

MESSAGES

NOT TO BE MISSED!

7 LETTERS TO THE SEVEN ECCLESIAS

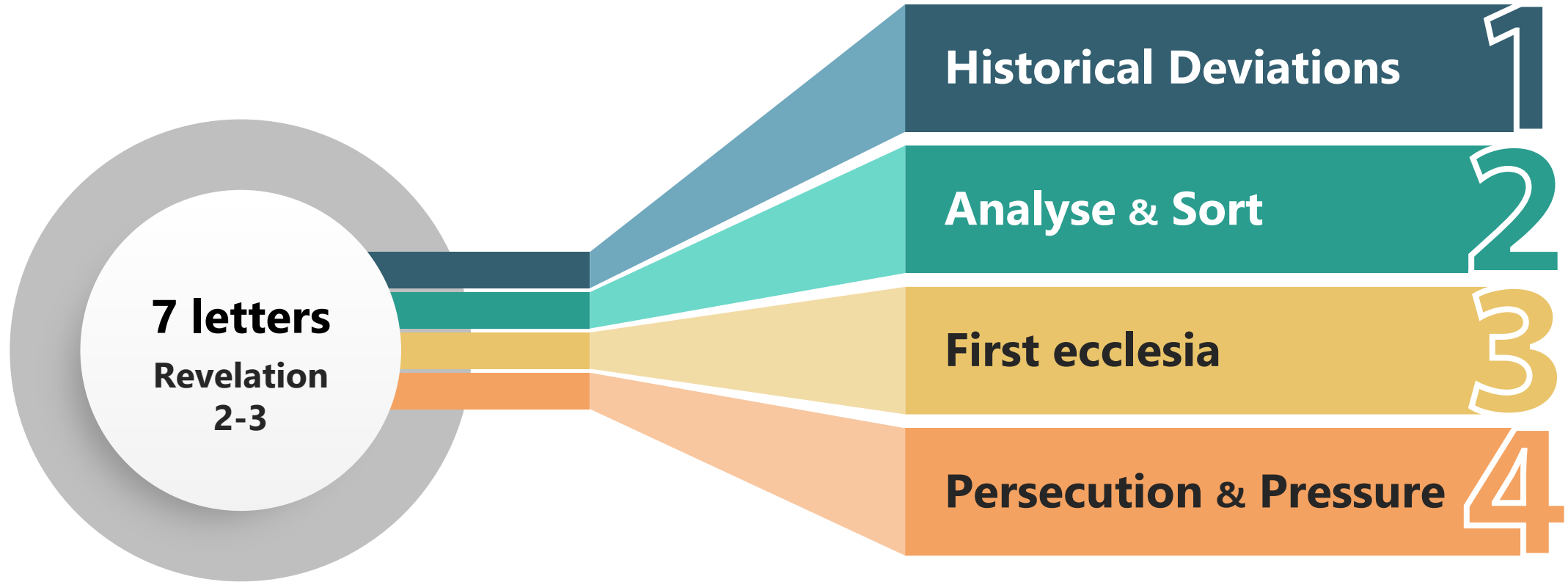


Class 2: Persecution & Pressure



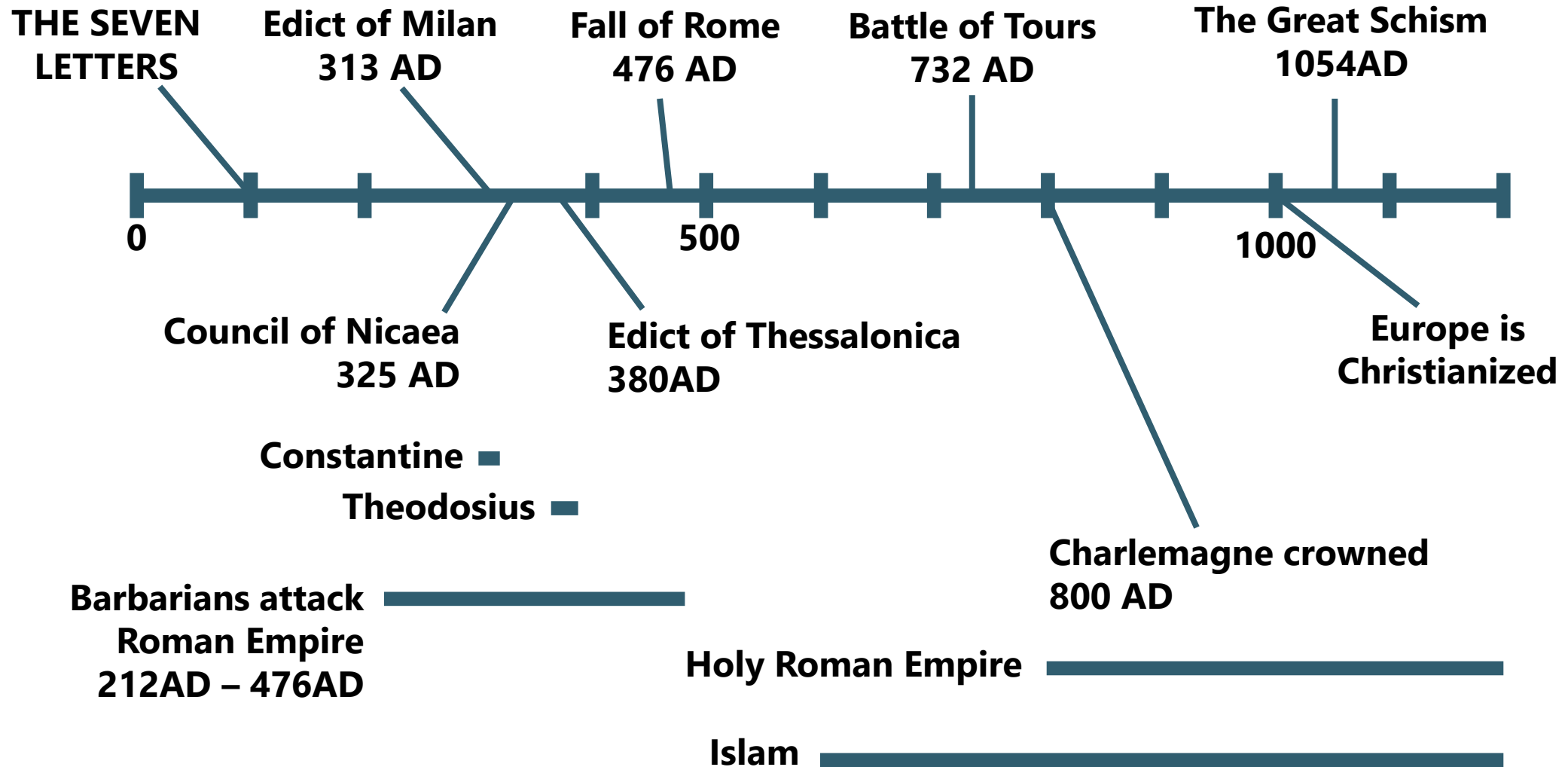
www.ChristadelphianVideo.org

AGENDA



MESSAGES NOT TO BE MISSED!

Christianity Timeline (first 1000 years)



SORTING THE ECCLESIAS (i.e. positive to negative)

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

Ephesus

Smyrna

Pergamos

Thyatira

Sardis

Philadelphia

Laodicea

SORTING THE ECCLESIAS (i.e. positive to negative)

1

1. Did they receive any condemnation?

2

3

Smyrna Philadelphia

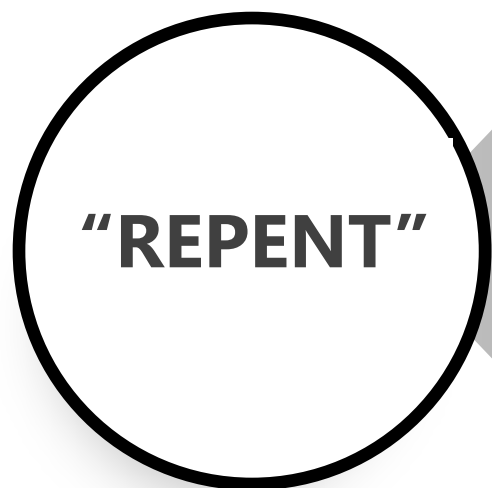
4

5

6

Ephesus Pergamos Thyatira Sardis Laodicea

7



"REPENT"

***Excludes:
Smyrna and
Philadelphia***

01

Ephesus 2:5 2X

02

Pergamos 2:16

03

Thyatira 2:21-22 3X

04

Sardis 3:3

05

Laodicea 3:19

Smyrna (2:8-11)

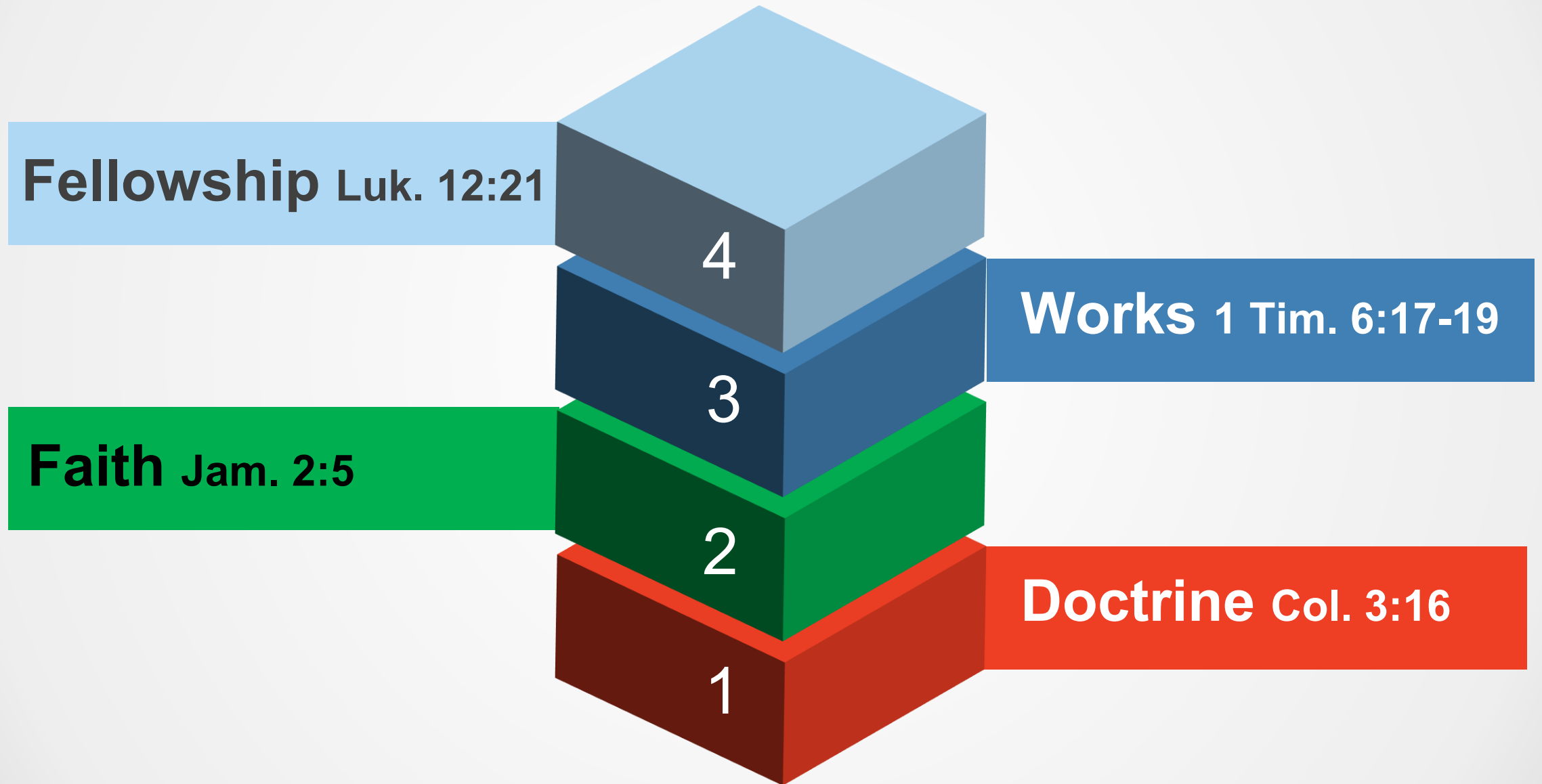
spiritually “rich”

Positive

Negative

—

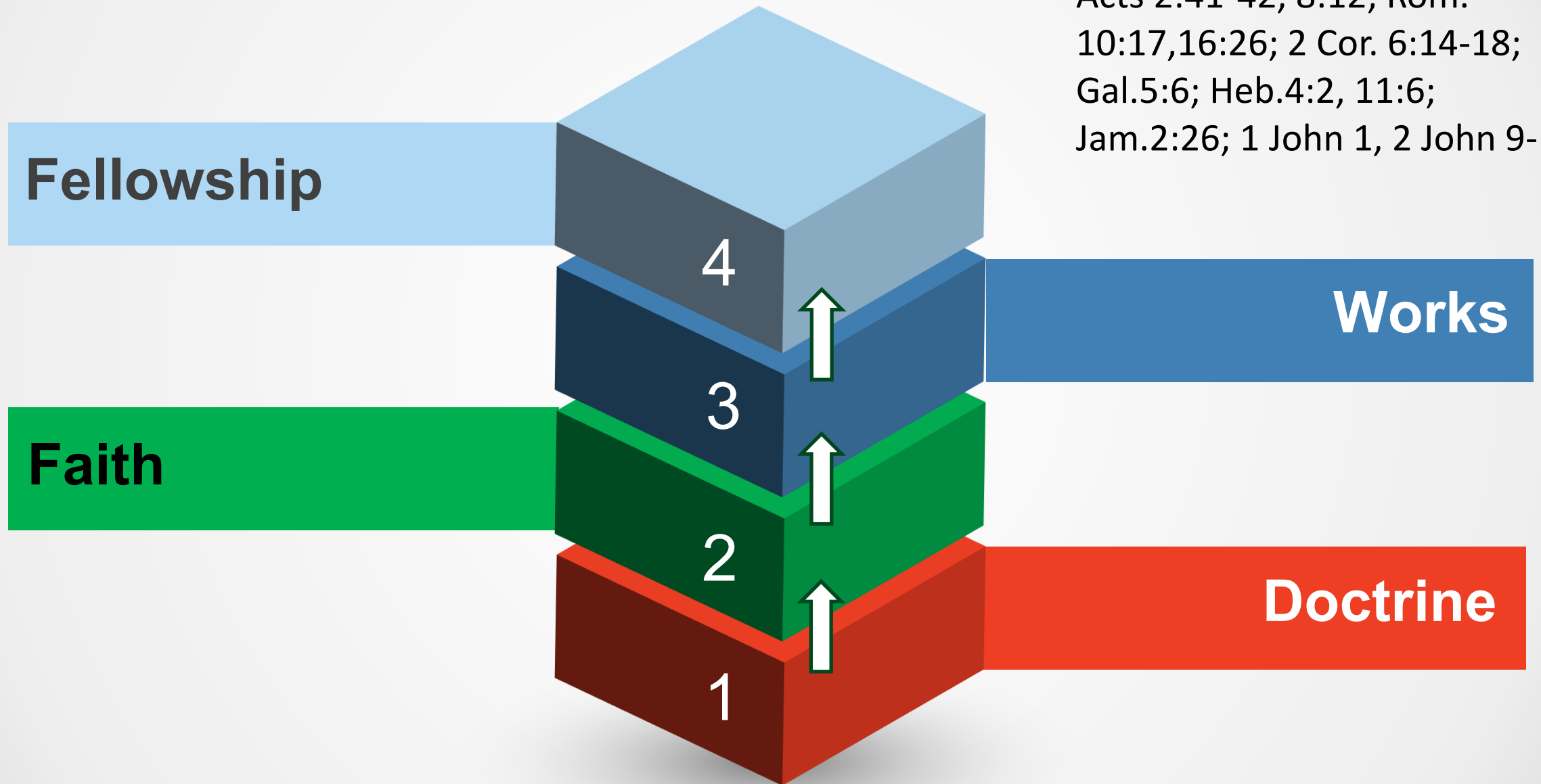
Rich in...



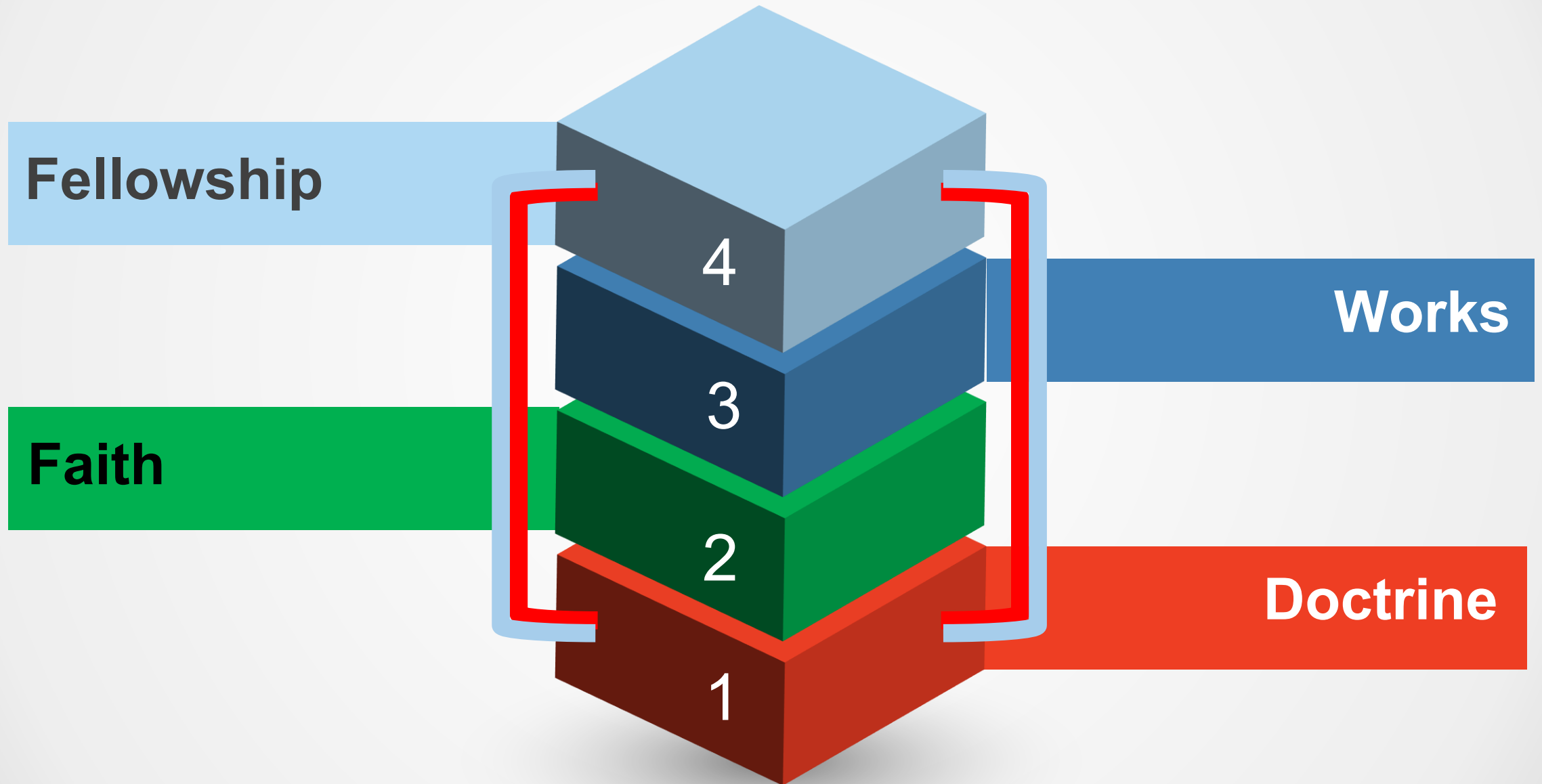
Scriptural Building Blocks

Scriptural References:

Acts 2:41-42, 8:12; Rom.
10:17, 16:26; 2 Cor. 6:14-18;
Gal. 5:6; Heb. 4:2, 11:6;
Jam. 2:26; 1 John 1, 2 John 9-10



Building Blocks of the Ecclesia



Smyrna (2:8-11)

spiritually “rich”

Positive

Negative

—

HEIGHTENED TRIAL (Smyrna Rev. 2)

*"Fear none
of those
things which
thou shalt
suffer" v10*



3. DEATH FOR CHRIST

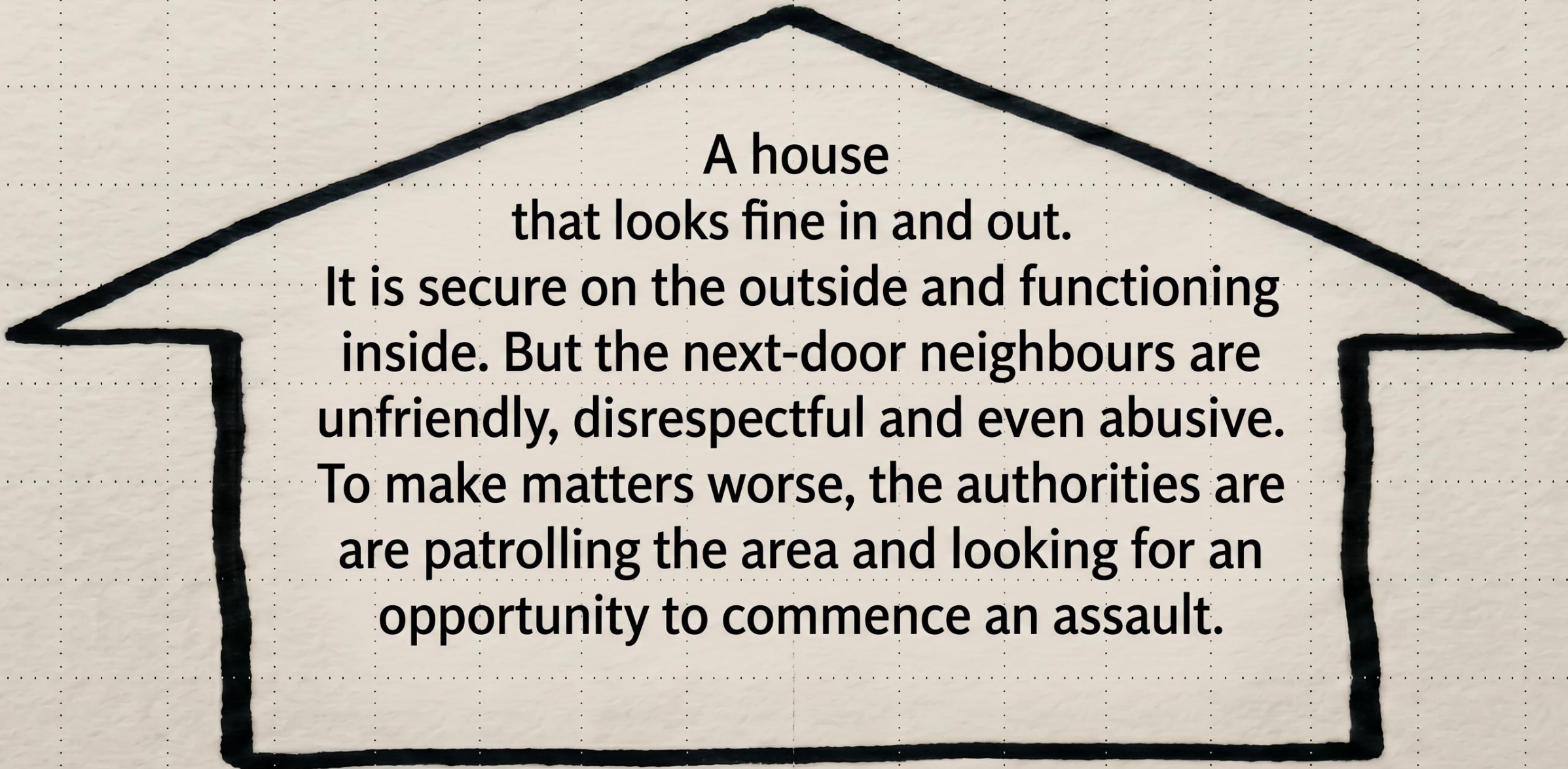
Imprisonment, death v10

2. PRESSURE FOR CHRIST

Tribulation v9

1. NATURAL SUFFERING

Poverty v9



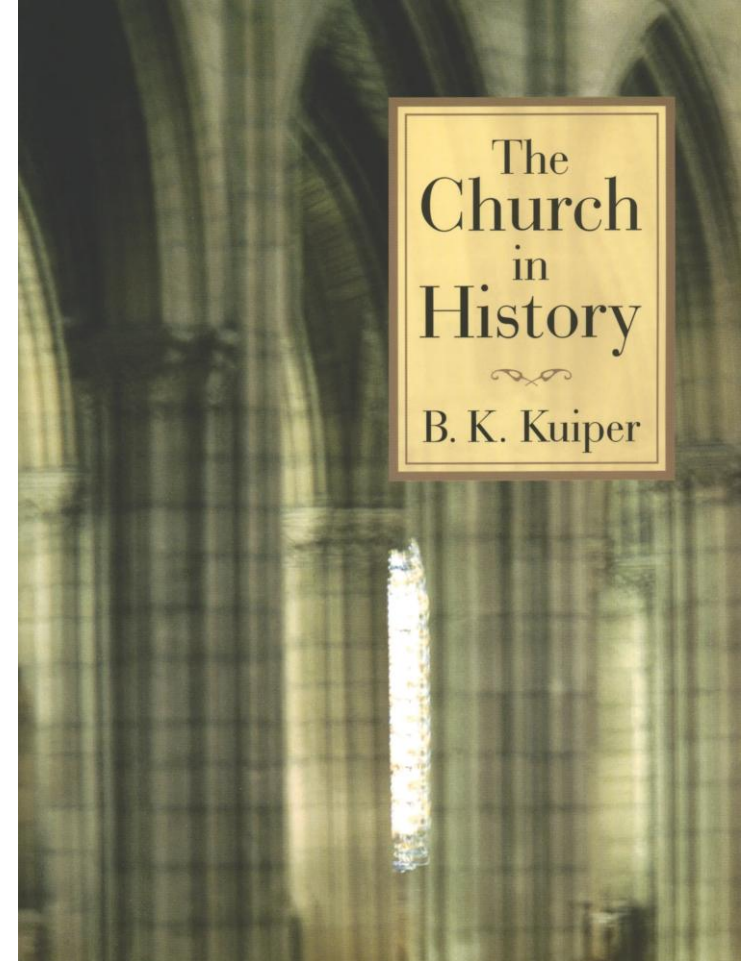
A house
that looks fine in and out.
It is secure on the outside and functioning
inside. But the next-door neighbours are
unfriendly, disrespectful and even abusive.
To make matters worse, the authorities are
are patrolling the area and looking for an
opportunity to commence an assault.

Overview of Christian Persecutions

After Nero:

“For the next one hundred years (from 68 to 161) there were no general persecutions, but in different parts of the Empire many Christians were put to death.”

(The Church in History, Kuiper, pg 8)

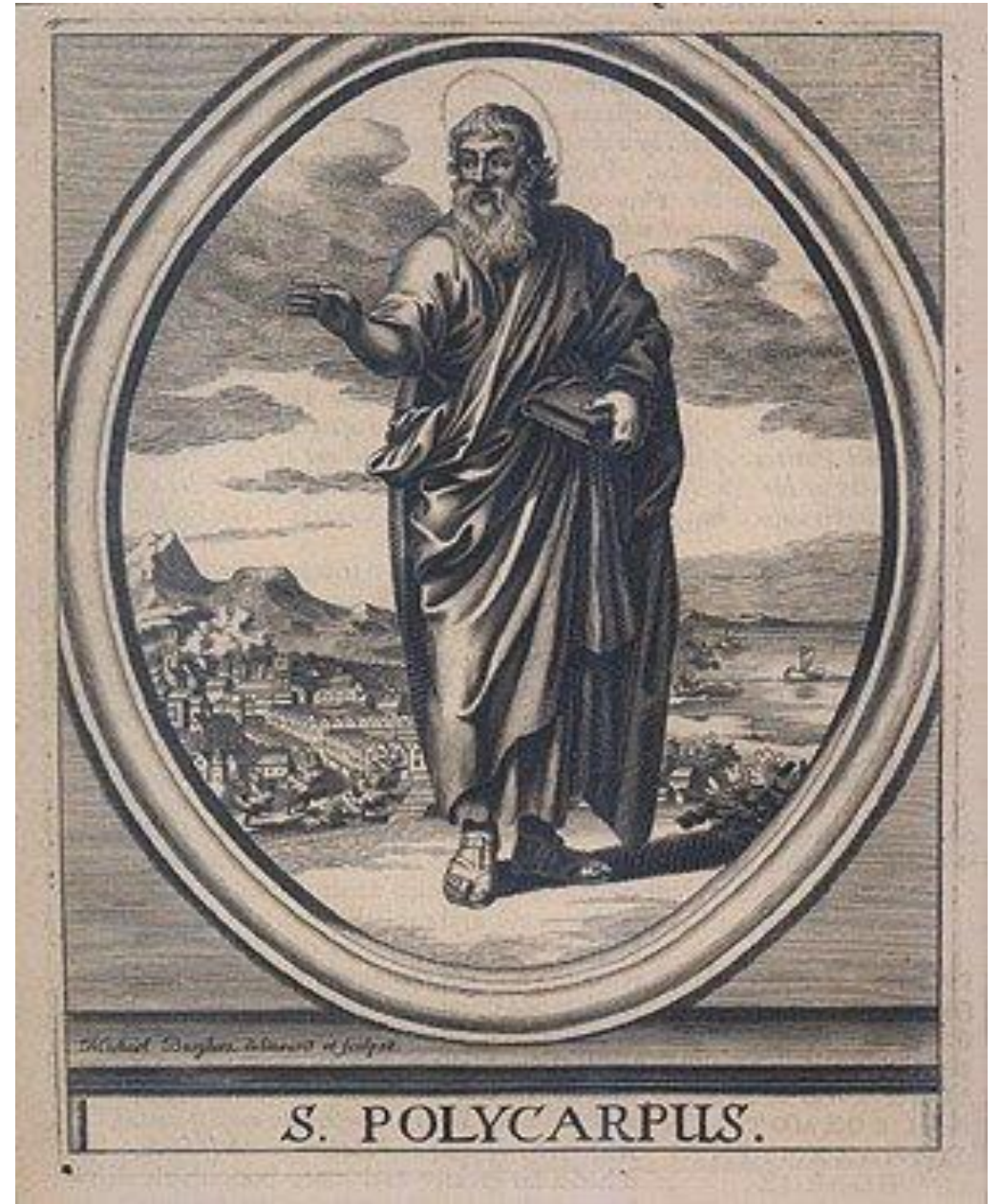


Polycarp

*(called by historians
"bishop of Smyrna")*

"Eighty and six years have I served him and he has never done me wrong; how can I blaspheme him, my king, who has saved me? I am Christian."

"He who strengthens me to endure the flames will also enable me to stand firm at the stake without being fastened with nails"



Overview of Christian Persecutions

Decius, Valerian, Diocletian, Galerius:

“The first emperor who ordered a general persecution with definite purpose of destroying the Church was Decius. Happily his reign lasted only two years, from 249 to 250. After a brief respite ... the Church suffered persecution under Valerian. Thereafter the Church was granted another period of tranquility...In the year 303 the emperor Diocletian started a persecution which was continued by his successor Galerius until the year 311.” (Kuiper, pg 12)

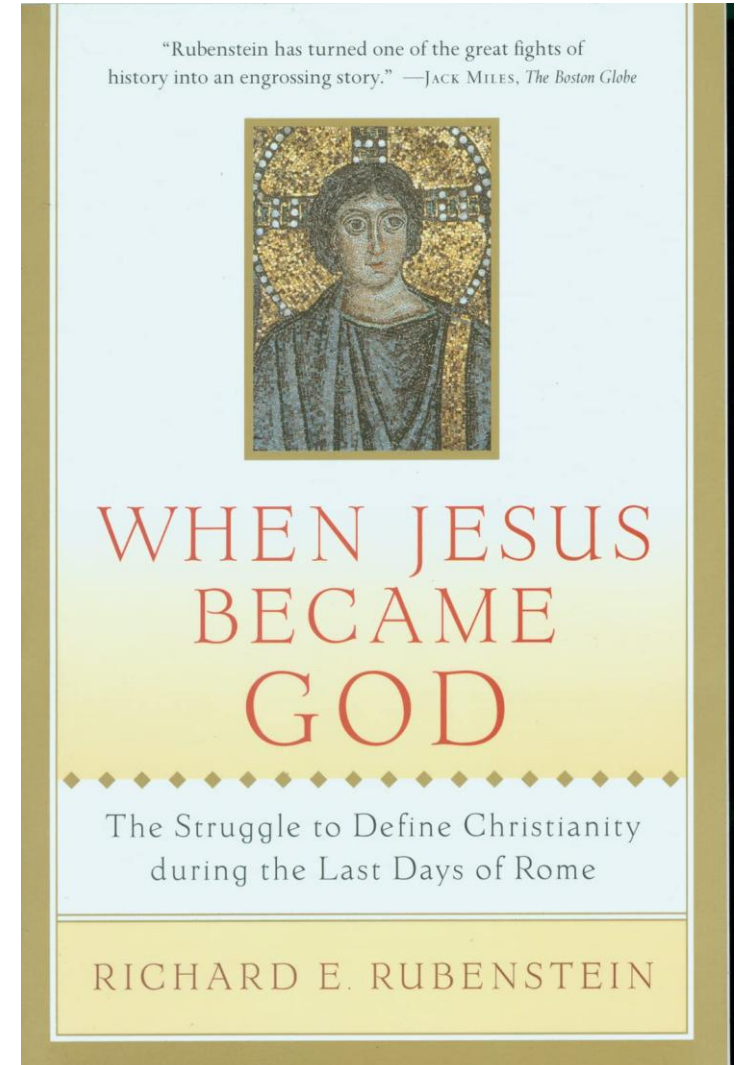
Overview of Christian Persecutions

“The tortures which were inflicted upon the Christians during these persecutions were so gruesome that it is not fit to describe them. Church buildings were demolished and Bibles were burned. These persecutions far surpassed, in the number of Christians who were martyred and in cruelty, anything the Christians had been made to suffer up to this time. These persecutions were a determined and systematic attempt to uproot Christianity completely, and wipe the Church off the face of the earth.” (Kuiper, pg 12)

The Great Persecution (303-311AD)

“...put to work in the mines of Palestine, or have an eye put out or the muscles of one leg severed...forms of torture were gruesomely diverse...forms of execution lay in the discretion of local officials.”

**(When Jesus Became God,
Richard E. Rubenstein, pg 35)**



The Great Persecution (303-311AD)

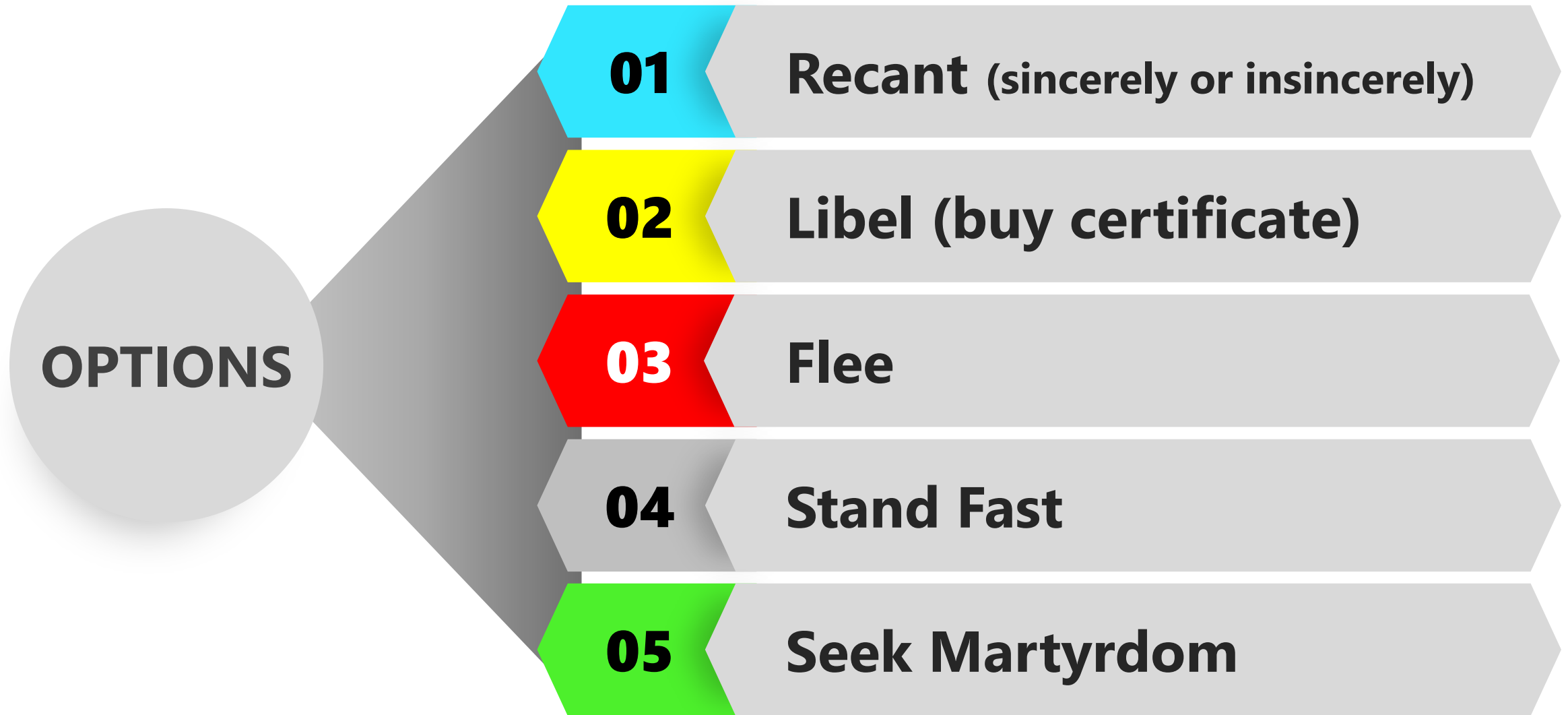
Martyrdom could take the form of hanging, beheading, crucifixion, burning, flaying alive, strangling or any other measure the authorities considered an appropriate response to rebellious behaviour and a salutary lesson to others.” (Rubenstein, pg 35)

The Great Persecution (303-311AD)

“Christians had been persecuted before, but this was the first systematic attempt by Rome to halt the spread of the religion. The strategy was simple: all subjects were ordered to sacrifice to immortal gods or else risk the death penalty....In the first year of the persecution, says one historian, “Christians joined with their pagan neighbours in a rush to sacrifice””

(Rubenstein, pg 18)

PERSECUTION AND US!



The Canadian Bill C-9

Bill C-9, known as the Combatting Hate Act (introduced in late 2025 in Canada)...deep concern over its potential to restrict religious freedom...removing long-standing protections for "good faith" religious expression. Critics, including Conservative MPs and some religious organizations, argue this change makes it possible for individuals to be prosecuted for "willful promotion of hatred" when quoting parts of the Bible (e.g., in Leviticus, Romans, or Genesis) that touch on sexuality, gender, or marriage.





MESSAGES NOT TO BE MISSED - SMYRNA

- 1. What matters is being “rich” in doctrine, faith, works and fellowship.**
- 2. Despite suffering personally (including for Christ), we should expect that we might face greater pressure and trial in the future (it is not meant to be easy).**