

3. The Seven Messages

Revelation 1:9–3:22

I. The Vision of Jesus (1:9-20)

John's apocalyptic prophetic letter to the churches of Asia is prefaced by a call vision (cf. OT prophets: Isa 6; Jer 1; Ezek 1–3).

A. John's setting (1:9)

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. (1:10)

1. John's solidarity with the suffering believers. As their "brother and companion," he shares three things with them in Christ:

1. **suffering** (θλίψις): tribulation is the expected lot of Christians in the present not of unbelievers in the future after the church has been raptured to heaven.
 - a. The church in Smyrna is in tribulation (θλίψις), about to suffer, and will be tested (πειράζω) for a 10-day tribulation from which it will be released by death (2:9-10).
 - b. Antipas, Jesus' faithful witness in Pergamum, has been killed (2:13).
 - c. those in Philadelphia who keep (τηρέω) his word to endure Jesus will keep from (τηρέω ἐκ cf. John 17:15) the testing (πειρασμός) that is about to test (πειράζω) the earth-dwellers (3:10); Jesus will keep them through the testing, not from having to go through it, contra dispensationalists who see this as proof of a pre-tribulation rapture.
 - d. the martyrs (witnesses) under the altar, slain "for the word of God and for the witness they had borne" (διὰ τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ διὰ τὴν μαρτυρίαν ἣν εἶχον) are given white robes and told to wait until the full number of their brothers have been likewise killed (6:9-11).
 - e. the countless multitude from every nation singing before the throne are those who have come out of (ἐκ) the great tribulation, who have washed their robes white in the Lamb's blood (7:14).
2. **kingdom**: the kingdoms of heaven and hell (Abyss) each have a colony on earth. Jesus is King of the heavenly colony; its residents are the saints. The dragon has enthroned the beast as king of the hellish colony; its residents are οἱ κατοικοῦντες ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς, the earth-dwellers. One kingdom is true, the other is counterfeit.
3. **patient endurance** (ὑπομονή): the saints conquer by enduring.

2. The word of God and the testimony of Jesus

John's share in the tribulation is to be in exile on Patmos "because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus," i.e. because he is a faithful witness to Jesus (cf. 1:2; 6:9; 12:17; 19:10; 20:4).

The word of God and the testimony of Jesus is a major theme of the book:

1. the contents of the book (1:2; 22:16)
2. The Word of God is the name of the rider on the white horse (19:13), Christ, the faithful witness (1:5).
3. to worship God alone and not worship the beast (19:10; 20:4).
4. the faithful witnesses are killed (overcome) for their faithful testimony (6:9; 11:7; 12:17; 20:4).
5. the faithful witnesses in turn overcome (12:10-11; 20:4).

Patmos: a small (34 km², 13 sq. mls) island, ca. 90km/55 mls s.w. of Ephesus. Now one of the Dodacanese islands of Greece. John presumably exiled here by governor of Asia because of his witness to Jesus.

B. The call to Write (1:10-11)

I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet 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." (1:10-11)

The phrase "in the Spirit" marks the first of the four major sections of the visions (cf. 4:2; 17:3; 21:10). In the first two cases a trumpet-like voice summons him; in the last two it is one of the bowl angels, suggesting that the trumpet-like voice is also the interpreting angel not Jesus (contra NASB, ESV, HCSB, NIV red-letter editions). Jesus' voice will be like the sound of many waters (1:15).

John's mission (cf 1:19): Write a record of his visions and send it to the seven churches located in seven cities in the province of Asia.

C. The Vision (1:12-16)

Turning around to identify the voice, John sees:

1. seven golden lampstands; a composite image of three sets of OT gold lampstands (menorahs):
 - a. Tabernacle: seven-lamp, seven-branched gold lampstand (*menorah*) (Exod 25:31-37; 37:17-24; Num 8:1-4)
 - b. Temple: ten gold lampstands (1 Kgs 7:49)
 - c. Zechariah's vision: seven-lamp, 49-wick gold lampstand fed by two olive trees (Zech 4); the seven lamps are Yahweh's eyes ranging throughout the earth; Israel is empowered by the Spirit: "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the LORD of hosts" (Zech 4:6).
2. a figure among these lampstands; also a composite image:
 - a. one like a son of man, who receives the kingdom from the Ancient of Days (Dan 7:13-14). A favorite Messianic title used by Jesus.
 - b. robed and girdled: three sets of OT people wore such a robe "reaching down to his feet":
 - i. High Priest (Exod 28:4; 29:5; Lev 16:4).
 - ii. royalty (1 Sam 18:4; 24:5,11; Ezek 26:16).
 - iii. Daniel's interpreting angel (Dan 10:5)
 - c. snow-white hair: the Ancient of Days sitting on the throne of judgment (Dan 7:9)
 - d. eyes of blazing fire, feet of burnished bronze: Daniel's interpreting angel (Dan 10:5-6)
 - e. voice like many waters: God (Ezek 43:2)

This figure is a composite of God, prophet, priest and king. But John does not yet know who this is.

D. John's Response (1:17)

John falls down in worship, cf. Isaiah (Isa 6:5); Ezekiel (Ezek 1:28; 3:23; 43:3). Prior to commissioning he has been given an overwhelming vision of God, cf. A. W. Tozer, *Whatever Happened to Worship*:¹

- To Isaiah...the violent contrast between that which is God and that which is not God was such that his very language suffered under the effort to express it. ...the living God, in the space of a short second of time, can reveal Himself to the willing spirit of a man. It is only then that an Isaiah, or any other man or woman, can say with humility but with assurance, 'I know Him.' (56)
- The man whom God will use must be undone. He must be a man who has seen the King in His beauty. (62)

1. A. W. Tozer, *Whatever Happened to Worship* (Camp Hill, Penn.: Christian Publications, 1985).

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- God has saved us to be worshipers. May God show us a vision of ourselves that will devalue us to the point of total devaluation. From there he can raise us up to worship Him and to praise Him and to witness. (62)
- If there is no wonder, no experience of mystery, our efforts to worship will be futile...I will never bend my knees and say 'Holy, holy, holy' to that which I have been able to decipher and figure out in my own mind! That which I can understand will never bring me to the place of awe. It can never fill me with astonishment or wonder or admiration. (66)
- These believers worship gladly because they have a high view of God. In some circles, God has been abridged, reduced, modified, edited, changed and amended until He is no longer the God whom Isaiah saw, high and lifted up. (67)

Rudolph Otto describes the holy one as *mysterium tremendum et fascinans*, the mystery that causes trembling and fascination.² Mole and Rat experience this mystery on encountering an august Presence:

Then suddenly the Mole felt a great Awe fall upon him, an awe that turned his muscles to water, bowed his head, and rooted his feet to the ground. It was no panic terror—indeed he felt wonderfully at peace and happy—but it was an awe that smote and held him and, without seeing, he knew it could only mean that some august Presence was very, very near. With difficulty he turned to look for his friend, and saw him at his side cowed, stricken, and trembling violently. And still there was utter silence in the populous bird-haunted branches around them; and still the light grew and grew...

“Rat!” he found breath to whisper, shaking. “Are you afraid?”

“Afraid?” murmured the Rat, his eyes shining with unutterable love. “Afraid! Of HIM? O, never, never! And yet—and yet—O, Mole, I am afraid!”

Then the two animals, crouching to the earth, bowed their heads and did worship.³

E. Jesus' Commission of John (1:17-20)

The figure before whom John has fallen issues two commands:

1. “Do not fear”: the most frequent command in Scripture. NT μή φοβοῦ etc 21x; OT אַל-תִּירָא 78x. Only now is the identity of the figure in the vision revealed: he is the one who was dead, but is now alive forever—the risen Christ.
 - a. the First and the Last: Jesus applies to himself a title used of God (Isa 44:6; 48:12).
 - b. the Living One: passed through death into life.
 - c. holds the keys of death and Hades: he can release others from Hades.
2. Write. “Write therefore the things that you have seen, those that are and those that are to take place after this” γράψον οὖν ἃ εἶδες καὶ ἃ εἰσὶν καὶ ἃ μέλλει γενέσθαι μετὰ ταῦτα.

There are two major schools of interpretation concerning what John is to write:

- a. Three-part futurist interpretation: what you have seen (ch 1), what is (ch 2-3), and what will happen after these things (ch 4-22).
- b. Two-part interpretation: what John sees is subdivided into two categories:
 - i. what is: conflict between two kingdoms; God's saints are being killed; false worship on earth.
 - ii. what will be: God will overthrow the kingdom of the earth, together with its leaders (dragon and two beasts). The counterfeit will be removed, and heaven and earth become one. The certainty of this outcome is predicated (“therefore”) on Jesus being the living victor over death.

2. Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy* (London: Oxford University Press, 1923), chapters 4-6.

3. Chapter 7, “The Piper at the Gates of Dawn” in Kenneth Grahame, *The Wind in the Willows* (1908).

Jesus interprets the symbols:

1. seven lampstands = the seven churches: bearing illumination in God's presence; Jesus walks in their midst; empowered by the Spirit.
2. seven stars = the angels of the seven churches: heavenly representatives of God's people on earth (cf. Dan 10:13; 12:1). The churches are heavenly colonies on earth.

II. The Seven Messages (2:1–3:22)

A. Structure

Each of the seven messages has a similar format:

1. Command to write

- a. Destination (*adscriptio*): “To the angel of the church in _____” Τῷ ἀγγέλῳ τῆς ἐν _____ ἐκκλησίας.
- b. Command: “write” γράψον.

2. Formula introducing the prophetic message

Formula introducing the prophetic message:

- a. “Thus saith...” Τάδε λέγει. Deliberately archaic. In LXX this is the usual translation of “Thus saith the Lord” כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה.
- b. Christological predications: description of Christ, all except the 7th using language of the previous vision (1:9-20). Four of these begin ὁ ἔχων “the one having” (2:12, 18; 3:1, 7).
 - i. Ephesus: “the one who holds the seven stars in his right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands” (1:16, 13).
 - ii. Smyrna: “the First and the Last, who was dead but has come to life” (1:18).
 - iii. Pergamum: “the one who holds the sharp double-edged sword” (1:16)
 - iv. Thyatira: “the Son of God, who has eyes like flaming fire, and feet like burnished bronze” (1:14-15).
 - v. Sardis: “the one who holds the seven spirits of God and the seven stars” (1:16).
 - vi. Philadelphia: “the Holy and True One, who holds the key of David, who opens and no one shuts, and shuts and no one opens.”
 - vii. Laodicea: “the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of God's creation.”

3. Prophetic Message

1. Narrative (*narratio*): 2:2-3, 9, 13-15, 19-21; 3:1b, 8, 15.
 - a. Assurance of Christ's awareness: “I know” οἶδά. οἶδά σου τὰ ἔργα “I know your works” (2:19; 3:1, 8, 15); οἶδα τὰ ἔργα σου (2:2).
 - b. Positive endorsement:
 - c. Negative censure: “But I have against you...” ἀλλὰ ἔχω κατὰ σοῦ (2:4, 14, 20).
2. Prophetic message (*dispositio*): 2:5-6, 10, 16, 22-25; 3:2-4, 9-11, 16-20.
 - a. Commands: remember μνημόνευε (2:5; 3:3), repent μετανόησον (2:5, 16; 3:3, 19).
 - b. Promise of Christ's quick coming: “I am coming” ἔρχομαι (2:5, 16; 3:11), ἦξω (2:25; 3:3).

4. Conclusion: Proclamation

- a. Exhortation to hear: “The one having an ear let him hear what the spirit says to the churches” ὁ

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ἔχων οὓς ἀκουσάτω τί τὸ πνεῦμα λέγει ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις. Identical in all 7. This functions as a prophetic signature. ὁ ἔχων balances ὁ ἔχων in the descriptions of Christ. Both Christ and the Spirit speak to the churches.

- b. Promise to the one who conquers, ὁ νικῶν or τῷ νικῶντι. These promises are consummated at the end of the book. νικάω *nikaō*, “conquer, overcome,” is a key word in Revelation, used 17× (of 28× in NT). In the epistles it is those who have faith or love that are commended, but here it is the ones who overcome and endure (ὑπομονή *hypomonē*, endurance, is used 7×).
 - i. Ephesus: “to the one who conquers I will allow him to eat from the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of God” (22:2, 19).
 - ii. Smyrna: “the one who conquers will in no way be harmed by the second death” (20:6, 14; 21:18).
 - iii. Pergamum: “to the one who conquers I will give him some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white pebble, and upon the pebble a new name written which no one knows except the recipient.”
 - iv. Thyatira: “and the one who conquers and keeps my works until the end, I will give him authority over the nations, and he will rule them with an iron rod, as earthen vessels are shattered, as I also have received from my father, and I will give him the morning star” (22:16)
 - v. Sardis: “the one who conquers will in the same way be clothed in white robes, and I will in no way blot out his name from the book of life, and I will confess his name before my father and before his angels.”
 - vi. Philadelphia: “the one who conquers I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God, and he will never ever go outside again, and I will write upon him the name of my God and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem which comes down out of heaven, and my new name” (21:2, 11; 22:4).
 - vii. Laodicea: “the one who conquers I will allow him to sit with me on my throne, as I also conquered and sat with my father on his throne.”

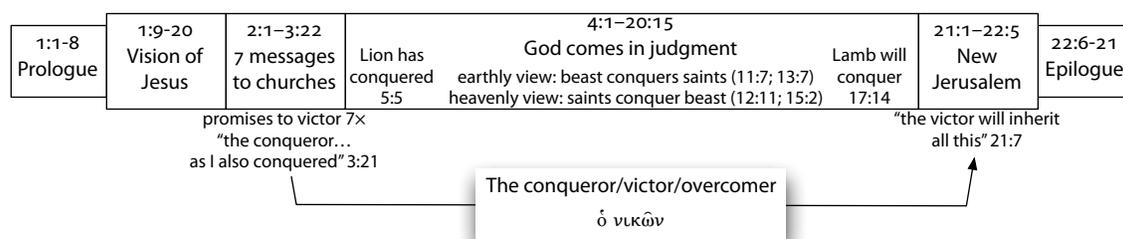


Fig. 3-1: The Place of the 7 Messages in the Book

B. Common Themes

According to theme, the seven messages fall into three pairs and a single:

1. Ephesus and Sardis: earlier passion has grown cold; both are called to remember.
2. Smyrna and Philadelphia: the two most positive churches; both facing opposition from the synagogue of Satan.
3. Pergamum and Thyatira: both succumbing to the teaching of Balaam/the Nicolaitans/Jezebel.
4. Laodicea: has forgotten its need for Jesus, and is now indistinguishable from Babylon.

Churches 1–4, Revelation 2

Adscript	² “To the angel of the church in Ephesus write:	⁸ And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write:	¹² And to the angel of the church in Pergamum write:	¹⁸ And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write:
Intro	“The words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand, who walks among the seven golden lampstands.	“The words of the first and the last, who died and came to life.	“The words of him who has the sharp two-edged sword.	“The words of the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and whose feet are like burnished bronze.
Edict <i>narrative</i>	² I know your works, your toil and your patient endurance, and how you cannot bear with those who are evil, but have tested those who call themselves apostles and are not, and found them to be false. ³ I know you are enduring patiently and bearing up for the my name’s sake, and you have not grown weary. ⁴ But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first.	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.	¹³ I know where you dwell, where Satan’s throne is. Yet you hold fast my name, and you did not deny my faith even in the days of Antipas my faithful witness, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells. ¹⁴ But I have a few things against you: you have some there who hold the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, so that they might eat food sacrificed to idols and practice sexual immorality. ¹⁵ So also you have some who hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans.	¹⁹ I know your works, your love and faith and service and patient endurance, and that your latter works exceed the first. ²⁰ But I have this against you, that you tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess and is teaching and seducing my servants to practice sexual immorality and to eat food sacrificed to idols. ²¹ I gave her time to repent, but she refuses to repent of her sexual immorality.
<i>arrangement</i>	⁵ Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent. ⁶ Yet this you have: you hate the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.	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, and I will give you the crown of life.	¹⁶ Therefore repent. If not, I will come to you soon and war against them with the sword of my mouth.	²² Behold, I will throw her onto a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her I will throw into great tribulation, unless they repent of her works, ²³ and I will strike her children dead. And all the churches will know that I am he who searches mind and heart, and I will give to each of you according to your works. ²⁴ But to the rest of you in Thyatira, who do not hold this teaching, who have not learned what some call the deep things of Satan, to you I say, I do not lay on you any other burden. ²⁵ Only hold fast what you have until I come.
Proclamation	⁷ He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.’	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.’	¹⁷ He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, with a new name written on the stone that no one knows except the one who receives it.’	²⁶ The one who conquers and who keeps my works until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations, ²⁷ and he will rule them with a rod of iron, as when earthen pots are broken in pieces, even as I myself have received authority from my Father. ²⁸ And I will give him the morning star. ²⁹ He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.’

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Churches 5–7, Revelation 3 (ESV)

<i>Adscript.</i>	3 And to the angel of the church in Sardis write:	7 And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write:	14 And to the angel of the church in Laodicea write:
Intro.	“The words of him who has the seven spirits of God and the seven stars.	“The words of the holy one, the true one, who has the key of David, who opens and no one will shut, who shuts and no one opens.	“The words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of God’s creation.
Edict <i>narrative</i>	I know your works. You have the reputation of being alive, but you are dead.	8 I know your works. Behold, I have set before you an open door, which no one is able to shut. I know that you have but little power, and yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name.	15 I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were either cold or hot!
arrange- ment	2 Wake up, and strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have not found your works complete in the sight of my God. 3 Remember, then, what you received and heard. Keep it, and repent. If you will not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come against you. 4 Yet you have still a few names in Sardis, people who have not soiled their garments, and they will walk with me in white, for they are worthy.	9 Behold, I will make those of the synagogue of Satan who say that they are Jews and are not, but lie—behold, I will make them come and bow down before your feet, and they will learn that I have loved you. 10 Because you have kept my word about patient endurance, I will keep you from the hour of trial that is coming on the whole world, to try those who dwell on the earth. 11 I am coming soon. Hold fast what you have, so that no one may seize your crown.	16 So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth. 17 For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked. 18 I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire, so that you may be rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself and the shame of your nakedness may not be seen, and salve to anoint your eyes, so that you may see. 19 Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent. 20 Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me.
Proclam- ation	5 The one who conquers will be clothed thus in white garments, and I will never blot his name out of the book of life. I will confess his name before my Father and before his angels. 6 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.’	12 The one who conquers, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God. Never shall he go out of it, 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 from my God out of heaven, and my own new name. 13 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.’	21 The one who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, as I also conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne. 22 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.’”

Churches 1–4, Revelation 2

Adscript.	2 Τῷ ἀγγέλῳ τῆς ἐν Ἐφέσῳ ἐκκλησίας γράψον·	8 Καὶ τῷ ἀγγέλῳ τῆς ἐν Σμύρνῃ ἐκκλησίας γράψον·	12 Καὶ τῷ ἀγγέλῳ τῆς ἐν Περγάμῳ ἐκκλησίας γράψον·	18 Καὶ τῷ ἀγγέλῳ τῆς ἐν Θυατείροις ἐκκλησίας γράψον·
Intro.	Τάδε λέγει ὁ κρατῶν τοὺς ἑπτὰ ἀστέρας ἐν τῇ δεξιᾷ αὐτοῦ, ὁ περιπατῶν ἐν μέσῳ τῶν ἑπτὰ λυχνιῶν τῶν χρυσῶν·	Τάδε λέγει ὁ πρῶτος καὶ ὁ ἔσχατος, ὃς ἐγένετο νεκρὸς καὶ ἔζησεν·	Τάδε λέγει ὁ ἔχων τὴν ῥομφαίαν τὴν δίστομον τὴν ὀξεῖαν·	Τάδε λέγει ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ, ὁ ἔχων τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς αὐτοῦ ὡς φλόγα πυρὸς καὶ οἱ πόδες αὐτοῦ ὅμοιοι χαλκολιβάνῳ·
Edict <i>narrative</i>	2 οἶδα τὰ ἔργα σου καὶ τὸν κόπον καὶ τὴν ὑπομονήν σου καὶ ὅτι οὐ δύνη βασιτάσαι κακοῦς, καὶ ἐπίερασας τοὺς λέγοντας ἑαυτοὺς ἀποστόλους καὶ οὐκ εἰσὶν καὶ εὗρες αὐτοὺς ψευδεῖς, 3 καὶ ὑπομονὴν ἔχεις καὶ ἐβίαστας διὰ τὸ ὄνομά μου καὶ οὐ κεκοπιάκες. 4 ἀλλὰ ἔχω κατὰ σοῦ ὅτι τὴν ἀγάπην σου τὴν πρώτην ἀφήκες.	9 οἶδά σου τὴν θλίψιν καὶ τὴν πτωχείαν, ἀλλὰ πλούσιος εἶ, καὶ τὴν βλασφημίαν ἐκ τῶν λεγόντων Ἰουδαίους εἶναι ἑαυτοὺς καὶ οὐκ εἰσὶν ἀλλὰ συναγωγὴ τοῦ σατανᾶ.	13 οἶδα τοῦ κατοικεῖς, ὅπου ὁ θρόνος τοῦ σατανᾶ, καὶ κρατεῖς τὸ ὄνομά μου καὶ οὐκ ἠρνήσω τὴν πίστιν μου καὶ ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις Ἀντιπᾶς ὁ μάρτυς μου ὁ πιστὸς μου, ὃς ἀπεκτάνθη παρ' ὑμῖν, ὅπου ὁ σατανᾶς κατοικεῖ. 14 ἀλλ' ἔχω κατὰ σοῦ ὀλίγα ὅτι ἔχεις ἐκεῖ κρατοῦντας τὴν διδαχὴν Βαλαάμ, ὃς ἐδίδασκεν τῷ Βαλὰκ βαλεῖν σκάνδαλον ἐνώπιον τῶν υἱῶν Ἰσραὴλ φαγεῖν εἰδωλόθυτα καὶ πορνεῦσαι. 15 οὕτως ἔχεις καὶ σὺ κρατοῦντας τὴν διδαχὴν [τῶν] Νικολαϊτῶν ὁμοίως.	19 οἶδά σου τὰ ἔργα καὶ τὴν ἀγάπην καὶ τὴν πίστιν καὶ τὴν διακονίαν καὶ τὴν ὑπομονὴν σου, καὶ τὰ ἔργα σου τὰ ἔσχατα πλεῖον τῶν πρώτων. 20 ἀλλὰ ἔχω κατὰ σοῦ ὅτι ἀφεῖς τὴν γυναῖκα Ἰεζάβελ, ἣ λέγουσα ἑαυτὴν προφήτην καὶ διδάσκει καὶ πλανᾷ τοὺς ἐμοὺς δούλους πορνεύσαι καὶ φαγεῖν εἰδωλόθυτα. 21 καὶ ἔδωκα αὐτῇ χρόνον ἵνα μετανοήσῃ, καὶ οὐ θέλει μετανοήσαι ἐκ τῆς πορνείας αὐτῆς.
arrangement	5 μνημόνευε οὖν πόθεν πέπτωκας καὶ μετανόησον καὶ τὰ πρώτα ἔργα ποίησον· εἰ δὲ μὴ, ἔρχομαί σοι καὶ κινήσω τὴν λυχνίαν σου ἐκ τοῦ τόπου αὐτῆς, ἐὰν μὴ μετανόησῃς. 6 ἀλλὰ τοῦτο ἔχεις, ὅτι μισεῖς τὰ ἔργα τῶν Νικολαϊτῶν ἃ κἀγὼ μισῶ.	10 μηδὲν φοβοῦ ἃ μέλλεις πάσχειν. ἰδοὺ μέλλει βάλλειν ὁ διάβολος ἐξ ὑμῶν εἰς φυλακὴν ἵνα πειρασθῆτε καὶ ἔξετε θλίψιν ἡμερῶν δέκα. γίνου πιστὸς ἄχρι θανάτου, καὶ δώσω σοι τὸν στέφανον τῆς ζωῆς.	16 μετανόησον οὖν· εἰ δὲ μὴ, ἔρχομαί σοι ταχὺ καὶ πολεμήσω μετ' αὐτῶν ἐν τῇ ῥομφαίᾳ τοῦ στόματός μου.	22 ἰδοὺ βάλλω αὐτὴν εἰς κλίνην καὶ τοὺς μοιχεύοντας μετ' αὐτῆς εἰς θλίψιν μεγάλην, ἐὰν μὴ μετανοήσωσιν ἐκ τῶν ἔργων αὐτῆς, 23 καὶ τὰ τέκνα αὐτῆς ἀποκτενῶ ἐν θανάτῳ. καὶ γινώσκονται πᾶσαι αἱ ἐκκλησίαι ὅτι ἐγὼ εἰμι ὁ ἔραυνων νεφροὺς καὶ καρδίας, καὶ δώσω ὑμῖν ἑκάστῳ κατὰ τὰ ἔργα ὑμῶν. 24 ὑμῖν δὲ λέγω τοῖς λοιποῖς τοῖς ἐν Θυατείροις, ὅσοι οὐκ ἔχουσιν τὴν διδαχὴν ταύτην, οἵτινες οὐκ ἔγνωσαν τὰ βαθέα τοῦ σατανᾶ ὡς λέγουσιν· οὐ βάλλω ἐφ' ὑμᾶς ἄλλο βάρος, 25 πλην ὃ ἔχετε κρατήσατε ἄχρι [ς] οὐ ἂν ἤξω.
Proclamation	7 Ὁ ἔχων οὖς ἀκουσάτω τί τὸ πνεῦμα λέγει ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις. Τῷ νικῶντι δώσω αὐτῷ φαγεῖν ἐκ τοῦ ξύλου τῆς ζωῆς, ὃ ἐστὶν ἐν τῷ παραδείσῳ τοῦ θεοῦ.	11 Ὁ ἔχων οὖς ἀκουσάτω τί τὸ πνεῦμα λέγει ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις. Ὁ νικῶν οὐ μὴ ἀδικηθῆ ἐκ τοῦ θανάτου τοῦ δευτέρου.	17 Ὁ ἔχων οὖς ἀκουσάτω τί τὸ πνεῦμα λέγει ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις. Τῷ νικῶντι δώσω αὐτῷ τοῦ μάννα τοῦ κεκρυμμένου καὶ δώσω αὐτῷ ψῆφον λευκὴν, καὶ ἐπὶ τὴν ψῆφον ὄνομα καινὸν γεγραμμένον ὃ οὐδεὶς οἶδεν εἰ μὴ ὁ λαμβάνων.	26 Καὶ ὁ νικῶν καὶ ὁ τηρῶν ἄχρι τέλους τὰ ἔργα μου, δώσω αὐτῷ ἐξουσίαν ἐπὶ τῶν ἔθνων 27 καὶ ποιμανεῖ αὐτοὺς ἐν ῥάβδῳ σιδηρᾷ ὡς τὰ σκεύη τὰ κεραμικὰ συντρίβεται, 28 ὡς κἀγὼ εἴληφα παρὰ τοῦ πατρός μου, καὶ δώσω αὐτῷ τὸν ἀστέρα τὸν πρωϊνόν. 29 Ὁ ἔχων οὖς ἀκουσάτω τί τὸ πνεῦμα λέγει ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις.

3. The Seven Messages

Churches 5-7, Revelation 3

Adscript.	3 Καὶ τῷ ἀγγέλῳ τῆς ἐν Σάρδεσιν ἐκκλησίας γράψον·	7 Καὶ τῷ ἀγγέλῳ τῆς ἐν Φιλαδελφείᾳ ἐκκλησίας γράψον·	14 Καὶ τῷ ἀγγέλῳ τῆς ἐν Λαοδικείᾳ ἐκκλησίας γράψον·
Intro.	Τάδε λέγει ὁ ἔχων τὰ ἑπτὰ πνεύματα τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ τοὺς ἑπτὰ ἀστέρας·	Τάδε λέγει ὁ ἅγιος, ὁ ἀληθινός, ὁ ἔχων τὴν κλεῖν Δαυὶδ, ὁ ἀνοίγων καὶ οὐδεὶς κλείσει καὶ κλείων καὶ οὐδεὶς ἀνοίγει·	Τάδε λέγει ὁ ἄμην, ὁ μάρτυς ὁ πιστὸς καὶ ἀληθινός, ἡ ἀρχὴ τῆς κτίσεως τοῦ θεοῦ·
Edict narrative	οἶδά σου τὰ ἔργα ὅτι ὄνομα ἔχεις ὅτι ζῆς, καὶ νεκρὸς εἶ.	⁸ οἶδά σου τὰ ἔργα, ἰδοὺ δέδωκα ἐνώπιόν σου θύραν ἠνεωγμένην, ἣν οὐδεὶς δύναται κλείσαι αὐτήν, ὅτι μικρὰν ἔχεις δύναμιν καὶ ἐτήρησάς μου τὸν λόγον καὶ οὐκ ἠρνήσω τὸ ὄνομά μου.	¹⁵ οἶδά σου τὰ ἔργα ὅτι οὔτε ψυχρὸς εἶ οὔτε ζεστός. ὄφελον ψυχρὸς ἢ ἢ ζεστός.
arrangement	² γίνου γρηγορῶν καὶ στήρισον τὰ λοιπὰ ἃ ἔμελλον ἀποθανεῖν, οὐ γὰρ εὔρηκά σου τὰ ἔργα πεπληρωμένα ἐνώπιον τοῦ θεοῦ μου. ³ μνημόνευε οὖν πῶς εἴληφας καὶ ἤκουσας καὶ τήρει καὶ μετανόησον. ἐὰν οὖν μὴ γρηγορήσης, ἦξω ὡς κλέπτῃς, καὶ οὐ μὴ γνῶς ποῖαν ὥραν ἦξω ἐπὶ σέ. ⁴ ἀλλὰ ἔχεις ὀλίγα ὀνόματα ἐν Σάρδεσιν ἃ οὐκ ἐμόλυναν τὰ ἱμάτια αὐτῶν, καὶ περιπατήσουσιν μετ' ἐμοῦ ἐν λευκοῖς, ὅτι ἄξιοί εἰσιν.	⁹ ἰδοὺ διδῶ ἐκ τῆς συναγωγῆς τοῦ σατανᾶ τῶν λεγόντων ἑαυτοὺς Ἰουδαίους εἶναι, καὶ οὐκ εἰσὶν ἀλλὰ ψεύδονται. ἰδοὺ ποιήσω αὐτοὺς ἵνα ἦξουσιν καὶ προσκυνήσουσιν ἐνώπιον τῶν ποδῶν σου καὶ γνώσιν ὅτι ἐγὼ ἠγάπησά σε. ¹⁰ ὅτι ἐτήρησας τὸν λόγον τῆς ὑπομονῆς μου, κἀγὼ σε τηρήσω ἐκ τῆς ὥρας τοῦ πειρασμοῦ τῆς μελλούσης ἔρχεσθαι ἐπὶ τῆς οἰκουμένης ὅλης πειράσαι τοὺς κατοικοῦντας ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς. ¹¹ ἔρχομαι ταχύ· κράτει ὃ ἔχεις, ἵνα μηδεὶς λάβῃ τὸν στέφανόν σου.	¹⁶ οὕτως ὅτι χλιαρὸς εἶ καὶ οὔτε ζεστὸς οὔτε ψυχρὸς, μέλλω σε ἐμέσαι ἐκ τοῦ στόματός μου. ¹⁷ ὅτι λέγεις ὅτι πλούσιός εἰμι καὶ πεπλούτηκα καὶ οὐδὲν χρεῖαν ἔχω, καὶ οὐκ οἶδας ὅτι σὺ εἶ ὁ ταλαίπωρος καὶ ἐλεεινὸς καὶ πτωχὸς καὶ τυφλὸς καὶ γυμνός, ¹⁸ συμβουλεύω σοι ἀγοράσαι παρ' ἐμοῦ χρυσοῖον πεπυρωμένον ἐκ πυρὸς ἵνα πλουτήσης, καὶ ἱμάτια λευκὰ ἵνα περιβάλλῃ καὶ μὴ φανερωθῇ ἡ αἰσχύνῃ τῆς γυμνότητός σου, καὶ κολλ[ο]ύριον ἐγχρῖσαι τοὺς ὀφθαλμούς σου ἵνα βλέπῃς. ¹⁹ ἐγὼ ὄσους ἐὰν φιλῶ ἐλέγχω καὶ παιδεύω· ζήλευε οὖν καὶ μετανόησον. ²⁰ Ἰδοὺ ἔστηκα ἐπὶ τὴν θύραν καὶ κρούω· ἐὰν τις ἀκούσῃ τῆς φωνῆς μου καὶ ἀνοίξῃ τὴν θύραν, [καὶ] εἰσελεύσομαι πρὸς αὐτὸν καὶ δεῖπνήσω μετ' αὐτοῦ καὶ αὐτὸς μετ' ἐμοῦ.
Proclamation	⁵ Ὁ νικῶν οὕτως περιβαλεῖται ἐν ἱματίοις λευκοῖς καὶ οὐ μὴ ἐξαλείψω τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ ἐκ τῆς βίβλου τῆς ζωῆς καὶ ὁμολογήσω τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ ἐνώπιον τοῦ πατρὸς μου καὶ ἐνώπιον τῶν ἀγγέλων αὐτοῦ. ⁶ Ὁ ἔχων οὐς ἀκουσάτω τί τὸ πνεῦμα λέγει ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις.	¹² Ὁ νικῶν ποιήσω αὐτὸν στυλὸν ἐν τῷ ναῶ τοῦ θεοῦ μου καὶ ἔξω οὐ μὴ ἐξέλθῃ ἔτι καὶ γράψω ἐπ' αὐτὸν τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ θεοῦ μου καὶ τὸ ὄνομα τῆς πόλεως τοῦ θεοῦ μου, τῆς καινῆς Ἰερουσαλὴμ ἣ καταβαίνουσα ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ ἀπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ μου, καὶ τὸ ὄνομά μου τὸ καινόν. ¹³ Ὁ ἔχων οὐς ἀκουσάτω τί τὸ πνεῦμα λέγει ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις.	²¹ Ὁ νικῶν δώσω αὐτῷ καθῆσαι μετ' ἐμοῦ ἐν τῷ θρόνῳ μου, ὡς κἀγὼ ἐνίκησα καὶ ἐκάθισα μετὰ τοῦ πατρὸς μου ἐν τῷ θρόνῳ αὐτοῦ. ²² Ὁ ἔχων οὐς ἀκουσάτω τί τὸ πνεῦμα λέγει ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις.

C. The Province of Asia



Fig. 3-2: Roman Anatolia

Asia was the first and most important Roman province in the eastern Mediterranean. In 133 BC, King Attalus III of Pergamum died without an heir, willing his kingdom to Rome. From this kingdom of Pergamum, Rome created the province of Asia. It was a proconsular province, governed by a proconsul (a former consul appointed by the Senate for a one-year term; other provinces were imperial provinces governed by imperial appointees).

When the province of Asia was created out of the kingdom of Pergamum, Pergamum remained the capital. The capital was later transferred to Ephesus. There was bitter rivalry between three large cities: Pergamum, Smyrna, Ephesus.

D. Ephesus

Ephesus was originally located on or near the shore of an inlet of the sea, near the mouth of the Cayster river. Around 1000 BC settlers from Greece founded twelve cities, forming a pan-Ionic league with Ephesus as its capital. The city was later incorporated into the kingdom of Lydia. The last Lydian king, Croesus, besieged Ephesus, but was then the primary benefactor of the temple of Artemis. The ancient city was located near this temple. Around 290 BC, Lysamachus relocated the city to the valley between Panayir Dagħ and Bülbül Dagħ. Half of the city moved back in the late Byzantine period. The remainder of the city was abandoned in the tenth century.

With a population of 250,000, Ephesus was the fourth largest city in the Roman Empire. It was a free city, i.e., self-governing. It was the largest commercial center in Asia Minor, and enjoyed great prosperity under the reign of Augustus, and until the mid-second century. It eventually replaced Pergamon as the capital of the province of Asia. The Great Theater sat 25,000. The stadium built during Nero's reign sat 75,000.

3. The Seven Messages

Ephesus called itself “First and Greatest Metropolis of Asia.”

Ephesus contained many temples, including:

1. Artemisium: the Temple of Artemis was declared one of the Seven Wonders of the World by Antipater of Sidon (2nd century BC). It was the largest Greek temple in antiquity, four times larger than the Parthenon in Athens. The temple was plundered by the Goths c. AD 262.
2. Dea Roma and Divus Julius: a single temple, authorized by Augustus, for the worship of the goddess Roma and the divine Julius Caesar. The construction of this temple probably reflected the desire of the people to honor Augustus for the peace that he had restored to Asia, which brought renewed commercial prosperity.
3. Temple of the Sebastoi: an immense temple constructed during the reign of Domitian. It contained a colossal statue of Domitian. Following the *damnatio memoriae* of Domitian, his name was chiselled out of all inscriptions and replaced by the name of Vespasian.

1. Description of Jesus

2. Prophetic Message

a. Narrative:

- i. Commendation: for labor and endurance, and for testing false apostles.
- ii. Chastisement: for abandoning first love.

b. Arrangement:

- i. Command: remember, repent, repeat.
 - ii. Warning: Christ will remove lampstand. Perhaps a reference to fact that Ephesus had already been moved twice, and to ongoing threat of harbor silting up.
 - iii. Commendation: hate the work of the Nicolaitans, while the Pergamene church holds to their teaching. Their teaching seems similar to that of Balaam (Pergamum) and Jezebel (Thyatira): eating meat offered to idols, and sexual immorality, the two things specifically forbidden Gentile believers by the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15:29).
3. Promise: Access to the tree of life in God’s paradise. In this sanctuary there will be no room for any wicked people, unlike the asylum sanctuary (*temenos*) around the Temple of Artemis which became a refuge of criminals.

E. Smyrna

Smyrna was an important port, located in a beautiful setting at the head of a large bay. Strabo called it “the most beautiful city of all.” With a population of 200,000, it was not much smaller than Ephesus. It disputed with Ephesus the claim to be “First City in Asia.” In 195 BC it was the first city in Asia to erect a temple to Dea Roma. Technically Smyrna was warden (*neokoros*) of all the temples of the province. In 155 Polycarp was martyred in Smyrna for his refusal to acknowledge Caesar as Lord.

1. Description of Jesus

2. Prophetic Message

a. Narrative:

- i. Commendation: Christ knows their treatment by “those who say that they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan.” This synagogue of Satan also active in Philadelphia. Probably refers to Jews who denounced Christians to Roman authorities, as they later denounced Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna.
- ii. Chastisement: none.

b. Arrangement:

- i. Command: do not fear, be faithful.

- ii. Promise: The one who is faithful unto death will receive the victor's wreath.
- 3. Promise to Victor: Will not be harmed by second death (20:6, 14; 21:18)

F. Pergamum

Pergamum is 45 miles north of Smyrna, 85 miles north of Ephesus, and 15 miles inland, near the river Caicus. Its most prominent feature is the huge acropolis that rises 1300 feet above the surrounding plain. The early city was built atop this acropolis, eventually spreading to the plain below. Today the modern city of Bergama lies at the foot of the acropolis.

After the death of Alexander the Great in 323 BC, his successors (Διάδοχοι, mostly his generals) fought amongst themselves (The Wars of the Diadochi). Twenty years of infighting, eventually produced four independent kingdoms: Thrace and Asia Minor ruled by Lysimachus, Macedonia ruled by Cassander, Egypt ruled by Ptolemy, and Persia ruled by Seleucus. Lysimachus chose to locate his treasury in Pergamum, entrusting it to the care of Philataerus. But in 281 Lysimachus was defeated by Seleucus, and Philataerus took advantage of the chaos to establish his own kingdom, ruled by what would become known as the Attalid dynasty (after his nephew and third ruler, Attalus).

As Rome was spreading its tentacles throughout the Mediterranean, the kingdom of Pergamon was her most important ally in the east. In 212 BC the king of Pergamon made an alliance with Rome, and in 189 Pergamon assisted Rome in its defeat of Antiochus. Rome rewarded this loyalty with large grants of land taken from Antiochus. In 133 BC, King Attalus III died without an heir, and willed his kingdom to Rome. From this kingdom Rome created the province of Asia, with Pergamon its capital. Probably in the second century AD Rome transferred the capital to Ephesus, but the latter had been the de facto capital for a century already.

In the second century BC, King Eumenes II built a magnificent set of buildings atop the acropolis, including a massive theater (the steepest in the ancient world), a library, and the great altar of Zeus (now in the Pergamon Museum, Berlin). Other buildings were later added, including a temple to Trajan. The library in Pergamon was second only to Alexandria. Threatened by Pergamon's growing importance, Alexandria prohibited the export of papyrus. Needing a new writing material, artisans in Pergamon developed parchment (animal skins), naming it after their city. This use of parchment in turn led to the development of the codex (bound book) because parchment scrolls were much bulkier than papyrus ones. Temples were prominent in Pergamum:

1. Temple of Athene: the goddess of Pergamum. The oldest temple on the acropolis.
2. Great altar of Zeus: built to commemorate victory over the Galatians (Celtic invaders from Gaul) ca. 240 BC.
3. Temple to Rome and Augustus: 29 BC. The first temple of the imperial cult.
4. The Asklepiion: a famous medical center dedicated to Asklepius, the god of healing, whose symbol was the serpent. On the plain below the acropolis.
5. Temple to Trajan: built on the highest point of the Acropolis.
6. Temple of Serapis:
 1. Description of Jesus: the one with the sharp double-edged sword (ρομφαία), the symbol of judicial power. The Roman proconsul wielded the judicial sword in Pergamum, but it is Jesus who has ultimate authority.
 2. Prophetic Message
 - a. Narrative:
 - i. Commendation: holding fast as faithful witnesses, even in shadow of Satan's throne and despite martyrdom of Antipas. Suggested identities of Satan's throne in Pergamum: altar of Zeus Soter

3. The Seven Messages

(Zeus Savior), whole complex of temples atop acropolis, city as seat of provincial government, Asklepiion (medical center dedicated to god Asklepius, whose symbol is serpent), throne-like appearance of theater on hillside.

- ii. Chastisement: some hold to the teaching of Balaam and the Nicolaitans (presumably the same), who deceived people to eat food sacrificed to idols, and to physical or spiritual adultery (cf. Acts 15:29). Balaam incited the Israelites to participate with Moabite women in immorality, idolatry, and sacrificial feasts to their gods (Num 25:1-3; 31:16).

While Israel lived in Shittim, the people began to whore with the daughters of Moab. These invited the people to the sacrifices of their gods, and the people ate and bowed down to their gods. So Israel yoked himself to Baal of Peor. And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel... Behold, these [the foreign women], on Balaam's advice, caused the people of Israel to act treacherously against the LORD in the incident of Peor, and so the plague came among the congregation of the LORD. (Num 25:1-3; 31:16)

- a. Arrangement:
 - i. Command: repent of compromise with the pagan world.
 - ii. Warning: Christ will come soon (ἔρχομαί σοι ταχύ) to wage war.
1. Promise to Victor
 - a. Hidden manna: heavenly food provided by God in messianic banquet to replace the earthly food in pagan idolatrous banquets that the faithful one has declined to eat.
 - b. White pebble: signal of acquittal, or token of admission to heavenly banquet.
 - c. New name:

G. Thyatira

Thyatira was an important center of the wool trade. Thyatira was the home town of Lydia, “a dealer in purple cloth” and “a worshiper of God” whom Paul met in Philippi (Acts 16:14-15, 40).

1. Description of Jesus: Son of God
2. Prophetic Message
 - a. Narrative:
 - i. Commendation: growing love, faith, service, endurance.
 - ii. Chastisement: toleration of Jezebel, whose teaching seems similar to that of Balaam and the Nicolaitans.
 - b. Arrangement:
 - i. Warning: judgment against Jezebel.
 - ii. Command: hold fast to Christ.
3. Promise to Victor
 - a. Rule over the nations
 - b. The Morning Star

H. Sardis

Sardis was the capital of the Lydian empire (c. 680–c. 547 BC), whose most famous king was Croesus (ca. 560–ca. 547). Prosperity was due to local gold supplies; coinage was invented here. The city was destroyed by an earthquake in AD 17.

The citadel was built on an acropolis towering 1500 ft above the plain. The people of Sardis thought this to be invincible, but it was twice captured by surprise attacks at the seemingly most invincible point “where

no guard was stationed, for there was no fear that it would ever be captured at that place, for the acropolis is sheer and impregnable there” (Herodotus, *Hist.*, 1.84): Cyrus (546 BC), Antiochus III (214 BC). Sardis contained a large Jewish population, dating to OT times (שְׁפָרַדִּים *Səpārad* Obad 20). It contained the largest synagogue ever found in the Mediterranean; furthermore, this synagogue was in the center of town.

1. Description of Jesus: The one holding the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars (cf. Ephesus 2:1).
2. Prophetic Message
 - a. Narrative:
 - i. Commendation: none.
 - ii. Chastisement: reputation of being alive, but actually dead. The Sardian church is complacent, just like the defenders of the citadel in 546, 214 bc.
 - b. Arrangement:
 - i. Command: wake up; remember, repent (cf. Ephesus 2:5).
 - ii. Warning: Christ will come like thief in night—like Cyrus and Antiochus who captured the citadel by surprise, and like the earthquakes which suddenly destroyed Sardis.
3. Promise to Victor

I. Philadelphia

Philadelphia was founded by Eumenes II (197-159 BC), king of Pergamon, or possibly by his brother Attalus II (159-138 BC), whose loyalty had earned him the name *philadelphus* (brother-lover). Philadelphia was the last town before the major road (the Roman imperial post road from Troas, Pergamon, Sardis to all points east; the old Persian highway from Sardis to Persepolis) climbed up to the interior plateau of Phrygia. Philadelphia was an outpost of Greek culture.

The city lay in a prosperous agricultural region, where volcanic soil nurtured a rich viticulture. Dionysius was the chief local deity.

The region was prone to earthquakes. In AD 17, the city was destroyed by an earthquake that Pliny described as the greatest in human history. Strabo reports that because of the frequent earthquakes people preferred to live in the surrounding countryside rather than in the town.

Tiberius granted a five-year exemption from tribute to help the city rebuild, dispatching his adopted son Germanicus to supervise aid. In gratitude for this aid, Philadelphia added a new name, Neocaesarea. Later, during the reign of Vespasian (70-79, founder of the Flavian dynasty), and presumably in response to further imperial aid, it took another new name, Flavia. It was a great honor for a city to be allowed to take an imperial name.

In AD 92 Domitian ordered that half the vineyards in the provinces be destroyed to encourage grain production and to protect the Italian wine industry. Philadelphia Flavia, heavily dependent upon viticulture, must have felt betrayed.

1. Description of Jesus
 - a. The Holy and True (ὁ ἅγιος, ὁ ἀληθινός):
 - b. The one who holds the key of David:
 - c. The one who opens and no one can shut, and shuts and no one can open:
2. Prophetic Message
 - a. Narrative:
 - i. Commendation: faithfulness to Christ despite weakness.
 - ii. Chastisement: none.
 - b. Arrangement:
 - i. Resolve: will make members of synagogue of Satan acknowledge Christians; will keep safe from

3. The Seven Messages

- tribulation.
- ii. Command: hold fast to Christ.
- 3. Promise to Victor
 - a. Will make a pillar in God's temple: a secure building.
 - b. Will never again go outside: a permanent dwelling, from which one will never again have to flee to the countryside to escape earthquake damage.
 - c. Will write on him three names: in contrast to the new names which Philadelphia took.
 - i. the name of God
 - ii. name of God's city, New Jerusalem
 - iii. Jesus' new name

J. Laodicea

Laodicea is on a hill above the Lycus River, ten miles downstream from Colossae, and 6 miles from Hierapolis. It was founded by the Seleucid king Antiochus II (r. 261- BC), who named it after his wife Laodice, before he divorced her in 253. The city's great prosperity was based on its woollen industry; it was especially noted for its black wool. Laodicea was so prosperous that it was able to rebuild itself from its own resources after devastating earthquakes in AD 17, 60. Laodicea was also strategically located at the intersection of the road from Ephesus to the east, and the road from Pergamum and Sardis to the south. It was the chief medical center of Phrygia.

The gospel was probably brought to Laodicea, Hierapolis and Colossae by Epaphras of Colossae during Paul's two-year stay in Ephesus (Col 1:7-8; 4:12-16).

1. Description of Jesus: Unlike the other 6 messages, this description of Jesus does not draw from the inaugural vision of Jesus (1:12-20).
 - a. The Amen: cf. "the Amen God" (אֱמֵן יְהוָה הוּא הֵוֵה הָאֱמֵן הַיְהוּדִים, Isa 65:16). John again applies to Jesus a name appropriate to God alone.
 - b. The faithful and true witness.
 - c. The beginning/ruler (ἀρχή) of God's creation: presumably John was acquainted with Paul's letter to Colossae, which describes Jesus as "the firstborn over all creation" (πρωτότοκος πάσης κτίσεως) and "the beginning" (ἀρχή) (Col 1:15, 18). Both Paul and John draw on the imagery of Yahweh establishing Lady Wisdom from the beginning (ἀρχή) (Prov 8:22-23).
2. Prophetic Message
 - a. Narrative:
 - i. Commendation: none.
 - ii. Chastisement:
 1. useless: neither hot nor cold. Probably a reference to local water supply: Hierapolis had hot mineral springs of medicinal value, Colossae had cold refreshing springs, Laodicea had neither and was thus useless.
 2. unaware of need: material self-sufficiency of city paralleled spiritual self-sufficiency of church.
 - b. Arrangement:
 - i. Warning: Christ will spew them out, for their self-sufficiency. The city prided itself for its self-sufficiency in recovering from the earthquakes of AD 17, 60. The church was unaware of its spiritual poverty, of its need for Jesus.
 - ii. Command:
 1. buy from Christ three things, each alluding to some local product:
 1. gold: city was a major banking center

2. white robes: city was famous for its black wool garments
3. eye-salve: region was famous for its eye-salve.
2. Be zealous and repent
 - iii. Promise: Jesus will dine with whoever invites him in. NB this is not a gospel invitation; this is addressed to the church, a church that has forgotten its need for Jesus.
3. Promise to Victor: To sit with Jesus on his Father's throne: to follow in his footsteps, receiving the same reward for victory.