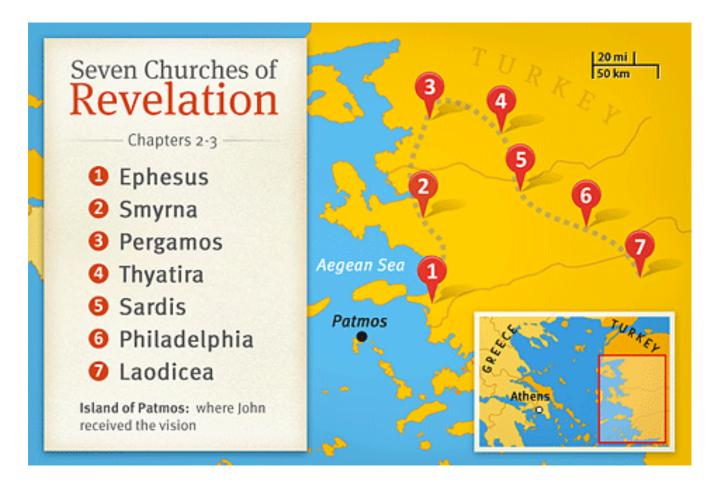


Part IV: Message to Smyrna - Persecution

THE CHURCHES OF ASIA



BACKGROUND: CITY OF SMYRNA

- Smyrna was another large city in Asia, and could be considered the second greatest city in the province behind the capital, Ephesus. In fact, these two cities carried on a ______ with each other.
- Smyrna is the only of the seven cities to remain in existence today (modern day Izmir, Turkey).
- Smyrna was considered one of the most

_ cities of its time.

• Smyrna was a very old city, but it had been destroyed 700 years prior to the writing of Revelation. It remained in ruins 300 years until rebuilt by

____. Though a Greek city, it changed its allegiance to

Rome.

• There were two major temples in Smyrna at the time of the writing of Revelation. First, there was the temple of ______, who was the personification of Rome. It was built in 195 BC, and was the first such temple built to her. Second, there was a temple built for

, the Roman Emperor. It was built in

25 AD. Smyrna, then, was a major center of

- The city also had a very thriving and prosperous ______ community. In fact, it was the largest population in all Asia. This group had an empire-wide exemption from the requirements of emperor worship.
- We do not know when the church in Smyrna was established, but we do know that Paul had not visited the church.
- Famous bishop: Polycarp (AD 69-155).

CHARACTERISTIC OF CHRIST

Jesus is the	and the	,
who	and came to	
	(v. 8).	

- Does this description remind you of any other descriptions of God we've seen so far in Revelation?
- How would His eternality have encouraged believers in Smyrna? How does it encourage you today?

• How would His resurrection have encouraged believers in Smyrna? How does it encourage you today?

COMMENDATION

Jesus offers two commendations to the church at Smyrna:

- Their faithful endurance of persecution (v. 9-10)
 - First, they were persecuted by "those who say they are Jews and are not" (cf. John 8:39-47)

• Second, they were persecuted by the Romans

• The combined persecution of the Jews and Romans

- Their spiritual richness (v. 9)
 - Jesus says that He knows the believers' "poverty." What would have caused this?

• Why would Jesus tell those who were in poverty that they were "rich"? (Cf. Matthew 6:20, James 2:5)

• When we think of riches and material possessions, are they a help or a hindrance to our faith? Why or why not? What about during times of persecution?

CONDEMNATION

Is there any condemnation for the church in Smyrna?

CORRECTION

Though there is no sin that is condemned in Smyrna, Christ offers what might be considered a preventative correction for the believers there: "Do not fear what you are about to suffer" (v. 10; cf. Luke 12:4, Philippians 1:21).

• What is the natural human reaction in the face of persecution?

- John Wayne: "Courage is being scared to death, but saddling up anyway."
- What two things did Jesus say were coming to the church in Smyrna? Would there have been reason to fear?

• Who is behind these attacks on the believers?

• Did Satan know that God's plan was to establish the Church?

• Why does Satan hate the Church so much?

• Why does God, if He is sovereign, allow us to endure such persecution? (Cf. Job, James 1:2-4, Matthew 5:11-12)

CONSEQUENCE

As there was no condemnation, there is no consequence for continuing in that particular disobedience.

A WORD TO THOSE WHO CONQUER

The one who conquers avoids the ______. What is that?

Instead, we receive the ______ of

_____·