

Thyatira guarded the road from Pergamum east across Asia. It was also a major center for the manufacture of dye, garments, pottery, and brass. Powerful trade guilds controlled access to these industries--participation in their meetings usually meant participation in pagan rites as well.

Sardis lay on an important trade route but was never a prominent city in Roman times. As the capital of Croesus's kingdom of Lydia, Sardis had been famed for its wealth. Conquered by Cyrus the Great (546 BC) and again by Antiochus the Great (214 BC), it never recovered its wealth or its fame.

Philadelphia was the youngest of the seven cities. Eumenes, king of Pergamum, named it for his brother Attalus (nicknamed Philadelphus for his loyalty) in the second century BC. Philadelphia lay inland at the end of a long valley, near a great fertile plateau which gave Philadelphia much of its prosperity.

Laodicea lay at the crossing of the main east-west trade route across Asia and a major north-south highway (Pergamum to Attalia). Laodicea was a wealthy commercial center, depending heavily on banking and exchange for its income.

Many of the images in Revelation arise out of the common life of the first century. Pillars were often inscribed with the names of benefactors of the temples to which they belonged (3:12). Scrolls were closed with several seals which were to be opened only by the proper person in the presences of witnesses (5:1; 6:1--8:5). Many cities were personified as women in the ancient world (17:3-8). Pompeii's Venus rode an elephant-drawn chariot and Athena (Minerva) of Athens was often portrayed leaning on her shield.

#### Study Tips:

Read through Revelation at one sitting. Don't try to analyze every detail the first time through, but try to understand the general flow of thought. Read through Revelation again, marking its main divisions. Read about Revelation in a Bible dictionary or encyclopaedia. Read the articles on the seven cities, as well. What does this add to your understanding?

Revelation is filled with allusions to the Old Testament--how many can you find? Few of these are quotations..most are simply phrases and pictures. How many "sevens" are in Revelation? After listing and studying these read the article on "number" in a Bible encyclopaedia or dictionary comparing your observations with theirs.

Compare and contrast the seven letters to the churches. Are any of their characteristics reflected in the church today? Why was the book addressed to them?

What does Revelation say about the end of the age? What effect is this to have on the church? on your life? What promise does it hold?