

### **EPHESUS**

- Centre of Roman administration in Asia & the seat of the Roman proconsul; the first & greatest metropolis of Asia Minor; western terminus of the great system of Roman roads.
- A hotbed of every kind of cult & superstition; its works of magic were notorious throughout the world; devotion to Artemis (originally an Asiatic mother goddess, patroness of fertility, but identified by the Greeks with Artemis, sister of Apollo); a centre for emperor worship.
- Paul founded a Christian Church here, c. 50-55 AD & thence movement of evangelisation (cf. Acts 19); after 70 AD: the chief centre of Christian faith!
- Judaizing & Gnostic teachers active (cf. 1 Tim 1:7); hence, threat of schism in Church.

### **S.MYRNA**

- Destroyed in the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC; was rebuilt on new site
- Became one of the most wealthy & prosperous cities of Asia Minor
- A centre of emperor worship, but its main difficulties were with Jewish opponents (cf. Rev 2:9)
- Faithful ally of Rome; dedication of temple to the goddess of Rome in 195 BC. Famous for its gladiatorial games

### **PERGAMUM**

- First official centre in Asia Minor for the imperial cult
- Famous for its great religious foundations in honour of Zeus, Athena, etc. Cult of Asklepios Soter, the god of healing (whose symbol was the serpent, later applied to Satan in Rev 12:9)
- The "Lourdes" of Asia Minor...& the seat of a famous school of medicine
- Behind the city rose a cone-shaped hill, 1000ft high, home to multiple pagan temples & altars. The "throne of Satan...where Satan dwells" (2:13) may refer to the temple of Augustus, or the cult of Asklepios, or to the conical hill, which John would have understood as the enemy of the "mountain of God" (Is 14:13; Ezek 28:14, 16) called the "throne of God" in 1 Enoch 25:3.

### **THYATIRA**

- Here, the emperor was worshipped as (the sun-god) Apollo incarnate, the son of Zeus.
- A city of merchants & trade guilds (including a guild of metallurgists); its local gods were dedicated to the city's economic well-being; idol of materialism.
- The burning question: "Could Christians maintain faith in Christ & yet participate in pagan sacrificial meals?"

### **SARDIS**

- Reached height of prosperity c.560 BC; its state of decline was in sharp contrast to its past splendour, even though under Roman rule, it recovered some of its ancient importance.
- Its citadel, thought to be impregnable, was twice taken by surprise (549 BC & 218 BC)
- Claimed to be the first community to discover the art of dyeing wool
- Its inhabitants were known for their life of luxury & licentiousness.

### **PHILADELPHIA**

- Destroyed by an earthquake in 17 AD; rebuilt & renamed "New Caesarea"
- Its quality of Christian life was of a high character
- Its main difficulties arose from Jewish rather than pagan opponents (cf. Rev 3:9)

### **LAODICEA**

- Its location helped it become a great commercial & administrative city; a banking centre & a large manufacturer of clothing & carpets of native black wool. Noted for its manufacture of a medication for eye disorders; seat of a flourishing medical school.

CHURCH	IMAGE OF CHRIST	PRAISE	REBUKE	THREAT	PROMISE
Ephesus (2:1-7)	Holds the seven stars; walks among the seven lampstands	Toil; patient endurance; intolerant of evildoers	"You have abandoned the love you had at first"	"I will remove your lampstand"	Permission to eat from the tree of life
Smyrna (2:8-11)	The First and the Last, who was dead and came to life	Afflicted; poor; slandered, yet, rich in suffering	***	***	The crown of life; not harmed by the second death
Pergamum (2:12-17)	Has the sharp two-edged sword	"you did not deny your faith in me"	Some are holding on to heretical teachings	"I will make war... with the sword of my mouth"	Hidden manna; white stone with a new name on it
Thyatira (2:18-29)	Eyes like flame of fire; feet like burnished bronze	Love, faith service, endurance	"You tolerate Jezebel" (idolatry)	"great distress" and "death"	Authority over the nations
Sardis (3:1-6)	Has the seven spirits of God and the seven stars	"a few have not soiled their clothes"	Seem alive but yet are dead "works not perfect in the sight of God"	"I will come like a thief"	Clothed in white robes; names not blotted from the book of life
Philadelphia (3:7-13)	The holy one; the true one, who has the key of David	"you have kept my word"	***	***	Made a pillar in God's temple; "I will write on you the name of: God, God's city, and my new name"
Laodicea (3:14-22)	The Amen, the faithful and true witness, the origin of God's creation	***	"You are lukewarm and neither cold nor hot"	"I am about to spit you out of my mouth"	"A place with me on my throne"