

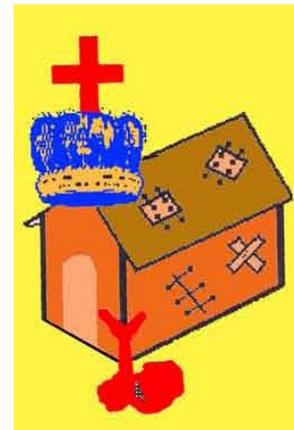
The Seven Churches of Asia

Smyrna



The REVELATION
PART ONE
The Seven Churches of Asia

Smyrna



The second church we will study is the Church at Smyrna.

GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS:

ATTENDANCE:

The required minimum attendance for the course overall is 10 weeks.

The required minimum attendance for this lesson is 1 week.

You may take more than 1 week for each lesson should you choose to do so; without any penalty. In fact, some lessons probably will take more than a week to complete for some students. However, though you can take more than the minimum required attendance for each lesson, under no circumstances are you to take less than 1 week for each lesson.

TESTS:

Lesson tests must be taken not less than one week apart.

If you fail a test you may not retake that test on the same day that you failed it.

You must wait at least one day before retaking the test. Use that time to restudy the material and find all of the correct answers to every question missed on the test. The copy of the test automatically sent to you has all of the correct answers on it. Use that copy to make sure you have found all of the correct answers in the study materials.

SCRIPTURES:

Each scripture referenced in this lesson must be looked up and read in your KJV. Reading the scriptures in the lesson, even if they are fully quoted in the lesson, will not fulfill this requirement. They must be looked up and read in your KJV.

LESSONS:

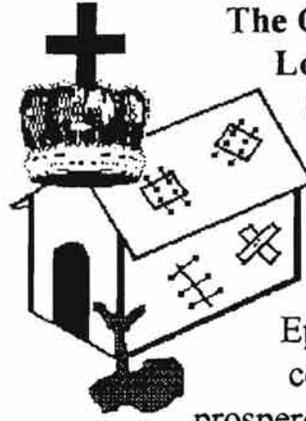
Each lesson is followed by a test. You will find a link to the course main page at the end of each lesson. When you click that link you will be returned to the course main page where you will find a list of tests. There will be instructions concerning whether a particular test is open book or closed book.

If a test is open book you will not need a password to access that test. Click the link for it and it will open and you can then take the test. Your next lesson attendance begins the day after you pass the current lesson test.

If a test is closed book, then you will be instructed to submit a Closed Book Test Contract form. When we receive that form, then you will be sent the password that you will need to access that test. In answer to your request, the password will be sent in 1-2 days, not including weekends when the college offices are closed.. Your next lesson attendance begins the day after you pass the current lesson test.

You may now proceed to the next page to begin the study of the Church at Smyrna.

SMYRNA



The City: Smyrna.

Location and history. Smyrna was (and is) a port on the west coast of Asia Minor. Situated 50 mi. north of Ephesus, it was a splendid city of rare beauty with a port that rivaled that of Miletus. (See sec. on Ephesus.) An important commercial center, it became one of the most prosperous cities of Asia Minor, it eventu-

ally took the name of "Metropolis." Homer, the Greek epic poet, was born there during the ninth century B.C. The city, originally a Greek settlement, was destroyed by Alyattes, King of Lydia in about 580 B.C. During the 4th century, Alexander the Great planned to rebuild it but died before carrying out his plan. Subsequently his successors rebuilt the city, but at another site. After being rebuilt on its current site, it became a city noted for science, medicine, and its majestic public buildings. Later the city became an important commercial center and proved to be a useful ally to Roman imperialism. It was destroyed a second time in A.D. 78. This time, however, it was not destroyed by man but by nature, an earthquake. Once again it was rebuilt. Because of its place as a cultural center, and because of its ability to survive both natural and man-made catastrophes, it was among those cities that helped to spur the Renaissance.

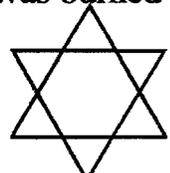
Major agricultural crop, figs: Among the mountains are found the various fertile valleys, especially along the Mendere (Meander) river. Figs are a major crop and, when ripe, they are shipped by donkey caravan to Smyrna for processing. This caravan is seen trudging on the still primitive road to Smyrna, much in the same way their forefathers must have in the days of the Revelation. (The picture is pre-World War II.)



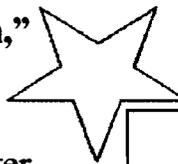
Religion: The city had practiced Emperor worship since 195 B.C. and held a historical pride in her Caesar-cult. This, as was stated earlier, made the city a useful ally to Roman imperialism from several hundred years before the birth of Christ on through New Testament times. In A.D. 26 they petitioned Tiberius Caesar to allow them to build a temple to his deity. (This was only the second such temple in Asia dedicated to Tiberius.)

Judaism was particularly strong in Smyrna as is witnessed by the letter to the church at Smyrna. In fact, Ignatius mentioned it also in his letter to the Smyrnaeans; and both tell of the bitter antagonism exercised by the Jews toward the Christians of the city. Later, this was followed by quite a number of bitter persecutions by the Romans.

Christianity: The church in Smyrna was composed mainly of poor people, with nothing like the numbers nor the prestige of the church at Ephesus. [cf. Rev 2:9 "... poverty, (but thou art rich)...] The bishop during the time of the penning of the Revelation was Polycarp. Polycarp (A.D. 69-156) was a pupil of the Apostle John and was burned at the stake in A.D. 156. Christians there reported that the Jews joined the pagans in insisting that the Romans must execute him for his opposition to the state religion, Emperor worship. Yet those same Jews claimed to worship "Jehovah," as the "one true God." It's no wonder in Rev 2:9 that the Lord called the Jews there, "the synagogue of Satan," rather than true Jews. At his own request, Polycarp was bound to the stake rather than spiked to it; maintaining that God would give him the strength to remain in the flames. After burning slowly, his suffering was finally ended by a sword-thrust from a Roman soldier.



Jewish Star of David



Satanic "goat's head" star

Persecution: Persecution of the Christians there was continuous from John's time (A.D. 90) until about A.D. 312. The persecution has resumed during this present (twentieth) century with the slaughter of the Armenian Christians there in 1922 by the Turks. Consequently, the scope of the prophecy concerning the church at Smyrna now encompasses a current total of around nineteen centuries. It has withstood attacks by the Turks, and was one of the last cities in Asia to fall to the Muslims. [In 1922 the Turks, in a war with Greece, attempted to wipe out all Armenians in Asia Minor. Marching on Smyrna, the Turkish armies slaughtered thousands upon thousands of Christians in the city. When it fell, the refugees were backed up to the harbour where they tried to escape via the foreign ships moored there. While they were being pushed toward the docks, a disastrous fire broke out and a large portion of the city was destroyed. In that fire more than a quarter of a million of the fleeing population were consumed by the flames. Following the fire the Turks arrested all of the males between the ages of 17 and 45 and sent them to the interior where most of them later died. All of the remaining population, women, children, and older males, were then deported from the country and more than a million refugees flooded into Greece. After intense suffering, relieved where possible by help from Christians around the world, those who had escaped the carnage at Smyrna finally settled permanently in Greece. To prevent any further occurrences such as the one at Smyrna, the Turks and the Greeks agreed to an exchange of all of the Christians living in Turkey for all of the Turks living in surrounding countries.]

THE LETTER TO SMYRNA

(Rev 2:8-11)

2:8 COMMISSION: The Pastor and the church at Smyrna.

Who from and who to? From Jesus Christ to the pastor & church at Smyrna.

2:8 CHARACTER:

This verse gives a description of Christ as the one who was, "dead," and then was, "alive." This relates to the fact that many in this church would face martyrdom and then live again in the resurrection.



- A. This prophecy of martyrdom would include the pastor, Polycarp, who was mentioned earlier. When he was brought before the Governor and offered his freedom if he would curse Christ, he made this statement, "Eighty and six years have I served and he has done me nothing but good; how then could I curse Him, my Lord and Saviour?" For his refusal he was burned at the stake.
- B. The lesson Christ was teaching the church at Smyrna, and us today, is don't fear death, look toward the resurrection.
- C. Smyrna means, "myrrh," or, "bruised myrrh."

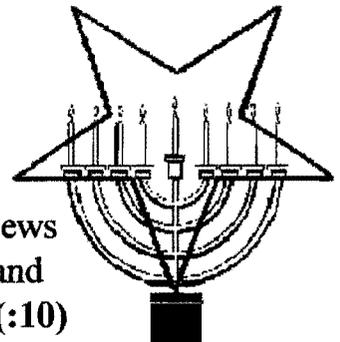
Myrrh was a plant; and its resin was much valued as a perfume. In the same way that the odiferous resin was extracted from the plant by grinding it, the church at Smyrna was also ground, or bruised. In spite of this bruising, symbolic of the intense and lengthy persecution suffered by the church, they remained faithful to God through the grinding process, thus giving off an odour that was pleasing to the nostrils of God.

2:9-10 COMMENDATION: "... works, and tribulation, and poverty..."

- A. Their works pleased God.
- B. Their faithfulness through tribulation pleased God.
 1. They endured persecution from the false Jews.

Rev 2:9 "... I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not but are the synagogue of Satan."

In God's eyes those persecuting Jews were not his people, (real Jews according to Ro 2:17-29) but the devil's people. God tells them (and us) to, **"...Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer..." (:10)**



2. They also endured intense persecution from Imperial Rome.

"... tribulation ten days..." prefigured either the 10 Imperial persecutions or the persecution of Trajan which was about to begin. The one under Trajan, like all of the others, hit Smyrna especially hard.
- C. Their poverty (material poverty) pleased God. It was obvious that they did not seek the riches of the world but the riches of God's Kingdom. (Mt 6:19-34)

--- **CONDEMNATION:** Smyrna was one of only two churches that received no condemnation from Christ. Philadelphia being the other one.

2:10 CORRECTION / EXHORTATION:

Since Smyrna received no condemnation from Christ, this should actually be called an "Exhortation."

NOTE: In the exhortation we find-

A. The promises:

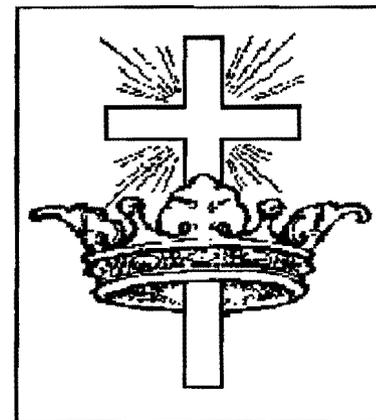
:10 "... crown of life..."

(cf v:8, looking toward the resurrection; also Jas 1:12)

:11 "... not be hurt of the second death..."

(Promise to the overcomer.) (See Rev 20:14; 21:8)

B. Historical note: Remember when we studied the church at Ephesus, and how not only the church but the whole town is gone? How that where once there was a thriving metropolis, now there is nothing but ruins and a reedy marsh? When God removed the church's candlestick the city also died. The city of Smyrna, on the other hand, received a fallout blessing because of the promise made to the church in verse 2:10, **"... a crown of life."** This city, in marked contrast to Ephesus, is still there. It has not only survived but has grown down through the centuries. It is now one of the largest cities in modern day Turkey. Today it is known as, "Iz-mir," and has a population of around a half-a-million people.



:11 CALL: **"... he that hath an ear, let him hear..."**

The call is, again, to anyone who will listen.

:11 CHALLENGE:

Overcome and not fear the second death, which is condemnation to the lake of fire.

(Rev 20:ch.)

NOTE: **"Overcomer."** (I Jn 5:4-5)