



The Church at Smyrna

A Bit of History



Smyrna ruins



Smyrna was a coastal city in what is today western Turkey. Smyrna was for a long time a pro-Roman city, serving as a regional center for worship of the "divine" Roman emperor. It was the site of the temple to Tiberius, who reigned at the time of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. This ancient form of human idolatry is prophesied to occur yet again on a worldwide scale prior to the return of Jesus Christ (i.e.: The Abomination of Desolation by the antichrist.)

Despite the pagan environment, Christians in Smyrna were true and faithful. Of the seven churches addressed by the Lord, only Smyrna and Philadelphia were spoken of with approval. In later years, Polycarp, a student of the apostle John, served as a leader of the church at Smyrna, and he was martyred there, burned at the stake, about 155 A.D.

The Church at Smyrna

(Revelation 2:8-11)

The Persecuted Church under the Roman Empire – A.D. 100 to A.D. 313

A suffering church, enduring hardships for its faith

The Persecution: “I know your works, and tribulation, and poverty, but you are rich; and I know the blasphemy of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are of the synagogue of Satan.

The Exhortation: “Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you shall be tested ten days. Be faithful unto death and I will give you a Crown of Life.”

The Promise: He that overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death (Lake of Fire).

A Closer Look at Smyrna



he Church in its “Ephesian Period,” having lost its “First Love,” the Lord is now about to “chastise” it, so as to cause it to return to Him. Smyrna has for its root meaning “bitterness,” and means “Myrrh,” an ointment associated with death, and we see in the meaning of the word a prophecy of the persecution and death which was to befall the members of the Smyrna church. They were told not to “fear” the things that they should be called on to suffer, but to be faithful “unto” death, not “until” death. That is, not until the end of their “natural” life. They were not to “recant” when called upon to face a martyr’s death, but remain faithful until death relieved them of their suffering. The reward would be a “**Crown of Life.**” This is the martyr’s crown.

They were told that the author of their suffering would be the Devil, and its duration would be ten days, which was doubtless a prophetic reference to the “Ten Great Persecutions” under the Roman Emperors, beginning with Nero, A.D. 64. Seven of these Great Persecutions occurred during this Smyrna Period of church history. Or it may refer to the 10 years of the last and fiercest persecution under Diocletian. It is estimated that approximately 5000 believers of this church period were fed to the lions in Rome.

This period extended from A. D. 100 to Constantine, A.D. 313.

The period of persecution was to last for a specified period. The persecution during this period lasted from the time of Domitian in A.D. 96 until Diocletian and his successor Galerius in A.D. 311. Depending on when counting begins, 10 or 11 periods of persecution can be located during this period. If we start at Domitian, (John was on

Patmos because of Domitian) then there are 10 periods. With Nero as the start, there are 11 periods.

1	Nero	A.D. 54- 68	Paul beheaded and Peter crucified
2	Domitian	A.D. 81-96	John exiled
3	Trajan	A.D. 98-117	Ignatius burned at the stake
4	Marcus Aurelius	A.D. 161-180	Justin Martyr killed
5	Severus	A.D. 193-211	
6	Maximinus	A.D. 235-238	
7	Decius	A.D.249-251	
8	Valerian	A.D. 253-260	
9	Aurelian	A.D. 270-275	
10	Diocleation	A.D. 284-305	
11	Galerius	A.D. 305-311	