

SMYRNA

Int.

1. Aim: To expound the message to the church at Smyrna, to give a setting by discussing the city in history, and then make some practical applications.
2. 7 letters to 7 churches of Asia
 - a. These 7 churches stand as representatives of all congregations
 - b. The problems of these churches are related to us today for human nature is still the same.
 - c. This letter to Smyrna was intended for a particular people at a particular time in history, yet it has a message for Christians today.
3. Our lesson will include: [Rev. 2:8-11]
 - a. The historical background
 - b. The letter itself
 - c. Lessons for us

Discussion

I. historical BACKGROUND

- A. Name of city
 1. Comes from ancient Semitic word - myrrh
 2. Mt. 2:11 medical prescriptions
 3. It was a bitter gum from which a costly perfume was extracted
- B. Foundation of city
 1. Around 1312 B.C. was the first settlement
 2. Destroyed around 600 B.C. - ceased to exist for a while

3. Alexander the Great restored the city and it grew and prospered
4. Lay out of city shows they were highly developed
 - a. Broad streets, paved, squares - unusually proud of their city - claimed that it was "first in Asia"
 - b. Main street was paved with Gold
 - c. Magnificent theater - 20,000 capacity
 - d. Schools of science and medicine
 - e. It was one of the loveliest cities in existence and was sometimes called "the crown of Asia" or "the flower of Asia."
5. Pictures of Agora or market place in Smyrna
6. Today it is called Izmir - population over 200,000 - About 50 miles north of Ephesus

C. RELIGIOUS DEVELOPMENT

1. They had developed a system of idol worship
2. Zeus was their first god - a temple was built for him
3. Dionysius - the wine god - they had a big celebration yearly to mock death, burial and resurrection
4. Homer the poet was born here - shrine - coins in his honor
5. Meles - river god

D. Emperor worship

1. It was a part of the Roman empire
2. In 195 BC they built a temple and instituted a worship of Rome and its emperor.
3. In 26 A.D. they built a new temple in worship of the emperor Tiberius.
4. The Christians could not worship the emperor, so conflict often arose.

E. Church

1. No record of its establishment
2. Maybe it was started when Paul was in Ephesus and the disciples divided to preach to all Asia - Acts 19:10

II. **THE LETTER V. 8-11**

A. V. 8 Introducing of sender "And unto the angel of the church in Smyrna write; These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive;"

1. Angel - written to the angel of the church
 - a. Four views as to who the angel was:
 - (1) Messengers sent to John at Patmos
 - (2) Real angels
 - (3) Elders - overseers of the congregation
 - (4) Preacher or evangelist
 - b. Messenger was the one who read it to the church.
2. The first and the last
 - a. He is eternal - always existed in past and will in future
 - b. At beginning and end of history
3. Dead and Alive Again
 - a. No mockery like with their wine-god Dionysisos
 - b. Encouragement to Smyrna
 - (1) They had to face death and needed to be assured of resurrection
 - (2) They could anticipate ultimate victory!
 - (3) He can bring comfort to them because he had been through it all

B. V. 9 PRAISE "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."

1. I Know

- a. He knew by watching - their works
- b. He also knew by experience because he suffered and was poor - I Pet. 4:1 I I Cor. 8:9 Mt.8:20

2. Tribulation

- a. Pressure, burden, pressing down, stones used to grind wheat - trials of all kinds
- b. Persecution of some sort - they were a suffering church
- c. He assures them that he knows their affliction and tribulation and is sympathetic
- d. Many churches have known suffering
 - (1) Jerusalem - preacher stoned, members imprisoned, leaders were fed to wild beasts
 - (2) I Pet.4:16
- e. These people at Smyrna were under pressure of death because they were Christians

3. Poverty - one of the trials they faced was poverty

- a. Extreme poverty, deep poverty destitute of riches and abundance
- b. It probably came because of oppression and robbery
- c. It is likely that their possessions were confiscated.

- d. The city was rich - but the Christians were poor
- e. They suffered financial loss because of their commitment to Christ
- f. Heb. 10:32-34
- g. It was poor in all that is ordinarily reckoned as wealth, but it was rich in the estimation of those who can judge the realities of life.

4. But thou art rich

- a. Poor in money - rich in faith -Jas. 2:5 the real rich people
- b. Spiritual riches - they were wealthy in the things that last. They were building for eternity!
- c. Hadn't you rather be rich in the sight of God than men?
- d. Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven.
- e. The RICH-POOR CHURCH
 - (1) Very poor - but very rich!
 - (2) Rich in faith, grace of God, Christian Character
 - (3) Opposite of Laodicea which was rich in money - poor before God
 - (4) Smyrna was poor in the world's goods but rich before God
 - (5) There are poor-rich men, and rich poor-men!
- f. II Cor. 6:10

5. BLASPHEMY

- a. False Jews who spake against Christians
- b. Rm. 2:28-29 Jews by birth only not life
- c. Blasphemed church at Smyrna and Christians who had remained loyal
- d. Synagogue of Satan
 - (1) Synagogue - Jewish place of worship
 - (2) Worshipers of Satan - because of actions
 - (3) Those who act like the devil are his servants

C. V. 10 PROPHECY "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."

1. Fear Not

- a. They were a martyred church already
- b. Things are going to be worse - more trials & tribulations to come
- c. Most think we should have nothing bad - Job did, even though he was an upright man

2. Devil cast you into prison ten days

- a. Prison - common punishment - Acts 12:3,4 16:23
- b. Devil - his workers - persecutors
- c. Tried - tested - their faith was tried
- d. Ten days - it would not be long - but an intensified period

3. Be faithful unto death - crown of life
 - a. Even to the point of martyrdom - trust in Christ, be loyal to Him, even when threatened with death.
 - b. Many would be tempted to worship the emperor
 - c. Crown of life - everlasting life - victory - his crown in life is eternal - I I
Tim. 4:8 I Pet. 5:4
 - d. Polycarp - example

D. V. 11 WORDS OF PRAISE "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"

1. He that hath an ear, let him hear...
 - a. Those who are willing to listen
 - b. God does not act in some miraculous way but teaches us and we must respond
 - c. He has ears to hear the word for himself!

2. Overcometh - not hurt by second death
 - a. Those who are overcome - lost
 - b. Second death - lake of fire Rev. 20:6,14 21:8
 - c. If he overcomes the temptation and lost his life he would be spared from the second death or vice versa!!
 - d. All fear death - but we should especially fear this second death
 - e. The unbeliever dies and finds another death awaiting him.
 - f. The believer dies and finds another life awaiting him.
 - g. The first death is of the body, the second is the death of the soul!

III. LESSONS

A. The message has meaning for us

1. This letter was written for the church at Smyrna nearly 2,000 years ago
2. But truth remains the same in the 20th century as it was in the 1st
3. Human nature is the same today as then. We have the same sins now that they had
4. So what applies to them applies to us if we are in the same condition

B. Lessons

1. I Know
 - a. Christ knows what we do and what we fail to do
 - b. He knows our works, tribulation and poverty.
 - c. He knows if we are rich in faith
2. We will have tribulations
 - a. Jn. 16:33
 - b. II Tim. 3:12
 - c. It is better to suffer injury than it is to inflict injury
3. We must be faithful at all costs in order to receive the crown of life
 - a. Some are faithful until they get mad
 - b. Others allow troubles and tribulations to cause them to be unfaithful
 - c. Would you be willing to die for Christ?
4. Fear the second death

CONCLUSION

1. Christ tasted death for every man so we would not have to taste the second death
 2. The decision is yours and your decision is the final one.
 3. Will you obey God?
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