

## **PART 3: HANDOUT “Jesus’ Message to the Church in Smyrna” REV 2:8-11**

**Jesus has No censure for the Church in Smyrna instead He Reveals His Deep Compassion for These People who are Faithful to the Lord even as they Suffer Persecution.**

- The church of Smyrna It Challenges Western Perspectives, Asserting that Obedience, Faith, and the Gospel can Flourish Under Severe Suffering. **READ Rev. 2:8-11**

Jesus words to the Church in Smyrna Offer Us Great Insight into the life of a First-Century Congregation. *And...There are Many Applications for Today’s Believers.*

**VS-8** *These are the words of him who is the First and the Last, who died and came to life again.” Jesus wants them to know He is the First and Last...Because being the First and Last Implies there is Nothing that is Beyond His Control! The Believers here Needed to Hear This Truth...**And So Do We Today!***

- Rev. 22:13 Reinforces this Truth that Only Jesus Christ is the First and the Last: *I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.*

**VS-9:** Jesus Acknowledges their Trials: *“I know your afflictions and your poverty, yet you are rich! I know the slander of those who say they are Jews and are not but are a Synagogue of Satan”*

- In their Physical Poverty, Jesus says, the church of Smyrna was “RICH”; that is, they had Spiritual Wealth that No One Could Take Away. Matt 6:20 Jesus said, *“But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal.”*

### **Two Factors Made Smyrna a Hostile Environment:**

**First:** Hostility was caused from the fact that Smyrna was the center for Worship of the Emperor. Any Other Religion was Deemed “Unpatriotic”. If Christians failed to Bow to the Emperor and see him as their Savior...If they failed to declare publicly that Caesar is Lord...They were Deemed Criminals.

**Second:** A Large Jewish population resided in Smyrna, a population that became Strongly Antagonistic toward any Jews who Converted to Christianity. **John 16: 2-3**

**As for the “Identity” of the “Synagogue of Satan,” there are a Couple Views.**

**First:** This Group of Gentiles called themselves “Jews”, God’s Chosen People, did not follow Judaism, instead they Worshiped the Roman emperor and Spoke Out Against the Christians in Smyrna.

**Second:** The “Synagogue of Satan” was a physical group of Jews who Followed Tradition and the Mosaic Law, yet in reality they did know God! They were Not Jews in the Sense that they did Not have the Faith of their Father Abraham (John 8:40). They Were “of Satan” as they had Rejected Jesus Christ (John 8:44).

In Rom 2:28-29 Paul differentiates “TRUE” (spiritual) Jews from those who can only claim a physical connection to Abraham: *“A man is Not a Jew if he is only one Outwardly, nor is circumcision merely outward and physical. No, a man is a Jew If he is one Inwardly; and Circumcision is Circumcision of the Heart, by the Spirit, Not by the Written Code”*.

After Commending the Church in Smyrna for their Spiritual Victories, Jesus warned of Coming Persecution: VS 10 *“You Are About to Suffer. I tell You, the Devil will Put Some of You in Prison to TEST You, and You will Suffer Persecution for Ten days”*

Some of the Church Members Would Be Imprisoned, and this Wave of Persecution would last for Ten days. However, Jesus gives Hope to His Church: “Do not be afraid,” He says. The Smyrnaean Believers would Have the Courage to Face the Trial.

**VS 10:** Jesus Calls them to Remain Faithful in Their Suffering: *“Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the Crown of Life”*. This same “Martyr’s Crown” is mentioned in James 1:12

**VS 11:** Jesus makes a Final Promise to the Believers in Smyrna: “*He who Overcomes will Not be Hurt at All by the Second Death*”. The Overcomers, or “Conquerors,” Refer to All Believers/ **Read 1 John 5:4-5**

- “The Second Death” is a Reference to the Final Judgment of the Wicked (Rev 20 & 21)
- **KEY:** Believers will Not be Hurt “at All” by that Judgment; *Their Sin Was Judged At The Cross and, In Christ, there is NO More Condemnation. Rom 8:1-4*

**Here we see how believers fit into the conflict between God and the Devil:** Like Job, we know that God is Still in Control even amid Persecution. **Satan Operates Under God’s Divine Authority!**

Dr. Barnhouse describes how when Adam chose to eat of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, *He dropped the scepter of authority God had given him over the newly created Earth, The Devil picked it up!* Satan became the new master of the planet *However it’s an Authority Totally Under” GOD.*

- **KEY: If Affliction is Outside Pressure or Persecution...Then it is a Test of Faithfulness!**
- Credit accrues to a Church or Our Spiritual account when we faithfully endure suffering for the Lord.
- Jesus said, *Be Faithful, Even to the Point of Death, and I Will Give You Life as Your Victor’s Crown!*”

*So , how can we enjoy the safety of Jesus, Held in the Palm of his hand, while in Such A Painful Situation?*

First, *nothing traumatic happens in the life of a believer unless Jesus allows it*

- **KEY:** *If we’re in His hand, under His authority and protection, it is Impossible for Satan to harass us without Jesus permitting it...But only as far as God allows! Every Christian is Secure in Jesus Right Hand...But understand...It is a normal part of His care to test and discipline us!*
- True Character Reveals Itself Under Pressure and Pain!

Second, *A person’s or a churches existence extends beyond its present trials.*

- POINT>>No Matter what We Face on Earth...Eternity Alone Is Our Only True HOPE.

Believers have asked “Why do We Remain on the Earth after Becoming a Disciple of Jesus? “*Why doesn’t Jesus just Take Us to Be With Him the Moment We Believe and Save All the Grief and Hardship?*”

- **Answer: We’ve Been Left Here to Demonstrate to the World the Stewardships with which God Has Entrusted Us.** Stewardships of life, time, possessions, spiritual gifts and responsibilities, etc.
- We’ll give an account of faithfulness in carrying out these stewardships at Christ’s Judgment Seat.

I Cor 5:10 “*For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.*”

**The Victor’s Crown is A Validation of the Believers Faithfulness in the Midst of Trials.**

When Tested, Believer’s Hearts at the Church of Smyrna Revealed “Willing Rather Than Willful” Dispositions. They did Not Chafe at their Circumstances but Trusted the Lord in the Midst of the Most Severe Pressures. *Credit Accrues to a Church or an Individual’s Spiritual Account When they Faithfully Endure Suffering for Their Lord.*

The Mature Christian Understands that Persecution & Adversity in this life is Normal Here We See that True Faith Survives in Hostile Places...And God is Glorified!

**LIFE POINT: AS WE FAITHFULLY ENDURE EVERY TEST AND HARDSHIP GOD WILL MAKE US MORE PERFECT IN HIM AND WE WILL RECEIVE THE VICTOR’S CROWN!**