

Smyrna

City of the Persecuted Church



- Modern city of Izmir in Turkey.
- Location:
 - Smyrna was located about 40 miles north of Ephesus.
 - Sits at the inland tip of a large deep gulf that extends 30 miles inland from the Aegean Sea.
- Description:
 - Adorns the base, slopes, and Summit of Mount Pagos.
 - Was on a major trade route that led inland through Asia Minor.
- Brief history:
 - Founded in about 1100-1000 B.C.
 - According to legend, an Amazon named Smyrna founded the city.
 - The earliest settlers were Aeolian Greeks.
 - After 688 B.C. Smyrna fell to the Ionians.
 - After the time of Alexander the Great, Lysirnachus built a new city at Smyrna.
 - Early in the period of Roman dominance (about 195 B.C.), Smyrna pledged her allegiance with a temple built to honor the god Rorna.
 - A major earthquake occurred in the region in 177 or 178 A.D.
 - The beautiful white marble city was left in ruins.
 - Aristides wrote an eloquent appeal to the emperor Marcus Aurelius, describing Smyrna—the Glory of Asia—transformed into a waste. The emperor was so moved that he burst into tears. The emperor then granted Smyrna a ten years' remission of taxes and funds for rebuilding.
 - During New Testament times the population is estimated to have been between 180,000 and 200,000 people. Modern Izmir has a

- population of about 2,000,000.
- Political status in New Testament times:
 - The city was under Roman control.
 - It had a proconsul
- Smyrna was a flourishing commercial city.
 - A port city with two harbors.
 - Small harbor could be closed with chains.
 - larger harbor used as a mooring place.
 - A wealthy city.
 - Fertile soil and excellent climate.
 - Smyrna claims to have been the birthplace of the Greek poet Homer.
 - The primary home of Aelius Aristides the distinguished rhetorician and writer.
 - Aristides said: “Smyrna city was a flower of beauty, such as earth and sun had never showed to mankind.”
 - Olympian games were celebrated in Smyrna.
 - The “Crown”
 - Ancient writers referred to the ‘Crown of Smyrna.’
 - The crown of Smyrna likely arose from the appearance of the hill Pagos, with the stately public buildings on its rounded top and the city spreading out down its rounded sloping sides.
- Concerning crowns:
 - A crown or garland was usually a circlet of flowers or vines.
 - They were often worn in worship of the gods.
 - John used the crown terminology so closely related to the city of Smyrna. **Revelation 2:10**
 - Other Biblical references to the “crown”
 - **James 1:12**
 - **2 Corinthians 9:24-27**
 - **1 Peter 5:4**
 - Smyrna was famous throughout the Roman world for:
 - Its wealth.
 - As a center of science.
 - As a center of medicine.
 - Smyrna has been called:
 - “The fairest city” of its region.
 - “The crown of Ionia.”
 - The lovely.”
 - “The “ornament of Asia.”
- Architecture:
 - Beautiful, well-paved, colonnades-lined streets. One street was called the “Street of Gold.”
 - Attractive squares and porticos.

- Public library.
- A theater that would seat 20,000 people.
- A grain market.
- The most magnificent gymnasium in Asia Minor.
- Temple of Zeus
- Temple to Nemesis
- In 195 B.C., Smyrna was the first city in Asia Minor to erect a temple for the cult of Rome.
- Temple to Tiberias.
- Temple to Hadrian.
- The Agora (marketplace)
 - The only area of Greco-Roman Smyrna which has been excavated.
 - 394 ft. x 262½ ft.
 - Vaulted basement.
 - Two story portico.
 - The market place formed the center attraction of the city.
- The Odeion — an auditorium which one writer said was Smyrna's house of music.

■ Religion:

- Smyrna was the center for the worship of Dionysus (the god of wine).
- During the reign of Emperor Domitian (81-96 A.D.), refusal to worship the image of the Roman emperor as lord was punishable by death.

■ The Church at Smyrna:

- Mentioned only in:
 - **Revelation 1:11**
 - **Revelation 2:8-11**
- Known as the suffering church due to the severe persecution it suffered at the hands of the Roman government.
- Polycarp (A.D. 69-156)
 - A pupil of John.
 - During a great period of persecution, Polycarp was arrested and brought before the governor. When he was offered his freedom if he would curse Christ, he replied: "Eighty and six years have I served Christ and He has done me nothing but good; how then could I curse Him, my Lord and Savior?" He was then burned alive.
 - Jews, although it was the Sabbath, helped gather faggots for the fires.
 - It is said that ten other Christians, including some from

Philadelphia, were martyred along with Polycarp in Smyrna's stadium.

- Irenaeus, a very influential leader in the early church, lived in Smyrna.

■ The Letter to the Church at Smyrna — **Revelation 2:8-11**

8 “And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write, “These things says the First and the Last, who was dead, and came to life:

9 ‘I know your works, tribulation, and poverty (but you are rich); and I know the blasphemy of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan.

10 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 will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.

11 ‘He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death.’”

