

# *Dear Church...*

EXPLORING THE LETTERS TO THE  
SEVEN CHURCHES OF REVELATION



# ***Why Revelation now? Why the 7 churches?***

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What are the ***'end times'*** or the ***'end of the world'*** going to  
look like....at least from a biblical understanding?

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does it relate to the ***'end times'*** or the ***'end of the world'***?

What are the ***'end times'*** or the ***'end of the world'*** going to  
look like....at least from a biblical understanding?

We are going to 'dip our toe' into understanding Revelation  
and the coming judgment and redemptive activities of God  
by looking at the messages in chapters 2 & 3  
sent to 7 churches concerning their condition.

# *Dear Church...*

**Revelation chapters 2 & 3**





Pergamum

Thyatira

Smyrna

Sardis

Philadelphia

Ephesus

Laodicea

# First-Century Mediterranean World





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**Macedonia / Bulgaria**

*Black Sea*

# The Seven Churches of Revelation

**Turkey**

ASIA

*Aegean Sea*

Pergamum

Thyatira

Smyrna

Sardis

Philadelphia

**Greece**

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# First-Century Mediterranean World





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Thyatira

Smyrna

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Philadelphia

Ephesus

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**1. Ephesus..... *The Loveless Church***



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- 2. Smyrna..... *The Persecuted Church*



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- 2. Smyrna..... *The Persecuted Church*
- 3. Pergamum..... *The Compromising Church*



Pergamum

Thyatira

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Sardis

Philadelphia

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1. Ephesus..... *The Loveless Church*
2. Smyrna..... *The Persecuted Church*
3. Pergamum..... *The Compromising Church*
4. Thyatira..... *The Corrupt Church*



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5. Sardis..... *The Dead Church*
6. Philadelphia.... *The Faithful Church*



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4. Thyatira..... *The Corrupt Church*
5. Sardis..... *The Dead Church*
6. Philadelphia.... *The Faithful Church*
7. Laodicea..... *The Lukewarm Church*

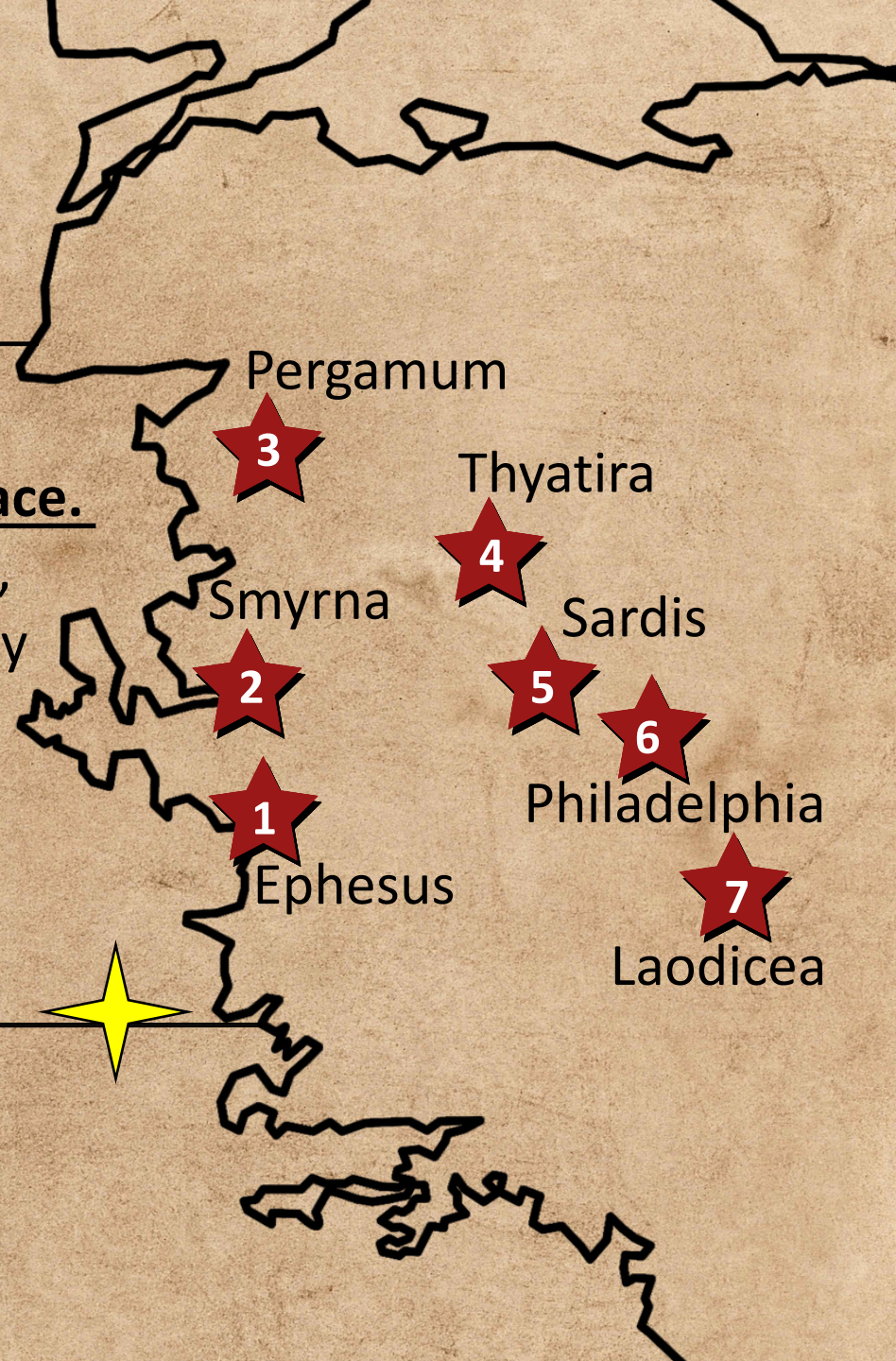


# Revelation 1

<sup>1</sup> The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show to His servants the things that must soon take place.

He made it known by sending His angel to His servant John, <sup>2</sup> who bore witness to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw.

<sup>3</sup> Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear, and who keep what is written in it, for the time is near.



# Revelation 1

<sup>4</sup> John to the seven churches that are in Asia:

Grace to you and peace from Him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before His throne,

<sup>5</sup> and from Jesus Christ the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of kings on earth.

To Him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by His blood

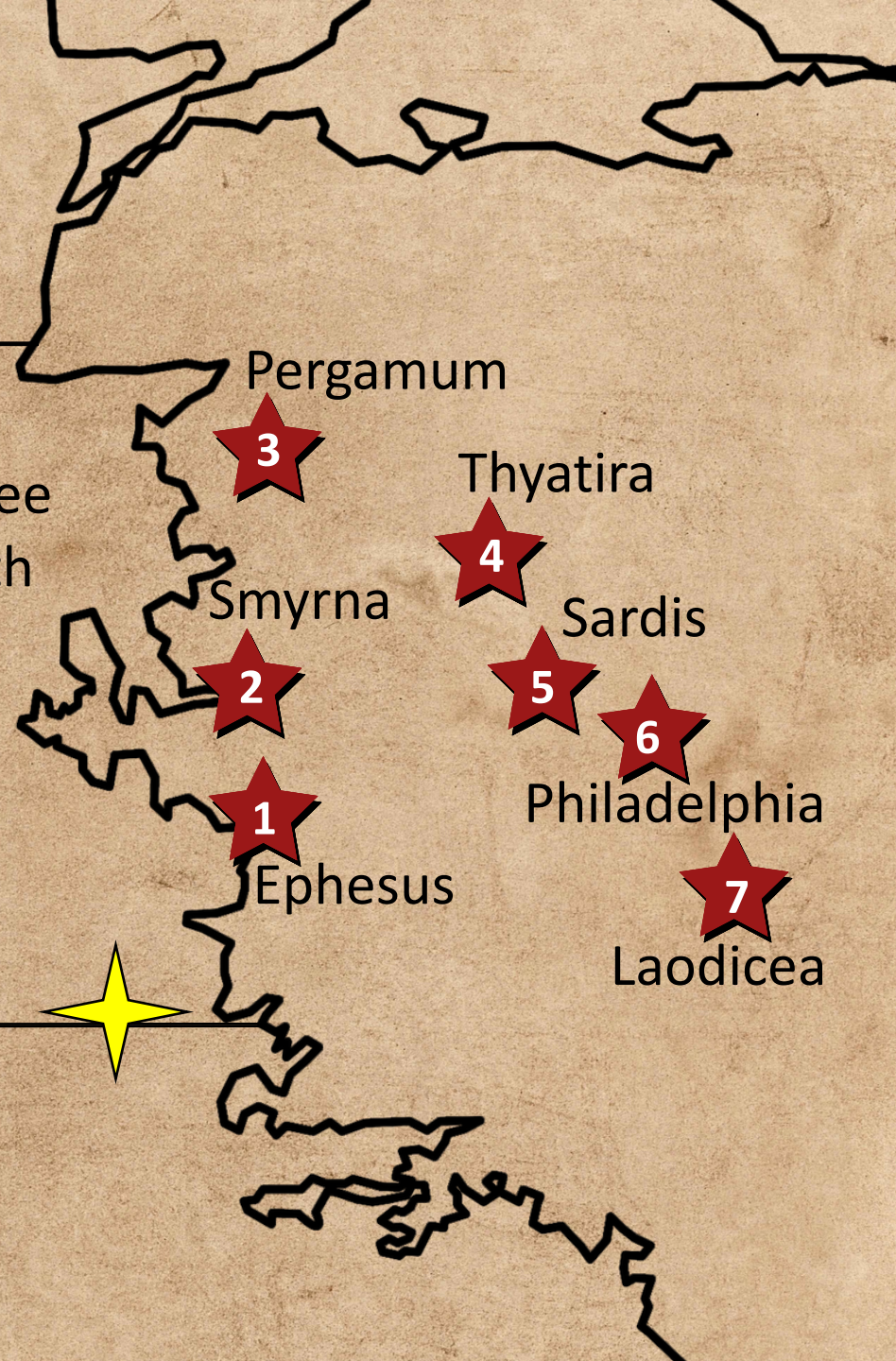
<sup>6</sup> and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.



# Revelation 1

<sup>7</sup> Behold, He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him, and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of Him. Even so. Amen.

<sup>8</sup> “I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, “who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.”

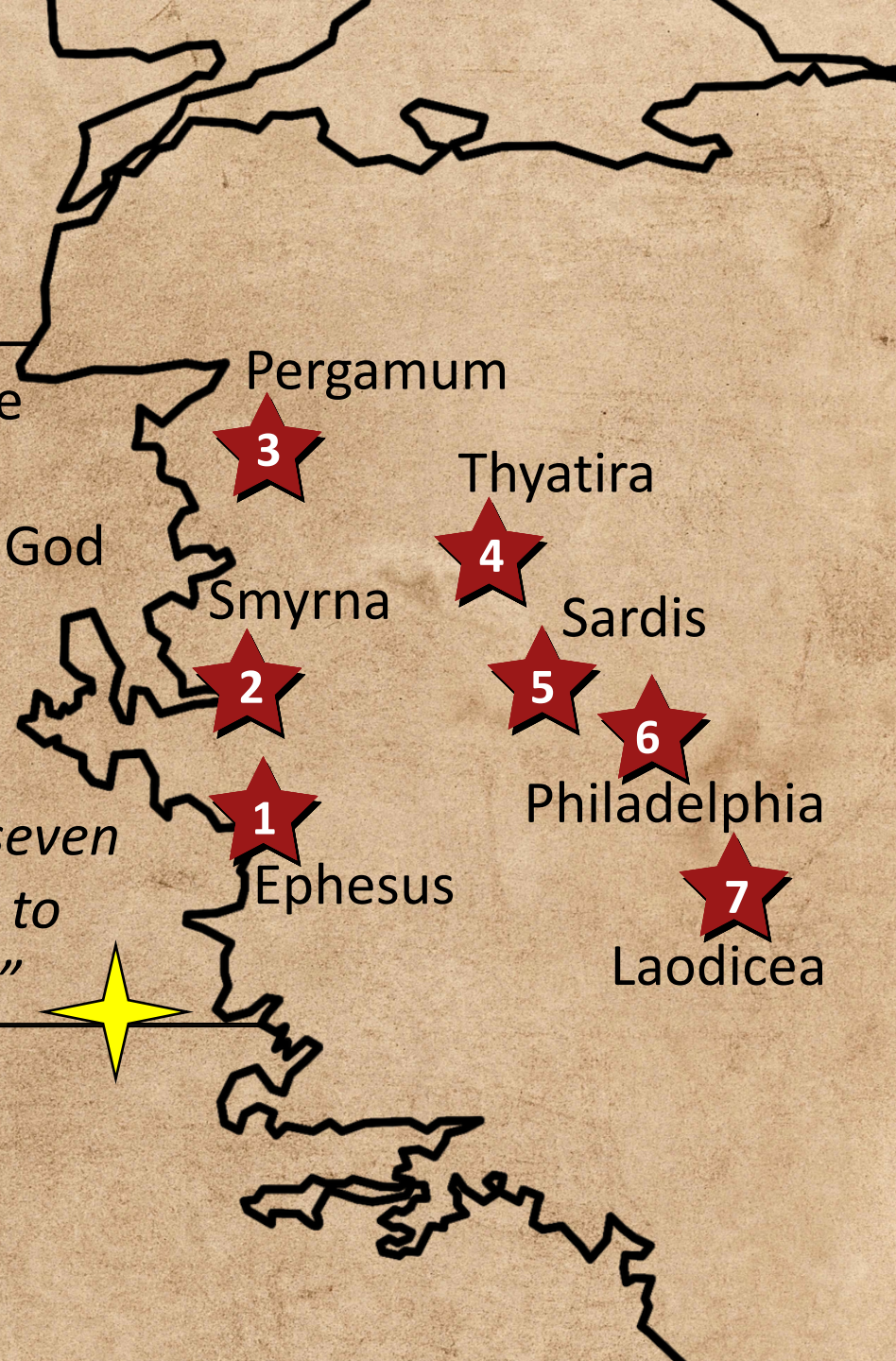


# Revelation 1

<sup>9</sup> I, John, your brother and partner in the tribulation and the kingdom and the patient endurance that are in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos on account of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.

<sup>10</sup> I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet

<sup>11</sup> saying, *"Write what you see in a book and send it to the seven churches, to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamum and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea."*





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- **95 AD (CE)**- impacted by the persecution of Roman Emperor Domitian.

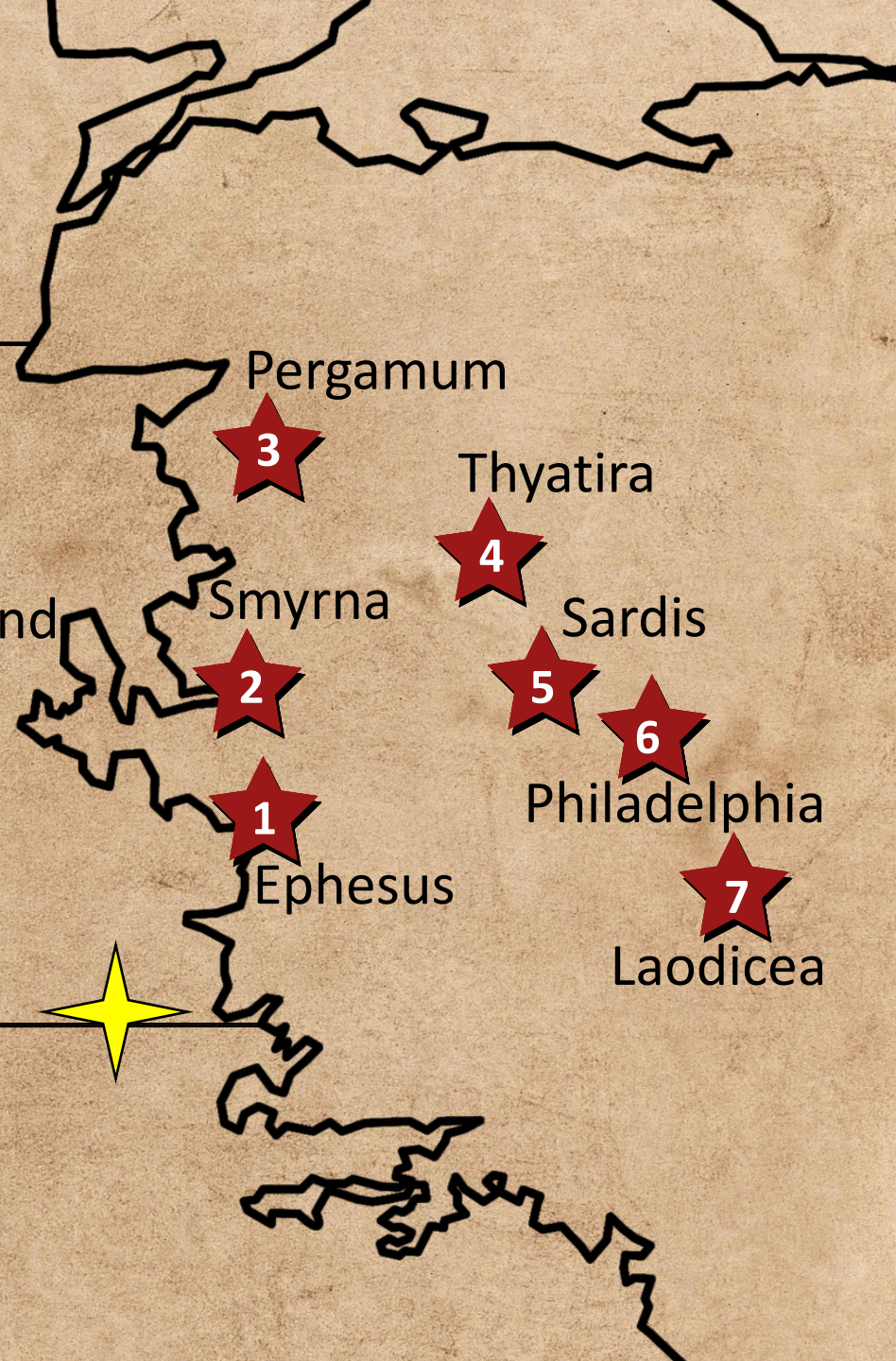
# Revelation 1

<sup>12</sup> Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking to me, and on turning I saw seven golden lampstands,

<sup>13</sup> and **in the midst of the lampstands one like a son of man**, clothed with a long robe and with a golden sash around His chest.

<sup>14</sup> The hairs of His head were white, like white wool, like snow. His eyes were like a flame of fire,

<sup>15</sup> His feet were like burnished bronze, refined in a furnace, and His voice was like the roar of many waters.



# Revelation 1

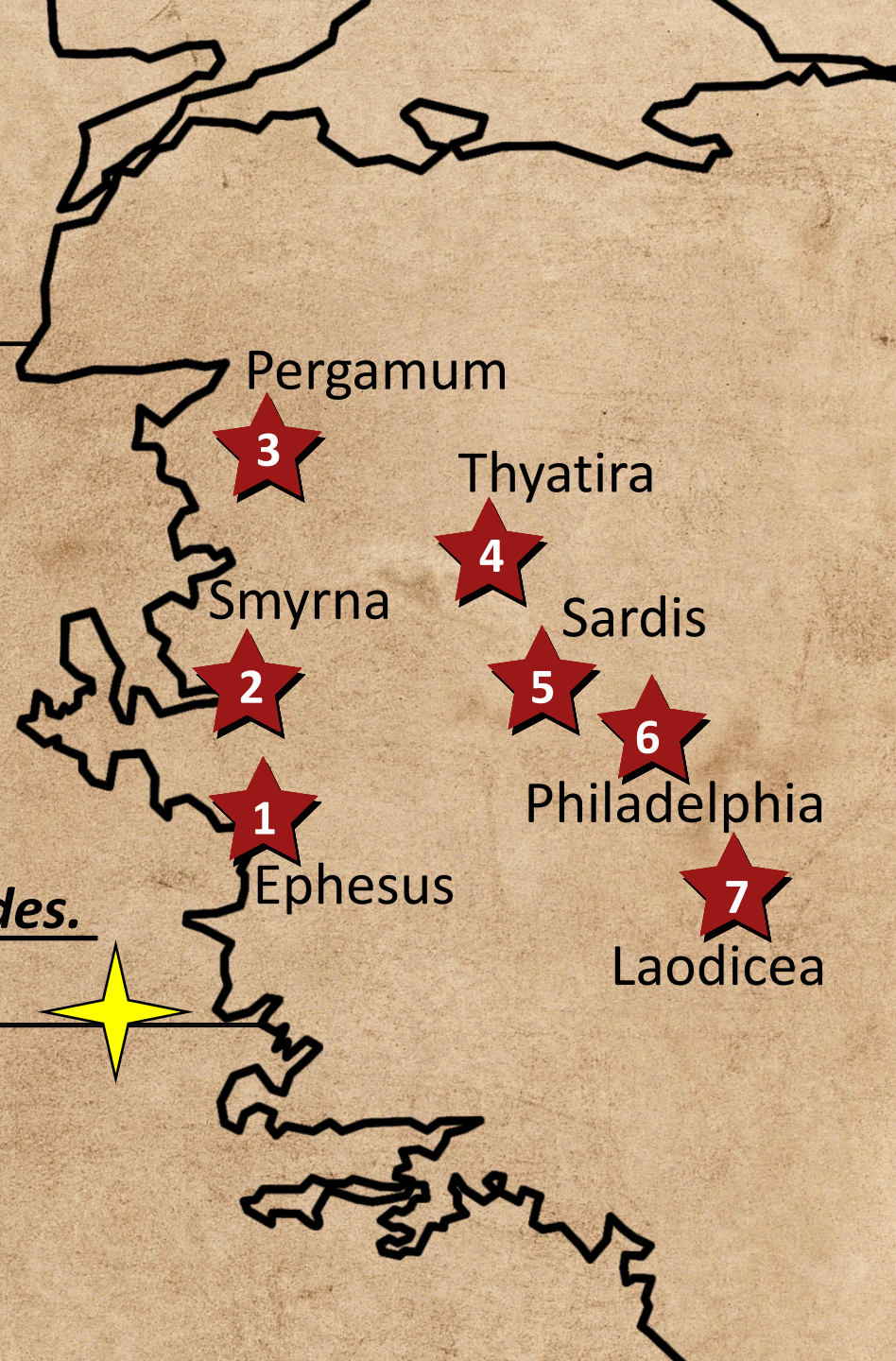
<sup>16</sup> In His right hand He held seven stars,  
from His mouth came a sharp two-edged sword,  
and His face was like the sun shining in full strength.

<sup>17</sup> When I saw him, I fell at His feet as though dead.

But He laid His right hand on me, saying,

*“Fear not, I am the first and the last,  
and the living one. I died, and behold I am alive  
forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades.”*

<sup>18</sup>



*Revelation 2:8-11*

# Smyrna

*The Persecuted Church*



## The culture in Smyrna was decidedly hostile to Christians.

- Developing city until the Persians under **Cyrus the Great** destroyed it in 545 BC.
- ‘Resurrected’ in 340 BC by the Greek military leader **Alexander the Great...**  
(folklore of from death to resurrection...from **obsolete** to **dynamic**)
- Came under Roman rule in 133 BC.  
Smyrna was a thriving port city of 200,00 people in Roman times...  
...one of the most important ports in the entire world...  
...gateway to Europe directly east of Athens across the Aegean Sea.
- A beautiful Mediterranean climate known for having exclusive rights for the import and export of the tree resin we call **Myrrh**, which was famous for its fragrance and embalming properties...used throughout the Middle East and especially Egypt.
- Smyrna was one of the official sites of Emperor worship...  
in this case, the compulsory worship of **Domitian** under threat of death if you did not proclaim your loyalty to him as God once a year in the Agora...  
...in effect it was more of a political loyalty than a religious loyalty.
- The “Golden Street” - anchored by temples to **Cybele** and **Zeus**....  
...Apollo and Aphrodite in between.



# Izmir

Turkey









8 “And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write:  
‘The words of the first and the last, who died and came to life.

9 “‘I know your tribulation and your poverty  
(but you are rich)  
and the slander of those who say that they are  
Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan.  
10 Do not fear what you are about to suffer.

Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you  
into prison, that you may be tested,  
and for ten days you will have tribulation.  
Be faithful unto death,  
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11 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.  
The one who conquers will not be hurt by the second death.’



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### Greek: *thlipsis*

**Definition:** persecution, affliction, distress, tribulation.

- 10 – properly, *pressure*; that which constricts, compresses, or rubs together; used of a narrow place that “hems someone in”; *tribulation*, especially *internal pressure* that causes someone to feel confined or restricted, being caught “without options”.

11 H This word carries the challenge of coping with the *internal* pressure of a *tribulation*, especially when feeling there is “no way of escape”, when you feel “hemmed in”.



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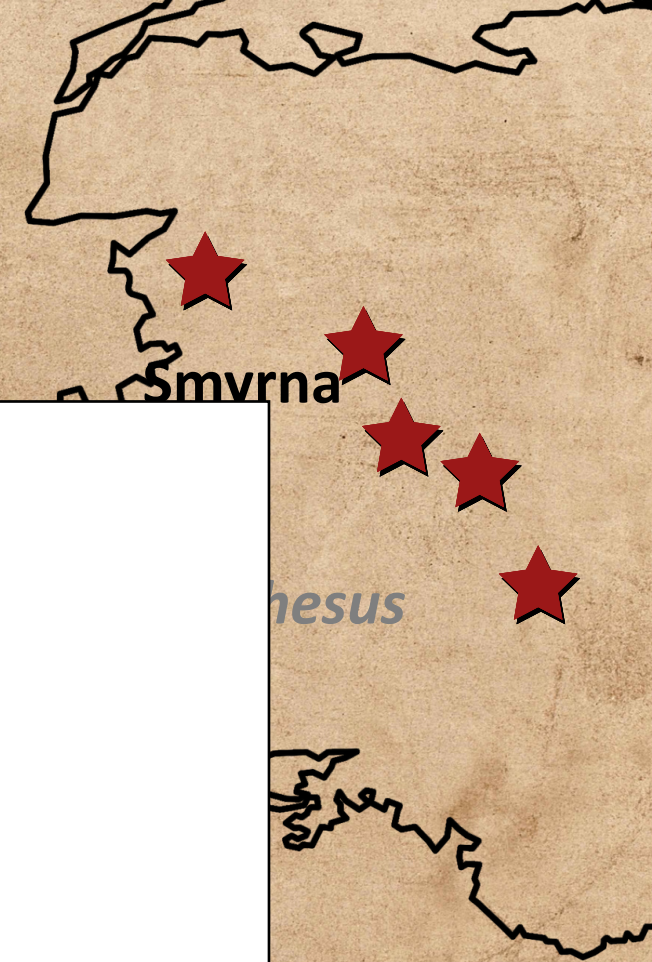
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10 **Greek**: ptócheia

**Definition:** beggary, destitution  
poverty;  
having no resources in order to survive.

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**Greek**: plousios

**Definition:** wealthy, rich, abounding in, abundance

– properly, *fully* resourced; *rich* (filled);

by having God's "*muchness*" – His *abundance* that comes from

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**Ephesians 3:14-19**

<sup>14</sup> For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, <sup>15</sup> from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, <sup>16</sup> that according to the *riches of His glory* He may grant you to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in your inner being, <sup>17</sup> so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, <sup>18</sup> may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, <sup>19</sup> and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

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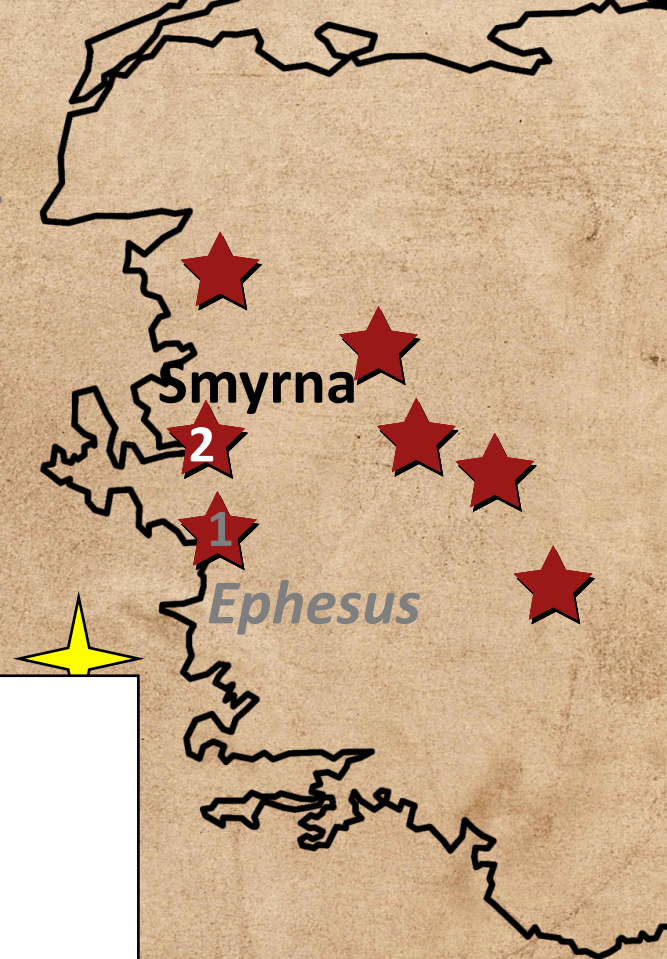
### Greek:blasphémia

**Definition:** slander....abusive or scurrilous language, .

– literally, slow (sluggish) to call something *good* (that *really is good*),  
and slow to identify what is truly bad (that really is evil).

- "switches" right for wrong (wrong for right)

-it calls that of which God *disapproves as "right"* and "exchanges the truth  
of God for a lie" (Ro 1:25).



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**Greek:** paschó

**Definition:** to suffer, to be acted upon in a certain way, either good or bad; to experience ill treatment, suffer.

–properly, to feel *heavy emotion*, especially *suffering*; *affected*, experiencing feeling  
--relates to any part of us that feels strong emotion, passion,  
"the capacity to feel suffering".

The Lord has privileged us to have great capacity for *feeling* (passion, emotion, affections).  
Indeed, this is inherent because all people are created in the divine image.

Note for example how Jesus in His perfect (sinless) humanity keenly *felt*.

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# Polycarp 69-155 AD



**Disciple of the Apostle John**

**One of three famous  
Church Fathers**

(second generation church leaders:  
Clement of Rome and  
Ignatius of Antioch).

**Leader of the church in  
Smyrna from 107-155 AD**

Arrested and burned at the  
stake for refusing to pay  
allegiance to the Roman  
Emperor...when fire was not  
successful, he was pierced with  
a spear or a dagger.



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*Dear Church... So....therefore....what now?*



*So....therefore....what now?*

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A letter to the church in

*Smyrna*

*So....therefore....what now?*

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A letter to the church in

*America*

*So....therefore....what now?*

---

A letter to the church in

*Wildwood*

*So....therefore....what now?*

---

A letter to the church called

*Quest*



*Dear Church... So... therefore... what now?*



1

2

*Dear Church... So....therefore....what now?*



**1**

**Recognize the reality that we live in a culture that has turned away from, and in part turned against, a God-centered worldview and finds itself offended by that which it deems old-fashioned and repressive.**

**2**

*Dear Church... So....therefore....what now?*



**1**

Recognize the reality that we live in a culture that has turned away from, and in part turned against, a God-centered worldview and finds itself offended by that which it deems old-fashioned and repressive.

**2**

Decide whether the reward for perseverance (the 'crown of life') offered by Christ is worth our loyalty, or will we exchange it for either bowing to the culture or becoming powerlessly hyper-religious.

# Richard and Sabina Wurmbrand



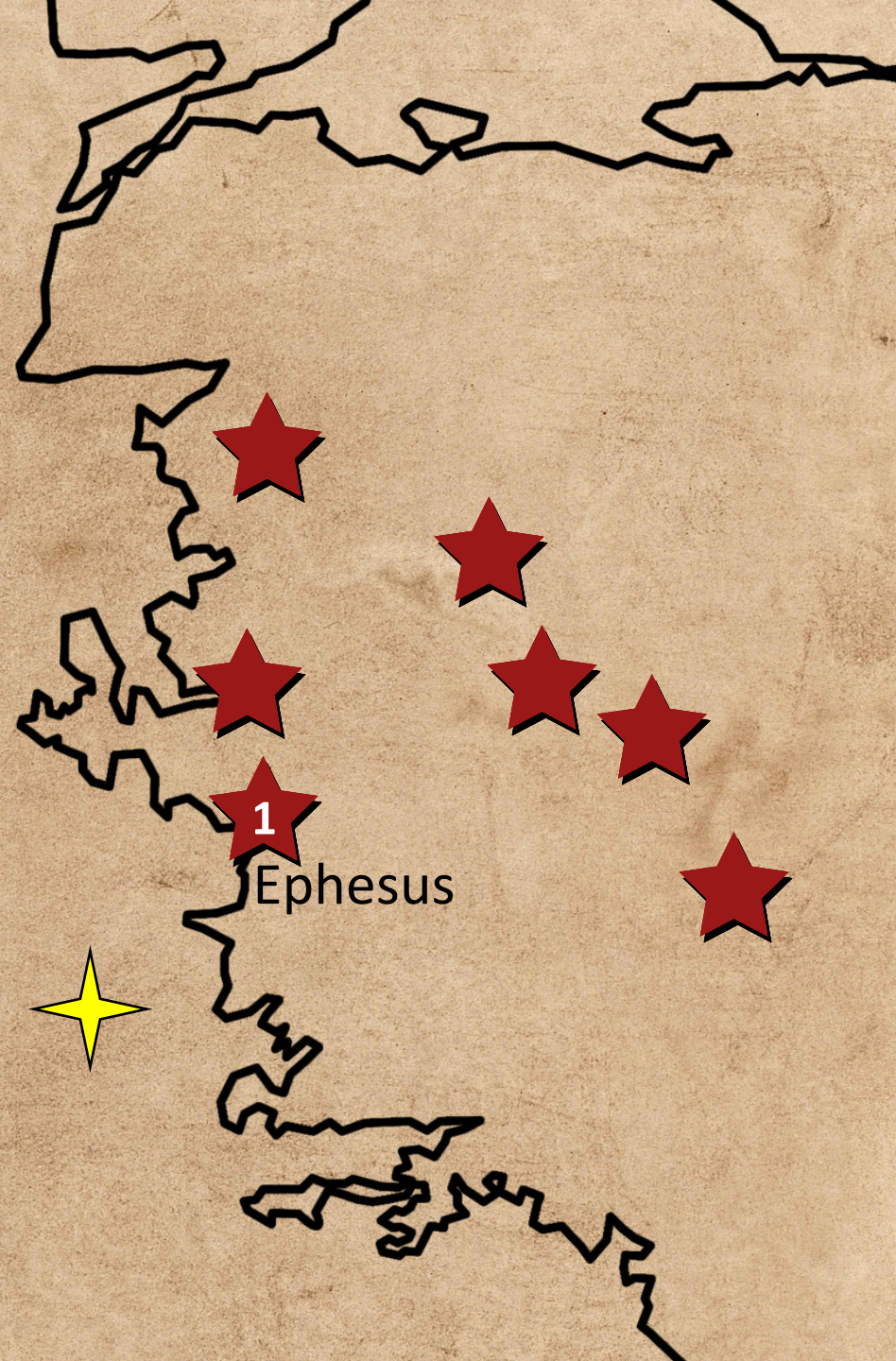
Imprisoned 14 years for preaching the gospel and protecting Jews during and after WWII in communist Romania...

## Three levels of reward in heaven (II Cor. 12)-

1. The joy of knowing Christ.
2. The honor of serving Christ.
3. **The privilege of suffering for Christ.**

**Voice of the Martyrs**





1

Ephesus