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NT377 The Revelation: 'Heavy Revy'

Spring 2014

Class #5-March 20 chapters 2:12-3:13

12 "And to the angel of the church in Pergamos

Pergamos means 'thoroughly married'

Church age covered: 313-600 AD, Unity or marriage of church and state

Begun by Constantine. 313 AD Christianity became the State Religion of the Roman Empire

Barclay on Pergamos: Pergamos is the feminine form of the name and *Pergamum* the neuter. In the ancient world, it was known by both forms.

Pergamos had a unique place in Asia. It was not on any of the great roads, as Ephesus and Smyrna were, but historically it was the greatest city in Asia. Strabo, the Greek geographer, called it an illustrious (*epiphanēs*) city, and Pliny, the Governor of Bithynia, called it 'by far the most famous city in Asia'. The reason was that, by the time John was writing, Pergamos had been a capital city for almost 400 years. Back in 282 BC, it was made the capital of the Seleucid kingdom, one of the sections into which the empire of Alexander the Great was broken up. It remained the capital until 133 BC. In that year, Attalus III died; and, before he died, he willed his dominions into the possession of Rome. Out of the dominions of Attalus, Rome formed the province of Asia, and Pergamos still remained its capital.

Its geographical position made Pergamos even more impressive. It was built on a tall conical hill which dominated the valley of the River Caicus, from the top of which the Mediterranean could be seen, fifteen miles away. The archaeologist Sir William Ramsay describes it thus: 'Beyond all other cities in Asia Minor, it gives the traveler the impression of a royal city, the home of authority; the rocky hill on which it stands is so huge, and dominates the broad plain of the Caicus so proudly and so boldly.' History and honor gathered around Pergamos. Let us then set down its outstanding characteristics.

(1) Pergamos could never achieve the commercial greatness of Ephesus or of Smyrna, but it was a centre of culture which surpassed both. It was famous for its library, which contained no fewer than 200,000 parchment rolls. It was second only to the unique library of Alexandria.

It is interesting to note that the word *parchment* is derived from Pergamos. In the ancient world, *parchment* was *hē pergamēnē charta*, the *Pergamene sheet*; and there is a story about this name. For many centuries, rolls were written on papyrus, a substance made of the pith of a very large bulrush which grows beside the Nile. The pith was extracted, cut into strips, pressed into sheets and smoothed. This process produced a substance not unlike brown paper, and this was universally used for writing. In the third century BC, a Pergamene king called Eumenēs was very anxious to make the library of the city supreme. In order to do so, he persuaded Aristophanes of Byzantium, the librarian at Alexandria, to agree

to leave Alexandria and come to Pergamos. Ptolemy of Egypt, enraged at this seduction of his outstanding scholar, promptly imprisoned Aristophanes and by way of retaliation put an embargo on the export of papyrus to Pergamos. Faced with this situation, the scholars of Pergamos invented parchment or vellum, which is made of the skins of animals, smoothed and polished. In fact, parchment is a much superior substance on which to write; and, although it did not do so for many centuries, in the end it ousted papyrus altogether as a writing material.

(2) Pergamos was one of the great religious centers. In particular, it had two famous shrines. In the letter of the risen Christ, Pergamos is said to be the place where 'Satan's seat' is. Obviously, this must refer to something which the Christian Church regarded as particularly evil. Some have found the reference explained in Pergamos' religious splendor.

(a) Pergamos regarded itself as the custodian of the Greek way of life and of Greek worship. About 240 BC, it had won a great victory against the savage invading Galateans, or Gauls. In memory of that victory, a great altar to Zeus was built in front of the Temple of Athene which stood 800 feet up on Pergamos' conical hill. Forty feet high, it stood on a projecting ledge of rock and looked exactly like a great throne on the hillside. All day, it smoked with the smoke of sacrifices offered to Zeus. Around its base was carved one of the greatest achievements in the world of sculpture, the frieze which showed the Battle of the Giants, in which the gods of Greece were victorious over the giants of the barbarians. It has been suggested that this great altar was Satan's seat. But it is unlikely that a Christian writer would call that altar Satan's seat, for even by this time the old Greek gods were anachronisms and it would have been a waste of breath for Christians to attack them.

(b) Pergamos was particularly connected with the worship of Asclepius, so much so that Asclepius was known as 'the Pergamene god'. When Galen was mentioning favorite oaths, he said that people commonly swore by Artemis of Ephesus, or Apollo of Delphi, or Asclepius of Pergamos. Asclepius was the god of healing, and his temples were the nearest thing to hospitals in the ancient world. From all over the world, people flocked to Pergamos for relief from their sicknesses. In his commentary, R. H. Charles has called Pergamos 'the Lourdes of the ancient world'. The task of healing was partly the work of the priests, partly the work of doctors—Galen, second only to Hippocrates in the medical history of the ancient world, was born in Pergamos—and partly the work of Asclepius himself. Was there anything in that worship to move the Christians to call the Temple of Asclepius Satan's seat? There may have been two things.

First, the most common and most famous title for Asclepius was *Asclepius Sōtēr*, Asclepius the Saviour. It might well be that the Christians felt a shudder of horror that the name *Saviour* should be given to anyone other than Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world.

Second, the emblem of Asclepius was the *double* serpent, which still appears on the cap badge of the Royal Army Medical Corps. Many of the coins of Pergamos have Asclepius' serpents as part of their design. It might well be that Jews or Christians would regard a religion which took the serpent as its emblem as a satanic cult. Again, this explanation seems unlikely. As has been pointed out, the Christians would regard the place where people went to be healed—and often were—with sympathy rather than with indignation. The worship of Asclepius surely would not give adequate grounds for calling Pergamos Satan's seat.

It seems, then, that we must look elsewhere for the explanation of this phrase.

(3) Pergamos was the administrative centre of Asia. That meant that it was the centre of Caesar-worship for the province. It was organized with a provincial centre and an administration like that of a presbytery

or diocese. The point here is that Pergamos was the centre of that worship for the province of Asia. Undoubtedly, that is why Pergamos was Satan's seat; it was the place where people were required on pain of death to take the name of *Lord* and give it to Caesar instead of to Christ; and to a Christian there could be nothing more satanic than that.

And here is the explanation of the beginning of the letter to Pergamos. The risen Christ is called *the one who has the sharp two-edged sword*. Roman governors were divided into two classes—those who had the *ius gladii*, the right of the sword, and those who did not. Those who had the right of the sword had the power of life and death; on their word a person could be executed on the spot. In terms of worldly power, the proconsul, who had his headquarters at Pergamos, had the *ius gladii*, 'the right of the sword', and at any moment he might use it against any Christian; but the letter tells Christians not to forget that the last word is still with the risen Christ, who has the sharp two-edged sword. The power of Rome might be satanically powerful; but the power of the risen Lord is even greater.

write, "These things says He (followed by a description of the speaker from chapter 1:16) who has the the sharp the two-edged sword:

-See Rev. 19:15 what is the difference between there and here in 2:12?

Walvoord: The sword mentioned is a long spear like sword, apparently referring to the double-edged character of the Word of God. Reference is made to this spear like sword seven times in the Bible (Luke 2:35; Rev. 1:16; 2:12, 16; 6:8; 19:15, 21). The last two references in Revelation 19, where it speaks of the sword proceeding from the mouth of Christ in keeping with the introductory description in 1:16, seem to make plain that the sword here refers to the Word of God. The Luke reference is to a piercing of the soul of Mary, as in a thrusting of a spear/sword.

-He is equipped to make war against this church.

-The Word of God is at once the instrument of salvation and the instrument of death. This twofold character is especially pertinent to the church at Pergamos, which needed to be reminded of the distinct position of those who are true Christians as opposed to those who reject the gospel.

See 2Cor. 2:14-17. Yet there they both are together in the same visible church!

Commendation

13 "I know your works, (no positive or negative review of his works) and where you dwell, where Satan's throne is.

-Remember we are take the Scripture literally unless the language and or context says to take it figuratively. Do we have any reason to not take this literally? Remember Satan is not omnipresent! Jesus is speaking here, He would know.....

-Center of Satan worship

-Throne speaks of a kingdom, a king or ruler, perhaps a reference to the state and Satan's desire to head a state run religion that is like the most high, see Is.14:13-14. He will succeed as we shall see in Rev. 17.

And you (sing.) hold fast to My name, and did not deny My, the faith

-The reference to "my name" seems to embody a personal loyalty and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ with all that this represented; in addition to this they have not denied the body of Christian truth which accompanies faith in Christ, to which He refers in the expression "my faith."

-Pretty good reference!

For Example: **even in the days in which Antipas was My faithful martyr (transliteration of 'μάρτυς' s/b 'witness' unto & including death), who was killed among you (pl.), where Satan dwells.**

His Rebuke

14 But I have a few things against you (*sing.*), because you (*sing.*) have there those who hold (*have taken for themselves*) the doctrine (*noun*) of Balaam (*a Babylonian, a seer see Num. 22:5*), who taught (*verb, root is the same as doctrine*) king Balak to #1 put a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to #2 eat things sacrificed to idols, and then to #3 commit sexual immorality.

-Balaam, Numbers 22-25, 31:16. Hired to curse Israel. Four attempts, 4 blessings instead, not curses
-Finally He had Balak send in his beautiful woman (the stumbling block). The men of Israel had to first eat things sacrificed to idols (thus fellowship with idols and idolaters), then they partook of the women in marriage. God sent a plague among them. Thousands were killed.

-**Walvoord**: Numbers 31:15-16 records that Moses said to the children of Israel, "Have you saved all the women alive? Behold, these caused the children of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to commit trespass against the Lord in the matter of Peor, and there was a plague among the congregation of the Lord." **The doctrine of Balaam therefore was the teaching that the people of God should intermarry with the heathen and compromise in the matter of idolatrous worship.** This is in contrast to "the way of Balaam," that is, selling his prophetic gift for money (2 Peter 2:15), and "the error of Balaam," his assumption that God would curse and destroy Israel (Jude 11).

-In this church many were admitted by the act of baptism, not by faith in Jesus Christ. With this also came idolatrous practices and fornications, the greatest of which was spiritual adultery. There was little conversion thru faith. How do you grow a church in terms of numbers? Compromise.

15 Thus you also have those who hold (*again have taken*) the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate.

-clergy and laity are separated, different set of rules for each, clergy above the laity the people
-opposite of servant leadership as commanded by Jesus. See Mark 9:33-35,

16 Repent, or else I will come to you (*sing.*) quickly or suddenly

-the messenger may not have been a participant, BUT he allowed, for the sake of unity and numbers to 'allow'.

and will fight against them (*Balaamites, Nicolaitans*) with the sword of My mouth.

17 "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give some of the hidden manna to eat. And I will give him a white stone, and on the stone a new name written which no one knows except him who receives it."

-'hidden manna'. How God provided for Israel in the wilderness was thru 'open' manna on the ground each morning. It was miraculous and met their needs for food. So He will do for the faithful in Pergamos who will lose all open sources of provision for their faithfulness.

-those who leave the state church will suffer deprivation, but He promises to provide for them 'hidden manna'

-'White stone'. Used on two occasions. After a trial the judge would give black or white stone. Those who overcome the state church will be given a white stone of acquittal, instead of the black stone of guilt.

-Also given when accepted into a private guild will be accepted in a private guild headed by the Lord Himself.

18 "And to the angel of the church in Thyatira

Thyatira means: 'Perpetual Sacrifice'

Church age covered: 600-1517 AD.

- Signified by the perpetual sacrifice in the Mass thru Transubstantiation. Cup reserved for priests only so that none of the blood would be spilled.
- The Priests often would accuse the Jews of stealing the wafer elements and nailing them to a tree and thus crowds would be incited to anti-Semitic acts of violence.

Barclay on Thyatira: The longest of the seven letters is written to the least important of the seven cities. Nonetheless, the problem which faced Thyatira and the danger which threatened it were those which were universally involved in the position of the Christians in Asia.

Thyatira lay in the long valley connecting the valleys of the Hermus and the Caicus rivers through which the railway runs today; and it was its geographical position which gave it its importance.

(1) Thyatira lay on the road which connected Pergamos with Sardis and went on to Philadelphia and to Laodicea, linking up with both Smyrna and Byzantium. That was the road by which the imperial mail travelled; and it was crowded with the commerce of Asia and the east. Therefore, first and foremost, Thyatira was a great commercial town.

(2) Strategically, the importance of Thyatira was that it was the gateway to Pergamos, the capital of the province. The first we hear of Thyatira is that it is an armed garrison, protected by a company of Macedonian troops, placed there as an outpost to defend Pergamos. The difficulty was that Thyatira was not capable of any prolonged defense. It lay in an open valley. There was no height that could be fortified; and all that Thyatira could ever hope to do was to fight a delaying action until Pergamos could prepare to meet the invaders.

(3) Thyatira had no special religious significance. It was not a centre either of Caesar-worship or of Greek worship. Its local hero god was called Tyrinnus, and he appears on its coins on horseback armed with battle-axe and club. The only notable thing about Thyatira from the religious point of view was that it possessed a fortune-telling shrine, presided over by a female oracle called the Sambathē. Certainly, no threat of persecution hung over the Thyatiran church.

(4) What, then, was the problem in Thyatira? We know less about Thyatira than about any other of the seven cities and are, therefore, seriously handicapped in trying to reconstruct the situation. The one thing we do know is that it was a great commercial centre, especially of the dyeing industry and of the trade in woolen goods. It was from Thyatira that Lydia, the seller of purple, came (Acts 16:14). From inscriptions discovered, we learn that it had an extraordinary number of trade guilds. These were associations for mutual profit and pleasure of people employed in certain trades. There were guilds of workers in wool, leather, linen and bronze, makers of outer garments, dyers, potters, bakers and slave-dealers.

Here, we think, was the problem of the church in Thyatira. To refuse to join one of these guilds would mean to give up all prospect of commercial existence. Why should a Christian not join one of these guilds? They held common meals. These would very often be held in a temple; and, even if not, they would begin and end with a formal sacrifice to the gods, and the meat eaten would be meat which had already been offered to idols. Further, it often happened that these communal meals were occasions of drunken revelry and slack morality. Was it possible for a Christian to be part of such occasions?

Here was the problem at Thyatira: the threat came from inside the church. There was a strong movement, led by the woman referred to as Jezebel, which pleaded for compromise with the world's standards in the interests of business and commercial prosperity, maintaining, no doubt, that the Holy Spirit could preserve them from any harm. The answer of the risen Christ is uncompromising. Christians must have nothing to do with such things.

write, "These things says (followed by a description of the speaker from chapter 1:14-15) the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet like fine brass:

-features of judgment

Commendation

19 "I know your works, love, service, faith, and your patience; and as for your works, the last are more than the first.

-their works progressively increased

Condemnation

20 Nevertheless I have a few things against you, because you (sing.) allow that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess (self-proclaimed, Jesus didn't call her that), to teach (directly)

-First, they violated the biblical teaching that women are not to be teachers or preachers in the church over men (see 1 Tim. 2:12).

-They compounded their error of permitting her to *teach* by allowing her to teach *error*.

-Jezebel is here the Lord's declaration of who she is and who she emulates, probably not her name

-Phoenician name. Jezebel married Ahab

-Already idolatrous, but an idolatry that was a corruption, a perversion of the truth. "The Golden calf this brought you out of Egypt", see Ex. 32:4.

-But Jezebel introduced a whole religious worship of Baal, a completely new religious system

-the Bible names marrying her as the most evil thing wicked King Ahab did: "Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the Lord more than all who were before him. It came about, as though it had been a trivial thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that he married Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Sidonians, and went to serve Baal and worshiped him" (1 Kings 16:30-31).

and seduce (passively, make this teaching appealing to the flesh) My servants (bondservants, but not trained disciples) to commit sexual immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols (the reverse of what Balaam taught).

-Pagan idolatry was introduced into the church, not just a corruption of the truth

MacArthur: "One might speculate that she may have espoused the philosophical dualism so prevalent in contemporary Greek philosophy. When brought into the church, that teaching held that the spirit is good, and the flesh is evil. Since God is only interested in the spirit, its purveyors falsely argued, it doesn't matter what one does with one's body. Thus, according to Jezebel, it did not matter if Christians committed **acts of immorality** or ate **things sacrificed to idols**.

Walvoord: The message to the assembly in Thyatira seems to foreshadow that period of church history known as the Middle Ages preceding the Protestant Reformation. In that period the church became corrupt as it sought to combine Christianity with pagan philosophy and heathen religious rites so that much of the ritual of the church of that period is directly traceable to comparable ceremonies in heathen religion.

Ten New Doctrines Introduced by the Historical Thyatira:

1-Baptismal Regeneration

2-Justification by works: More good than bad, you are OK, but will require lesser or greater time in purgatory

3-Worship of images (saints, statues of Mary and Jesus).

4-Doctrine of Celibacy, priests forbidden to marry

5-Doctrine of confessionalism. Had to go to priest to receive absolution of sins.

- 6-Doctrine of purgatory. Intermediate state where one may be thoroughly purified to enter into Heaven
- 7-Transubstantiation: The communion elements thru intercession by the priest where the communion elements become the real body and the real blood of Jesus Christ.
- 8-The adoption of indulgences that may be purchased to reduce your time in purgatory or that of a loved one.
- 9-Penance, inflicting suffering on yourself to reduce your time in purgatory
- 10-Maryolatry. Mary Elevated to sinless, mother of God, and thus became a 4th member of the Godhead and worshipped accordingly

21 And I gave her time to repent of her sexual immorality, and she did not repent.

-both literal sexual immorality and spiritual adultery

22 Indeed I will cast her into a sickbed (the opposite of or the fruit of the adultery bed), and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they (her followers) repent of their deeds.

-The Jezebel portion of this church will go into the great tribulation, therefore this portion of Thyatira will be highly visible prior to the tribulation and will go into it.

23 I will kill her children with death,

JFB: 'Kill with death' is a Hebraism for slay with a most sure and awful death....Not "die the common death of men" (see Num. 16:29).

and all the churches shall know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts (innermost parts). And I will give to each one of you (pl.) according to your (pl.) works (works that reflect what you believe from the innermost parts, and He will decide that).

24 "Now to you (sing.) I say, and to the rest in Thyatira, as many as do not have (echo: have and reflect) this doctrine, who have not known or experienced the depths of Satan, as they say, I will put on you (pl) no other burden.

-There are those in Thyatira who love Christ and do not hold to these doctrines and experienced the depths of Satan, perhaps the Messenger is one of them.

MacArthur: Jezebel and her followers claimed to be 'plum'ing' the very depths of Satan's domain and remaining spiritually unscathed. In their perverse, libertine, licentious false theology, they believed they could do so with impunity. This Gnostic teaching said that one was free to engage the sphere of Satan and participate in sins of the body without harming the spirit. Since the spirit belongs to God, their twisted logic went, what does it matter if the body attends idolatrous feasts and engages in sexual immorality?

25 But hold fast what you (plural speaking to the non Jezebel followers) have till I come.

26 And he who overcomes, and keeps (or guards, protects) My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations—

-What works of Jesus are these? (this is the homework assignment!)

-True rule over the nations, not the church-state rule as sought by the historic church of Thyatira.

27 'He shall rule them with a rod of iron; They shall be dashed to pieces like the potter's vessels'—

-This is a Kingdom Age reference from Ps. 2.

as I also have received from My Father; **28** and I will give him the morning star (see 2Peter 1:19 and see 22:16 for who or what the Morning Star is). **29** "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches." "

3:1 “And to the angel of the church in Sardis

Sardis means: ‘Those Escaping’

Church age covered: 1517-1700 Church of the Reformation

Barclay on Sardis: The archaeologist Sir William Ramsay said of Sardis that nowhere was there a greater example of the melancholy contrast between past splendor and present decay. Sardis was a city of degeneration.

Seven centuries before this letter was written, Sardis had been one of the greatest cities in the world. There, the king of Lydia ruled over his empire in splendor. At that time, Sardis was a city of the east and was hostile to the Greek world. Aeschylus, the Greek poet, wrote of it: ‘They that dwelt by Tmolus pledged themselves to cast the yoke on Hellas.’

Sardis stood in the middle of the plain of the valley of the River Hermus. To the north of that plain rose the long ridge of Mount Tmolus; from that ridge, a series of hills went out like spurs, each forming a narrow plateau. On one of these spurs, 1,500 feet up, stood the original Sardis. Clearly, such a position made it almost impregnable. The sides of the ridge were smoothly precipitous; and only where the spur met the ridge of Mount Tmolus was there any possible approach into Sardis, and even that was difficult and steep. It has been said that Sardis stood like some gigantic watch-tower guarding the Hermus valley.

The time came when the narrow space on the top of the plateau was too small for the expanding city; and Sardis grew around the foot of the spur on which the citadel stood. The name Sardis (*Sardeis* in Greek) is really a plural noun, for there were two towns, one on the plateau and one in the valley beneath. The wealth of Sardis was legendary. Through the lower town flowed the River Pactolus, which was said in past days to have had gold-bearing waters from which much of the wealth of Sardis came. The greatest of the Sardian kings was Croesus, whose name is still commemorated in the saying ‘as rich as Croesus’. It was with him that Sardis reached the highest point in its history, and it was with him that it plunged to disaster.

It was not that Croesus was not warned about where Sardis was heading. Solon, the Athenian law-giver and the wisest of the Greeks, came on a visit and was shown the magnificence and the luxury. He saw the blind confidence of Croesus and his people that nothing could end this splendor, but he also saw that the seeds of softness and of degeneration were being sown. And it was then that he uttered his famous saying to Croesus: ‘Call no man happy until he is dead.’ Solon knew only too well the chances and changes of life which Croesus had forgotten.

Croesus embarked upon a war with Cyrus of Persia which was the end of the greatness of Sardis. Again Croesus was warned, but he failed to see the warning. To get at the armies of Cyrus, he had to cross the River Halys. He took counsel of the famous oracle at Delphi and was told: ‘If you cross the River Halys, you will destroy a great empire.’ Croesus took it as a promise that he would annihilate the Persians; it never crossed his mind that it was a prophecy that the campaign on which he had embarked would be the end of his own power. He crossed the Halys, engaged in battle and was routed. He was not in the least worried, for he thought that all he had to do was to retire to the impregnable citadel of Sardis, recuperate and fight again. Cyrus initiated the siege of Sardis, waited for fourteen days, then offered a special reward to anyone who would find an entry into the city.

The rock on which Sardis was built crumbled easily. It was more like close-packed dried mud than rock. The nature of the rock meant that it developed cracks. A certain Mardian soldier called Hyeroeades had

seen a Sardinian soldier accidentally drop his helmet over the battlements and then make his way down the precipice to retrieve it. Hyeroeades knew that there must be a crack in the rock there by means of which an agile man could climb up. That night, he led a party of Persian troops up by the fault in the rock. When they reached the top, they found the battlements completely unguarded. The Sardians had thought themselves too safe to need a guard; and so Sardis fell. A city with a history like that knew what the risen Christ was talking about when he said: 'Watch!'

There were a few futile attempts at rebellion; but Cyrus followed a deliberate policy. He forbade any Sardinian to possess a weapon of war. He ordered them to wear tunics and buskins, that is, actors' boots, instead of sandals. He ordered them to teach their sons lyre-playing, the song and the dance, and retail trading. Sardis had been flabby already; but the last vestige of spirit was banished from its people, and it became a city of degeneration.

It vanished from history under Persian rule for two centuries. In due course, it surrendered to Alexander the Great, and through him it became a city of Greek culture. Then history repeated itself. After the death of Alexander, there were many claimants for the power. Antiochus, who became the ruler of the area in which Sardis stood, was at war with a rival called Achaeus who sought refuge in Sardis. For a year, Antiochus besieged him; then a soldier called Lagoras repeated the exploit of Hyeroeades. At night, with a band of brave men, he climbed the steep cliffs. The Sardians had forgotten their lesson. There was no guard, and once again Sardis fell because it had not kept watch.

Later, the Romans came. Sardis was still a wealthy city. It was a centre of the wool trade; and it was claimed that the art of dyeing wool was actually discovered there. It became a Roman assize town. In AD 17, it was destroyed by an earthquake which devastated the area. Tiberius, the Roman emperor, in his kindness cancelled all tribute money due for five years and gave a donation of 10,000,000 sesterces towards rebuilding—and Sardis recovered itself by the easy way.

When John wrote his letter to Sardis, it was wealthy but degenerate. Even the once great citadel was now only an ancient monument on the hilltop. There was no life or spirit there. The once great Sardians were soft, and twice they had lost their city because they were too lazy to keep watch. In that atmosphere so lacking in energy or concern, the Christian church too had lost its vitality and was a corpse instead of a living church.

write, 'These things says He (followed by a description of the speaker from chapter 1:16) who has the seven Spirits of God (allusion to Is. 11:2-5) and the seven stars (seven messengers, per 1:20): "I know your works, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead.

-works apart from the Spirit of God

-A name, a good name, good Protestant creeds, but no life

-A name (great doctrines) that live, but they themselves are dead

-More state churches other than Catholic, even with the Reformation,

-Lutheranism became the state church of Germany and Scandinavia

-Presbyterianism in Scotland

-Dutch Reform in Holland

-Reform church in parts of Switzerland

-Anglican church in England etc.

-After one generation, entry again into the new church states was by Baptism into the state church.

-What infected Pergamos also infected this church: The State Church Problem. Massive unbelievers coming into the church by baptism alone, not true conversion

-Great doctrinal creeds, but Jesus says they are dead.

Rebuke

2 Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die,

-Resurrect what was alive in the first generation

MacArthur:many churches....still shine with the reflected light of a brilliant past. Looking at them from a distance, one might think nothing had changed. Yet the spiritual darkness of false teaching and sinful living and no regenerative life has extinguished the light on the inside, though some of their reputation may still remain.

for I have not found your works perfect before God.

-either they were not done with His Spirit's power, but in their own strength

-or they were done in their own name, Lutheran, Methodist, Baptist etc....

-or they were done and they did not make His name great, but their own

3 Remember therefore how you have received and heard; hold fast and repent.

-Repentance is the end of the mental process to remember how you received what you heard

Therefore if you will not watch, I will come upon you as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you.

Morgan: G. Campbell Morgan observes that there is a change in approach beginning with this letter:

There is a marked change in our Lord's method of address to the church at Sardis. Hitherto He has commenced with words of commendation. Here, He commenced with words of condemnation. In the other churches, evil had not been the habit, but rather the exception, and therefore it was possible first to commend. Here the case is reversed, and no word of commendation is addressed to the church as a church.

Commendation

4 You have a few names even in Sardis who have not defiled their garments (who have escaped, and are living out the creeds, the great doctrines of the reformation.); and they shall walk with Me in white, for they are worthy.

Swete: Suggests that white apparel in Scripture denotes (1) festivity; (2) victory; (3) purity; (4) the heavenly state. The thought seems to be that the righteousness of the saints bestowed in the form of a garment is a token of their acceptability to God and the divine recognition of their office and ministry as the priests of God. They have not defiled their garments as others have done in Sardis, and now they are promised that in the future they will have the heavenly white garment and will walk with Christ because they are judged as "worthy."

5 He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments (salvation, righteousness), and I will not blot out his name from the Book of the Life (highest form of life); but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels. (contrast with see 20:15)

Walvoord: some have considered the book of life not as the roll of those who are saved but rather a list of those for whom Christ died, that is, all humanity who have possessed physical life. As they come to maturity and are faced with the responsibility of accepting or rejecting Christ, their names are blotted out if they fail to receive Jesus Christ as Saviour; whereas those who do accept Christ as Saviour are confirmed in their position in the book of life, and their names are confessed before the Father and the heavenly angels.

6 “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.” ’

7 “And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia

Philadelphia means: ‘Brotherly Love’

Church age covered: 1700-1900 Great Missionary Age (but according to v. 10 will last until the tribulation begins)

Barclay on Philadelphia: Philadelphia was the youngest of all the seven cities. It was founded by colonists from Pergamos under the reign of Attalus II, who ruled in Pergamos from 159 to 138 BC. *Philadelphos* is the Greek for *one who loves his brother*. Such was the love of Attalus for his brother Eumenes that he was called Philadelphos, and it was after him that Philadelphia was named.

It was founded for a special purpose. It was situated where the borders of Mysia, Lydia and Phrygia met. But it was not as a garrison town that Philadelphia was founded, for there was little danger there. It was founded with the deliberate intention that it might be a means of spreading Greek culture and language to Lydia and Phrygia; and so well did it do its work that by AD 19 the Lydians had forgotten their own language and were all but Greeks. The archaeologist Sir William Ramsay says of Philadelphia that it was ‘the centre for the diffusion of Greek language and Greek letters in a peaceful land and by peaceful means’. That is what the risen Christ means when he speaks of the open door that is set before Philadelphia. Three centuries before, Philadelphia had been given an open door to spread Greek ideas in the lands beyond; and now there has come to it another great missionary opportunity, to carry to those who had yet to hear it the message of the love of Jesus Christ.

Philadelphia had one particular characteristic which has left its mark upon this letter. It was on the edge of a great plain called the *Katakekaumenē*, which means the Burned Land. The *Katakekaumenē* was a great volcanic plain bearing the marks of the lava and the ashes of volcanoes then extinct. Such land is fertile; and Philadelphia was the centre of a great grape-growing area and a famous producer of wines.

But that situation had its perils, and these perils had left their mark more deeply on Philadelphia than on any other city. In AD 17, there was a great earthquake which destroyed Sardis and ten other cities. In Philadelphia, the tremors went on for years; Strabo describes it as a ‘city full of earthquakes’. It often happens that, when a great earthquake comes, people meet it with courage and self-possession, but the constantly recurring minor shocks drive them to sheer panic. That is what happened in Philadelphia. Strabo describes the scene. Shocks were an everyday occurrence. Gaping cracks appeared in the walls of the houses. First one part of the city was in ruins, then another. Most of the population lived outside the city in huts and were afraid even to go on to the city streets in case they should be killed by falling masonry. Those who still dared to live in the city were considered mad; they spent their time shoring up the shaking buildings and every now and then fleeing to the open spaces for safety. These terrible days in Philadelphia were never wholly forgotten, and people in the city were always waiting subconsciously for the ominous tremors of the ground, ready to flee for their lives to the open spaces.

People in Philadelphia knew very well what security lay in a promise that ‘they would go out no more’. But there is more of Philadelphia’s history than that in this letter. When this earthquake devastated it, Tiberius was as generous to Philadelphia as he had been to Sardis. In gratitude, it changed its name to Neocaesarea—the New City of Caesar. In the time of Vespasian, Philadelphia was to change its name, again out of gratitude, to Flavia, for Flavius was the emperor’s family name. It is true that neither of these new names lasted and ‘Philadelphia’ was restored. But the people of Philadelphia knew what it was to receive ‘a new name’.

Of all the cities, Philadelphia receives the greatest praise—and it was to show that it deserved it. Later on, it became a very great city. When the Turks and Muslims flooded across Asia Minor, and every other town had fallen, Philadelphia stood firm. For centuries, it was a free Greek Christian city amid people from a very different culture. It was the last bastion of Asian Christianity. It was not until midway through the fourteenth century that it fell; and to this day there is a Christian bishop and 1,000 Christians in it. With the exception of Smyrna, the other churches are in ruins; but Philadelphia still holds aloft the banner of the Christian faith.

write, "These things says He who is holy, He (followed by a description of the speaker from chapter 1:18) who is true, "He who has the key of David (from see Is. 22:20-23), He who opens and no one shuts, and shuts and no one opens":

-open door of world wide missions.

-The great missionary works started in the 1700s on unto today and up to the great tribulation

Commendation, no rebuke

8 "I know your works. See, I have set before you an open door, and no one can shut it; for you have a little strength,

-took advantage of the great open door and sent missionaries thruout the open world

-'little strength' here refers to real strength. This comes form a right understanding of ourselves 'little' and a right appropriation of Him-'Strength'. Combine these two verses and you have 'little or real strength: see John 15:5 with see Phil. 4:13

have kept (guarded) My word, and have not denied My name.

Promises to Philadelphia

9 Indeed I will make *those* of the synagogue of Satan, who say they are Jews and are not (see Romans 9:6), but lie—indeed I will make them come and worship before or in the presence of your feet, and to know that I have loved you.

-Jewish converts will worship with Gentile converts

-Jewish missions come into their own in this period. In the 1800s separate Jewish missions in England and Germany, presenting the Gospel with a Jewish reference, especially in Eastern Europe.

-1880s onward, revival in Eastern Europe among Jews, and Rabbis.

-Fewer Rabbis today, The Germans stopped much of this movement for a period of time.

10 Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from (not in) the hour or time of it of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.

-So the Philadelphia church will have a major and continuing presence until the Tribulation.

Exhortation

11 Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown.

-continue, do not vary your attitude, love, desires, course or works.

-Those who persevere to the end thereby prove the genuineness of their salvation (see Matt. 10:22; see 24:13).

12 He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more.

-you will be seen as permanent, stable, and in a place of honor

I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God.

-They will have a part in the eternal order coming down out of heaven

And I will write on him My new name.

-The **new name** by which we will be privileged to call Him will reflect that glorious revelation of His person, that will be fuller, newer, clearer to us in understanding

-Tattoos from God anyone?

-The name of God will be upon us.

13 "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."'

Next week: Church of Laodicea and chapters 4-5.

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NT377 The Revelation: *'Heavy Revy'*

Spring 2014

Class #5-March 20. Chapters 2:12 thru 3:13. Homework: In detail describe what Jesus is talking about in chapter 2:26: "...and keeps My works until the end." What works of Jesus is He talking about and how do we keep them?

Plus all readings on chapters 3:14 thru chapter 5