

## 4 – WHAT IS NOW – PART 2 (REVELATION 2:8-17)

### Review:

A. The key verse (1:19)

- The key to understanding the book is found in Revelation 1:19

B. A basic outline

1. What You Have Seen (Chapter 1)
2. What is Now (Chapters 2-3)
3. What will take place later (Chapters 4-22)

I. The Letter to the Church of Smyrna (Revelation 2:8-11)



A. The Recipient (2:8a)

- Christ addressed the pastor of the church in Smyrna.

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## **Historical Note:** Smyrna

Smyrna was an ancient Greek city. It was a seaport city and very wealthy. As one of the principal cities of the Roman Province Asia in Asia Minor, Smyrna competed with Ephesus and Pergamos for the title "First City of Asia." As of 195 BC, the city of Rome started to be deified in Smyrna, in the cult to the goddess Roma. In this sense, the city can be considered as the creators of the goddess Roma. This cult eventually became widespread through the whole Roman Empire. Smyrna was also noted for emperor worship. Refusal to worship the emperor brought martyrdom to some Christians.

See: Revelation 1:11; 2:8

## B. The Author (2:8b)

### 1. First and Last

- Christ proclaims himself as the eternal one who has always existed.

### 2. Who was dead and came to life

- Christ proclaims himself as the resurrected one.
- Christ has experience death and defeated it with His resurrection.

## C. Commendation (2:9)

### 1. Christ's Knowledge of the church (2:9a)

- Christ has an intimate knowledge of the church.

### 2. Christ commends them (2:9b-d)

#### a. Tribulation

- Christ knows that they are suffering extreme persecution.

#### b. Poverty

- Christ knows that they are living in extreme poverty.
- Christ reminds them that they are rich in spite of their present condition.

#### c. The Blasphemy

- Christ knows that they are suffering at the hands of religionists.

## **Biblical Note:** Jews and are Not

The phrase "Jews and are not" refers to people of Jewish descent who claimed to be descendants of Abraham but are not truly God's people. This is because they have rejected Jesus Christ as their Messiah.

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See: Romans 9:6

## **Cultural Note:** Synagogue

A Jewish institution was a place of assembly for the reading and exposition of the Torah or Hebrew scriptures. It possibly originated during the Babylonian exile. It is believed that the synagogue emerged out of the spontaneous gatherings of Jewish people in the lands of their exile, where they met on the Sabbath and on special feast days. From about the second century B.C., the Pharisees assumed the leading role in the synagogues. By the time of Jesus and his disciples, the synagogue was firmly established among the Jews. Synagogues were found everywhere in the Hellenistic world.

See: Matthew 6:2,5, 9:35, 10:17, 12:9, 13:54, 23:6,34; Mark 1:21,23,29,39, 3:1, 5:22,36,38, 6:2, 12:39, 13:9; Luke 4:15,16,20,28,33,38,44, 6:6, 7:5, 8:41, 11:43, 12:11, 13:10,14, 20:46, 21:12; John 6:59, 12:42, 16:2, 18:20; Acts 6:9, 9:2,20, 13:5,14,15,42, 14:1, 15:21, 17:1,10,17, 18:4,7,8,17,19,26, 19:8, 22:19, 24:12, 26:11; Revelation 2:9, 3:9

## **Biblical Note:** Synagogue of Satan

The synagogue of Satan refers to the local Jewish synagogue. Because they had rejected Jesus Christ as the Messiah, they were serving Satan's purpose when they gathered to worship God. They hated and persecuted God's true people, the Christians.

See: Revelation 2:9; 3:9

### D. Rebuke

- Notably is the fact that Christ did not rebuke them.

### E. Exhortation (2:10)

#### 1. Do not fear

- Christ encourages them to have courage.

#### 2. The prediction

- Christ tells them that their suffering is only for a certain period of time.

## **Biblical Note:** Ten Days

There are many views concerning the meaning of the phrase "10 days." Some scholars have taken these words "10 days" as a symbolic representation of the entire persecution of the church. Some scholars think it refers to 10 persecutions under Roman rulers. Most feel that the phrase "ten days" refers to an anticipated limited period of time for suffering. Whichever viewpoint is selected, the point is that the church at Sardis would only endure suffering for a certain period of time.

#### 3. Be faithful

- Christ encourages them to be faithful to the end.
- Christ promises the faithful eternal life.

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**Bible Note:** The Crown of Life

The Crown of Life is one of several crowns promised to Christians (see 1 Corinthians 9:25; 1 Thessalonians 2:19; 2 Timothy 4:6-8; 1 Peter 5:4; Revelation 4:4). The Crown of Life is the promise to faithful that what awaits them after death is eternal life.

See: James 1:12; Revelation 2:10

F. Promise (2:11)

A. The exhortation (2:11a)

- We are called to acknowledge what the Holy Spirit reveals to us.

B. No Second Death (2:11b)

- Those that persevere in their faith will not experience eternal death in Hell.

**Theological Note:** The Second Death

The Second Death refers to eternal separation from God. It is synonymous with the Lake of Fire. It is called the "second death" because it follows physical death.

See: Revelation 2:11; 20:6,15; 21:8.

II. The Letter to the Church of Pergamos (Revelation 2:12-17)

A. The Recipient (2:12a)

- Christ addressed the pastor of the church in Pergamos.

**Historical Note:** Pergamos

Pergamos was a rich and powerful ancient Greek city. It was briefly the capital of the Roman province of Asia in Asia Minor, before the capital was transferred to Ephesus. Pergamos reached the height of its greatness under Roman rule and was home to about 200,000 inhabitants. It was a wicked city. People in its pagan cults worshiped Athena, Asclepius, Dionysus, and Zeus. Pergamos was famous for its university with a library of about 200,000 volumes, and for manufacturing parchment resulting in a paper called pergamena.

B. The Author (2:12b)

1. He who has a sharp two-edged sword

- The sword is a symbolic representation of the Word of God.

- It has the ability to separate believers from the world.

- It has the ability to condemn the world for its sin.

C. Commendation (2:13)

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## 1. Christ's Knowledge of the church (2:13a)

- Christ has an intimate knowledge of the church.

## 2. Christ commends them (2:13b-d)

### a. Their difficult situation

- Christ is aware that they living where Satan was worshiped.

**Biblical Note:** Satan's Throne

Satan's Throne may refer to the great temple of Asclepius, a pagan god of healing. This pagan god was represented in the form of a serpent.

### b. They were true

- Christ knew that they remained true in spite of persecution.

### c. They suffered martyrdom

- Christ knew that some had suffered martyrdom for their faith.

**Historical Note:** Antipas

Antipas was an early Christian martyr in Pergamos. He was described as a faithful witness of Jesus Christ. Nothing is known of his martyrdom. Nothing else is known about Antipas.

## D. Rebuke (2:14-15)

### 1. The doctrine of Balaam (2:14)

- They were allowing compromise in their morality.

**Historical Note:** Balaam

Balaam was Gentile diviner. He was the son Beor from the city of Pethor on the Euphrates River. He was hired by Balak, king of Moab, to curse Israel. However, he pronounced three blessings on Israel as he was commanded to do by the Lord. Balaam was guilty of counseling King Balak to cause Israel to sin through idolatry and intermarriage with Balak's people. Balak will killed when Israel defeated the Midianites.

See: Numbers 22:5-41; 23:1-30; 24:25; 31:8,16; Deuteronomy 23:4-5; Joshua 13:22; 24:9-10; Nehemiah 13:2; Micah 6:6; 2 Peter 2:15; Jude 11; Revelation 2:14.

**Historical Note:** Barak

Balak was a king of Moab who hired Balaam to pronounce a curse upon the children of Israel. He was frightened by the news of Israel's victory over the Amorite kings, Sihon and Og. He thought that God's favor could be turned from Israel to his own nation. He heeded Balaam's advice to seduce the people of Israel with idolatry and sexual immorality.

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See: Numbers 22:1-41; 23:1-30; 24:10-25; Joshua 24:9-10; Judges 11:25; Micah 6:5; Revelation 2:14.

Scripture: Numbers 25:1-13; 31:1:16

## 2. Doctrine of the Nicolaitans (2:15)

- They were allowing compromise in their faith.

## E. Exhortation (2:16)

### 1. Repent (2:16a)

- Christ calls them to acknowledge and turn from their sin.

### 2. Fight against you (2:16b)

- Christ will judge them soon with His Word.

## F. Promise (2:17)

### 1. The exhortation (2:17a)

- We are called to acknowledge what the Holy Spirit reveals to us.

### 2. Hidden Manna (2:17b)

- You will receive the blessings and benefits of knowing Christ, the Bread of Life.

**Biblical Note:** Hidden Manna

Hidden Manna refers to spiritual nourishment that believers will receive. The hidden manna symbolizes the promises and blessings that will come with the Messiah, Jesus Christ the Living Bread.

### 3. A White Stone (2:17c)

- You will receive a “new name” and acceptance by God.

**Biblical Note:** White Stone

In Roman culture, the White Stone refers the custom of awarding white stones to the victors in athletic contests. A white stone with the athlete's name served as his ticket to the special banquet honoring the victors.