

The Book of Revelation

Week Four: In depth on the letter to Smyrna

- About the City:
 - It is 40 miles north of Ephesus.
 - Whereas Ephesus was a very Non-Jewish City, Smyrna had a very strong Jewish community within it.
 - How can first-century Jewish leaders who effectively have no power, persecute Christians at all? By expelling them from the synagogue.
 - Modern Smyrna is not that much larger than Bloomington/Normal, and is about 1/3 Christian
- Only two of the seven churches get all praise... Smyrna and Philadelphia.
 - Later on in history, of the seven, when the Islamic faith takes over this region in the 6-800's. Smyrna and Philadelphia will hold out the longest.
- Letter to Smyrna:
 - Identification: The one who was dead and came to life
 - I know your affliction and your poverty, even though you are rich.
 - This church is suffering under persecution ALREADY, but Christ is reminding them of what he said in the sermon on the mount:
 - Synagogue of Satan:
 - Acknowledgement of the conflict with the first century Jewish faith.
 - Do not fear what you are about to suffer.
 - A warning of upcoming persecution.
 - Beware, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison so that you may be tested, and for 10 days have affliction.
 - Some link this to the test of Daniel in chapter 1
 - Many commentators view this as a "limited time" statement.
 - PROMISE: Whoever conquers will not be harmed by the second death.
- We used the story of Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna to illustrate the power of someone who had read the letter and faced trials. You can read about Polycarp on a site like Wikipedia, but personally I like the article in the catholic encyclopedia: www.newadvent.org
- Scripture worth reading:
 - The Beatitudes from the Sermon on the Mount: Matthew ch 5
 - The Book of Daniel: Especially chapter 1
- History worth looking into:
 - Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna, and his martyrdom.