

Revelation

Jesus Knows Where We Are and Where We're Headed

Revelation 2:8-11

Grace Fellowship Church / Pastor Brad Bigney / May 3, 2026

I. Jesus Knows What We're Facing

Seven times for 7 different churches our Savior says "I know." Those two words are so helpful. Even before He unpacks what He knows, the fact that He knows is a huge comfort.

As human beings, some of our greatest angst and deepest sorrow is how we feel like no one gets it or knows what we're going through. He does! Not just sometimes, but always, in every situation, with every child of God.

Revelation 2:9 "I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich) and the slander of those who say they are Jews and are not..."

That one verse captures three things that we still face today - social pressure to conform, financial cost if you don't, and unfair verbal assaults that are nothing less than slanderous.

A. The Crushing Social Pressure to Conform

They had it then, and we still have it today because that word "tribulation" in **v. 9** was a Greek word that indicated a type of "crushing pressure."

Rome was an interconnected social network from the emperor, to the local rulers, to the economy, military, temples, and gods. You were expected to participate, fit in, and go along with what everyone was doing. Christians were tempted to accommodate themselves to the Roman way of life.

"Never underestimate the power of the environment you work in to gradually transform who you are. When you choose to work at a certain company, you are turning yourself into the sort of person who works in that company. That's great if the culture of McKinsey or General Mills satisfies your very soul. But if it doesn't, there will be some little piece of yourself that will go unfed...The 'How do I succeed?' questions quickly eclipse the 'Why am I doing this?' questions...It's fascinating how easy it is to simply let drop those spiritual questions that used to plague you...to streamline yourself into a professional person."

- David Brooks, *The Second Mountain*

B. The Financial Cost of Refusing to Compromise

He says, "I know your poverty..." but there was absolutely no reason for them to be poor because this was a stunning and wealthy place to live. It's where people went to experience the good life.

Christians were ostracized and boycotted. Some of their shops were confiscated and their homes had been ransacked.

Revelation 2:9 "I know...your poverty (but you are rich)..."

He's reminding them that even if we face economic hardship, we have riches outside of this world that cannot be taken or shaken. The things of this world pale in comparison to the inheritance of spiritual riches that we have!

C. The Unfair Verbal Assaults that Keep Coming Our Way

As Christianity grew, things only got worse as wild rumors and conspiracies were constantly swirling around the empire about Christians who became the favorite scapegoat for every problem in their culture.

The most frequent accusations that were made against them was for incest and cannibalism because they called each other "Brother" and "Sister" and talked about the "body and blood" of Christ in the Lord's Supper. It was actually rumored the Christians murdered infants covered in flour.

Christians were called "haters of the human race." They were accused of plotting against the social order because they refused to attend gladiatorial games, theaters, and civic festivals.

When we live out loud and Christianity goes public in a pagan world, instead of being isolated and quiet, the opposition doesn't label us as "mistaken," they label us as "evil" and "dangerous."

"These [traditional Christian] views are not just old-fashioned; they are actively harmful. They contribute to a culture of shame that leads to real-world destruction of lives."

- Op-ed in *The Guardian* discussing the rise of "*Traditionalism*," March 2025

This slander is intense for Christians in the legal and medical fields when professionals are sometimes told that their faith makes them unfit for their jobs, like what took place for a cardiologist in Britain a few years ago.

"A doctor who holds these [pro-life] convictions is a danger to their patients. You cannot provide safe, evidence-based care while clinging to a destructive theological bias."

- Summary of arguments in a UK medical tribunal case (Dr. Dermot Kearney), 2022

We can't expect the world to treat us fairly and Jesus never said they would. He said He would be with us in it.

He doesn't say "I'll stop it for you." Look at what He says in **v. 10**.

Revelation 2:10 "Do not fear what you are about to suffer..."

This world doesn't have the last word on what matters most. Jesus does! Look at the title He gives Himself in **v. 8**.

Revelation 2:8 "...the words of the First and the Last, who died and came to life."

Jesus had the first word when He spoke this world into existence and He's going to have the last word when He declares us forgiven and the wicked condemned.

II. Jesus Knows Why It's All Happening

That's why He stops talking about the Jews, Romans, or any Emperor that has it in for them and starts talking about the devil!

Revelation 2:10 "Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison..."

Right here's an example of what Revelation's all about! An unveiling of what Jesus wants us to see that you don't see with your naked eye that does not get reported in the news.

Revelation's not all about something new. It's a review of what He's already told us in God's Word that Satan is the ultimate person behind all human, wicked rulers.

Ephesians 6:12 "For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places."

See **Revelation 12:7-9, 17**.

Satan hates Jesus, and so he hates His Bride – us – because Jesus intends to use us to change this world.

III. Jesus Is in Control of Where It's All Headed

A. He's Sovereign Over Our Suffering

Revelation 2:10 "...Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and for ten days you will have tribulation..."

Satan is out to destroy you, but Jesus wants to refine you. He's in control of how long it will last because spiritual forces of evil exist by permission of God and are limited by God.

B. He Solved Our Biggest Problem

Revelation 2:11 "...The one who conquers will not be hurt by the second death."

He's talking about hell or the lake of fire that is far worse than physical death or any amount of pain leading up to it.

When you put your trust in Him and His death on the cross for you, you'll never experience the horror of this second death in hell.

Every human being's going to die, but not every human being's going to experience the eternal and horrible second death of hell. That depends on what you do with the free offer of Jesus as your Savior!

See **Revelation 20:11-15**.