

# “The Seven Churches of Revelation”

## Part 2 – The Church of Smyrna

Smyrna – The Persecuted Church (Revelation 2:8-11).

\*Prophetically – the era from 170 AD – 315 AD.

Only mention in the Bible is here in Revelation chapter 2.

Shortest of the 7 letters to the churches.

“Death” is mentioned three times in four verses.

One of only two of the seven churches not admonished by Christ.

### **I. The City of Smyrna**

- i. About 35 miles north of Ephesus in modern-day Turkey. It sits at the head of the Aegean Sea.
- ii. Known for its beauty, wealth, and achievement.
- iii. One of the first cities in the region to pledge allegiance to Rome and Caesar.
- iv. Some of the first schools of science and medicine were found there.
- v. Also known for its sports culture and athletes. In the early centuries Olympic Games were held here. It also had a theater (stadium) that held 20,000 people.
- vi. Home of the Greek poet Homer.
- vii. Polycarp, a personal disciple of the Apostle John, and the pastor of the church at Smyrna was killed here.
- viii. Today there are about 3 million people living there in the city now known as Izmir, Turkey.

### **II. The Church of Smyrna – Revelation 2:8-11**

#### **A. Their Name**

- i. Smyrna is Greek for “myrrh”, a substance extracted from tree bark and used for perfumes,

anointing oils, and used in ancient burial preparations. The fragrance was released by crushing the bark with large boulders, symbolizing the persecution and pressure that would be upon the early Christian church. Myrrh was one of the gifts presented by the wise men when Jesus was born – a costly gift – but a symbol of death.

#### B. Their Praise

- i. Jesus said they had material poverty, but spiritual prosperity (Matthew 6:20-21).
- ii. They were persecuted into poverty by the Roman Empire, and by zealot Jewish leaders who hated them and kept them from working, buying, selling, etc.

#### C. The Warning

- i. Great suffering, persecution, and testing was coming to the church at Smyrna. (Representing that era of the early church).
- ii. It is estimated that 5 million Christians were martyred during the first 300 years of Christianity. The most famous of these in Smyrna was Polycarp in 155 AD. Philip Schaff – “the blood of the martyrs was the seed of the church”.

#### D. Their Promise

- i. Rev. 2:10 – “be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.” (James 1:12). Crowns were very familiar to the people of Smyrna, as they were used in pagan worship offerings, and awarded to the champions of their athletic contests in victory parades.
- ii. Notice “unto death”, not “until death” (Rev. 2:10). He reminded them of His resurrection power (2:8), and that He is aware of their suffering.
- iii. Overcomers – second death has no power (2:11). Revelation 20:6, 14, Revelation 21:8.