

### Revelation 2 Part 3

This is Richard Oliver, with part six of our study into the book of Revelation. We're in Revelation chapter two and we're going to start at verse eight.

*'And unto the angel of the church in Smyrna write; These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive;'*

Now God Himself, of course, claims to be the first and the last. He claims to be the Alpha and the Omega. The beginning and the end. But here, once again we have confirmation that Jesus is God. For He says 'I am the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive.' Now the eternal God has never been dead, but Jesus Christ has. This is God in human form.

The letter once again is addressed to the angel. The angel of the first church Ephesus was St Paul. He actually was the pastor of the church of Ephesus for about three years, but his teachings etcetera set the pattern for the church and the warning of course that they should not leave their first love.

But this is to Smyrna, and the name Smyrna comes from myrrh, it's an embalming fragrance used for the dead, and it is an indication that this church is dying.

The angel of the church of Smyrna was Irenaeus.

The two vines, there are always two vines. Two lives. There was Cain and Abel. There was Esau and Jacob. There's always been two lines of everything. And the church is no different, there are two vines, the false and the true.

In verse nine it says *'I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan.'*

There are false people once again. The true vine, the false vine. The false, of course, included the Nicolaitans, the group that want to make the clergy something over and above and in control of the laity, the people. This group has grown stronger as time goes on. Of course it seems very logical to organise the church by placing leaders over the people, and let's face it, quite a lot of people much prefer things, they don't want to stand up with Christ on their own. They want a group to be with, and someone to lead them.

And of course this is another example of First Samuel eight where the people decide that they don't want leadership just from Samuel or from his sons etcetera, they want to look like the other nations, they want to be organised and have a king. God told Samuel that they hadn't rejected him but they had rejected the leadership of God. And here of course in the church is exactly what we're facing again. The church, by organising and having men controlling them, making decisions, is taking away the leadership of the Holy Ghost. Once again, people have rejected God.

In God's church it was the Holy Spirit that was to lead each member. But of course that can be scary. Especially for the person who's very nervous and doesn't want to stand on their own. So it seems logical to set in order managers, senior managers and so on. In fact, organise things exactly as a business or the world would organise things. And of course we'd have to rename those levels of management into pastors, or priests, vicars, bishops, archbishops, and so on.

Now, these Jews who claim to be Jews, claim to be one up on the average Christian were part of the false vine, the false church. They were causing a lot of trouble. Jews, of course, had had a time when they were carried away into Babylon, they left Jerusalem as people of the Word of God were the

temple were the worship, they came back as people with a Talmud, a list of rules and regulations, and they had the synagogues. Now, this word 'synagogue' means 'gathering place', where people gather together. But the word 'church' means 'called out'. These were people originally called out by God from Egypt, called out from the world, but they had finished up just having gathering places. And I'm afraid that the church was heading in the same direction as the Jews had.

The false vine, the Jews, were creating a different structure to the church. Such a structure with the clergy and the laity separate, with the Jews and the general people separate, will tend to cause bitterness, and of course that's what myrrh does. Myrrh is a bitter fragrance, and it indicates, as I say, the dying church. It's Cain and Abel all over again, because when you've got bitterness you've got hate, and hate can bring death.

*Verse ten, 'Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.'*

The ten days here refer to the time the end of the church age, from 150 to 312, of the emperor Diocletian. He was the cruellest and most vicious of all, and for ten years he persecuted the church. The church suffered. This church really suffered. But suffering brings character.

*Verse eleven, 'He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.'*

In other words there were people from this age, as in all ages, who were to be part of the Bride of Christ, and they will rise, never to be judged again.

God bless you.