

Rev 2:8-11 Smyrna – Martyr Church

Smyrna (modern word Myrrh) means suffering. This city is still in existence. Today is called Izmir. Some say this city will be larger than Istanbul. Lovely ancient Harbor city many called a crown or flower. City was on top with flowers and myrtle trees. There was a Theater, music center and stadium. Polycarp student of John was burned alive for his faith in that very stadium in 155AD. Smyrna and Philadelphia received no condemnation and they have had continuous existence. Izmir (Smyrna) still has believers, but they are underground due to persecution to this day in Turkey. Both are the only two churches that have not had their lamp stands removed.

Historical Time period – 100AD – 314AD (Began with the death of John and Edict of Tolerance by Constantine that ended persecution)

Smyrna Background:



Smyrna was a port city in Asia Minor, in what today is Turkey. In ancient times Smyrna contended with Ephesus and Pergamum for the honor of being called the foremost city of Asia. Streets and buildings extended from the bay up the sides of the surrounding hills. Fountains flowed with the water from the city's aqueducts. A theater on one of the highest slopes overlooked the lower city. Smyrna claimed to be the birthplace of the poet Homer and built a shrine in his honor. A library, gymnasiums, baths, and a stadium contributed to Smyrna's cultural life. The city attracted speakers like Apollonius of Tyanna in the first century and other renowned orators in the second century.

The broad harbor alongside Smyrna was the mooring ground for ships that plied the Aegean Sea. In the heart of the city there was also a smaller harbor or marina that could be closed with a chain. Ships would transfer their cargo from the waterfront to the agora or market place, which was the commercial center of the city. Smyrna was known for its fine wine, garments, perfumes, and goldsmithing.

Great Mother goddess, Cybele, whose temple was located on the eastern side of the city, was Smyrna's patron deity. Often pictured on Smyrna's coins, she was regarded as the divine being who was especially responsible for the well-being of the city. Fertility, health, and protection were among the benefits she was said to provide.



V8 “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:

Alpha and Omega – Creation to End – He is in charge. This speaks to Resurrection - up to 5 million died during this period professing faith in Christ. **Why would this characteristic of the Lord's Divine nature be important for Smyrna to hear? Why is it important to you in your time of suffering?**

V9-10 – “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. 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.

Commendation is for 7 things:

1. Tribulation (trouble)
2. Poverty
3. Jew externally (Jew by definition can be defined by faith proven by actions)
4. Fear nothing
5. Satan
6. 10 days (10 Periods – 10 emperors in the period – starting with Nero who killed Paul)
7. Faithful to the death

James 1:12 “Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him.”

Put your name in this section.

Will God be able to say, “_____”, I know your afflictions and your poverty—yet you are rich! I know about the slander of those who say they are Christians and are not, but are a church of Satan. Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. I tell you, the devil will put may you in prison to test you, and you will suffer persecution for ten days. Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you life as your victor’s crown.”

What does it mean to you now? Despite your circumstances, are you found rich in your faith? Are you a true Christian? In the time of testing that will come, will you be found faithful?

V11 “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.”

First Death is the body. The second death is the soul. No believer will have to go through the second death.

Moody said, “He who is born twice will only have to die once, but those who are only born once will have to die twice.”

How about you have you been born again?

Rev 2:12-17 Pergamum – Church

Three Great Royal Cities -

Smyrna (Izmir) – Commerce Center

70 miles north – Pergamum – Religious Center (Satan’s headquarters at the time)

65 miles South – Ephesus – Political Center (Roman Emperors came)

Pergamum – The most Greek Gods (6 alters) in the acropolis including Zeus.

The name is comprised of two Greek words, “pergos” or “married” or “united to” and “gamos” which is “power”. So, Pergamos literally means “married” or “united to power”. With stunning vistas and high society, it was aptly named a Royal City. A temple to Caesar Augustus was constructed there. There was also a healing temple area. Pergamum had the greatest library at the time. It had parchment - not papyrus. Mark Anthony gave the library to his girlfriend Cleopatra.

Historical Period 314AD – 590AD – Paganism - World entered into the Church. Heresies were prevalent in this period.

Pergamum Background:

Pergamum was a major city in western Asia Minor in New Testament times. It lies in a spacious valley, sixteen miles from the Aegean Sea in what is today the country of Turkey. In the centuries before Christ, Pergamum was the capital of an independent



kingdom. Its impressive temples, library, and medical facilities made Pergamum a renowned cultural and political center. By the time Revelation was written,

Pergamum had become part of the Roman Empire, but because of its location and importance, the Romans used it as an administrative center for the province of Asia.

Athena was the patron goddess of Pergamum. Strong and chaste, she was considered the protector of the city. Her strength of character is reflected in the statue of Athena shown at the right. This statue stood in the north hall of the sanctuary to Athena that graced the acropolis at Pergamum. The renowned Pergamum library stood next to her sanctuary, showing her close connection with culture, wisdom, crafts, and learning of all sorts. The founding of the cult of Athena at Pergamum is included on the panels on the altar to Zeus, which also stood on the acropolis.



V12 “And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write, ‘These things says He who has the sharp two-edged sword:

The defined nature given to this church is the Word of God sharper than a two-edged sword. **Why was this chosen for this church? Do you take the Word of God lightly or treat as you would a powerful weapon?**

V13 "I know your works, and where you dwell, where Satan's throne is. And you hold fast to My name, and did not deny My faith even in the days in which Antipas was My faithful martyr, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells.

According to Christian tradition, John the Apostle ordained Antipas as bishop of Pergamum during the reign of the Roman emperor Domitian. The traditional account Antipas was martyred in 92 AD by burning in a brazen bull-shaped altar for casting out demons worshiped by the local population². Another account in the [Believer's Bible Commentary](#), claims his martyrdom was because he refused to worship the Roman Emperor.

Polycarp undoubtedly knew how Antipas stood firm on his faith in Christ as a martyr approximately 60 years prior to his martyrdom.

Satan's City: Religion was big business there and Satan had his headquarters placed there complete with heathen temples. Athena, Caesar, Hadrian, Alter of Zeus with an idol on it, Temple of Dionysus, Asclepius (staff with serpent) healing. Dionysus was the god of wine closely aligned with Satyr (half goat with horns image of Satan).

Asclepius (staff with serpent) healing example:

Pergamum constructed a for profit hospital to capitalize on the religion and take advantage of the weakest and sick in the Roman Empire. A long tunnel was constructed in a cave they claimed was a healing temple where voices came through holes, positive sayings, hot baths, music, library, at night the sick would go in to temple where the poisonous snakes would crawl all over you. The snakes and the gods would heal you for a price. They also had a secret door to drag out the dead. This hospital with satanic practices was in operation for 700 years. Today, this seem ridiculous right. **Wait, don't we have people that will send money and do ridiculous things today to get healed? Are we not treating people with CoVid with experimental drugs under emergency use authorization for a virus that has a 99% survival rate, yet we don't have a vaccine for obesity or diabetes or cancer, which has a much higher death rate.**



² ["St Antipas of Pergamon"](#). Retrieved 2007-12-21.

Satyr

**Definition:**

1. Greek myth one of a class of sylvan deities, represented as goatlike men who drank and danced in the train of Dionysus and chased the nymphs
2. a man who has strong sexual desires

Satyrs acquired their [goat](#)-like aspect through later Roman, conflation with [Faunus](#), a carefree [Italic](#) nature spirit of similar characteristics and identified with the Greek god [Pan](#). Hence satyrs are most commonly described in Latin literature as having the upper half of a man and the lower half of a goat, with a goat's tail in place of the Greek tradition of horse-tailed satyrs; therefore, satyrs became nearly identical with [fauns](#). Mature satyrs are often depicted in Roman art with goat's [horns](#), while juveniles are often shown with bony nubs on their foreheads.

Satyrs are described as roguish but faint-hearted folk — subversive and dangerous, yet shy and cowardly. [Luce](#) [concord](#): As Dionysiac creatures they are lovers of wine and women, and they are ready for every physical pleasure. They roam to the music of pipes ([auloi](#)), [cymbals](#), [castanets](#), and [bagpipes](#), and they love to dance with the [nymphs](#) (with whom they are obsessed, and whom they often pursue), and have a special form of dance called [sikinnis](#). Because of their love of wine, they are often represented holding wine cups, and they appear often in the decorations on wine cups.

Does it surprise you that Satan is embodied in the original image of the god of wine and a goat? Jesus said He would separate the sheep from the goats (Matthew 25:31-33). Also, Satan sets up an unholy temple as a place for healing? Can you see what Jesus does for good, Satan turns for evil? Do you think this is relevant today?

V14 - 15 But I have a few things against you, because you have there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit sexual immorality. Thus, you also have those who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate.

Balaam taught Balak which introduced idol worship to Israel. He did it subtly by introducing them to food sacrificed by idols and then enticing the children of Israel to inter-marry with Moabite Women. Nicolaitans among others re-introduced religious rituals such as clergy to speak for believers.

Read Hebrews 4:14-16. **Do you go boldly straight to the throne of God with your High Priest Jesus?** If you go through any intermediary in prayer then you have fallen to some of the lies of Satan that he used on the Nicolaitans. No matter what logic is used it is simply not in the word of God. Remember, Jesus + 0!

This word “Nikolaos”, appears to be a compound of two Greek words; “nikao”, “to conquer” or “consume” and “laos”, “laity” or “the people” has another connection to “Bil’am”, other than just being mentioned together in Revelation 2. The Hebrew word “Bil’am” is a compound of two words also; “Bila” (beit-lamedayin), meaning “eater” or “destroyer” and “am” (ayin-mem) or “people”. The name “Bil’am” literally means “Destroyer of people”. Hmmm, what a coincidence.

In what ways, do we compromise today? What is the problem with eating food sacrificed to idols? What relevance does this have to us today?

V16 Repent, or else I will come to you quickly and will fight against them with the sword of My mouth.

The very sword you have been (the Word of God) given for your protection and defense, is also the instrument of judgment against you if you do not repent. It is the only cure. This is the reason that knowing your bible and studying the Word of God is vital to your very survival. **Are you qualified to hold the sword and operate it? What do you need to do to become more qualified?**

V17 “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give some of the hidden manna to eat. And I will give him a white stone, and on the stone a new name written which no one knows except him who receives it.”

Hidden Manna (word of God) and the person and the bread of Christ. Christ is hidden from the world today. This is also meant as a contrast to those that had the meat dedicated to idols. The faithful Christians who reject bad doctrine and stand firm are given this Hidden Manna. White stone (color of Holy Heaven). Christ will give each of us a white stone with a new name for him that is intimate and only means something to you personally.

Just picture in your mind what it will be like in Heaven to receive a white stone and the significance of our relationship with the Lord. **What will it mean to you? How will you feel if you do not get this eternal reward?** You now have the knowledge of what is at stake which makes you accountable.
