His crucifixion. That is an indication of what we will be like in the next age. **“So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. So it is written: “The first man Adam became a living being”; the last Adam, a life-giving spirit. The spiritual did not come first, but the natural, and after that the spiritual” (1 Corinthians 15:42-46 NIV).**

6. When Jesus ascended to heaven, He went with this glorified flesh. Therefore heaven is a place that can contain, not just spirits, but resurrected bodies! That means that hell can handle flesh as well.

9 I know your afflictions and your poverty-- yet you are rich! I know the slander of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan.

Jesus knows whatever you are going through. I would rather be in trouble on earth than with Him who lives in heaven! They were poor, but Jesus considered them rich.

Jesus always kept His expectations in the Father and not in men. It was said of Him, **“But Jesus would not entrust himself to them, for he knew all men. He did not need man's testimony about man, for he knew what was in a man (John 2:24-25 NIV).**

Jesus knows what is said about you. Just because people calls themselves Jews or Christians doesn't mean they are in reality. They will be known by their fruit and so will you. That is why you are tested, so your fruit can be evident to all, including principalities and powers.

There must have been a synagogue where these deceived people met. Imagine that there are Satanic churches and synagogues! These aren't necessarily known by their doctrine, but by their fruit (or lack of it!).

10 Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test you, and you will suffer persecution for ten days. Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life.

Uh oh. If Jesus tells you not to be afraid, then something is coming that is going to tempt you to fear. See how often the Lord gave that admonition to

His people (see Is 35:4, Is 41:10, Is 41:13, Is 43:1, Luke 12:32, John 14:27, Rev 1:17).

ASSIGNMENT: What are you afraid of? Write out the worst that can happen in the area of your fear. Face it, ask God to help you with it and then tear it up. Don't hide from fear, but rather face it!

Jesus did not relieve them of their suffering, but warned them it was coming.

Paul wrote this prayer, **“I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me” (Philippians 3:10-12 NIV)**. This is a good prayer and goal for you and me as well.

The devil is active in Revelation and in the Church. Do not underestimate his will or power. Even though these saints faithfully followed Jesus, they weren't immune from the persecution and even death that was part of following Jesus. We have a powerful enemy, but praise God our Protector is stronger than the devil!

Their persecution was for 10 days. Every trial has its end. The deeper the trial, the greater the joy at its conclusion.

James wrote, **“Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him” (James 1:12 NIV)**.

They were going to be tested. Testing doesn't mean that they were given an exam, like in school. They were to be tested in the sense that metal is tested. It was submitted to fire and heat so its purity (or lack of it) could be shown.

“Then the LORD said to Moses, **“I will rain down bread from heaven for you. The people are to go out each day and gather enough for that day. In this way I will test them and see whether they will follow my instructions” (Exodus 16:4 NIV)**. God will test you to see if you will follow His voice and instructions, to show you where you are in reality. God can even use a blessing to test you.

When God tests you, He is often proving the reality and worth of what He has put in you. Think of it. There may be a trial you are going through now that would have overwhelmed you a few years ago. But now you are patiently enduring and even experiencing victory over anxiety and fear. All around

you, including those in the unseen world, are able to see the good work of God in your heart and life.

In the end, God is trying to bless you through every test, as hard as that may be to receive. **“He gave you manna to eat in the desert, something your fathers had never known, to humble and to test you so that in the end it might go well with you” (Deuteronomy 8:16 NIV).**

Jesus urges them to be faithful in the midst of trial, even if it means death. But He promises them a crown of life if that happens. That requires faith, but it is the same faith that Jesus had when He died.

Remember that these words are coming from someone who understood death and resurrection. That is why He identified Himself as He did in verse 8. You can trust the words of someone who has been through what you are about to go through.

11 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes will not be hurt at all by the second death.

“He who has an ear.” Well, we all have ears, but what does this mean? It means that we have a choice to listen or ignore what Jesus is saying. What is Jesus saying to you?

Jesus constantly warned his disciples to listen carefully. (see Mark 4:9 and 4:23; Luke 8:8 and 14:35). Also consider **Luke 8:18, “Therefore consider carefully how you listen. Whoever has will be given more; whoever does not have, even what he thinks he has will be taken from him”(NIV).**

ASSIGNMENT: How diligently have you listened to the Lord? Do you have any prophetic words that you are not acting on? How is your journal coming along that we mentioned in Study One? What means do you have to keep what the Lord is saying in front of you? In prayer, do you only talk, or do you listen?

The first death is our physical death. The second death is the judgment of where we will spend eternity.