

# **Journey Through the Bible: Revelation**

## **Session 4: The Persecuted Church: Smyrna (Rev. 2:8-11)**

Remember Acts 17:11

### **The Apocalypse (Unveiling-SINGULAR)**

- (1:19) Christ's Instruction and Outline for the Book
- "Have Seen" Risen Christ (Ch. 1)
- "Is" The Seven Churches (Ch. 2-3)
- "Hereafter" The Conquest (Ch. 4-22)

### **Areas of Meaning:**

- The Name of the Church
- The Title Christ Chooses for Himself
- Commendation
- Concern
- Instruction
- Promise to the Overcomer

### **Name: Σμύρνα (Smyrna) = "Myrr"**

- A Bitter Gum (Evergreen Shrub)
  - Antiseptic
  - Offered to Christ on the Cross (Mk. 15:23)
  - Embalming Agent (John 19:39-40)
  - Ingredient in Middle Easter Perfumes
  - Ingredient in Holy Anointing Oil
    - Purification of the Unclean
    - Anointing of Priests
    - Gift of the Magi (1<sup>st</sup> Coming. Not the 2<sup>nd</sup>: Isa. 60:6)
- Must be Crushed to be Useable

### **History:**

- Today Known as Izmir (3<sup>rd</sup> Largest City in Turkey)
- Harbor City (Center of West-East Trade in Roman Times)
- Founded Before 3000BC by the Leleges/Later Hittites
  - 1,200 BC Colonized by the Aeolians (Early Greek Culture)
  - 900 BC Under Control of the Ionia (Classic Greek Culture)
    - 300 Year Golden Age
    - Homer was Born, Lived, and Died in Smyrna
    - Economic Rivals to Ephesus, Sardis, and Lydia
    - First City Destroyed by Lydia (Circa 600 BC)
- Rebuilt in 301 BC Under Alexander the Great

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History:

- Allies of and Were Willed to Rome by King Attalus (Pergamum) in 129 BC
  - Harbor Replaced Ephesus After the Closing of its Harbor
  - One of the Most Beautiful Cities in the Roman Empire
  - Suffered Several Seismic Events Between 178-180AD
  - Demolished by an Earthquake in 378AD
  - Rebuilt and Ceded to the Eastern Roman Empire in 395AD

Culture:

- Multiple Temples and Pagan Shrines of Renowned Beauty
  - Principal Deity: Cybele (Greek: Rhea)
  - Goddess of Motherhood (Zeus, Hades, and Poseidon)
- Early Adopter of Emperor Worship
  - All Citizens Were Free to Worship Any Deity So Long as They Also Declared the Emperor as the Primary Deity and Their Loyalty to Him
  - Compulsory for All Citizens to Demonstrate Loyalty
  - Burning a Pinch of Incense and Publicly Declaring Caesar as Supreme Lord (Annually)
  - Received a Formal Certificate of Acknowledgement

“Eighty and six years have I served Him, and he never did me any injury; how then can I blaspheme my King and my Savior.”  
-Polycarp, Disciple of John, Bishop of Smyrna (166AD)

Title of Christ (v.8):

“The First and The Last...”

- Multiple References in Isaiah (41:4; 44:6; 48:12)

“Was dead and am alive...”

(Rev. 1:17-18; 2:8; 22:13)

- Descriptive of Deity and Humanity
- Sacrifice and Glorification
- Death and Resurrection (Ref. Mat. 10:38-39; 16:24-25)

Commendation (v.9):

**θλίψις (Thlipsis)** = Lit. “Pressing” or “Pressure”

“Anguish, Burdened, Persecution, Tribulation, Trouble”

**Πτωχεία (Ptōcheia)** = “Beggary” or “Destitution”

Πενία (Penia) = “deficiency” (Having Nothing Superfluous)

“Jews Who Are Not” (v.9) Cf. Mat. 10:21-22

- Those Who Claim Religious Authority: “Synagogue of Satan” (Jn. 8:44)
- Legalists: Returning to the Law (Acts 15:1,10; Gal. 2:11; 3:1-3; 2 Pet. 3:15-16)
- Early Persecutors of Christians (Acts 13:50; 14:2-5; 14:19; 17:5)
- Members of the Church Conspiring with the Civil Authorities
- Rise of Early Church Heresies
  - Legalism: Denial of Christ’s Completed Sacrificial Atonement
  - Gnosticism: Denial of Christ’s Humanity
  - Arianism: Denial of Christ’s Divinity
  - Cesar Worship: Denial of the Supremacy of God

Instruction (v. 10): NOTE: No Concern

- 10 “Days”
  - Nero (Beheaded Paul; Crucified Peter)
  - Domitian (Tortured and Imprisoned John)
  - Trajan (Burned Ignatius)
  - Marcus Aurelius (Burned Polycarp)
  - Septimus Severus (Killed Irenaeus)
  - Maximus (Killed Ursula and Hippolytus)
  - Decius
  - Valerian
  - Aurelian
  - Diocletian (Great Persecution)
- 10 Emperors (Span of 250 Years)

Roman Persecution

- Burning of Rome
- Plagues Brought from the Parthian Wars
- Flood of Tiber Destroying Grain Stores
- 5 Million Christians Die (*Fox’s Book of Martyrs*)

Promises to the Overcomer (v.9-10):

- Στέφανος (Stephanos)** “Victor’s Crown” (Laurel Wreath)
  - Crown of Life: Persecution (Jas. 1:12; Rev. 2:10)
  - Crown of Righteousness: Long for His Appearing (2 Tim. 4:8)
  - Crown of Glory: Feed the Flock (1 Pet. 5:4)
  - Crown Incorruptible: Press on Steadfastly (1 Cor. 9:25)
  - Crown of Rejoicing: Soul Winners (1 Thes. 2:19)
- Second Death (Rev. 20:6; Jude 12)
- Born Once: Die Twice/Born Twice: Die Once

