

**Session Three:**  
**The Letters to the Seven Churches—Part Two**

Revelation 2:1-29

Outline Reference: John Stott, *What Christ Thinks of the Church: An Exposition of Revelation 1-3*, Baker, 2003.



Figure 1: Mosaic of the Seven Angels St. Mark's Basilica Venice, Italy

### To the Church in Thyatira

18 "To the angel of the church in Thyatira write:

These are the words of the Son of God, whose eyes are like blazing fire and whose feet are like burnished bronze. 19 I know your deeds, your love and faith, your service and perseverance, and that you are now doing more than you did at first. 20 Nevertheless, I have this against you: You tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess. By her teaching she misleads my servants into sexual immorality and the eating of food sacrificed to idols. 21 I have given her time to repent of her immorality, but she is unwilling. 22 So I will cast her on a bed of suffering, and I will make those who commit adultery with her suffer intensely, unless they repent of her ways. 23 I will strike her children dead. Then all the churches will know that I am he who searches hearts and minds, and I will repay each of you according to your deeds. 24 Now I say to the rest of you in Thyatira, to you who do not hold to her teaching and have not learned Satan's so-called deep secrets (I will not impose any other burden on you): 25 Only hold on to what you have until I come. 26 To him who overcomes and does my will to the end, I will give authority over the nations—

27 He will rule them with an iron scepter; he will dash them to pieces like pottery<sup>1</sup>— just as I have received authority from my Father. 28 I will also give him the morning star. 29 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

### The Letter to Thyatira: Holiness

- A Prosperous Center for Commerce (Acts 16:4)
- A Beautiful Garden of Virtue
  - Deeds, Love, Faith, Service and Perseverance (v. 19)
  - The Fruit of the Spirit: 1 Thes. 1:3
- Christian Growth
  - "now doing more than you did at first"
  - Compare with Ephesus: "abandoned first love"
  - 2 Thes. 1:3
- A Poisonous Weed

<sup>1</sup> Psalm 2:9

- Tolerated a false teacher and sexual immorality and idolatry.

- Compare with Ephesus (2:2,4)

- Christian Holiness--Mark of true Christian<sup>2</sup>

### Jezebel

- In the Old Testament:<sup>3</sup>
  - Queen, wife of King Ahab
  - Jezebel means "pure or chaste" but she was a priestess of Ashtoreth (Greek Aphrodite, Roman Venus)
  - She had 850 Prophets and killed all of YHWH's prophets.
- The Second Jezebel
- Tolerating Sin
  - Ephesus would not tolerate their teaching or practice. Pergamum tolerated their "teaching", Thyatira tolerated her!
  - "my servants" v. 20

### Christ's Statement to the Whole Church

- Burning Eyes – Sees what is done in Secret v. 23 (cf. 1:14; 19:12)
- Divine Insight<sup>4</sup>
- Folly of Secrecy<sup>5</sup>

### Christ's Warning to the Jezebel Party

- Repent! (2 Pet. 3:9)
- New Covenant Judgment (Ex. Acts 5:1-11; 1 Cor. 11:17-32; 1 Cor. 6:9)

### Christ's Advice to the Remnant –

Glorious Liberty—1 John 5:3, Matt. 11:30 (contra. Mark 7:8-13; Matt. 11:30)

### Christ's Promise to the Overcomer

- Two Promises:
  - Sharing Christ's reign (Ps. 2:8,9; Matt. 25:21, 23; Luke 19:17; 1 Cor. 6:2)
  - The Morning Star (22:16)

<sup>2</sup> See 1 Thes. 4:3; Eph. 1:4; Tit. 2:13, 14; 1 Thes. 4:7,8

<sup>3</sup> See 1 Kings 16:30-32; 18:4, 19; 21:25; 2 Kings 9:22.

<sup>4</sup> Jer. 17:10; 11:20; 20:12; Ps. 7:9; Mark 2:8; John 2:25; 21:17; Acts 1:24, 15:8 kardiognostes, "heart-knower".

<sup>5</sup> Isa. 29:15,16; Heb. 4:12, 13 Rom. 2:16

## To the Church in Sardis

1 "To the angel of the church in Sardis write:

These are the words of him who holds the seven spirits of God and the seven stars. I know your deeds; you have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead. 2 Wake up! Strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have not found your deeds complete in the sight of my God. 3 Remember, therefore, what you have received and heard; obey it, and repent. But if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what time I will come to you. 4 Yet you have a few people in Sardis who have not soiled their clothes. They will walk with me, dressed in white, for they are worthy. 5 He who overcomes will, like them, be dressed in white. I will never blot out his name from the book of life, but will acknowledge his name before my Father and his angels. 6 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

## The Letter to Sardis: Reality

### Sardis in History

- Capital of Lydia, King Croesus conquered by Cyrus of Persia
- Conquered by Alexander and Antiochus the Great
- Earthquake in 17 AD
- Tiberius had it rebuilt by a 5 year tax holiday.

## A Critical Letter—Wake up call!

### The Rebuke Christ Gives

- A Spiritual Graveyard (1 Sam. 16:7)
- Spiritual Death – Sin, Defilement<sup>6</sup>
- Nominal Faith—Christians in Name, not heart. (Isa. 29:13)
- Hypocrites!<sup>7</sup>
  - Actor, plays a part on stage
  - Charlatan or pretender

<sup>6</sup> Matt. 8:22; Luke 9:60; Ephesians 2:1; 1 Tim. 5:6; John 5:25

<sup>7</sup> Like the Pharisees: Matt. 6:1-6, 16-18; 23:5, 27, 28.

## The Remedy Christ Proposes

- Wake Up! Strengthen what remains! Remember! Obey! Repent!
- The Godly Remnant<sup>8</sup>
- A Small Flock
- Strengthen What Remains
  - Paul Acts 18:23; Romans 1:11.
  - Scriptures Acts 20:32
  - Training in Godliness 1 Tim 4:7b-8
  - Make Disciples 2 Tim. 2:1
- Coming Judgment
- The Gift of the Spirit and the Truth Acts 2:32-38; John 4:23, 24
- Seven Spirits 1:4; 4:5; 5:6 Rom. 8:2; Eph. 5:18; Gal. 5:25
- Seven Stars

## The Reward Christ Promises

- White Clothes Rev. 7:14
- God's Book<sup>9</sup> (13:8; 20:11-25; 21:27)



<sup>8</sup> Remnant in Old and New: Gen. 6:5-18; 19:24. 25; 2 Pet. 2:7; 1 Kings 19:18; Isa. 1:9; 10:20-22; 6:13; 7:3; Mark 8:38; Luke 12:32; 18:8

<sup>9</sup> Exodus 32:32, 33; Ps. 69:28; Mal. 3:16; Dan. 12:1; Phil. 4:3; Luke 10:20; Heb. 12:23



### **To the Church in Philadelphia**

7" To the angel of the church in Philadelphia write:

These are the words of him who is holy and true, who holds the key of David. What he opens no one can shut, and what he shuts no one can open. 8 I know your deeds. See, I have placed before you an open door that no one can shut. I know that you have little strength, yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name. 9 I will make those who are of the synagogue of Satan, who claim to be Jews though they are not, but are liars—I will make them come and fall down at your feet and acknowledge that I have loved you. 10 Since you have kept my command to endure patiently, I will also keep you from the hour of trial that is going to come upon the whole world to test those who live on the earth. 11 I am coming soon. Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take your crown. 12 Him who overcomes I will make a pillar in the temple of my God. Never again will he leave it. I will write on him the name of my God and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which is coming down out of heaven from my God; and I will also write on him my new name. 13 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

### **The Letter to Philadelphia: Opportunity**

#### **The Church of Philadelphia**

#### **The Church and the Open Door**

- The Opportunity of Salvation Matt. 7:13, 14
- The Opportunity of Service
- A Great Door for effective work
  - 1 Cor. 16:9, Col. 4:3,4; 2 Cor. 2:12
- Fierce Opposition (Isa. 60:14)
- The Threat of Persecution
- A Strategic Location—Roman Road (gateway to Mysia, Lydia, Phrygia)
- Open Doors

### **Christ and the Key of David**

- The Key of David (2 Kings 18:17, 18; Isa. 22:21-22)
- The Key of Salvation Heb. 10:19, 20
- A Locked Door (Luke 13:24-28)
- The Key of Service Acts 14:27
- “Come over...and help us”

### **The Overcomer as a Pillar in God’s Temple**

- To be a Pilgrim (Phil 3:20; 1 Pet. 2:4-11)



### **To the Church in Laodicea**

14 "To the angel of the church in Laodicea write:

These are the words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God's creation. 15 I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! 16 So, because you are lukewarm—neither hot nor cold—I am about to spit you out of my mouth. 17 You say, 'I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.' But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked. 18 I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see. 19 Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest, and repent. 20 Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me. 21 To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne. 22 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."

### **The Letter to Laodicea: Wholeheartedness**

#### **Laodicea**

- A Stern Letter
- On Fire for Christ – Complacency Kills
- A Time for Enthusiasm

#### **The Diagnosis Christ Makes**

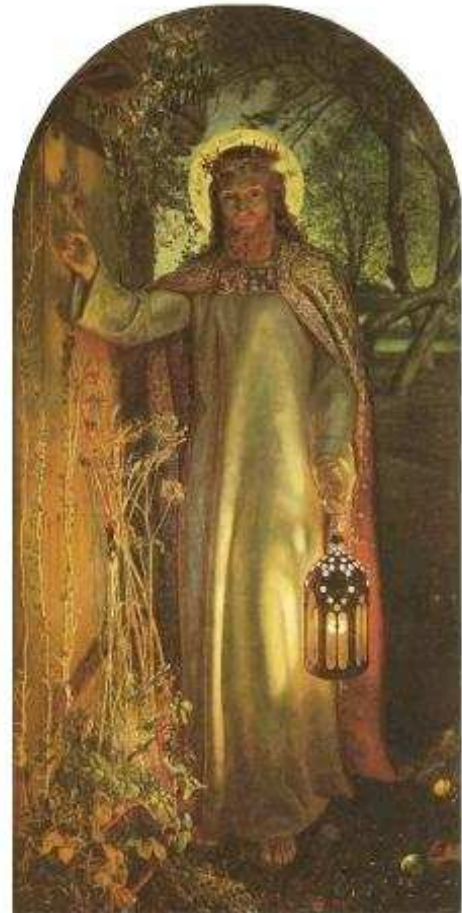
- An Opulent Society
  - After Earthquake in 60 AD quickly rebuilt
  - Banking and Merchant Center
  - Famous Medical School
- Naked, Blind Beggars

### **The Advice Christ Gives**

- Desolation and Waste
- The Divine Merchant (Isa. 55:1)
- Two Steps to Take
  - Repentance
  - Faith "Open the Door"
- Paupers to Princes
- The Master of the House

### **The Prospect Christ Offers**

- The Great Choice



**Figure 2 "Light of the World" William  
Holman Hunt**