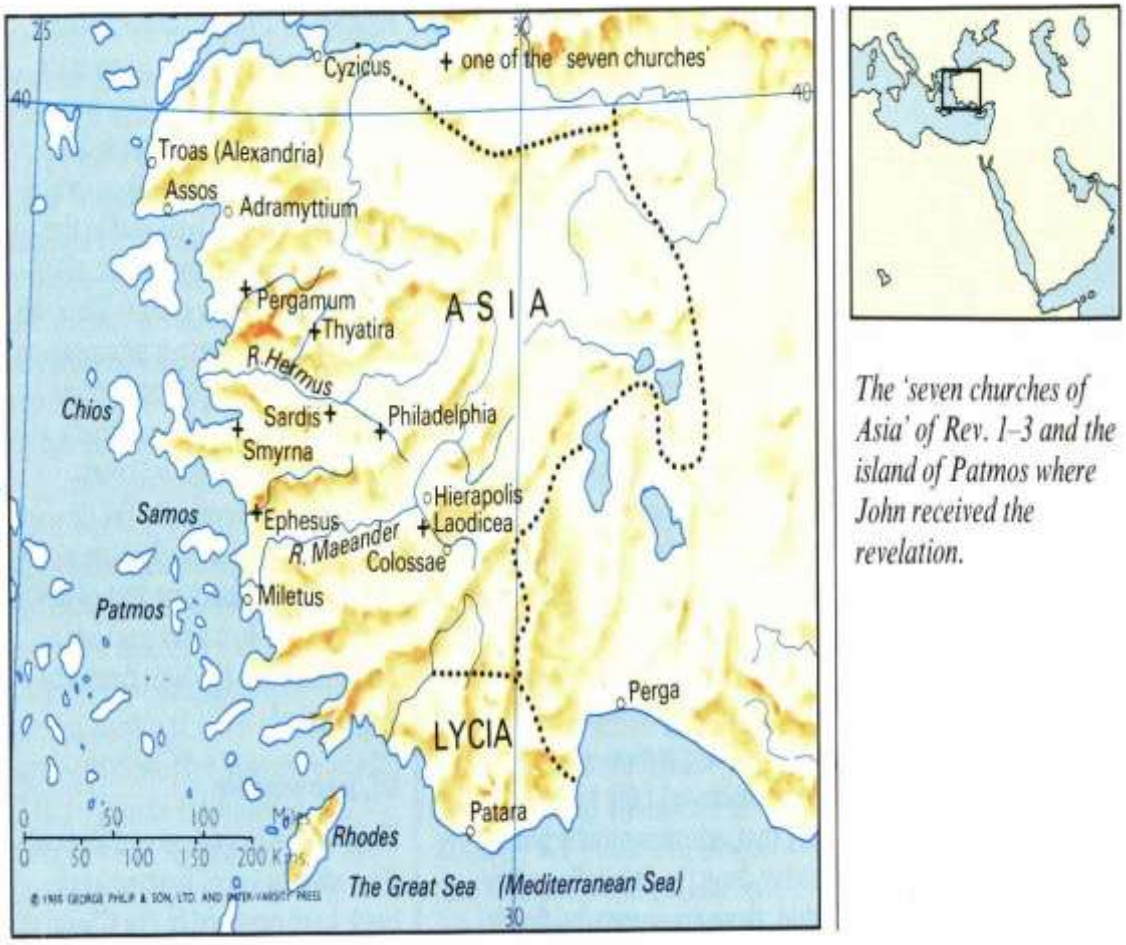
Focus Bible Study Series.



The 'seven churches of Asia' of Rev. 1–3 and the island of Patmos where John received the revelation.

Study 1.

The letter to the seven churches.

Revelation 1 – 3

Study 1. The letters to the seven churches.

Discuss.

People have been waiting for Jesus to come back for over 2000 years. What is the likelihood that Jesus will return in our lifetime? Explain your answer.

Read Rev 1:1-20.

As you read, what information can you gather about

a. The purpose of this letter
b. The author or authors
c. The recipients
d. The change of tone from verse 12 onwards. How is the passage different from v 1-11?

Historical background.

First century Christians suffered under the Roman rule. The Roman emperor declared himself a god and threatened to punish anyone who refused to worship him. Christians who refused to do this were often executed or imprisoned. Within this context God's vision comes to John, as you read the passage ask yourself two questions, firstly "how would non believers respond to this pressure?", secondly "how does this vision encourage Christians to persevere under persecution?"

Verses 12-20

Can you describe what John is seeing ? (suggested activity – draw a picture.)

What is the meaning of this vision? (V19-20)

Split your group into pairs and give each pair one or two of the following passages. (note : group 1 to ignore passages with *)

Church of Ephesus 2:1-7, Church of Smyrna 2:8-11*

Church of Pergamum 2:12-17*, Church of Thyatira 2:18-29*

Church of Sardis 3:1-6*, Church of Philadelphia 3:7-13*

Church of Laodicea 3:14-22*

In your pairs, try to answer these questions. Share your findings with the whole group and fill in the following table:

1. What is Good about the church
2. What is bad about the church
3. What is going to happen to the church.

Church	Bad	Good	What will happen?

Overall Observations.

What was the overall condition of the churches during these times?

What will happen to these churches?

Application.

If Jesus were to assess the churches today, how do you think Jesus will respond ?

Which of the warnings hits you the most (ie. You feel is most relevant) ? What should we do about it?

For Group 1.

In your opinion, what do you think of the Christian church ?

a. What is attractive about the church and what is not attractive about the church?

b. Looking at the church and how the people in the church behave, does it make you want to be a Christian?

c. If you became a follower of Jesus, what would motivate you to be part of the church (think in terms of involvement, service , outreach)?