

# What Happened to the Seven Churches?

By Ed Stevens -- Then and Now Podcast -- May 12, 2013

## INTRODUCTION:

- A. Thank you for joining us here on *Then and Now* for another look at first century Christian history. In this session, we will be looking at what happened to the Seven Churches of Turkey after the Neronic Persecution.
- B. Before we begin I want to let our new listeners know that there is a Lesson Outline available for each of these Podcasts: Each of them are in PDF format. Most listeners like to have it open in front of them as they listen. If you don't have the PDF, simply email me and request it. If you are planning on being a regular listener, and would like to receive the PDF as soon as it is ready, without having to request it each time, simply email me and ask to be put on the **PDF List**. The PDF contains all my lesson notes and resource references, so that you do not have to write them down while listening. It is free for the asking. My email address is: <preterist1@preterist.org>
- C. Let's pray --
- Our Heavenly Father, the Only True God, who fills the heavens and our hearts. We praise you for sending your Son to redeem us from our sins. Be with us here in these studies as we look at how You sovereignly and providentially acted in history to build Your Kingdom. Teach us how to seek your kingdom first in our lives, and live in such a way that we bring much glory and honor to You. It is in the Name of Your Son and our Savior Jesus, that we pray. Amen.*
- D. If you have benefited from these podcasts, we would love to hear from you. Email us and tell us how it has helped you. We would also encourage you to become partners with us in this teaching and publishing ministry, to enable us to share it with many others, and so that all the good fruit that comes from it may be credited to your heavenly account. Those who contribute to International Preterist Association will receive some of our latest resources as our gift to you. Simply go to our website and click on the left sidebar button entitled "Make a Donation" where you can make a one-time donation or contribute monthly. Our website address is <www.preterist.org> You can also make donations through PayPal. Our PayPal address, to which you may make your payment is: <preterist1@preterist.org>
- E. Last time we looked at two of the seven churches (Smyrna and Laodicea), showing how the futurists are mistaken in their suggestion that the church in Smyrna was not even in existence in 62 AD, and that the church in Laodicea could not have recovered from the earthquake in only two years.

F. This time we want to look further at the **seven churches of Asia (Turkey)** that are addressed in the book of Revelation, to see what happened to them after the Neronic persecution.

### What Happened to the Seven Churches of Asia?

We constantly need to emphasize the significance and severity of the Neronic persecution. It is one of the most traumatic events in the history of the church just before the Parousia. But as important as it is for our understanding, it has been almost totally ignored by futurists. And even many preterists have grossly underestimated its impact on the church, and failed to grasp its timing and sequencing in relation to the other endtime events.

One of the best ways to come to grips with the implications of the Neronic persecution, is to see how it affected the various churches scattered throughout the Diaspora during those two short years before the Jewish War. The seven churches in Turkey that were mentioned in the book of Revelation, is a great place to start. There is quite a bit of information about them right up to the very moment when the Neronic persecution was about to break out.



Let's look at the color-coded chart in the lesson outline that I sent you. This will help us analyze the messages that Christ sent to these seven churches, two years before the Neronic persecution. Notice the color key and what each color represents.

**Key to the Color Highlights:**

**Gold** = the Overcomers (those who died as martyrs in the persecution)

**Green** = the Faithful who lived and remained until the Parousia

**Red** = Rewards offered to the Faithful

**Blue** = Punishments threatened against the Wicked

**What does Revelation 2-3 say would happen to the Seven churches?**

CHURCH	Reward Offered	Punishment Threatened	History After AD 62
<b>Ephesus</b> (Rev. 2:1-7)	To him who <b>overcomes</b> , I will grant to eat of the <b>tree of life</b> which is in the <b>Paradise</b> of God. (Rev. 2:7)	Repent; or else I am coming to you and will <b>remove your lampstand</b> out of its place – unless you repent. (Rev. 2:5)	
<b>Smyrna</b> (Rev. 2:8-11)	Be faithful until death, and I will give you the <b>crown of life</b> . ... He who <b>overcomes</b> will <b>not be hurt by the second death</b> . (Rev. 2:10-11)	the <b>second death</b> (Rev. 2:11)	"...you are about to <b>suffer</b> ... the devil is about to cast some of you into <b>prison</b> ... you will be <b>tested</b> , and you will have <b>tribulation</b> for ten days. Be faithful until <b>death</b> ..." (Rev. 2:10)
<b>Pergamum</b> (Rev. 2:12-17)	To him who <b>overcomes</b> , to him I will give some of the <b>hidden manna</b> , and I will give him a <b>white stone</b> , and a <b>new name</b> written on the stone which no one knows but he who receives it. (Rev. 2:17)	Repent; or else I am coming to you <b>quickly</b> , and I will <b>make war</b> against them with the <b>sword</b> of My mouth (Rev. 2:16)	

<p><b>Thyatira</b> (Rev. 2:18-29)</p> <p>Note the mention of two different groups of saints here: (1) the <b>overcomers</b>, and (2) those who <b>lived and remained faithful until the end</b>. They both get the same reward at the Parousia, whether they were dead or alive. This pretty clearly defines who the <b>overcomers</b> were (<b>martyrs</b>).</p>	<p>He who <b>overcomes</b>, and <b>he who keeps My deeds until the end</b>, to him I will give <b>authority over the nations</b>; and he shall <b>rule them with a rod of iron</b>, as the vessels of the potter are broken to pieces, as I also have received authority from My Father; and I will give him the <b>morning star</b>. (Rev. 2:26-28)</p>	<p>I will throw [Jezebel] on a <b>bed of sickness</b>, and those who commit adultery with her into <b>great tribulation</b>, unless they repent of her deeds. And I will <b>kill her children with pestilence</b>, and all the churches will know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts; and I will give to each one of you according to your deeds. (Rev. 2:22-23)</p>	<p>I will throw [Jezebel] on a <b>sick-bed</b>, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of her deeds. And I will <b>kill her children with pestilence</b> (Rev. 2:22-23)</p> <p>Bullinger notes that 2 heretics (Cerdon &amp; Marcion) claimed that there was no church in Thyatira in AD 95. But there was a church there in AD 62 when John wrote Revelation.</p>
<p><b>Sardis</b> (Rev. 3:1-6)</p> <p>The <b>living saints</b> would "walk with Him in white" at His coming, like Enoch "walked with God," implying a bodily change for the living (1Cor 15:52; 2Cor 5:1-4) and new white clothing (immortal bodies) for the <b>overcomers</b> whose bodies had been divested in martyrdom.</p>	<p>But you have <b>a few people in Sardis who have not soiled their garments; and they will walk with Me in white, for they are worthy</b>. He who <b>overcomes</b> will thus be <b>clothed in white garments</b>; and I will <b>not erase his name from the book of life</b>, and I will <b>confess his name before My Father and before His angels</b>. (Rev. 3:4-5)</p>	<p>So remember what you have received and heard; and keep it, and repent. Therefore if you do not wake up, <b>I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come to you</b>. (Rev. 3:3)</p>	<p>The ancient city of Sardis is no longer there today. It lies desolate.</p>

<p><b>Philadelphia</b> (Rev. 3:7-13)</p>	<p>hold fast what you have, so that no one will take your crown. He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he will not go out from it anymore; and I will write on him the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God, and My new name. (Rev. 3:11-12)</p>	<p>the hour of testing, that hour which is about to come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth ... will take [away] your crown (Rev. 3:10-11)</p>	<p>I have put before you an open door which no one can shut ... Behold, I will cause those of the synagogue of Satan, who say that they are Jews and are not, but lie – I will make them come and bow down at your feet, and make them know that I have loved you. ... I also will keep you from the hour of testing, that hour which is about to come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth. I am coming quickly (Rev. 3:8-11)</p>

<p><b>Laodicea</b> (Rev. 3:14-22)</p> <p>The living saints would get white garments (like the Sardis saints) so that their nakedness would be covered (like the parable of wedding guests). Rev. 3:21 clearly defines who the overcomers were (the martyrs): Just like Jesus overcame by His death and sat down to reign, so also these overcomers through martyrdom would get to reign. Peter explains how "suffering in the flesh" overcomes imputed sin: "...since Christ has suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same purpose, because he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin" (1Pet. 4:1)</p>	<p>... buy from Me gold refined by fire so that you may become rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself, and that the shame of your nakedness will not be revealed; and eye salve to anoint your eyes so that you may see. Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline; therefore be zealous and repent. Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me. He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne. (Rev. 3:18-21)</p>	<p>... lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth ... shame of your nakedness will be revealed (Rev. 3:16, 18)</p>	<p>The city of Laodicea is no longer there. It now lies desolate because of its lack of a good source of water, as well as other factors.</p> <p>We know that Paul planned to visit nearby Colossae and spend some time there after he was released from imprisonment, but we do not know if he ever made it there. We know he attempted a fund-raising tour through the cities of Asia, and that "all those who were in Asia turned away from him." Somewhere during that trip through Asia, Paul was arrested and sent back to Rome for execution. This certainly does not look good for the seven churches of Asia.</p>

## Explanation of the Chart Above

As we study these two chapters of Revelation (2-3), we will discover quite a lot about the conditions of those seven churches at the time John wrote to them in late 62 AD. Most of them were struggling with moral, ethical, doctrinal, and spiritual weaknesses, as well as materialism, apathy, pride, and diminished love. None of them were totally aware of the danger looming on the horizon. They were ill-prepared for the challenge that the Neronic persecution would pose to their faith and endurance. Here in Revelation 2-3, Jesus pointed out their weak spots and the kind of threat that they would soon be facing, and then exhorted them to shape up while there was still time. This was written in late 62, two years before the Neronic persecution began in late 64. That was plenty of time to batten down the hatches before the storm. However, does subsequent history show that they heeded the warning, and survived until the Parousia?

The conditions of these churches that are mentioned here in Revelation, presuppose a pre-70 date for the book of Revelation. It mentions the strong presence of Jewish opponents in their cities, something which would NOT have been the case after AD 70. Josephus tells us that most of the Greek and Roman cities outside Palestine expelled their Jewish residents, or killed them and confiscated their property when the war in Judea began. Most of the Diaspora Jews fled back to Judea to participate in the war, where over a million of them were killed, and hundreds of thousands more sent into slavery, the mines, the galley ships, gladiatorial contests, or other purposes by their Roman captors. After AD 70 the Jews were no longer a majority in any of the Diaspora cities, nor in a position to persecute the church, especially at 95 AD when most futurists like to date the book of Revelation.

Furthermore, there is serious question from historians and archaeologists whether there was even a church in existence in Thyatira in 95 AD. As we noted on the chart, two heretics in the second century (Cerdon and Marcion) claimed that there was no church there in 95 AD when futurists think John wrote the Apocalypse. The only significant evidence we have is from **Papias**, who was supposedly the bishop of nearby Hierapolis in the early decades of the second century. We have noted in times past that he claimed that Apostle John was killed by the Jews (supposedly before AD 70 when they had the power to do so). It is not known whether Papias was even a Christian yet in 95 AD. Same thing for **Polycarp** at Smyrna. These two guys pop up rather suddenly in the historical record with no background information to explain when and where and how they became Christians. Their writings show no awareness of an AD 70 Parousia, Resurrection, Rapture, or Judgment. Surely if they had met John or any of his disciples (as Irenaeus claims), they would have heard about the consummation of all things at the destruction of Jerusalem. Surely John would have explained how all of the things he had prophesied in the book of Revelation had come true. Those saints who had been alive at the time of the Parousia would have set the record straight with Papias and Polycarp, if any of them were still around after AD 70.

The historical conditions and archaeological evidence points almost exclusively toward a pre-70 date of the Apocalypse, soon after the Laodicea earthquake (in 60 AD), but

before the Neronic persecution began (in 64 AD). Somewhere in the middle of that four-year period, the book of Revelation was written. Two years after the Laodicean earthquake would have given them enough time to rebuild their city and be overly proud of it, deserving the rebuke that Christ gave to them. Plus, that would leave two years of warning and repentance time for the churches before the Neronic persecution descended upon them. All historical factors seem to be pointing right at late 62 as the date when the Apocalypse was composed and put into circulation.

Apostle Paul knew about these warnings to the seven churches, and so did Apostle Peter. That is why both of them wrote several epistles (Ephesians, Colossians, Hebrews, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, 1 Peter, 2 Peter) to those churches, and sent their co-workers to them to stabilize them and brace them for the soon-coming Neronic persecution, which would cause so many Christians to fall away from the faith or be killed. Despite all of their diligent efforts to prepare the churches for this great tribulation, few of them remained faithful. Paul tells us that "all who are in Asia turned away" from him (2 Tim. 1:15). It does not sound like those churches in Asia heeded the warnings of John, Paul, and Peter. No wonder those churches disappeared from history after the Neronic persecution. Their lamps were snuffed out, just as Christ had threatened.

**EPHESUS, SMYRNA, and PERGAMUM** (the three west coast cities): Because these three cities were located on the west coast of Turkey, closest to Rome, they would have been the first ones to hear about the Neronic persecution and to feel its impact. If the news about the Neronic persecution first came by boat to the port cities of Ephesus and Smyrna, there would have been no time for escape. The Christians would have been rounded up and killed immediately without opportunity to flee. That may be why there is no mention here in Revelation of anyone in those three cities living and remaining until the Parousia. It only mentions "**overcomers**" (**martyrs**) in those three cities (**gold highlights**), implying that few (if any) would live and remain until the Parousia. However, Christians in the other four cities further inland might have had a better chance of being forewarned, and a few of them may have fled to safety. That may be why we see some of the faithful saints who **lived and remained faithful until the Parousia** being mentioned here in the letters to the other four cities (**green highlights**).

**SMYRNA, THYATIRA, and PHILADELPHIA**: In the case of these three cities, Jesus explicitly tells them what is actually going to happen to them during the upcoming tribulation. He is not as specific to the other four cities regarding what they were about to experience, but there was enough information given, which if it was heeded and followed, would have saved some of them from the worst part of the persecution and death. Unfortunately, it does not appear that very many of them heeded those warnings. For instance, to the church at **Smyrna**, Jesus told them that some of them were about to suffer imprisonment, tribulation, and death. They would have to endure ten days of tribulation. The church in **Thyatira** was told that Christ would throw Jezebel on a sick-bed and those who were associated with her into great tribulation. Her children would be killed with pestilence. Then Jesus told the saints at **Philadelphia** that He would make the Jews come and bow down at their feet, and would keep them from the hour of testing which was about to come ("quickly"). Note the mention of a synagogue and Jews

there in Philadelphia at the time of writing, implying that the Jews were still a strong factor in that community at the time of writing. This points unmistakably to a pre-70 date.

**SMYRNA:** There was a considerable number of Jews living in Smyrna who took advantage of every opportunity to kill the Christians. For instance, when Polycarp was being killed by the Roman authorities in the middle of the second century, the Jews there in Smyrna broke their Sabbath in order to pile up the wood for his burning at the stake. The Jews were most likely involved in using the Neronic persecution as an opportunity to eliminate all the Christians from Smyrna and all the other cities in Asia. Rev. 2:9 says that there was a synagogue there who were claiming to be true godly Jews, but were instead a synagogue of Satan. That fits a pre-70 timeframe very well when there was a strong Jewish community in Smyrna until the war broke out in Judea in AD 66.

**PHILADELPHIA:** Like Smyrna, Philadelphia evidently had a significant community of Jews living there who claimed to be true Jews, but were instead a synagogue of Satan. This again reflects conditions that were definitely appropriate to AD 62, but which would hardly have been possible in AD 95.

When looking at all the warnings to these seven literal churches in the seven cities of Asia, who were told that these tribulations and trials and persecutions were about to be unleashed upon them, we notice that there was no fulfillment shortly after AD 95. One looks in vain for a historical event which fulfilled all those dire pronouncements about "the hour of testing which was about to come upon the whole world to test those who dwell on the earth" (Rev. 3:10-11). When did that happen shortly after AD 95? What event fulfilled that prediction literally? It is easy to see how this applies to AD 70, but there is nothing shortly after AD 95 to fulfill it. The late-daters and futurists totally ignore this problem.

### **More on What Happened to the Seven Churches**

When we ask what happened to the Seven Churches, we might as well ask what happened to ALL the true Christians after AD 70! They were gone. We do not hear from any of them again. No more books written, no more missionary activity, no more churches established. Nothing but deafening silence from the true Christians, at the very time when the heretics, Judaizers, and Gnostics were flourishing! Where were those true Christians (the "elect") who supposedly "lived and remained until the Parousia"? If they were still around afterwards, why were they so silent about what they had seen, heard and experienced at the Parousia, especially in view of the heretics, Judaizers, and Gnostics who were teaching a future Parousia? Why didn't the true Christians speak up and set the record straight if they were still alive on earth after the Parousia? There is something very strange and incriminating about their silence, if indeed they were still around.

However, the point that we must not overlook here, is that there were some folks who called themselves "Christians" still around after AD 70 doing some writing and teaching.

They are known to us today as the Judaizers, Gnostics, and other heretics. Since there are no writings from the true Christians at this time, we are left with no other option but to examine the documents that were produced by the false "Christians" at that time. Those heretical, apocryphal, and pseudepigraphal writings are valuable source material for the historian. They reveal the real history of the first generation right after AD 70, both in what they explicitly say, as well as in what they do not say.

All interpreters of Bible prophecy, both preterists and futurists, need to examine this significant body of literature that exploded into existence during that forty-year generation right after AD 70. It was not until a generation later that some true Christians began to appear and take issue with those heretical writings. But in the meantime, the heretical writers took full advantage of the void left by the disappearance of all the true Christians. And the writings that these heretics left behind can be used to reconstruct the real history of this otherwise "dark obscure period" (as it has been called by church historians).

Church historians are puzzled by the silence and inactivity of true Christians during the generation right after AD 70. They moan and groan and complain about the lack of writings, and assume that there must have been lots of writings produced, but for some reason they were never preserved for posterity.

And because history abhors a vacuum, historical scholars were forced to fill the void however they could. Rather than admit the silence and confusion of this period, they late-date many of the NT writings and re-assign them to the generation after AD 70. But they did not stop there. Because they had moved some of the NT books into the post-70 period to fill that void, it forced them to push the Apostolic Father writings even later into the second century where they obviously do not belong. John A. T. Robinson, in his amazing book, *Redating the New Testament*, clearly pointed out the fallacy of that late-date theory. He convincingly demonstrated that all the New Testament writings were written before AD 70, leaving the post-70 generation devoid of any inspired writings, and allowing the Apostolic Fathers, heretics, Gnostics, and Judaizer writings to be re-assigned to that period. The significance of this re-dating cannot be overestimated, especially for canonical studies, ecclesiology, eschatology, and church history.

Written history does not tell us what happened to the seven churches of Asia, but the silence and absence of all the true Christians after AD 70 does indicate that something very significant must have occurred in order to remove them from the earthly scene. They are not just **silent** -- they are **absent!** They are gone -- nowhere to be found. Just like history abhors a vacuum and seeks to fill it immediately, this silence and absence screams for an explanation.

The letters to the seven churches give us plenty of clues. Christ warned them about what would happen to them if they did not repent. Their lampstands would be removed. Paul indicated in his very last epistle that he wrote just before the Neronian persecution, that "all who are in Asia turned away from him" (2 Tim 1:15). That definitely included the seven churches of Asia, and it spelled their doom. Instead of repenting and being

rescued out of that tribulation, they "turned away" from Christ and His apostles and either went back into Judaism or paganism. After AD 70 those churches were nowhere to be found. Evidently they were wiped out by the Neronic persecution and its associated apostasy. Their lampstands were removed. Any true Christians ("elect") who escaped that tribulation and apostasy would have been raptured at the Parousia immediately afterwards. Thus, there were no more inspired Christians and apostles left around to write anything and say anything. No wonder the heretics, Judaizers, and Gnostics were able to spread their false teaching so easily during that generation after AD 70. There were no true Christians left around to silence them, correct them, or set the record straight. With the true Christians gone, the heretics were able to swoop right in to fill the void, unhindered and unchallenged.

However, without a rapture, there still would have been some pre-70 Christians left around on earth to document the fulfillment of the Parousia, and to correct all the heresy and false teaching that was popping up everywhere. But we do not see any of that. There is not a single pre-70 Christian left around anywhere to be found. No one to silence the heretics, and claim the fulfillment of the Parousia.

We know that the pre-70 saints were not all killed in the Neronic persecution, and that not all of them fell away in the great apostasy. Jesus clearly indicated in Matthew 24 that his "elect" (those true Christians whom He had chosen) would live and remain until the Parousia, at which time He would send forth His angels to gather them together from the four points of the compass (Matt. 24:31). So, unless those elect ones were raptured out of there, they should have still been around after the Parousia to correct the heretics and claim the fulfillments. Since they were not still around doing that after AD 70, it implies that they had been gathered up by the angels, just as Jesus had promised.

But the Judaizers, Gnostics, and other heretics were still around, and very active in promoting their heresy and producing written documents, some of which have survived, and the rest of which we know about. We know what they were teaching. The second and third century church fathers quoted them and refuted them. But the question remains, where were the true Christians right after AD 70 when these false teachers began to spew out their nonsense? Why didn't they rise up against the false teachers and set the record straight? Why are the heretics the only ones who are saying anything about Christianity at this time? Why is it that we do not see anyone begin to refute them until the early or middle decades of the second century?

We have a lot of heretical writings from that very time period still in existence. Why don't we have some writings from the true Christians right after AD 70 refuting those heretics and claiming the fulfillment of the Parousia? How can it be that the writings of the true Christians were not preserved, but the writings of the heretics were preserved? And if there were some writings of the true Christians which were not preserved, why don't we at least know about their original existence, as we do for the heretical writings that are no longer extant? No one expects all of them to still be in existence, but surely it is not expecting too much to have as many of them still around as there are heretical writings

still in existence, and to at least know that the others which are no longer around were in existence in the late first century! But we don't even have that! Why is there such a disparity in representation between the heretical writings and the orthodox writings? Surely, if there were any pre-70 Christians still around in the decades immediately after AD 70, they would have been challenging the heretics and documenting the fulfillments. Some of their writings would have survived, and the rest we would still know about -- just like we do for the heretical writings. But there is a strange lack of writings here for the true Christians. The historians have noticed this silence and have labeled this generation right after AD 70 as "the dark or obscure period."

The only way we can determine what was really happening with Christianity during the period right after AD 70 is to look at the writings that have survived. The historical record is there for all to see. And it tells us not only what was actually happening then, but also what was NOT happening, or what was happening so far below the radar that it was not significant enough to be noticed in the historical record. The fact that none of the true Christians from the pre-70 generation show up on the post-70 radar screen to challenge the heretics and document the fulfillments, is extremely significant historically. Patristic scholars are baffled by that anomaly, and futurist critics use that lack of documentation as evidence against the occurrence of the Parousia. So, this is a documentation problem for the whole preterist movement, NOT just for the rapture preterists. And the only preterists who have a reasonable explanation for it, are those who believe in the first century rapture. The rapture solves the historical problem.

Next time we will look at the group of *Unitarian Judaizers* from the Jerusalem church who fled to Pella and other areas, supposedly before the Neronic persecution and before the war broke out in Judea. Futurists and Preterists both have greatly misunderstood the character of these supposed Christians who were under the leadership of fleshly relatives of Jesus, and were looking for a literal reign of Jesus on a physical throne in Jerusalem.

Well, that will wrap it up for this time. Thanks for listening to THEN AND NOW. Let us know how we can be of greater service to you in your studies of God's inspired, inerrant, and absolutely authoritative Word.

### **Extra Information about the Seven Cities and Patmos**

A little mnemonic device: ESP TSP L (Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamon, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, Laodicea)

**Ephesus** (Rev 2:1-7) - had forsaken its first love (2:4)  
**Smyrna** (Rev 2:8-11) - would suffer persecution (2:10)  
**Pergamum** (Rev 2:12-17) - needed to repent (2:16)  
**Thyatira** (Rev 2:18-29) - had a false prophetess (2:20)  
**Sardis** (Rev 3:1-6) - had fallen asleep (3:2)  
**Philadelphia** (Rev 3:7-13) - had patiently endured (3:10)  
**Laodicea** (Rev 3:14-22) - lukewarm and insipid (3:16)

### **MEANING OF CITY NAMES:**

1. Ephesus ("desirable")
2. Smyrna ("sweet smelling," like myrrh)
3. Pergamum ("elevation" or "exalted")
4. Thyatira ("sacrifice of contrition" or "sweet savor of labor")
5. Sardis ("renewal")
6. Philadelphia ("brotherly love")
7. Laodicea ("judgment" or "judging the people")

**PATMOS:** The island is 10 miles long, and about 6 broad along the northern coast. It is for the most part rocky. The highest part is Mount Elias, which rises to a height of over 800 ft. As in Greece, and in the adjacent mainland of Asia Minor, the land is treeless. ...In Roman times Patmos was one of the many places to which Rome banished her exiles." Found here: <http://bibleatlas.org/patmos.htm>

## **Internet Articles about the The Seven Cities**

### **Some good website articles:**

<http://bible.org/seriespage/message-pergamum-rev-212-17>

I am amazed at the way these futurist commentators avoid mentioning any historical or archaeological evidence which might support a pre-70 date. They dance all around it, but never bring it out in the open to look it.

### **New Testament and First Century writers understood Asia to mean:**

"...that part of Asia which Attalus III, king of Pergamum, gave to the Romans, namely, Mysia, Phrygia, Lycaonia, Lydia, Caria, Pisidia, and the southern coast - that is, all in the western, southwestern, and southern parts of Asia Minor; and, in the New Testament, usually the southwestern part of Asia Minor, of which Ephesus was the capital. See the Barnes Notes at Acts 2:9." Found: <http://bible.cc/revelation/1-4.htm>

### **History of the Seven Churches (futurist view with late 95 AD date):**

"Of this region **Ephesus** was the principal city, and it was in this region that the "seven churches" were situated. Whether there were more than seven churches in this region is not intimated by the writer of this book, and on that point we have no certain knowledge. it is evident that these seven were the principal churches, even if there were more, and that there was some reason why they should be particularly addressed. There is mention of some other churches in the neighborhood of these. **Colosse** was near to Laodicea; and from Colossians 4:13, it would seem not improbable that there was a church also at **Hierapolis**. But there may have been nothing in their circumstances that demanded particular instruction or admonition, and they may have been on that account

omitted. There is also some reason to suppose that, though there had been other churches in that vicinity besides the seven mentioned by John, **they had become extinct at the time [of AD 95]**. It appears from **Tacitus** (History, xiv, 27; compare also **Pliny**, N. H., v. 29), that in the time of Nero, 60 AD, the city of **Laodicea** was destroyed by an **earthquake**, in which earthquake, according to Eusebius, the adjacent cities of **Colossae** and **Hierapolis** were involved. **Laodicea** was, indeed, immediately rebuilt, but there is **no evidence of the re-establishment of the church there before [AD 95]**. **The earliest mention we have of a church there, after the one referred to in the New Testament by Paul Colossians 2:1; Colossians 4:13, Colossians 4:15-16, is in the time of Trajan, when Papias was bishop there, sometime between 98 AD and 117 AD.** It would appear, then, to be not improbable that at [AD 95], there were in fact but seven churches in the vicinity. ... Not all the churches in Asia are meant, since the list of those addressed in Revelation does not include **Colossae, Miletus, Hierapolis, or Magnesia**. The seven named are chosen to symbolize the **whole Church ...the church universal**. ... Asia-Proconsular, governed by a Roman proconsul: consisting of Phrygia, Mysia, Caria, and Lydia: the kingdom which Attalus III had bequeathed to Rome." Found here: <http://bible.cc/revelation/1-4.htm>

#### **EPHESUS:**

"The church in Ephesus (2:1-7) was commended for its hard work and perseverance. The church encountered much spiritual opposition from the temple of Artemis as well as from the fourteen or more other Greek deities that were worshipped. Ephesus was also a center of magical practices (Acts 19:19). False apostles in the church were also a problem. At Miletus St. Paul had warned the Ephesian elders that some from their own company would distort the truth (Acts 20:29-30). Timothy was to make the Ephesians Hymenaeus, Alexander, and Philetus stop teaching false doctrine (1 Tim. 1:3, 19-20; 2 Tim. 2:17-18). Such external and internal conflict had caused the church to lose its first love of Christ and his saints. The site of Ephesus had moved three times during its early history. Unless the church repented, Jesus threatened to move its lampstand from its place of prominence among the Asian churches. ...The victorious Christians in Ephesus were promised to eat of the tree of life in the paradise of God. Paradise was the name for the Garden of Eden in the Greek Old Testament. Outside Ephesus was the grove Ortygia which was thought to be the traditional birthplace of Artemis. The sacred grove called a paradeisos still drew pilgrims in the first century. The Christians were thus promised an eternal paradise far superior to that possessed by their pagan counterparts." Copyright 1997-2002 by Crossroads Travel. Found here: <http://www.travelbiblical.com/?p=churches>

**SMYRNA:**

"The church in Smyrna (2:8-11) had experienced great pressure from the Jewish authorities, called the synagogue of Satan. No archaeological evidence exists today for such a synagogue. It had closed its doors to Christians, and its leaders were inciting the Roman authorities to persecute the church. The Jews later had a similar role in the martyrdom of the bishop of Smyrna, Polycarp. The crown of life is a possible allusion to the acropolis Mount Pagus that looms over the city. Such ancient writers as Aristides describes it as Smyrna's crown. Whatever temporal crown the citizens of Smyrna enjoyed, the believers were guaranteed an eternal crown. They were also promised exemption from the second death. There existed in the ancient world a connection between death and Smyrna. Its name is identical to the Greek word for the sweet-smelling spice [myrrh] in which dead bodies were wrapped (e.g., Jesus in John 19:39). A number of mourning myths became associated with Smyrna..." Copyright 1997-2002 by Crossroads Travel. Found here: <http://www.travelbiblical.com/?p=churches>

**PERGAMUM:**

"The church in Pergamum (2:12-17) existed in the place where Satan had his throne. this reference probably does not refer to the altar of Zeus that sat atop the thousand-foot acropolis that towers over the lower city. Rather it refers to the city as the seat of the provincial koinon, or assembly, whose leader was also the chief priest ...of the imperial cult, the first cult temple in Anatolia. The Roman governor of Asia exercised the power of life and death (the "right of the sword") in this province. Jesus stated that he held even higher authority with his sharp, double-edged sword. One church leader named Antipas had already been martyred in the city. He was the only person named in the book of Revelation as being martyred. The imperial cult temple housed a white stone stele inscribed with a decree issued by Fabius, the governor of Asia, around 9 BC. It decreed that Augustus' birthday should be made an official holiday in Asia as well as mark the beginning of the municipal new year. The birth of Caesar Augustus was called the beginning of life and breath (cf. Rev. 3:14). And his birthday was declared the beginning of good news for the world (cf. Rev. 14:6). The emperors made the same claims to deity as Jesus Christ! No wonder the Christians refused to take the mark of this beast and worship him." Copyright 1997-2002 by Crossroads Travel. Found here: <http://www.travelbiblical.com/?p=churches>

**THYATIRA:**

"The church in Thyatira (2:18-29) was plagued by a false prophetess symbolically named Jezebel after the evil queen of Israel who worshipped idols. She along with the Nicolaitans advocated compromise with certain pagan practices. Meat in the ancient world was dedicated to the gods at the pagan temples before it was sold in the public

markets; many Christians refused to eat such meat sacrificed to idols. Thyatira was known for its trade guilds (cf. Lydia, Acts 16:14) which would hold banquets in the pagan temples. After eating and drinking, the diners often engaged in sexually immoral acts on the couches (klinai) where they lay. Jezebel and the Nicolaitans apparently condoned such behavior because of a false understanding of freedom in Christ."

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### **SARDIS:**

"The church in Sardis (3:1-6) had become dead in spite of its reputation. Twice before the city's acropolis had fallen because Sardis had fallen asleep and let down her guard. Cyrus defeated Croesus in 546 BC, and the Cretan general Lagoras captured it for Antiochus the Great in 218 BC. Greek cities maintained a list of citizens in a public register. When someone committed a criminal action and was condemned, he lost his citizenship and his name was then erased from the register. The believers who persevered would never be blotted from the eternal book of life. Sardis was noted as a textile center, producing wool to make the *himation*, the most common outer garment for men and women in the Greco-Roman world. The color white in the book of Revelation always denotes purity and worthiness. Hence white garments would be a suitable reward for the victors." Copyright 1997-2002 by Crossroads Travel. Found here:

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### **PHILADELPHIA:**

"The church in Philadelphia (3:7-13) stood at an important junction of the imperial postal road that ran from Rome through Troas, Pergamum, and Sardis on through to Tarsus and the East. They had an open door through which to share the gospel. Yet here too a synagogue of Satan opposed the believers. Although no archaeological evidence for a synagogue has been found, a third-century AD inscription was found 10 miles east of the city mentioning a 'synagogue of the Hebrews.' Philadelphia was located in an earthquake-prone region called the *Catacecaumene*. Both Sardis and Philadelphia were devastated by earthquakes in AD 17. Asian temples were built to withstand severe earthquakes. Their foundations were laid on beds of charcoal covered with wool fleeces, which caused the structure to 'float' on the soil like a raft. Each block was joined to another by metal clamps, so that the platform was a unity. The temple would be the most secure structure in the city, hence the promise to be a pillar in the temple of God was one of security and safety. Inscribed pillars are found throughout Aegean Turkey. A dramatic example is the temple of Zeus at Euromos with dedicatory inscriptions on ten of the eleven standing pillars. Jesus will write divine names as well as his new name on those human 'pillars' who overcome. Philadelphia received a new name twice in the first

century: the first time after the AD 17 earthquake to 'Neocaesarea' in gratitude for Tiberius' generosity, the second time to 'Flavia' after Vespasian gave financial assistance following a similar catastrophe." Copyright 1997-2002 by Crossroads Travel. Found here: <http://www.travelbiblical.com/?p=churches>

#### **LAODICEA:**

"The church at Laodicea (3:14-22) was closely related to its sister church in Colossae and Hierapolis. Its spiritual condition was lukewarm, neither hot nor cold. Six miles north of the city were the thermal springs (not drinkable) at Hierapolis, whose white calcareous cliffs were visible in the distance. To obtain drinking water, the Romans built an aqueduct that ran five miles south to an abundant spring (now in Denizli). The cool spring water would become lukewarm as it passed through the aqueducts into the city. The city was strategically located for trade and commerce, and became a leading banking center. It had accepted aid from Rome following earlier earthquakes. However, after the earthquake in 60 that devastated many Asian cities, only Laodicea refused to accept Roman financial assistance because she was so wealthy. This attitude of material self-satisfaction, 'I am rich,' had seemingly entered the church also. The church's spiritual blindness was ironic because a famous salve for treating eye disease was produced by the medical school there. The exhortation to buy white garments to cover their shameful nakedness is another example of irony. For the believers were living in a city where the Romans had established textile factories to manufacture clothing from the famous black wool of the region. Laodicea was a 'throne city' because a citizen Zeno became king of Cilicia in 39 BC and of Pontus in 36 BC. His family continued to rule in some measure in Anatolia over the next century. The Zenoid family figures prominently on the Laodicea's coinage. Again the victors are promised that they will sit with Jesus on his heavenly throne." Copyright 1997-2002 by Crossroads Travel. Found here: <http://www.travelbiblical.com/?p=churches>