

Revelation

The Churches

CHURCH 2: SMYRNA

Revelation 2:8-11



BACKGROUND

The church at Smyrna is the second along the route following the Roman postal road. It was 35 miles north of Ephesus on the Aegean Sea, in what is now modern-day Izmir, Turkey. This is only one of two churches from the seven that does not receive any kind of criticism from Jesus.



INTRODUCTION

Christians were a small minority in the Roman Empire. They were often targeted for refusing to participate in the "imperial cult," which Roman authorities saw as cultural subversion. Today, Turkey is ranked #50 on the Open Doors World Watch List due to increasing "Islamic oppression and dictatorial paranoia".

1. John Stott stated, "persecution is simply the clash between two irreconcilable value-systems." Do you agree?
2. What does John 16:33 tell us?

SMYRNA

The name "Smyrna" is derived from the word myrrh, a spice used for embalming, which fits the church's reputation as a "suffering church". The price for being a Christian was very high. It was a very anti-gospel and anti-Christian place but John has only praise for the church. Bishop Polycarp worked with John in the churches of Asia Minor, and was the pastor of the church at Smyrna. Polycarp was martyred in 155 AD at the age of about 86 for refusing to deny Christ.

THOUGHTS

1. How does Jesus describe Himself to the church in Smyrna and why do you think this is (v8)?
2. What do you think it means that they "are rich" and does this fit modern ideas of prosperity?
3. What do you think John means by, "a synagogue of Satan"?
4. Why do you think there is no criticism for this church at Smyrna?
5. Can the church at Smyrna take any comfort from the symbolic "10 days" time period?
6. What does Jesus tell the church at Smyrna will be their ultimate reward?

APPLICATION

1. How can we personally handle times of difficulty and persecution today?
2. What does Jesus tell both the church at Smyrna and us today (v10)?
3. It has been said we are, "to put spiritual things and people ahead of material things." What do you think of this advice?

Revelation



THE CHURCH AT SMYRNA

In modern Turkey today we can see the remains of Smyrna, a major ancient Greek and Roman port known for its strategic location as a vital trade hub.



SMYRNA

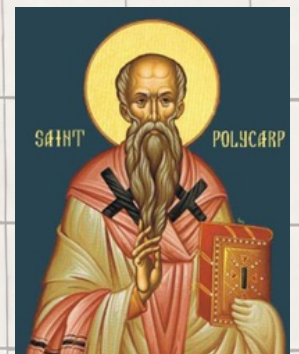
Location & Rebuilding: Originally built as a small peninsula settlement, it was destroyed in the 7th century BC and later refounded, largely under the direction of Alexander the Great.

"First City of Asia": In its prime, it was known as a beautiful, wealthy city with a 20,000 seat theater and a massive agora (marketplace). Culturally, it was a flourishing centre of Greek education and arts, often rivaling Ephesus in splendour and beauty.

Religious Significance: An intense religious devotion to the Roman Emperor and the martyrdom of early Christians is tied to the city. Home to the martyr Polycarp, a disciple of John the Apostle.

The Great Fire of 1922: A catastrophic event during the Greco-Turkish War that destroyed the Greek and Armenian quarters of the city, a deliberate act by the Turkish government to destroy or expel the Greeks and any other Christian population.

Modern Day Izmir: Today, it is Turkey's third largest city, with the Ancient Agora still standing in the city centre for visitors to explore.



"Pray for all the saints. Pray also for kings and magistrates and rulers, and for those who persecute and hate you, and for the enemies of the cross so that your fruit may be evident among all people, so that you may be perfect in him" - Polycarp