



The Message of the Church of Smyrna

Workers & Elders Conference 2022

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SMYRNA: REV 2.8-11

➤ Smyrna

- **City history:** *Lydians* destroyed the ancient city ~ 600 BC
 - ***It was*** composed of a few villages for nearly 400 years
 - ***So, it was*** dead as a city, but still with a few people
 - ***In its revival:*** Became a wealthy seaport, 2ND to Ephesus

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- **City history:** *Lydians* destroyed the ancient city ~ 600 BC
 - **Location:** 35 miles north of Ephesus
 - **ANE literature** mentions its wickedness/opposition to the Gospel
- **Church history:** Only mentioned here in the NT; means myrrh (a perfume from crushing the plant; embalmed the dead)

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▪ Christ (8)

▫ First and the last

✓ ***Time stamp statement***: He is referencing the beginning & end of time

✓ ***Eternality***: He is saying →

- He invented time & exists outside of it in the sphere of eternity
- Superior to the time element of life (cf. 1:8, 17; 21:6; 22:13)

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▪ Christ (8)

▫ Who was dead and came to life:

- ✓ **Since He is eternal:** He is the only one who can enter death & return from it; he traversed the portal
- ✓ **Compared to death:** He is superior to death
- ✓ **His journey:** It required rejection/persecution similar to the Smyrna church; i.e., identification with their state

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▪ **Christ knows a lot** (9a): Generally

▫ **Know** = *oida* = cognizant of the information (perfect tense)

▫ **He knows:**

- ✓ What they did and are doing--i.e., their deeds/works
- ✓ This word, "*erga*," is in the Majority Text, but not Nestle's text

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- **Christ knows a lot (9a):** Generally
 - **He knows:** What they did & are endure--i.e., oppression, distress, troubles, suffering, persecution, due to external circumstances (BDAG)
 - **He knows:** What about their past & current condition (*ptochian*)--i.e., beggarly or extreme poverty; no means of support (perhaps due to confiscation or they began that way)

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- **Christ knows a lot (9a): “You are rich”**
 - **He knows:** Your true condition → it may look one way, but its not
 - **Rich, but how?** A: Ja 2.5 → rich in faith; faith expands under such situations; only commodity that pleases God (cf. Heb 11.6)
 - **Collateral effect:** 2 Cor 6.10 → similar verb form in which others are made rich by one’s poverty

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- **Christ knows a lot (9b):** Specifically

- **The blasphemy:**

- ✓ *Semantic range:* Defamation, reviling, disrespecting with the intent of harm

- ✓ *Subject:* He knows they are the subject of lies and ridicule; he takes it personally as happened with Paul (cf. Acts 9.4)

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- **Christ knows a lot (9b):** Specifically
 - **The perpetrators:**
 - ✓ **The lie:** The group appeared to be Jews who were pummeling them with false accusations in order to exterminate them
 - ✓ **The reality:** They were not Jews in heart at all (cf. Rm 2.28; 9.6-7), but rather of Satan's congregation

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- **Christ knows a lot (9b): Specifically**
 - **True battle**
 - ✓ Not just people to people or person to person
 - ✓ But covert workers of Satan with a “headquarters” for Satan’s workers was in Smyrna itself
 - ✓ Cf. Eph 6.12: The struggle is not man against man, but man against principalities/powers/rulers of darkness...

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▪ **Christ is asking you a lot (10)**

▫ **No fear:** He acknowledges that fear would be part of a reasonable response, but not in his presence (9x with Christ)

▫ **Fearful items:**

✓ Impending suffering & imprisonment to come

✓ Ten days of testing: Like a metallurgist does his sample

✓ Satan's involvement/headquarters

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- **Christ is asking you a lot (10a)**

- **Satanic attack:** Is it Biblical?

- ✓ **Satan:** He was attacking from the start (Gen 3.1-5)--allowed but not authorized by God

- ✓ **Job:** Satan's authorized attack (Job 1.6-12)

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- **Christ is asking you a lot (10a)**

- **Satanic attack:** Is it Biblical?

- ✓ **Pharaoh:** He was a type of Satan who wanted the people of God and the promised seed to be dead (cf. Ex 14.4)

- ✓ **Ahab:** Satanic spirits were used of God to bring for his plan for Ahab (1 Kings 22.19-21)

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- **Christ is asking you a lot (10a)**
 - **Satanic attack:** Is it Biblical?
 - ✓ **Elisha:** Spiritual warfare on the human battlefield (2 Kings 6.15-18)
 - ✓ **Haman:** A tool of Satan to exterminate the lineage of Christ--used to reverse the entire plan (Esther)

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- **Christ is asking you a lot** (10a)

- **Lessons from testing**

- ✓ **Scope:** Our struggle is spiritual nor physical (Eph 6.12)

- ✓ **Corporately:** To demonstrate his glory which unites our hearts with his (Ex 9.16; 14.17; Pr 17.6)

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- **Christ is asking you a lot (10a)**

- **Lessons from testing**

- ✓ **Personally:** Paul had a messenger of Satan

- 1) TO CHASTEN** Paul of pride (2 Cor 12.7; cf. Heb 12.10-12)

- 2) TO SHOW AND TEACH** Paul to rely (rather than resist)

- God's grace to endure the testing (2 Cor 12.9-10; cf. Heb 12.14-16)

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- **Christ's rewards you a lot (10b)**

- **Time element:**

- ✓ **Limits:** There is a limit to this prospective suffering =
“tribulation ten days”

- ✓ **Aware:** He is profoundly attentive to your limitation (1
Cor 10.13; cf. John 16.12)

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- **Christ is rewards you a lot (10b)**

- **Satanic attack:** Is it Biblical?

- ✓ **Life:** He will replace that death with life in the form of a crown bestowed by the Lord himself to honor their faithfulness

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- **Christ's rewards you a lot (10b)**

- **Death and life**

- ✓ **Death**: It may be part of the outcome; be faithfully faithful [trustworthy] to that point of expiration (e.g., Polycarp) = *fidelis ad mortem*

- ✓ **Life**: He will replace that death with life in the form of a crown bestowed by the Lord himself to honor their faithfulness

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▪ Christ's encouragement(10)

▫ Death and life (cont'd)

✓ **Preservation**: From the second death (cf. Rev 20.6), which implies conscious continuous suffering (cf. 19.10)

✓ **This contrasts** with the history of the city and their current situation

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▪ **Christ's encouragement(11)**

▫ **The Spirit speaks:** All who would hear are invited to obey what the Spirit is saying to the churches of Chris

▫ **Overcomes:** One who prevails/gains victory over this situation and one's fear → God will honor in this way with life eternal, full of his joy

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➤ Smyrna Letter: Take home lessons

- **Christ** knows what you are enduring; it does not and will not escape him
- **Christ knows** the human instrument of your trial(s) and their true identity
- **Christ knows** the Satanic impetus behind your difficulties

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➤ Smyrna Letter: Take home lessons

- **Christ will** turn Satan's plans for destruction into plans of growth...you must be good with that; resist not his grace
- **Christ will** provide a method of escape/limitation
- **Christ will** reward those faithful to the end

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➤ Smyrna Letter

- **Christ is asking you a lot (10a)**

- **Lessons from testing**

- ✓ ***Disciplinary***: Suffering due to disrespecting the Lord in his supper (1 Cor 11.30-32)

- ✓ ***Holiness***: Suffering has a way of sterilizing from sin (1 Peter 4.1-2)

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➤ Smyrna Letter

- **Christ is asking you a lot (10a)**

- **Lessons from testing**

- ✓ **Obedience:** Suffering has a quickening our learning in obedience, like it was for Christ (Heb 5.8)
- ✓ **Maturity:** Suffering/testing is God's chosen method for maturity (cf. Rm 5.3-5; Ja 1.3)
- ✓ **It's demand:** Surrender (Ja 1.4, "Let patience have its...")