

# TO THE CONQUERORS

OCTOBER 11, 2026 / CLASS 5 / THE WORLD OF THE SEVEN CHURCHES

## The World of the Seven Churches

A companion to the maps of the seven churches. The maps and the full write-ups, with their sources, are in the church app: [app.1stchristianchurch.net/journey/revelation/maps](http://app.1stchristianchurch.net/journey/revelation/maps)

### Seven cities, seven churches

**Revelation 1:9–11; chapters 2–3.**

Revelation was written to seven real congregations in the Roman province of Asia, in what is now western Turkey. John received the vision on the island of Patmos and was told to send it to these churches (Revelation 1:9–11). The map follows the order of the letters: Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea.

The red line runs north up the coast from Ephesus to Pergamum, then turns inland through Thyatira, Sardis, and Philadelphia to Laodicea. The harbors, workshops, markets, farms, and public buildings on the map are the kind of places these Christians lived and worked in.

**On the map:** ΑΙ ΕΠΤΑ ΕΚΚΛΗΣΙΑΙ ΤΗΣ ΑΣΙΑΣ (the seven churches of Asia); ΠΑΤΜΟΣ (Patmos); ΣΑΜΟΣ (Samos); ΑΣΙΑ (Asia — here, the Roman province); ΑΙΓΑΙΟΝ ΠΕΛΑΓΟΣ (Aegean Sea). The cities are numbered Α', Β', Γ', Δ', Ε', Σ', Ζ' (1 to 7), each beside its Greek name. The letters with a numeral mark represent numbers. The sixth is stigma, Σ', whose curled form appears on the map. This key also serves the lighter Greek journey map.

### Ephesus

**Revelation 2:1–7; Acts 19:24–29.**

The map shows three things Ephesus was known for: its harbor, the great theater on the hillside, and the Temple of Artemis in its own sanctuary outside the crowded city. Ships brought people and goods in through the harbor, and the streets ran from the waterfront into the city.

Acts 19 shows how trade and worship were tied together there. Demetrius, a silversmith, made silver shrines of Artemis. When Paul's preaching hurt his trade, a crowd rushed into the theater (Acts 19:24–29).

Ephesus was the leading city of the province of Asia and the governor's seat. Its temple of Artemis was one of the seven wonders of the world and also served as the city's bank. Magic flourished there; after Paul's ministry, believers burned their magic books, worth fifty thousand pieces of silver (Acts 19:19). Paul spent about three years there (Acts 19:8–10; 20:31) and wrote the church a letter, and Timothy stayed on to deal with false teachers (1 Timothy 1:3).

**On the map:** ΕΦΕΣΟΣ (Ephesus); ΝΑΟΣ ΑΡΤΕΜΙΔΟΣ (temple of Artemis); ΛΙΜΗΝ (harbor); ΘΕΑΤΡΟΝ (theater). ΝΑΟΣ means "temple"; ΑΡΤΕΜΙΔΟΣ means "of Artemis."

## Smyrna

### Revelation 2:8–11.

Smyrna ran from the harbor up to its upper city. The geographer Strabo describes the city spread across the plain by the harbor and up a fortified hill, with straight paved streets and large two-story porticoes. The map follows that description: ships and quays at the bottom, the town in the middle, and the high ground above.

The agora was the public square and marketplace. The map fills it with stalls, goods, and people under long covered colonnades.

Smyrna was about 35 miles north of Ephesus, with a fine natural port. It built the first temple in Asia to the goddess Roma (195 BC), and in AD 26 it won the right to build a temple to the emperor Tiberius over ten rival cities (Tacitus, *Annals* 4.55–56). The church was likely planted during Paul's years at Ephesus, when "all the residents of Asia heard the word of the Lord" (Acts 19:10).

**On the map:** ΣΜΥΡΝΑ (Smyrna); ΛΙΜΗΝ (harbor); ΑΓΟΡΑ (agora — public square and marketplace); ΑΚΡΟΠΟΛΙΣ (acropolis — upper or fortified city). An agora served as a public meeting place as well as a center of trade.

## Pergamum

### Revelation 2:12–17.

Pergamum was built on a steep hill. Its buildings stand on terraces cut into the slope, joined by stairs and held up by great retaining walls. The theater is built down the hillside, and the acropolis at the top looks out over the plain. This is the city's Hellenistic plan.

The Great Altar stood in its own precinct on a separate terrace, reached by a broad staircase. Pergamum also had the first temple in Asia to a living Roman ruler, and the sanctuary of Asklepios, the healing god whose emblem was a serpent.

Pergamum stood about 15 miles inland. Besides its temples and its altar, it had a famous library.

**On the map:** ΠΕΡΤΑΜΟΝ (Pergamum — also called Pergamon); ΑΚΡΟΠΟΛΙΣ (acropolis — upper or fortified city); ΘΕΑΤΡΟΝ (theater); ΒΩΜΟΣ (altar). ΒΩΜΟΣ identifies the pictured altar. Was this Revelation's "Satan's throne?"

## Thyatira

**Revelation 2:18–29; Acts 16:14.**

Thyatira was a working town. The map shows cloth hanging in courtyards, dye vats beside the work areas, and carts taking goods to market. The city stood on the roads between Pergamum, Sardis, and the interior, and excavation shows a Roman town full of weaving, dyeing, and organized trades.

Lydia, the seller of purple cloth whom Paul met at Philippi, came from Thyatira (Acts 16:14). The colored cloth on the map is the kind of trade her home city was known for.

Thyatira was the smallest of the seven, a garrison town on the road between Pergamum and Sardis. It was known for its many trade guilds: wool, linen, leather, bronze, and dyeing. Its patron god was Apollo Tyrimnos.

**On the map:** ΘΥΑΤΕΙΡΑ (Thyatira); ΑΓΟΡΑ (agora — public square and marketplace); ΕΡΓΑΣΤΗΡΙΑ (workshops). ΕΡΓΑΣΤΗΡΙΑ is plural: places where people carry out their crafts.

## Sardis

**Revelation 3:1–6.**

Sardis sat below a high citadel. Cliffs rise over the lower town, and the valley and its river lead out to the countryside. Strabo describes the city by its stronghold and the Pactolus River.

The sanctuary of Artemis stands apart from the crowded streets. The map shows the temple as it stood in the first century: a large roofed building with solid side walls and porches at each end.

**On the map:** ΣΑΡΔΕΙΣ (Sardis); ΑΚΡΟΠΟΛΙΣ (acropolis — upper or fortified city); ΝΑΟΣ ΑΡΤΕΜΙΔΟΣ (temple of Artemis). Sardis and Ephesus each had a sanctuary of Artemis; the identical Greek label names a different temple in each city.

## Philadelphia

**Revelation 3:7–13.**

Philadelphia was a farm town. Roads run from the town out to the fields and to houses scattered across the countryside. Strabo describes the rich soil there and says many people lived outside the city because of the frequent earthquakes. The farms and the small repairs on the map come from that description.

Much of the town's life happened beyond its main square: work in the fields, produce moving along the roads, and households living off the land. The vineyard rows stand for the wine country Strabo describes next door.

**On the map:** ΦΙΛΑΔΕΛΦΕΙΑ (Philadelphia); ΑΓΟΡΑ (agora — public square and marketplace); ΑΓΡΟΙ (fields — cultivated countryside). ΑΓΡΟΙ is plural. The label draws attention to the farmland surrounding the town.

## Laodicea

### Revelation 3:14–22.

Laodicea was a wealthy city. The map shows pale stone buildings and busy public spaces, and in the foreground, dark-fleeced sheep and dark cloth. Strabo describes the area's soft black wool and the money it brought the Laodiceans.

The theater and the market are in town. The western theater was built in the Hellenistic period and altered in the early Roman period; the map gives an impression of the earlier building. The buildings, merchants, cloth, and flocks show the wealth around the church that received Revelation's seventh letter.

**On the map:** ΛΑΟΔΙΚΕΙΑ (Laodicea); ΘΕΑΤΡΟΝ (theater); ΑΓΟΡΑ (agora — public square and marketplace). The labels identify the city's public places; the dark wool supplies an additional visual clue to its economic life.

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The maps picture living cities in the years before AD 70. Their landmarks come from the historical record; scale, terrain, street plans, and everyday details are artistic reconstructions. Background sources: UNESCO, Ephesus (Ephesus); Strabo, Geography 14.1.37 (Smyrna); UNESCO, Pergamon (Pergamum); Dokuz Eylül University excavation account (Thyatira); Strabo, Geography 13.4.5 (Sardis geography); Sardis Expedition, The Temple of Artemis: Introduction (Sardis temple); Strabo, Geography 13.4.10–11 (Philadelphia); Strabo, Geography 12.8.16 (Laodicea wool); Laodikeia excavation project, Western Theater (Laodicea theater).