

The Letter to Smyrna. Revelation 2:8-11

Jesus describes Himself as the first and the last. We know that Jesus preceded creation of Earth, Heaven, angels etc. He was the first but what does He mean by the last? I think maybe a better description would be joint last; joint with you and I, aka eternity.

This church was situated in an impoverished area with lots of poverty and church members themselves were struggling to make ends meet. Add to that, the church was experiencing local hostility from the synagogue and yet they still managed to do God's work. When things get tough our natural instinct is to batten down the hatches and keep our heads down. Jesus describes them as financially poor but with Godly riches.

Jesus has stinging criticism of the local synagogue, calling its members blasphemous non-Jews and titling the synagogue, the Synagogue of Satan. There are Jews that Paul describes in Romans 2:28. Then there's a warning that things are going to get worse before they get better, some will be put in prison, the rest will be tested and will suffer tribulation. Jesus then says don't worry. Can you imagine getting told, life's tough, it's going to get a lot tougher, you're going to prison, but don't worry! That's going to take a lot of faith. But if you truly believe that God is all powerful, loves you dearly and deeply cares about you then logically you have no grounds to worry, He will get you through and provide. Romans 8:28. That's the theory, what's it like in practice? That's the test of faith; if you're up all night worrying about what's going to happen such as redundancy, house repossession, kids in trouble with the police, then is that a lack of faith? And yet Jesus was worried about what was going to happen when He was in the Garden of Gethsemane Luke 22:39-46.

Thankfully this tribulation was time limited, 10 days. They are encouraged to see it through, persevere and don't give in. This is a lesson for the post rapture believers left behind. The tribulation is time limited, 7 years. Don't give in, you might even be martyred but see it through to the end and you will be rewarded; you'll avoid the second death Revelation 21:8 and instead receive the crown of life.

Positives -

Financially poor but spirituality minted.

Working for God despite tribulation.

Jesus was sufficiently confident in their faith to give a warning of bumps in the road ahead knowing that that wouldn't cause a panic.

Negatives.

None.

Lessons for us.

The UK economy is at best, flat-lining, inflation is still high, particularly food and heat, incomes are being squeezed, taxes are going up, things are looking grim, more so if you watch the news and especially if you're already struggling to make ends meet. Do you panic or do you trust?

Smyrna is now called Izmir. There's a small Christian community of up to five hundred believers scattered among at least twelve churches. Although many of these churches are historically Catholic or Orthodox, there is a growing number of evangelical Protestant believers as well.

<https://www.imb.org/2018/06/01/what-happened-to-the-seven-churches-of-revelation/>