

Revelation
The Church at Smyrna

- **ORIENTATION:**

- An ancient city (today Izmir in Turkey) that was founded by ancient Greeks at a central and strategic point on the Aegean coast of Anatolia.
- Smyrna was established thirty-five miles north of Ephesus on the road that lead to Pergamum.
- It was built near the ruins of a Greek colony destroyed by the Lydian Kingdom in the C7 BC.
- The port was a natural one, and had the distinctive fortune of the Hermus River which flowed from inland to this natural gulf.
- Because of the river access to inland along with the major north-south highway the city grew to importance.
- The well watered region produced significant crops, and this provided the backbone of a prosperous trade between land and sea.

- **EARLY HISTORY:**

- The city was reputed to be the most faithful ally of Rome according to Cicero, as the city had a history of siding squarely with Rome.
- In the conflicts of Rome and Seleucia of 195 BC, and the war between Mithridates and Rome the city showed true loyalty, and received significant patronage from the Emperors in exchange.
- The city was noted by the geographer Strabo for its beautiful public buildings and its roads were commended for their geometric design.
- With a stadium that likely seated as many as 20,000 people, and a well developed infrastructure, scholars believe the city grew to about 100,000 by the time of the Apostle's Paul and John.

- The Church of St. Polycarp reminds the modern visitor that Polycarp, an Apostolic Father and student of the Apostle John, was martyred in the city in 155 CE. His famous speech concerning his dedication to Jesus is recalled here.
- The site has little excavation, as this important commercial port city is the second largest population in the modern Republic of Turkey.

- **THE CHURCH:**

- The church is not mentioned in the NT outside of Revelation.
- It earned a place in history by the fact that "Polycarp" was martyred there about AD 155.
- In this address there is **NO** condemnation from the Lord.

- **LETTER TO THE CHURCH:**

- **THE LORD'S SELF-DESIGNATION (8)**

- "The First and the Last"
 - Possible that since the church suffered poverty and persecution; the Lord was reminding them that their enemies would not have the last word.
 - He was the first and the last and that all who follow Him would be victorious.
- "Who was dead, and came to life"

- **COMMENDATION (9a)**

- For the works, tribulation, and poverty.
 - Persecution they faced because of their faith.
 - Poverty was most likely physical and a result of their faith.
 - The church denounced the paganism that conflicted with their faith.
 - A good portion of the prosperity the city enjoyed was a result of their Emperor worship among other pagan rituals.
- But they are rich...
 - Rich in heavenly things which count most now and in eternity.
 - They had a Christ and with Him came redemption and the fruit of Christian living. (Gal 5:22-23)
 - They had true riches laid up in Heaven (Mt 6:20)

- **EXHORTATION AND PROMISE (9b-11)**

- The Lord knows those who claim to be Jews but are a synagogue of Satan.
 - They are NOT true Jews.
 - The TRUE Israel ceased to be physical and became spiritual.
 - The Jews or Hebrews ceased to be God's "People" when the church was established on the day of Pentecost. (Acts 2)

- o Do not fear what they are about to suffer
- o The devil is about throw some into prison, that they may be tested.
 - Not himself but his agents (Enemies of God).
- o They will have tribulation ten days.
 - Not a literal 10 days.
 - In comparison to other symbolic numbers in the bible that represent time; 10 days represents a short period which would be a comfort and encouragement.
- o Be faithful unto death, and He will give them a crown of life.
 - Prove yourself faithful to the cause of Christ.
 - Be faithful even if the price you pay is DEATH.
 - The Crown of Life will be Eternal Life.
 - Always Win, Win for the faithful Christian.
- o Hear what the Spirit says to the churches.
 - He that has an ear and is willing to hear.
 - He that is willing to accept the responsibility with hearing.
 - Without hearing there can be no obeying.
- o He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death.
 - The second death is consistent throughout the book as being the Lake of Fire.

- **LIFE APPLICATION:**

- Do not fear this world and the tribulations in it.
 - The church at Smyrna suffered both poverty and persecution for their faith and were commended by the Lord for their patience and perseverance.
- We must maintain our faith and service no matter how bad things are.
 - When Christians are suffering, the first reaction is usually to start missing worship then, fellowship all together.
 - Is blaming God and turning away renouncing our faith?
- God promises we will be victorious if we're faithful...
 - Not only until death but...
 - Even if the price is death!
 - It's a Win, Win situation.
 - If we endure we will be stronger.
 - If we die, we will enjoy bliss forever and the pains of this world will be no more.
- When we suffer...
 - The world loses it's attraction.
 - We silence the enemies of God.
 - Remember Job?
 - We are appreciative of the good things of this life
 - We become more dependant on God.
 - We are more sympathetic.
 - We pray.....!