

## **GOD'S VISIONS AND DREAMS CANNOT BE DEFEATED!**

*REVELATION 2: 8-29*

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Verses 8-11, The Church in Smyrna

The City of Smyrna

If Ephesus was largest city in Asia, Smyrna was known as the loveliest.

It was also a free city and the first to erect a temple to the goddess Roma

It claimed to be the birthplace of Homer and had a number of temples erected to pagan deities (Cybele, Zeus, Apollo, Nemesis, Aphrodite)

It had a magnificent stadium and was known for its annual yearly games, similar to our Olympics

Message to the Church in Smyrna

Poverty

Church in Smyrna was poor because a number of its members came from lower socio-economic classes

Church in Smyrna was poor because of confiscation of property and goods as a result of persecution.

Persecution

Large population of Jews who were particularly hostile to the faith (synagogue of Satan)

Church Father Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna was martyred there, Saturday, February 23, 155AD

Religious terrorism can be some of the most intolerant, vicious and violent because it is justified by the highest possible authority—the misrepresentation of God

Imprisonment for ten days

Expression, which means for short-lived duration

Charges against Christians

1. Sacramental language misinterpreted as cannibalism
2. Agape (Love) Feasts accused of being sexual orgies
3. "Tampering with family relationships" because sometimes families split because of the faith
4. Atheism because there were no images of gods
5. Treason and political disloyalty because of refusal to say "Caesar is Lord."
6. Incendiaries because of prediction that world would end in flames

Admonition and Promise

Faithfulness to death (not just natural but violent, premature, painful) death

Crown of life

Not diadema but stephanos; not royal but victorious

Royalty can be inherited but one is victorious over some opposing force

Life (Eternal as distinct from dying and temporary)  
 Freedom from second death  
 Eternal damnation and suffering (Revelation 20: 14-15)  
 A surprising missing word: Reprimand

#### Verses 12-17, The Church in Pergamum

##### The City of Pergamum

Center of culture with famous library of 200,000 parchments; second only to the unique library of Alexandria  
 Custodian of Greek culture with two great temples to Zeus and Asclepius  
 Asclepius (healing) Symbol was serpent  
 Administrative center of Asia and thus center of Caesar worship in the province of Asia

##### Message to the Church in Pergamum

Satan's throne and Antipas my witness  
 Caesar worship  
 Antipas unknown to us but known by Christ  
 Witness can be translated as martyr: Christianity at great cost

##### Balaam and Nicolaitans

Lessening of standards and compromise with the world  
 Most common word for Christian in New Testament is hagios (different, separate)

##### Sword of my mouth

Word of God (Hebrews 4: 12; Ephesians 6: 17)

##### Hidden manna

Manna in the desert  
 Bread of the sacrament or Christ himself

##### White stone

Judicial system: black stone for guilt; white stone for acquittal  
 Roman tesserae (little tablet made of wood, metal or stone that bestowed privilege)  
 Great houses bestowed tesserae for free gifts to dependents for food or money  
 Tesserae bestowed upon winners in athletic games for free entry  
 Tesserae given to gladiators who retired in honor  
 Pagan amulets with name of deity that gave protective power

#### Verses 18-29, Church in Thyatira

Not a major city like Ephesus, Sardis or Pergamum  
 Central industry was textiles  
 (Home of Lydia, the seller of purple whom Paul converted in Acts 16: 4)  
 Strong trade guilds or unions

##### Message to the Church in Thyatira

Longest of the seven letters

## Risen Christ

Eyes of flame that penetrate  
 Feet of brass that are firm

## Last works are greater

Not facing persecution, but growing church  
 Growing church is not always healthy church

## The woman Jezebel

Identity unknown

Jezebel in scripture (I Kings 16-18)

Corrupted faith of Israel with false gods known as the Baals  
 Urged compromise with practices of guilds such as allowing  
 participation in trade guild meals, which were sometimes  
 drunken orgies and where food sacrificed to idols was eaten  
 Major problem in life of early church (Paul, I Corinthians 8-10)  
 Threat of accommodation still with us

## Word of Christ regarding accommodation

Those who accommodate would suffer the wrath of Christ

## Resistance to accommodation

Hold fast to the truth until the Lord comes

Promise to those who are undergoing trial—the Lord will come!

When the Lord comes those who are faithful will receive authority; first  
 will be last and the last first

Morning star

Daniel 12: 3

Revelation 22: 16 (Jesus, the bright and morning star)

We shall enjoy the Lord forever