

# 5 Smyrna

## Names (also known as)

Ancient: **Smyrna** in Greek and Roman times.  
Modern: **Izmir** – third largest city in Turkey, now predominantly Muslim.

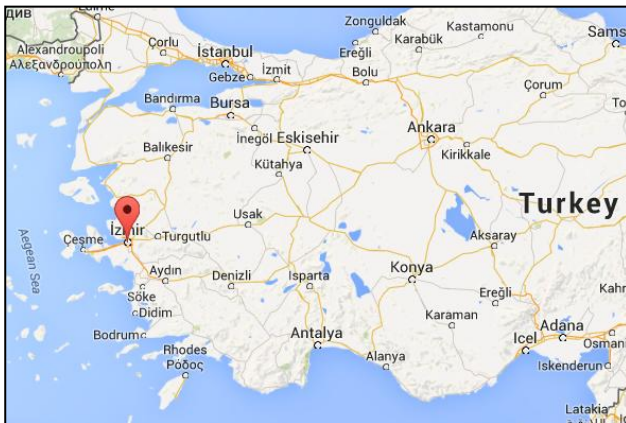
## Etymology

The modern name "İzmir" derives from the former Greek name "Smyrna" (Σμύρνη), most probably through the first two syllables of the phrase "is Smirnin" (Greek: "εις Σμύρνην"), which means "to Smyrna" in Greek.

The name Smyrna may also have been taken from the ancient Greek word for myrrh, "smyrna", which was the chief export of the city in ancient times.

## Location/Description

İzmir is a large metropolis in the western extremity of Anatolia and the third most populous city in Turkey, after Istanbul and Ankara.



The picture below of the modern Izmir shows within the red oval the only remains of ancient Smyrna uncovered.



Picture below: The diggings of ancient Smyrna in the city centre.



## Notable connections

The ecclesia in the city of Smyrna to whom Christ wrote in AD 96.

## Scriptural references

### *New Testament*

Rev. 2:8 is the only reference in Scripture.

## Brief history

The city is one of the oldest settlements of the Mediterranean basin. In 600 BC it was a strong city but was weakened by Cyrus after his Lydian campaign 545 BC – and lay politically “dead” for 200 years until rebuilt by the Greeks after the conquest of Alexander (340 BC).

In 133 BC, when Eumenes III, the last king of the Attalid dynasty of Pergamum, was about to die without an heir, he bequeathed his kingdom to the Roman Republic in his will, and this included Smyrna. The city thus came under Roman rule as a civil diocese within the Province of Asia and enjoyed a new period of prosperity. Thereafter, Smyrna was always a faithful ally of Rome and its people.

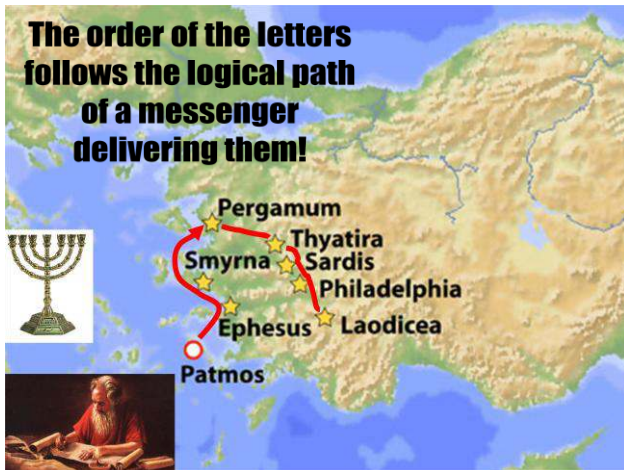
75 km (47 miles) north of Ephesus it stood in a beautiful setting at the end of a long arm of the sea. It was not a large metropolis in AD 96, nor did it match Ephesus for commercial or cultural significance in Asia, but it was known as the ornament, the flower and crown of Asia (from a ring of noble buildings set on the hill, the Pagos, behind the city).

In 178 AD, the city was devastated by an earthquake. Considered to be one of the most severe disasters that the city has faced in its history, the earthquake razed the town to the ground. The destruction was so great that the support of the Empire for rebuilding was necessary. Emperor Marcus Aurelius contributed greatly to the rebuilding activities and the city was re-founded again. The state

agora was restored during this period. Much of the works of architecture pertaining to the pre-Turkish period of the city and that reached our day date from this period.

After the Roman Empire's division into two distinct entities, Smyrna became a territory of the Eastern Roman Empire.

## Christ's letter to the ecclesia in Smyrna - Rev. 2:8-11



<sup>8</sup> And unto the angel of the ecclesia in <sup>1</sup>Smyrna write; These things saith <sup>2</sup>the first and the last, <sup>3</sup>which was dead, and is alive;

<sup>9</sup> I know thy works, and <sup>4</sup>tribulation, and <sup>5</sup>poverty, (but thou art rich) and I know <sup>6</sup>the blasphemy of <sup>7</sup>them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are <sup>8</sup>the synagogue of Satan.

<sup>10</sup> Fear none of those things which <sup>9</sup>thou shalt suffer: behold, <sup>10</sup>the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have <sup>11</sup>tribulation ten days: <sup>12</sup>be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a <sup>13</sup>crowns of life.

<sup>11</sup> He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the ecclesias; He that overcometh shall not be hurt of <sup>14</sup>the second death.

The name Smyrna is derived from myrrh = bitter. This ecclesia knew the bitterness of active persecution but had remained faithful. Christ warned that the persecution would continue and culminate in ‘ten days’ tribulation by which he meant the 10 years of intense persecution from AD 110-120 under Emperor Trajan.

Christ opens his letter by referring to himself as he who was once dead and is now alive for evermore. He concludes it with a promise that the faithful will not be subject to the second death.

The ecclesia at Smyrna received Christ's commendation for:

- works (although some texts omit);
- endurance of trial;
- material poverty due to giving priority to the Truth;
- richness of faith under severe trial;
- opposition to false “spiritual Jews”.

There is no condemnation or criticism. The only other ecclesia of the seven free of criticism was Philadelphia.

### Sources:

The Holy Bible – Rev. 2:8-11

Bible marking notes on the Apocalypse by Jim Cowie (see below)

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Smyrna/Izmir>

(Compiler – Jim Cowie)

### Smyrna – The Persecuted Ecclesia

<sup>1</sup> Derived from myrrh = bitter. Knew bitterness of active persecution. 75 kms north of Ephesus. Had fine harbour. Gospel introduced by Paul during 3 yrs in Ephesus.

<sup>2</sup> Based on Rev. 1:17. Cp. Heb. 12:2.

<sup>3</sup> Christ endured similar trials - example Heb. 4:15. Hope for persecuted.

<sup>4</sup> *thlipsis* – pressure - Acts 14:22.

<sup>5</sup> A poor ecclesia materially. Truth a treasure (2 Cor. 6:10).

<sup>6</sup> Used to describe those who made false claims to truth.

<sup>7</sup> Claimed to be spiritual Jews – Rom. 2:28; 9:7-8; Eph. 2:11-14.

<sup>8</sup> Synagogue = a collecting, a gathering. Hence a congregation. These pseudo- spiritual Jews went out and formed their own group, falsely accusing their brethren of error - 1 John 2:19.

<sup>9</sup> “shalt” - *melleis* – about to be or do; is used of purpose, certainly, compulsion, necessity. Lit. “which thou art about to suffer”.

<sup>10</sup> *diabolos* – false accuser = the civil authorities of Smyrna Eph.6:11; 1 Pet. 5:8.

<sup>11</sup> Intense persecution broke out AD 110–120 under Trajan. Tried to stamp out Christians.

<sup>12</sup> Christ himself guarantee of reward to the faithful who lose life for his sake.

<sup>13</sup> *stephanos* – coronal wreath. Symb. reward of victory to obtain crown – 1 Cor. 9:25; 2 Tim. 2:5; 1 Pet. 5:4; James 1:12.

<sup>14</sup> The death of the rejected at the judgment – Rev. 20:6.

