

### 5 - THE LETTER TO THE CHURCH OF SMYRNA (REVELATION 2:8-11)



#### I. Destination (Revelation 2:8)

##### A. The Recipient (Revelation 2:8a)

- Christ addressed the pastor of the church in Smyrna.

##### **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 Description of Christ (Revelation 2:8b)

##### 1. First and Last

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

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## 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.

## II. Commendation (Revelation 2:9)

### A. Christ's Knowledge of the Church (2:9a)

- Christ has an intimate knowledge of the church.

### B. Christ Commends Them (Revelation 2:9b-d)

#### 1. Tribulation

- Christ knows that they are suffering extreme persecution.

#### 2. Poverty

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

#### 3. 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.

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

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**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

### III. Rebuke

- It is notable that Christ did not rebuke them.

### IV. Exhortation (Revelation 2:10)

#### A. Do Not Fear

- Christ encourages them to have courage.

#### B. 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.

#### C. Be Faithful

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

**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

### V. Promise (Revelation 2:11)

#### A. The Exhortation (Revelation 2:11a)

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

#### B. No Second Death (Revelation 2:11b)

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- 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.