

Revelation Chapter 2 v 18 to Chapter 3 v 6

Letters to Seven Churches – Thyatira and Sardis

Revelation contains its own outline: John is told to write (a) “the things that you have seen” (i.e. Revelation Chapter 1); (b) “those that are” (i.e. Revelation Chapters 2 and 3); and (c) “those that are to take place after this” (i.e. Revelation Chapters 4 to 22). Chapters 2 and 3 are the most important for us as they concern the Church.

The fourth letter – to Thyatira (the ‘Medieval’ Church)

The name ‘Thyatira’ is derived from the Greek word θυγάτηρ (*thygater* = daughter), and the city was named by one of the successors of Alexander the Great, Seleucus I, on being informed that his daughter had been born (in 301 BC). Originally the city was named Semiramis, the consort of Nimrod (see Genesis 10 v 8 to 10) and mother of Tammuz – all pagan religions trace their origins to these three Babylonian ‘deities’...

Thyatira was an ‘industrial city’ located at a strategic crossroads. There were many trades controlled by guilds, each linked to a different ‘god’. In Acts 16 v 13 to 15 we read of Lydia, a wealthy sales representative for Thyatiran purple cloth, living in Philippi...

- Jesus uses the titles “The words of the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and whose feet are like burnished bronze” (verse 18). Why are these titles relevant to the situation here?
 - What good things did Jesus have to say about this church (verse 19)?
 - What were Jesus’ main concerns (verses 20, 21)?
 - What did Jesus warn the followers of Jezebel would happen (verses 22, 23)?
 - What did Jesus encourage the rest of the church members to do (verses 24, 25)?
 - What did Jesus promise the individual ‘overcomer’ (verses 26 to 28)?
1. “Jezebel” (verse 20) – read the story of Naboth’s vineyard in 1 Kings 21 verses 1 to 16, and notice that when King Ahab did not get his way, Queen Jezebel arranged an ‘Inquisition’ (false witnesses, condemnation, execution).
 2. “Until I come” (verse 25) – this is the first reference in these letters to the Second Coming. Notice that in this and subsequent letters the promise to the overcomer occurs within the body of the letter...
- **Admonitory** (all churches) and **homiletic** (personal) – avoid pagan practices.
 - **Prophetic** – this letter fits the Medieval period, whose history is dominated by the Church’s ambition to exercise political control over Europe. The period spans from Pope Gregory I (regarded by many as the first Pope, c 600 AD), through Charlemagne and the creation of the Holy Roman Empire (800 AD), through the ‘midnight of the Dark Ages’ (850 to 1050 AD), Hildebrand’s reforms, the Crusades and the Inquisition, through to the Renaissance and the Reformation around 1500 AD – a total of some 900 years.

[MORE OVER...]

The fifth letter – to Sardis (the ‘Denominational’ Church)

Sardis was the ancient capital of the Lydian empire (1200 BC), and was located at a strategic crossroads. Sardis became a wealthy city, with gold found in the nearby river. At its zenith, Croesus the king of Sardis was proverbial for riches (as was Midas, son of its patron deity).

Situated on a hill 1,000 feet above the valley, Sardis was ostensibly impregnable, but when besieged by the Persians in 549 BC Croesus left unguarded the precipitous cliffs on three sides. A Lydian soldier accidentally dropped his helmet over the battlements and was observed to retrieve it, as the cliffs were clay and eroded; and that night a Persian party scaled the cliffs, climbed over the unguarded battlements and took the city – so Jesus warned, “I will come like a thief” (verse 3)...

- The name ‘Sardis’ is obscure, but may refer to the red-coloured stone (also called carnelian) mentioned in Revelation 4 v 3, perhaps symbolic of God’s fiery judgment.
 - What was Jesus’ major concern (verse 1)?
 - Did Jesus have anything good to say about this church?
 - How was Jesus’ title (verse 1) relevant to the situation in Sardis?
 - Jesus gave five commands (verses 2, 3) – what were they?
 - What did Jesus warn would happen if they did not obey?
 - What did Jesus promise to the few faithful followers (verse 4) and to the ‘overcomer’?
 - What does it mean to be “clothed in white”?
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- **Admonitory** and **homiletic** – the need for watchfulness and diligence.
 - **Prophetic** – this letter fits the post-Reformation period and the rise of church denominations (1500 to 1700 AD). Many denominational churches are ‘dead’, having lost the great truths of the Reformation (e.g. justification by faith alone, Scripture as the inspired Word of God, the depravity of man, redemption through the blood of Christ) – so we are called to “strengthen what remains and is about to die” (verse 2)...

Prayer –

Lord, thank you for these letters. Help us to avoid pagan practices, to be watchful and diligent, and to hold fast to your Word of truth. In Jesus’ name, we pray, Amen.

