

"The Crown City: Smyrna"

(Rev 2:9-11)

Part 2



Truth Matters Church, Inc.

Exposit Rev 2:9a



9a 'I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich)

- ❧ "tribulation" is 'thlipsis' which means persecution, affliction, anguish, distress, trouble
- ❧ I've used Jesus's example of a woman giving labor to capture the essence of this word
- ❧ Other characteristics of thlipsis is to crush, press, compress, squeeze
- ❧ Brownie points, which tribulation is this (from "In the Tribulation" study)?
 - ❧ Church Tribulation (faithful edition)
 - ❧ Church Tribulation (unfaithful edition)
 - ❧ Jerusalem's Tribulation
 - ❧ Global Tribulation

Exposit Rev 2:9a



- ✧ Jesus knows (oida), is fully aware, of their thlipsis and all that it comes with identifying as a Christian
 - ✧ We'll talk more about this later in this letter
- ✧ "and your poverty (but you are rich)" [more on this]

“and your poverty (but you are rich)”



- ✧ “poverty” is ptōcheia and its root word (ptōcheuo) which means to be a beggar, be destitute, poor and helpless
- ✧ Because of severe Christian persecution, they were often in hiding, living as aliens, living off the grid so-to-speak
 - ✧ Cut off from social gatherings, not out publicly in the town square, unable to buy and sell, etc.
- ✧ They did not have property and possessions because of their faith,
 - ✧ They were poor and impoverished from a social and economic standpoint
- ✧ Jesus is well aware and acquainted with such tribulation and poverty
- ✧ But Jesus in the same breath says, “but you are rich”!
- ✧ “you are” is in the present tense!
- ✧ Mt 6 comes to mind...

“and your poverty (but you are rich)”



Matthew 6:19-21 (concerning true treasure)

19 “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. 20 **But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven**, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; 21 **for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.**

- ✧ Despite their social and economic status of being poor for being a Christian, in Jesus’s eyes, which is the truth that really matters, they aren’t truly poor, they are truly rich! For their treasures are not on earth, but in heaven!
- ✧ APPLICATION: This is a truth that transcends the believers in Smyrna and applies to all believers of all time! Doesn’t matter what you amass or do not amass on this side of heaven, but what truly matters is our riches and treasures in heaven!

Exposit Rev 2:9b



9b, and the blasphemy by those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan.

☞ “the blasphemy” what is that?

☞ HINT: we’ll look to both its historical context and Scripture

Exposit Rev 2:9b



- ❧ Roman emperors (Caesar) was considered a god among gods
 - ❧ With a Caveat, Caesar was the supreme emperor, the god of gods
- ❧ As such, they demanded and expected that all would praise and worship him
- ❧ One of Caesars many titles was LORD
 - ❧ Savior
 - ❧ Master
 - ❧ Son of Man
 - ❧ God
- ❧ So "the blasphemy" in its historical context, is hailing Caesar as a god
- ❧ But the subjects in view are those "who say they are Jews"
- ❧ Which means, this alludes to the Jews hailing Caesar as a god!
- ❧ Can this be supported by Scripture? Oh you bet it can...

Exposit Rev 2:9b



John 19:12 (Jesus before Pilate; Pilate seeks to release Him)

12 As a result of this Pilate made efforts to release Him, but the Jews cried out saying, “If you release this Man, **you are no friend of Caesar**; everyone who makes himself out to be a king opposes Caesar.”

- ❧ The Jews called themselves a “friend of Caesar” and loyal to Caesar
- ❧ This is contrary to the mandate “not to love the world, or the things in the world”
- ❧ It is along these lines I submit before you that this was “the blasphemy” of these Jews
 - ❧ When Caesar demanded worship, to save their skin, they obliged and blasphemed
 - ❧ Remember by this time, Jerusalem was destroyed in 70AD under Titus
 - ❧ It’s reasonable to deduce that this too changed their view of Caesar and were amendable to blaspheme
- ❧ Let’s now look at “synagogue of Satan” ...

“synagogue of Satan”



- ✧ “synagogue” is the same word used to describe the Jews meeting in synagogues
- ✧ By definition this word means to bring together, an assembly
- ✧ In context, there was great animosity between Christians and Judaizers
- ✧ When Roman persecution against Christianity broke out, these Jews had no problem pledging allegiance to Rome (just like they did under Pilate) and seek out Christians (just like the apostle Paul did before his conversion)
- ✧ These Jews are described as an assembly brought together for Satan against the cause or Name of Jesus
- ✧ TRUTH: Professing Jews who denounce Christianity are part of Satan’s “synagogue” back then and now

Exposit Rev 2:10



10 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.

- ☞ “what you are about to suffer” (future tense; prophecy; sometime after 95/96AD)
- ☞ Who is “you”?
 - ☞ CLUE: ROE #3: Thou shalt not take Scripture out of context
- ☞ “suffer” is paschō which means to endure suffering
 - ☞ paschō’s root word means mourning
- ☞ Jesus is exhorting His faithful followers not to fear of their upcoming suffering and mourning and to patiently endure it for His Name’s sake
- ☞ “the devil is about to cast some of you into prison” [more on this]

“the devil is about to cast some of you into prison”



- ❧ We all know who the devil is
- ❧ The devil is diabolos which means accuser, slanderous
- ❧ The devil is one of many of Satan's (which means adversary) names or characteristics, he's also known as:
 - ❧ The tempter, Prince of the power of the air, deceiver, father of lies, murderer, ruler of demons, Beelzebub, star of the morning, son of dawn, anointed cherub, the evil one, enemy of our souls, ruler of this world, god of this age, angel of light, Belial, roaring lion, dragon, and old serpent - there are possibly others, but this is a gist of them
- ❧ My question is who will the devil use in context?
 - ❧ HINT: he uses a person [DON'T PEEK]

“the devil is about to cast some of you into prison”



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- ❧ Evil world leaders! At the time of the 1st century, Roman Empowers!
 - ❧ Just like Satan entered Judas, Satan entered Roman emperors, including Nero then Domitian!
 - ❧ SPOILER: Satan will enter Antichrist
 - ❧ Satan through Roman emperors issued an order to arrest Christians for their faith!
 - ❧ Attributing Christianity to a religion that promotes hate, cannibalism (the Lord's Supper)
 - ❧ These outlawed Christianity and consequently issued an Order to have them arrested and thrown into prison, in fact, Domitian made a law that stated:
 - ❧ "That no Christian, once brought before the tribunal, should be exempted from punishment without renouncing his religion."
 - ❧ They were asked to renounce their faith or else be punished (torture; death)

“the devil is about to cast some of you into prison”



- ❧ History and tradition tells us believers were
 - ❧ lacerated with scourges even to the innermost veins and arteries, so that the hidden inward parts of the body, both their bowels and their members, were exposed to view; and then laid upon sea-shells and certain pointed spits, and subjected to every species of punishment and of torture, and finally thrown as food to wild beasts.
- ❧ As mentioned, history and tradition tells us that both Paul and Peter were put to death under Nero
- ❧ History and tradition tells us that John was thrown into a cauldron of boiling oil under Domitian, but survived
 - ❧ Later he was banished to Patmos by Domitian
- ❧ Sure sounds like these evil rulers were devil-possessed to me
- ❧ Jesus words certainly rings true “A slave is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted Me, **they will also persecute you (the apostles and those who believe their message)**; if they kept My word, they will keep yours also.” (Jn 15:20)

“the devil is about to cast some of you into prison”



❧ CONJECTURE

- ❧ I believe that the angels who joined the rebellion were allowed to be little “gods” under Satan
 - ❧ A good example of this is in Greek mythology (Zeus was highest, but there are other gods - Hades, Poseidon, Apollo, Athena, Artemis, etc.)
 - ❧ In Rome, although they allowed for the worship of other “gods”, the Roman emperor (Caesar) was LORD over all (a picture of Satan at the top, w/fallen angels subject to him)
- ❧ Hence, why throughout ancient world history to this date, there are many religions and “gods”
- ❧ Paul before his conversion too also thrown believers into prison. It can be said that certainly Paul was under the influence of the prince of the power of the air and a member of the synagogue of Satan
- ❧ Can this statement also be prophetic? Concerning Jerusalem’s and the global tribulation Jews and Christians will experience at the hands of Antichrist? I think so

“the devil is about to cast some of you into prison”



The take away from v.10 is:

- ✧ Jesus is warning these believers of immense persecution that is to come at the hands of evil rulers possessed by Satan himself
- ✧ The apostles and believers experienced it before them
- ✧ They will experience it too
- ✧ From here I'd like to share one of the early heroes of the faith in the early church
- ✧ A man by the name of Polycarp