

THE TESTIMONY OF JESUS IN THE BOOK OF REVELATION

by
William D. Barrick

The Bereans Adult Bible Fellowship
Placerita Baptist Church
2011

Mission Statement

This study of the Book of Revelation gives special attention to the testimony it provides concerning our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. “The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy” (Rev 19:10; cp. 1:2), leading us to worship and serve Him in everything.

- I. What you have seen (Rev 1).
- II. What is now (Rev 2–3)—the seven churches of Asia Minor.
 - A. Ephesus (2:1–7)
 - B. Smyrna (2:8–11)

One of Alexander the Great’s generals, Lysimachus, rebuilt Smyrna in the 3rd century B.C. The city later became a Roman commercial center with a port on the Aegean Sea. The city grew to nearly 100,000 by the lifetimes of the apostles Paul and John. A population of apostate Jews living in Smyrna persecuted its Christian inhabitants.

Smyrna was the city of life in John’s day. It was known as “the beauty of Asia.” Today Izmir (its modern name) still exudes joy, life, and brightness as Turkey’s third largest city. It is the only one of the seven churches still prospering. A large portion of its population professes Christianity.

1. Characterization of Christ (v. 8)

- He is the first and the last, the beginning and the end—He is Creator, Redeemer, and Completer of the work of God. He is sovereign over all history past, present, and future.
- He is the victor over death—the first to be resurrected.

2. Commendation from Christ (v. 9)

- He commends the church at Smyrna for its faithfulness during persecution by some Jews who are tools of Satan (cp. John 8:31–47).
- He commends the church at Smyrna for being spiritually rich, even though they are materially impoverished.

3. Complaint by Christ

- He has no complaint about the church at Smyrna.

4. Counsel from Christ (v. 10)

- He counsels the church at Smyrna to not fear the suffering that they are about to experience.

Barrick, The Testimony of Jesus in the Book of Revelation

- He counsels the church at Smyrna to remain faithful through the testing which will occur by means of persecution.

Note: Roman imprisonment of Christians frequently became a prelude to their execution. Christ encourages the believers to be faithful even unto death. John's own disciple, Polycarp, became a martyr at Smyrna in A.D. 155. He refused to blaspheme the Lord's name, so his persecutors burned him alive.

5. Caution by Christ (v. 10)

- He warns the church at Smyrna that they will experience suffering for ten days.

6. Commitment of Christ (vv. 10, 11)

- The faithful at Smyrna will receive the crown of life (see James 1:12).
- The overcomers at Smyrna will not be harmed by the second death.

7. Practical Implications

- Believers need to prepare themselves for immediate persecution.
- Persecution can be the result of engaging Satan and his forces in spiritual combat.

Questions for Discussion

- a. What "riches" does _____ possess in Christ?
- b. How can _____ prepare for suffering or persecution?
- c. Why would Christ have no complaint about _____?