

STEDFAST IN PERSECUTION**Revelation 2:8-11****Introduction:**

- A. It seems good to keep abreast of the historical lessons in the history of the Church Age as well as the practical lessons.**
- B. The letter to the church at Ephesus represented the first period of this age – the time when the church forsook her first love and her first work. The Lord called her back to these and evidently she repented and returned with vigor which brought about the conditions named in this letter.**
- C. The letter to the church at Smyrna represents the second period of the Church Age and seems to cover the years of 96 a.d. to 305 a.d., the time of the ten Roman emperors beginning with Nero and ending with Dyokleeshun. According to most authorities in Church History, all ten of these emperors persecuted the churches of the Lord Jesus Christ.**
- D. This severe persecution served as God’s chastisement of His churches because of their sin of forsaking their first love and first work.**
- E. This persecution brought about the rekindling of the first love of the churches and a return to their first work – spreading the saving gospel of Jesus Christ.**
- F. Church historians declare this time to be one of very rapid growth. Some wrote, “the martyr's blood was the seed of the church.” The growth of the Lord’s churches was so rapid and firm that Rome stopped persecuting them and in a sense joined the church. This condition will be addressed in the next lesson.**
- G. One thing the churches did not do was to purge themselves from the deeds of the Nicolaitans. This problem will also be addressed later when studying the letters to the next two churches.**
- H. According to church historians, Polycarp was the pastor of the Smyrna Church. He along with other church members he suffered martyrdom. Before being burned to death, he was asked to blaspheme God. He answered, “Eighty-six years have I served him, during all which time he never did me injury; how then can I blaspheme my King and my Saviour?” When further urged, his answer was “I am a Christian.” When threatened with wild beast, he said, “Bring them forth.” When threatened with fire, he reminded them of the eternal fire that awaited the ungodly.**

Then his last address to God had more praise in it than prayer.

I. LEARN THAT THE WORD KNOW HOLDS A DEEPER MEANING THAN JUST HAVING HEAD KNOWLEDGE.

- A. Jesus said “I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty—“**
- B. The members of the Smyrna church and other true churches were suffering tribulation and poverty; BUT so had Jesus suffered likewise.**
- C. These were tortured unto death; BUT so had Jesus suffered the same. He knew firsthand what they were going through.**
- D. We in our time can know for sure that our Lord knows the pain and sorrow His people are sometimes called on to bear. He know what our church brethren in Kenya, Solomon Islands and other nations are now enduring physical pain and suffering, some to death.**

II. LEARN THAT A CHURCH CAN CONTINUE WITHIN THE

WILL OF GOD UNDER VERY DIFFICULT AND TRYING CIRCUMSTANCES.

- A. Neither poverty, nor suffering nor tribulation can separate a person or a church from the Lord.**
- B. Neither can any of these prohibit God's churches and church members from loving the Lord and doing the work He calls us to do for Him.**
- C. Harsh treatment under difficult circumstances really draws the true people of God to a more ardent and active love for our Lord.**

III. LEARN THAT ALL WHO CLAIM TO BE OF GOD ARE NOT.

- A. John speaks of "those who claim to be Jews and are not."**
- B. John speaks of spiritual Jews as did the Apostle Paul in Romans 2:28, 29.**
- C. A public profession of faith and even baptism does not make a person a spiritual Jew. "Ye must be born again" to be saved and be in truth a spiritual Jew.**
- D. John charges these with blasphemy and declares that they are the synagogue of Satan. They may have been physical Jews who were persecuting church people – the kind that gave Jesus so much trouble whom He declared them to be of their father the devil. (John 8:44)**

IV. LEARN THAT MOST CHRISTIAN SUFFERING HAS BEEN BY ORGANIZED RELIGIONS USED BY THE DEVIL.

- A. Verse 9 speaks of the false spiritual Jews being of the synagogue of Satan and verse 10 speaks of the devil casting some of you into prison.**
- B. Church historians clearly place the blame on the Roman Catholic Church for the most of the persecution on the Lord's church during the first thousand years following the Lord's return to the right hand of the Father in heaven.**
- C. "Ye shall have tribulation ten days" seems to refer to the suffering of the Lord's churches under the reign of the ten Roman Emperors already referred to in the introduction.**
- D. Later persecution against the Lord's true churches came from the Church of England, the Lutheran and the Presbyterian in the old world and in the new. Those who doubt this should read church history books written by members of the religions named.**
- E. Brethren, persecution will come on the Lord's churches; in fact it has already come in places as before noted. It is and shall be the work of organized religions.**

V. LEARN THAT TRUE RICHES ARE NOT COUNTED IN PHYSICAL THINGS.

- A. In verse 9, the Lord spoke of the poverty of this church and then added in parentheses "but thou art rich."**
- B. Both people and churches can live in poverty and yet be rich in what really counts. Also, people and churches can live in riches and be poor unto God.**
- C. This truth will be address extensively in the last letter to the churches.**
- D. This in no way teaches that all people and churches existing in poverty are rich unto God; neither does it teach that all people and churches having riches are poor toward God.**
- E. It does that regardless of one's station in life, God and His cause should take first place in our lives.**

VI. LEARN THAT PROSPECTS FOR SUFFERING AND DEATH

SHOULD BE FACED WITHOUT FEAR.

- A. Verse 10 reveals the Lord commanding those making up the true churches “fear none of those things which thou shall suffer.”**
- B. During His earthly ministry, Jesus had said to His church people, “fear not those who can kill the body, but fear Him who can destroy the body and the soul in hell.”**
- C. Why should we be surprised when persecutions and hard times come upon God’s true people on earth?**
- D. Paul wrote, “He that would live godly shall suffer persecution.”**

CONCLUSION:

- A. Encouragements for godly living in the face of trials and troubles should encourage us.**
- B. Jesus has promised in verse 10, “Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.”**
- C. He also promised in verse 11, “He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.**
- D. He calls on each of us to “hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.”**