



CAPITOL COMMISSION™

Smyrna – A Persecuted Church (Rev 2:8-11)

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*Do you have a question about what God thinks? Would you care to know what God expects of you and of the church that you attend? The Son of God, Jesus Christ, appeared in all His glory to the Apostle John, dictating letters to seven typical churches. These letters appear in the Book of Revelation just prior to the detailed illustration of the end of the church age and time of judgment which ends this world! **What would be in God's letter to you if your life was soon to close?***

INTRODUCTION

The Church age is a mystery, not disclosed in the Bible until the New Testament (Romans 16:25; Galatians 1:12; Ephesians 1:17-23). God pauses His plan for the redemption of the Hebrew people until a sufficient number of others are in the Kingdom. Many from a variety of ethnic groups are being saved through the grace of God's Son, Jesus, the Christ. These are collectively called The Church (Ephesians 3:1-21). God's first letter was addressed to Ephesus: a church that was becoming cold and identified with much ritual. A second letter was addressed to Smyrna: a church that saw persecution from the world but was encouraged and received no word of condemnation from God! **Have you seen one of these churches?**

LEADERS/MEMBERS IN SMYRNA

Revelation 2:8 "To the angel of the church in Smyrna write: The first and the last, who was dead, and has come to life, says this:"

This salutation contains specifically chosen attributes of Christ meant to encourage persecuted followers in the faith. The first and the last is an Old Testament name for Yahweh, LORD (Isaiah 41:4). He came before idols and will remain after them. Jesus was dead and was resurrected to life and life eternal. Smyrna, a beautiful city off the coast of the Aegean Sea (now Izmir, Turkey), was extremely loyal to Rome in its rise to greatness. This resulted in a strong emperor-worship cult. A church leader from here (Polycarp) was burned at the stake in A.D. 155 for refusing to say, "Caesar is Lord." **How have you been persecuted for your faith?**

COMMENDATION

Revelation 2:9 "I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich), and the blasphemy by those who say they are Jews and are not; but are a synagogue of Satan."

A synagogue in Smyrna that was also a center of hostility to the church. Many of the members were Jewish in appearance but were spiritual pagans. Religious people, pagans, and emperor worshippers were an alliance used by Satan in an ongoing attempt to eliminate the Christian faith. This rejection often meant loss of work, poverty, imprisonment, even death. Those persecutors also rejected Christ, their Messiah. **What kinds of rejection have you faced?**

EXHORTATION AND PROMISE

Revelation 2:10-11 "Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, so that you will be tested, and you will have tribulation for ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes will not be hurt by the second death."

The devil is a name for "accuser." We have been pardoned! The testing is seen by God as proving! This is to receive your crown or recognition. The ten days is an illustration of completeness. It is a full, but relatively brief period, sometimes to encourage endurance (1Peter 1:6). Overcomers are ones who endure life in this world, without succumbing to Satan, the prince of this world (1John 2:12-17). The first death is only physical; the second is spiritual and eternal (Revelation 20:14). The "crown" is a symbol of our reward, eternal life in glory (Revelation 22:1-5). **How do you know your reward is sure (John 4:14)?**

A PRAYER

Father God: Thank You for revealing Your provision in contrast to the world's temporal allurements. Sometimes I have trouble taking a first step. Please help me to find the faith to take one then another toward You. I plead for this help in Jesus's Name! Amen! And Amen!