



the Seven Churches *of* Revelation

Seven Churches of Revelation

Seven Churches – Smyrna

Church of Smyrna

Background: The land and culture of this region in Turkey date back to ancient history. The geo location near the waterway is unchanged since the prehistoric era. The land has survived for thousands of years, but its inhabitants have changed repeatedly, including different dominant types rising to power and influence. In the early Church, the most recent influence was Greek, and its impact was likely more traditional and foundational than that of many of its neighbors. The historical notes indicate that Smyrna was founded by one of the four original Greek tribes (Aeolians) that gave birth to Greek civilization in ancient times.

Ephesus is a seafaring community, but Smyrna is literally a gulf-city civilization (the Gulf of İzmir) resting on the isthmus of the Aegean Sea. The other five Churches in Revelation are inland communities, while Smyrna is nearly detached.

The Apostle John, son of Zebedee and author of the Gospel named after him, formally trained the last Church leader formally mentored by a living Apostle. He is known only as “*Polycarp*,” and the Apostles assigned him as the overseer of the Church of Smyrna from 69-155 AD.

Polycarp is acknowledged as an Early Church Father and a martyr of the first-century Church. He is the last Church leader under the direct influence of the first Apostles. His term of leadership ends in 155 AD, and he trains his successor, Irenaeus, to replace him.

The Pentarchy system, which formally governs the Church, is not established until *527 AD. There is a notable exposure to heresy that extends from the time of Polycarp through the first thousand years of early Church history.

NOTE: Irenaeus, the mentee of Polycarp was ***known largely for his writing on heresy:***

180 AD *Adversus Haereses (against heresies)* providing a detailed attack against Gnosticism [Based on their readings of the Torah culturally influenced by Jewish norms found in the Talmud/ Kabbala] and systems that induced thinking: that the material world is created by an ignorant emanation of the highest God, ***trapping the Divine spark within the human body***. This Divine spark could be liberated by *gnosis* (knowledge) of the use of Mystical or Esoteric knowledge (knowledge that can only be comprehended by a special group or person.)

Rejecting the Gnostics, who said that they possessed a secret oral tradition from Jesus himself, Irenaeus maintained that the bishops in different cities are known as far back as the Apostles and that the bishops provided the only safe guide to the interpretation of Scripture.

Lesson Two

The Revelation Message:

Rev 2:8 And unto the angel of the church in Smyrna write; These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive;

Rev 2:9 I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and *I know* the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but *are* the synagogue of Satan.

Rev 2:10 Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast *some* of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.

Rev 2:11 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.

(Revelation 2:8) - The letter to Smyrna opens with an affirmation of the author: “the first and last”, which was dead and as alive. The resurrected Christ, is both first and last, simultaneously. He is not static as one or the other; he is both at the same time. He is **dead** and **alive**, meaning He always represents the Messiah who died as the propitiation for the sin of humanity. Still, He is yet alive as the victor over death and the grave.

(Revelation 2:9) - “I know thy work, tribulation (suffering), and poverty (lack)”. God knows the work of the Church, and He is aware of the suffering endured to do it effectively. God is sensitive to the lack of resources required to sustain ministry work.

However, the suffering or lack cannot justify failure to continue or to leave God’s work unfinished. He substitutes the evaluation of suffering and poverty with a projection that the Church is “*rich*”. God declares an immediate graduation from “beggar” status to abounding abundance. Acceleration is possible when the Church considers its identity embedded in God’s evaluation, in contrast to public opinion or natural observation.

The response turns its attention to uncovering a deeper issue, more important than suffering or lack. Beneath the surface of the Church, a subterranean ideology conflict rages. On the surface, the Church appears functional, but beneath the surface, its allegiance is divided. Divine inspection identifies the presence of an alternative assembly, the “synagogue of Satan”.

The Church is at war within itself, struggling to survive dual allegiance. The formula to serve multiple masters always ends the same, hating one to love the other. (Luke 16:13) Allegiance can only be certified by what is done, not by what is said. Actions not only speak louder than words, but actions replace all words.

(Revelation 2:10) – The fear of losing social favor and prominence among men causes the Church to dilute its message and compromise its principles. A dual allegiance to secular norms leads to adherence to the methods the world uses to measure and reward success. Adapting marketing strategy in exchange for ministry and music entertainment in place of worship removes the distinct lines and definitions that should clearly separate the Church from the world. When the difference cannot be seen or heard, the Church will have surrendered its purpose.

The Church must return to an identity that fears God more than men. (Luke 12:4) What God says about the Church is the only evaluation that matters.

(Revelation 2:11) – He that Hath an Ear: **LET HIM HEAR THE VOICE OF THE** will not be hurt by the second death, the condemnation and judgment of those who died without belief in the Messiah.