

Chapter Three

The Things Which Are

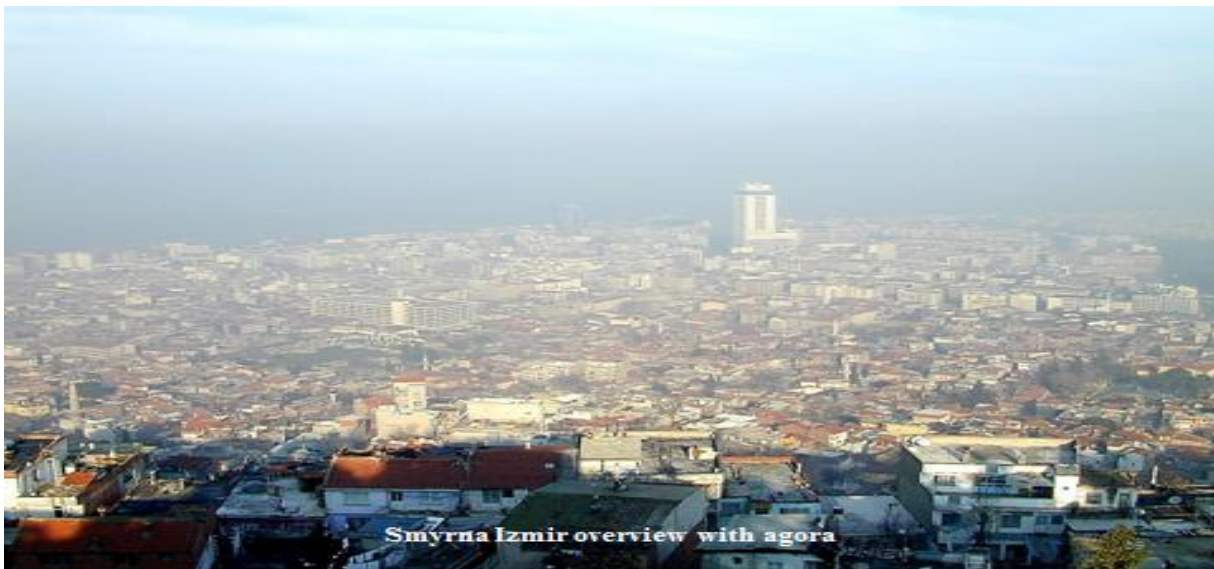
(Revelation 2:1 – 3:22)

I. The Church. (2:8)

I. Smyrna (The Suffering Church)

A. History of Smyrna

- 1) Founded in the 12th century B.C. It was destroyed by the Lydians in 627 B.C. And it lay in ruins for three centuries. Alexander saw its potential and planned for its restoration. This was carried out later by Antigonus and Lysimachus.
- 2) In 133 B.C. it was incorporated into the Roman Empire.
- 3) Located about 40 miles north of Ephesus and 50 miles South of Pergamum.
- 4) Had a well-protected port and was also connected to a main highway, was very wealthy, because they had commerce coming from every part of the world. It was a very prosperous city. Because of the trading from all over the world guilds were created.
- 5) The city was celebrated for its schools of science and medicine.







Smyrna agora



Smyrna agora first level arches



6) Depending on what writer you read the population was anywhere from 200,000 to 500,000 people.

7) There was the worship of many cults in the city.

Acts 17:16-23 (NKJV) ¹⁶Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was provoked within him when he saw that the city was given over to idols.

¹⁷Therefore he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and with the *Gentile* worshippers, and in the marketplace daily with those who happened to be there.

¹⁸Then certain Epicurean and Stoic philosophers encountered him. And some said, “What does this babbler want to say?” Others said, “He seems to be a proclaimer of foreign gods,” because he preached to them Jesus and the resurrection. ¹⁹And they took him and brought him to the Areopagus, saying, “May we know what this new doctrine *is* of which you speak? ²⁰For you are bringing some strange things to our ears. Therefore we want to know what these things mean.” ²¹For all the Athenians and the foreigners who were there spent their time in nothing else but either to tell or to hear some new thing. ²²Then Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, “Men of Athens, I perceive that in all things you are very religious; ²³for as I was passing through and considering the objects of your worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: **TO THE UNKNOWN GOD**. Therefore, the One whom you worship without knowing, Him I proclaim to you: (*City of Athens*)

8) Was considered the most beautiful city of the Roman province of Asia.

9) Smyrna was so prosperous they had a street of gold that had the temple of Zeus on one end and the temple of Cybele on the other end. In between these two were the temples of Apollo, Asklepios and Aphrodite.

A) *Cybele* - Goddess of nature

B) *Asklepios* - God of medicine

C) *Aphrodite* – Goddess of love

10) Emperor worship became even more popular during this time.

11) Smyrna was not kind to Christians. Many died there because of their belief in Jesus. One of the best known martyrs among the early Christians as you have heard was Polycarp.



II. The Correspondent. (2:8b)

I. He is the First and the Last. (Basically saying I Am God)

II. Who died and came to life again.

A. Remember the city was in ruins for three hundred years

1 Peter 3:18 (NKJV) ¹⁸For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring [£]us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit,

III. The Compliment. (2:9)

I. I know your afflictions. (Nothing escapes God's eyes)

II. I know your Poverty.

A. Penes – Having nothing extra, barely making it.

B. Ptocheia – Having nothing at all, begging to stay alive.

Hebrews 10:32-34 (NKJV) ³²But recall the former days in which, after you were illuminated, you endured a great struggle with sufferings: ³³partly while you were made a spectacle both by reproaches and tribulations, and partly while you became companions of those who were so treated; ³⁴**for you had compassion on [£]me in my chains, and joyfully accepted the plundering of your goods, knowing that you have a better and an enduring possession for yourselves [£]in heaven. (*Christian Jews Losing Everything*)**

III. Yet you are rich. (Salvation, grace, peace, holiness which are priceless to God)

IV. I know the blasphemy of those who say they are Jews and are not.

A. They are a synagogue of Satan.

IV. The Concern.

I. There is no concern mentioned.

V. The Cure. (2:10)

I. Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. (More suffering is to come)

II. The devil will put some of you in prison to test you.

III. You will suffer persecution for ten days.

IV. Be faithful even to the point of death.

V. I will give you the crown of life.

2 Corinthians 12:7-10 (NKJV) ⁷And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure. ⁸Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. ⁹And He said to me, **“My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.”** Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. ¹⁰Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ’s sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

VI. As we said before Emperor Worship was big in Smyrna, they had a temple to Caesar (Tiberius).

VII. Christians would not burn incense the required once a year to the Emperor recognizing him as god. Because of this many were thrown into prison, later fed to the lions or burned at the stake.

A. As we said one of those Christians was Polycarp who at the age of 86 (155-156 A.D.) was burned at the stake, he was given a chance to change his mind but he refused and this is what he said:

1) These 86 years God has been nothing but good to me how shall I blaspheme my King and Savior?

B. The ones who helped bring the firewood were the Jews, who belonged to the synagogue of Satan, they would not lift a finger during the Sabbath but they had no trouble this time.

Romans 8:18 (NKJV) ¹⁸For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy *to be compared* with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

VI. The Counsel. (2:11)

I. Let him who hath an ear, listen to what the Spirit says to the churches.

II. **He who overcomes** will not be hurt by the second death. **(Lake of Fire)**