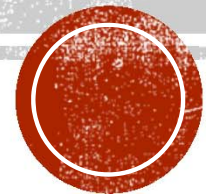


REVELATION 2

Letter to the churches - Smyrna



By Richard Osei

THE SEVEN CHURCHES

- Why these seven?
- One phrase that echo's through out the letters (He that heath an ear let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches)
- Levels of Application
 1. Local – Sir William Ramsay conducted an intensive archeological investigation (Had local problems that the letter address)
 2. Admonitory to all churches (all the seven letters were sent to all the seven churches, with one specifically that that church)
 3. Homiletic (Personal)
 4. Prophetic



SEVEN DESIGN ELEMENTS

- In each of the Letters to Seven Churches
 1. Name of the Church
 2. Title of Christ Chosen
 3. Commendation (2 letter - nothing good to say about them)
 4. Concerns (2 letter - nothing bad to say about them)
 5. Exhortation
 6. Promise to the Overcomer
 7. Close: "He that hath an ear, hear what the Spirit says to the Churches."



EPHESUS

- Nevertheless I have *this* against you, that you have left your first love.
- They are too busy on the business of the King, to have any time for the King (Example: Luke 10:38-40)

1. Name of the Church → Ephesus
2. Title of Christ Chosen → Rev. 2:1
3. Commendation → Rev. 2:2-3
4. Concerns → Rev. 2:4
5. Exhortation → Rev. 2:5-6
6. Close: “He that hath an ear, hear what the Spirit says to the Churches.”
→ Rev. 2:7
7. Promise to the Overcomer → Rev. 2:7



LETTER TO SMYRNA

- Smyrna is a Greek word with a Hebrew root
- Mur = Death
- Myrrh is a bitter gum and costly perfume which exudes from a certain tree or a shrub in Arabia and Ethiopia
- Also an ingredient in:
 - Perfume (Ps. 45:8)
 - Holy anointing oil for priests (Ex. 30:23)
 - The purification of women (Esther 2:12)
- It was used in embalming (John 19:39)
- Its ease pain / give nice scent when crush



MYRRH

- Myrrh
- One of the gifts of the Magi at Christ's birth (Matt. 2:11)
- Gold --> royalty
- Frankincense --> deity, priesthood
- Myrrh --> suffering, death
- The body of Jesus was embalmed by Joseph & Nicodemus (John 19:39-40)
- In the Millennium gold and frankincense are offered, but not myrrh (Isa. 60:6)



LEVELS OF APPLICATION

- Local
- Admonitory (to all churches)
- Personal (Homiletics)
- Prophetic



SMYRNA

- About 42 miles north of Ephesus and possessed an excellent double harbor.
- The outer harbor was a deep water mooring ground, the inner had a narrow entrance that could be blocked with a chain
- Today Smyrna is called Izmir, and it is the 3rd largest city in Turkey
- Population 3,000,000
- It exports tobacco, grapes, figs, cotton, olives, and olive oil





STRATEGIC LOCATION

- Smyrna stood at the entrance of the broad fertile valley of Mermus, at the mouth of the river Meles, and on the well sheltered gulf of Smyrna
- Strategically placed for trade between Europe and Asia; thus, a rival to Sardis and Lydian Kingdom
- Strabo described it as the most beautiful city in the world. Even today, bustling Izmir has been termed the "Paris of the Levant"



EARLY HISTORY

- Smyrna was devastated by Lyattes, king of Lydia, and ceased to exist for three centuries, a pathetic end to a history of two and one-half millennia
- 4th century: Alexander the Great ordered Lysimachus to build a strong, well planned city, the most beautiful in Ionia
- It prospered into one of the greatest of the then known world.
- 27 BC: Smyrna came under control of the Romans having proved a faithful ally to Rome in the Syrian and Mithridatic wars.



LATER HISTORY

- From 27 B.C. to 324 A.D. she enjoyed great material prosperity
- In the reign of Tiberius, it was almost blotted out by an earthquake
- Between 178 and 180 A.D. it suffered a succession of seismic disturbances which again reduced the vulnerable city to ruins
- Marcus Aurelius once more restored it
- parts of his agora are still standing
- In 378 another earthquake demolished the city, but the intrepid Smyrneans again rebuilt



PAGAN WORSHIP

- Pagan Worship
- At the foot of the mountain stood the temple of Zeus, the father of the gods, regarded as the lord of the sky, rain, clouds, and thunder
- Along the Golden Street stood the shrines of
 - Apollo, the sun-god
 - Aphrodite, the goddess of love and beauty
 - Aesculapius, the god of medicine
 - Cybele, a Phrygian nature goddess
- At the Agora (the commercial and political center) where statues of
 - Poseidon, the sea-god
 - Demeter, the goddess of corn



PAGAN WORSHIP - CYBELE

- Cybele
- The tutelary goddess of Smyrna was Cybele
- (later, the Greek Rhea, the daughter of sky and the earth and the mother of Zeus, Poseidon and Hades)
- Her worship was wild and unrestrained
- As the giver of wealth, depicted as enthroned and wearing a crown of battlements and towers
- "Goddess of fortresses"? (Daniel 11:38)



CAESAR WORSHIP

- Caesar Worship
- Smyrna also readily accepted Caesar worship
- In 196 B.C. the Smyrneans erected a temple to Dea Roma, the goddess of Rome, and they subsequently build one to Tiberius in 26 A.D.
- The worship of the emperor was compulsory.
- Each year a Roman citizen had to burn a pinch of incense on the alter and to acknowledge publicly that Caesar was supreme lord.
- In return, he received a formal certificate that he had done so
- This act of worship presented a vital test for the Christian, and many who refused perished at the stake or by wild beasts in the arena.



SMYRNA — CHRIST TITLE AND COMMENDATION

- 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.

- The title of Christ:
- First and the Last, who was dead, and came to life

- Commendation
- 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.



TRIBULATION/POVERTY

- Tribulation = thlipsis
 - a pressing, pressing together, pressure
 - metaphor for oppression, affliction, tribulation, distress, straits
- Not the specific "Great Tribulation"
 - we all shall have tribulation, trouble, persecution (John 16:33; 2 Tim 3:12, etc)
- "Poverty but rich"
 - vs. Laodicea, rich but poor (Rev. 3:17, 2 Cor. 8:9)
- Two words for poverty in the Greek:
 - penia, the state of have nothing superfluous
 - ptocheia (here), the state of one who has nothing at all; implies beggary
- "I know your suffering"; John 16:33, 2 Tim. 3:12
- It could have relieved by simply a pinch of incense offered to Caesar...



JEW'S "WHO ARE NOT"

- Jews "Who Are Not"
- Blasphemy: "Synagogue of Satan"
 - John knows about blasphemy of Jews (John 8:44)
- Legalism: leaven of Galatians
 - Demand of Gentiles circumcision (Acts 15:1,10)
 - Peter is rebuked by Paul (Gal 2; 3:1-3)
 - Peter agrees (2 Peter 3:15-16)
- Early persecution was brought on by the Jews not the Romans
 - in Antioch (Act 13:50)
 - in Iconium (Act 14:2,5)
 - in Lystra (Acts 14:19)
 - in Thessalonica (Acts 17:5)



BISHOP OF SMYRNA

- Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna
- In 166 AD, the bishop of Smyrna, Polycarp, refused to recant
- "Eighty and six years have I served Him, and He never did me wrong. How can I now blaspheme my King who has loved me so?"
- The old man was burned at the stake on the Sabbath day, on object of Jewish hatred as well as from the Roman persecution



"TARES" SOWN IN EARLY CHURCH

- Legalism
 - denial of Christ's completed work
- Gnosticism
 - denial of Christ's humanity
- Caesar worship
 - denial of Christ's Lordship



EXHORTATION: REV. 2:10-11

- 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.”
- "10 days"? (Gen 24:55, Job 19:3, Dan 1:12) Short period of time
- "Crown" (winners reward)



ROMAN PERSECUTION

- Famine and pestilence falls on Rome
- Diseases brought back from the Parthian wars devastated much of Rome
- Inundation from the Tiber put much of the grain storehouse under water
- The Christians were a convenient scapegoat
- These disasters were brought on by this new religion, so Christianity became a crime
- 5 million believers died for Christ during this period (Fox's Book of Martyrs)
- The 20th Century murdered more Christians than all the other centuries put together



CROWNS PROMISED

- Crown of Life (James 1:12, Rev. 2:10)
 - for those who have suffered for his Sake
- Crown of Righteousness (2 Tim 4:8)
 - for those who loved his appearing
- Crown of Glory (1 Peter 5:4)
 - for those who fed the flock
- Crown Incorruptible (1 Cor. 9:25)
 - for those who press on steadfastly
- Crown of Rejoicing (1 Thess 2:19)



CLOSING PHRASE AND POST SCRIPT

- Close: “He that hath an ear, hear what the Spirit says to the Churches.”
- He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death.



ADMONITORY (TO ALL CHURCHES)

- Don't confuse persecution with the specific "Great Tribulation"
- Most of the Body, in most of the world, for most of the past 1900 year
- Underground in America?
- "Non-Jews"? Replacement theology?
 - (Are these who say Israel rejected the messiah, all those promises God gave Israel now fall on the church)
 - its Blaspheming, it makes God a liar. Paul tells us in Romans chapters 9, 10 and 11 that God is not finish with Israel
- Jeremiah 3.14, Isaiah 54.4-8, Isaiah 62.1-5, Jeremiah 31.31-33...



PERSONAL (HOMILETICS)

▪ ¹² Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. (2 Timothy 3:12)

▪ **Promised persecution**

Why do Christians have trials?

▪ 1. To glorify God (Dan. 3:16-18, 24-25)

▪ 2. To Discipline for known sin (Heb. 12:5-11; James 4:17, Rom. 14:23, 1 John 1:9)

▪ 3. To prevent us from falling into sin (1 Pet 4:1-2)

▪ 4. To keep us from Pride (2 Cor. 12:7-10)

▪ Paul kept from pride by his "thorn in the flesh." (His eyes? Gal. 4:15; 6:11)

▪ 5. To build faith (1 Peter 1:6-7)

▪ 6. To cause growth (Rom. 5:3-5)

▪ 7. To teach obedience and discipline (Acts 9:15-16, Phil. 4:11-13)

▪ 8. To equip us to comfort others (2 Cor. 1:3-4)

▪ 9. To prove the reality of Christ in us (2 Cor. 4:7-11)

▪ 10. For testimony to the angels (Job 1:8, Eph. 3:8-11, 1 Pet. 1:12)

▪ ² My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, ³ knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. ⁴ But let patience have *its* perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing. (James 1:2-4)



PERSONAL (HOMILETICS)

- **Loyalty of Ambassadorship (The third commandment)**
- 7 “You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain. (**Exodus 20:7**)
-
- not acknowledge Caesar is lord
- ³² “Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven. ³³ But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven. (**Matthew 10:32-33**)



PROPHETIC PROFILE?

- Ephesus - Apostolic Church? (**The Loveless Church**)
 - Knew the word, and on a mission but left their first love
 - Being too busy on the business of the King rather than for the King Himself
- Smyrna - Persecuted Church? (**The Persecuted Church**)
 - that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation
 - Their ambassadorship was tested



SEVEN DESIGN ELEMENTS

1. Name of the Church - Smyrna
2. Title of Christ Chosen – Rev. 2:8
3. Commendation - Rev. 2:9
4. Concerns – no concerns
5. Exhortation - Rev. 2:10
6. Close: “He that hath an ear, hear what the Spirit says to the Churches.” - Rev. 2:11
7. Promise to the Overcomer - Rev. 2:11



NEXT READ CHAPTER 2 & 3

- Outline the Letter to Pergamos

1. Name of the Church
2. Title of Christ Chosen
3. Commendation
4. Concerns
5. Exhortation
6. Promise to the Overcomer
7. Close: “He that hath an ear, hear what the Spirit says to the Churches.”

