



REVELATION 15 – SMYRNA: SACRIFICIAL FRAGRANCE

Dr. Leon L. Sanders
Revelation 2:8-9

NAMES OF THE CITIES: CLUE TO THEIR LETTERS

- Name of each city gives insight into the letter Christ designed for each church
 - Ephesus – Permitted: Allowed to go their way; like Adam, you and me (Ro 1:18-25; He 5:11-14)
 - Smyrna – Myrrh: Spice used in Temple worship and anoint the dead (Ex 30:22-33; Jn 19:39-42)
- Smyrna rivaled Ephesus for honors, prestige and importance
 - Hittite community conquered by Sea Peoples and later by Ionian Greeks
 - Major trade center for interior agricultural producers and markets
 - *Neokoros* city with temples to *Zeus*, *Cybele* {Nature}, *Deity of Rome* and *Augustus*
 - Thirty years after John, Ignatius sojourned here on his way to Rome for execution

TO SMYRNA'S EPISKOPOS: PERSPECTIVE OF CHRIST

- Christ {infinite} presents Himself to each church {finite} which has varying degrees of maturity {understanding} via snippets appropriate to the message
 - John {Apostle} received complete view of Christ consistent with complete Revelation
 - Each *episkopos* {Overseer} received specific view consistent with Christ's message to that church
- Smyrna's view of Christ: First and Last – Died and Resurrected {Myrrh}
(Mt 2:9-12; Jn 19:39-42)
 - First and Last – Isaiah: *I Am, **only** God, and Creator* (Is 41:4; 44:6; 48:12-13)
 - Dead but now lives – His victory over Death giving us Hope (1Co 15:50-58)
 - Keep one's focus on Jesus who is greater than the *World* (Col 1:15-20)

SMYRNA: CHURCH WITH MANY ENEMIES

- Smyrna was bustling wealthy metropolis by World's standards but its church was *weak* by worldly standards {powerless}
 - This was not a wealthy church; thus, it had little influence and little respect
 - Early church Gentile growth occurred primarily among the slave class
 - Deprecated by the wealthier classes meant it could be oppressed, bullied, by local political-religious forces: *Easy* target
 - *A kick the dog* metaphor, easy non-threatening target to blame for whatever for any convenient issue needed to sway public's focus
 - *Illegal*, not approved, religion seen as disrupting the *peace of Rome*

IRE OF THE JEWS: REJECTED OF CHRIST

- Jews publicly distancing themselves from Christians {Council of Jamnia}
 - Jews minority in many communities after Jewish Revolt and destruction of Jerusalem {70 A.D.}
 - Jews could ingratiate themselves pointing to churches as being *non-Jewish* and illegal to eliminate competition (Ac 12:1-3; 13:26-50)
 - Their continuing rejection of Messiah's *New Covenant* redemption placed them in Satan's camp; hence, Christ identified them as *synagogues of Satan*
- Reinforces Paul's warning to churches that the same could occur to them should they leave the faith: Purpose of the Letters – Warning the Churches (Ro 11)

SMYRNA: DESPISED BY THE WORLD

- Smyrna, Myrrh, spice associated with death and sacrifice: Sweet Savor to God
 - Component of *anointing oil*; death associated with ALL Temple worship (Ex 30:22-31; He 9:22-28)
 - Tribulation is part and parcel of being Saved in the World: Christ (Mt 5:2-12;)
- Christ came in Flesh to experientially *know* our plight, and tribulation (He 2:14-18; 4:15-16)
 - He desires mercy rather over sacrifice, antithetical to World System (Hos 6:6-7; Mt 9:10-13)
 - Christ understands being poor and powerless in the World; but World is passing away (Is 53:7; Mt 5:2-12; 8:20; IJo 2:15-17)
 - Being like Christ is being *despised* by World; savor of their Death: They *hate* you (2Co 2:15-16; IPe 2:23-25; 4:1-2, 12-19)