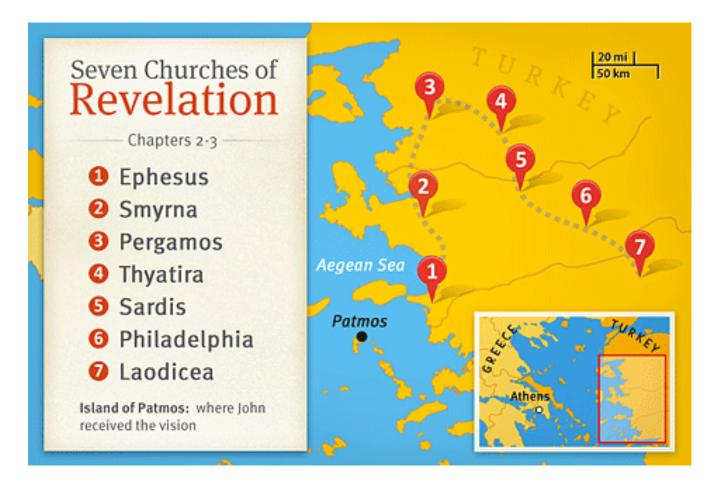


#### Part IV: Message to Smyrna - Persecution

## 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

\_\_\_\_\_·