

THE BOOK OF REVELATION, REVISITED

Part III

Wednesday, October 28, 2020 / First Assembly of God / Ft. Myers, FL
with Pastor Dan Betzer

We continue tonight in Revelation chapter 2 with Christ's message to the seven churches of Asia (Turkey) We remember that each of these seven churches represent seven distinct and different ages of our Lord's church through the ages, so this is not just a history lesson but rather a divinely-ordained biography of the church. The last of the seven churches in Revelation is the church of Laodicea; we are the Laodicean age, which is very unnerving to a true believer. And it signals clearly the end of the Age and the coming of Christ.

Last week, we concerned our study with the church in Ephesus and Smyrna.

Revelation 2:12-17 – The Church in Pergamos

And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write; These things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges; [13] I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is: and thou boldest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth. [14] But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication. [15] So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes, which thing I hate. [16] Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth. [17] He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.

1 + Pergamos was located about 70 miles north of Ephesus.
2

3 + From the years 300 AD to about 600 AD the church took on
4 worldliness and Christ as the center of His Church seemed to be
5 set aside.
6

7 + The three cities, Ephesus, Smyrna and Pergamos seemed to be the
8 three primary cities in western Turkey with Ephesus as the
9 political center, Smyrna (Izmir) as the great commercial center,
10 and Pergamos the religious center. Pergamos was considered a
11 place of beauty.
12

13 + There was a temple there built in honor of Caesar Augustus (the
14 Roman ruler when Jesus was born). Augustus himself came to the
15 city for rest and relaxation.
16

17 + Constructed on a mountain, Pergamos was a fortified stronghold.
18

19 + It was also a literary center with one of the largest libraries in the
20 world, boasting over 200,000 volumes. *It was given by Mark
21 Antony to his lover Cleopatra who lugged it back to Egypt.*
22

23 **CHRIST'S COMMENDATION TO THE CHURCH THERE**

24

- 25 1. Jesus acknowledged that the believers in Pergamos were living in a
26 very difficult place. Our Lord knows your circumstances of life.
27

28 It was a headquarters for Satanism (verse 13 “where Satan's seat is”)
29 Many cult centers were there, including the temple of Bacchus
30 (Dionysius). His image included horns, cloven feet and a tail, the
31 clue as to why Satan today is so depicted.
32

33 Also in Pergamos was the temple of Asklepios - a sort of hospital.
34 Augustus would often come here to “dry out” from his alcoholism.
35

- 36 2. Jesus commended the saints there for “holding fast the Name of
37 Christ.” They did not deny their Lord.
38

1 **CHRIST'S CONDEMNATION TO THE CHURCH THERE**

2
3 Revelation 2:14-15

4 *But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that*
5 *hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumblingblock*
6 *before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to*
7 *commit fornication. [15] So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine*
8 *of the Nicolaitanes, which thing I hate.*

9
10 The doctrine of Balaam fostered inter-marriage with non-believers, which
11 ushered in idolatry and fornication. It is at this point that the “worldliness”
12 came into Christ's church. We do not know exactly what the doctrine of
13 the Nicolaitanes was. But it had to do with compromise with Godly
14 standards of living. And Jesus wanted the church to be cleansed of
15 those practices.

16
17 His answer? REPENT! We hear that theme again in Scripture, such as:

18
19 I John 1:9

20 *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and*
21 *to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

22
23 This church in Turkey was a very real group of fellow Christians. They
24 had some noted strengths and some glaring weaknesses. Jesus was not
25 happy about partial victory and He commanded the church to repent. What
26 was the white stone of verse 17? A reward of some sort. Remember: while
27 salvation is the gift of God, given to us upon our acceptance of Christ's
28 salvation; but rewards have to be earned.

29 30 **The Church at Thyatira**

31
32 Here again, a basic knowledge of history helps us. This was the church
33 that spawned the period of roughly 600-1000 AD. What were those years?
34 **THE DARK AGES.**

1 A sidebar: The first convert we know of in Europe was Lydia, a textile
2 manufacturer from Thyatira, under the evangelistic ministry of Paul
3 and Silas:

4

5 Acts 16:11-16

6 *Therefore loosing from Troas, we came with a straight course to*
7 *Samothracia, and the next day to Neapolis; [12] And from thence to*
8 *Philippi, which is the chief city of that part of Macedonia, and a colony:*
9 *and we were in that city abiding certain days. [13] And on the Sabbath*
10 *we went out of the city by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made;*
11 *and we sat down, and spake unto the women which resorted thither.*
12 *[14] And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of*
13 *Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord*
14 *opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul.*
15 *[15] And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us,*
16 *saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my*
17 *house, and abide there. And she constrained us.*
18 *[16] And it came to pass, as we went to prayer, a certain damsel*
19 *possessed with a spirit of divination met us, which brought her masters*
20 *much gain by soothsaying...*

21

22 I had the privilege in 1972 of sailing into the harbor of Kavala, Greece,
23 with some close friends. Just north, beyond the city, was a high hill. We
24 drove over it to see the valley past it wherein lay the ruins of Philippi. This
25 is where Paul encountered the “lady from Thyatira,” Lydia, who became
26 the first known convert in Europe. I also climbed down into the prison
27 where Paul and Silas were thrown, after being severely beaten. A massive
28 earthquake destroyed the city and Paul and Silas went on from there to the
29 cities of Berea and Thessalonica.

30

31 The sin of the church in Thyatira is that it tolerated sin. The church is to
32 pursue holiness.

33

34 1 Peter 3:15-18

35 *But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give*
36 *an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in*

1 *you with meekness and fear: [16] Having a good conscience; that,*
2 *whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed*
3 *that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ. [17] For it is better,*
4 *if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing, than for evil doing.*
5 *[18] For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust,*
6 *that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but*
7 *quickenened by the Spirit...*

8
9 There was a false prophetess there named Jezebel (perhaps after the
10 wicked wife and queen of King Ahab) who used sex to destroy the
11 testimony of the people there. Jesus pulled no punches on this issue:

12
13 Revelation 2:25-26

14 *But that which ye have already hold fast till I come. [26] And he that*
15 *overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power*
16 *over the nations...*

17 18 The Church at Sardis

19
20 Revelation 3:1-6

21 *And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write; These things saith he*
22 *that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works,*
23 *that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead. [2] Be watchful,*
24 *and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have*
25 *not found thy works perfect before God. [3] Remember therefore how*
26 *thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore*
27 *thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not*
28 *know what hour I will come upon thee. [4] Thou hast a few names even*
29 *in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk*
30 *with me in white: for they are worthy. [5] He that overcometh, the same*
31 *shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out*
32 *of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and*
33 *before his angels. [6] He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit*
34 *saith unto the churches.*

35
36 This was a dead church, although the casual observer might have
37 considered it living. There is a star about 30 light years away. That star

1 could have been extinguished 25 years ago and yet its light was still
2 coming toward Earth. So, someone could say, “Look! The light comes
3 from such and such a star.” Yet the star could have died out a quarter
4 century ago. Such is the case with the church in Sardis... still going on,
5 doing all the church-things, yet dead, stone-cold dead.
6

7 Sardis was the capital of the old kingdom of Lydia and was one of the
8 most important cities in Turkey. It was located about 50 miles west of
9 present-day Izmir (Smyrna). It was the center of the carpet industry. Some
10 of the earliest coins were minted there. The primary false goddess was
11 Cybele (known in Ephesus as Diana).
12

13 Our Lord's condemnation was scathing. In effect, “Yes, I know you are a
14 busy group, doing a lot of things. “I know thy works.” (Verse 1, chapter
15 3) On the world clock we are now at the onset of the Dark Ages when the
16 church promised salvation because of works.
17



18
19

RUINS OF SARDIS, TURKEY

1 In verse 2, Jesus warned the people to wake up and be alert. They should
2 have already known that because years earlier the Greek dictator
3 Antiochus had captured the city when one of his soldiers was able to slip
4 into the city unknown while guards apparently slept. “Be alert!”
5 Jesus commanded.

6
7 The world does not hear a lot of preaching today about the return of Christ,
8 but this reality should be preached often. Who said so? Jesus:

9
10 Matthew 24:36-44

11 ***But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven,***
12 ***but my Father only. [37] But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the***
13 ***coming of the Son of man be. [38] For as in the days that were before***
14 ***the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in***
15 ***marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, [39] And knew not***
16 ***until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming***
17 ***of the Son of man be. [40] Then shall two be in the field; the one shall***
18 ***be taken, and the other left. [41] Two women shall be grinding at the***
19 ***mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left.***
20 ***[42] Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.***
21 ***[43] But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what***
22 ***watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have***
23 ***suffered his house to be broken up. [44] Therefore be ye also ready: for***
24 ***in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.***

25
26 It is important to recognize that to each of these churches Jesus challenged
27 us to endure to the end, to be faithful, to overcome. The victory does not
28 come to those who only “start well,” but to those who end well:

29
30 Revelation 2:7 (To the church in Ephesus)
31 ***He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the***
32 ***churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life,***
33 ***which is in the midst of the paradise of God.***

34
35
36

1 Revelation 2:10 (To the church in Smyrna)

2 *Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil*
3 *shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall*
4 *have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give*
5 *thee a crown of life.*

6

7 Revelation 2:17 (To the church in Pergamos)

8 *He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the*
9 *churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden*
10 *manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name*
11 *written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.*

12

13 Revelation 2:26 (To the church in Thyatira)

14 *And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will*
15 *I give power over the nations:*

16

17 Revelation 3:5 (To the church in Sardis)

18 *He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I*
19 *will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his*
20 *name before my Father, and before his angels.*

21

22 Revelation 3: 12 (To the church in Philadelphia)

23 *Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and*
24 *he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God,*
25 *and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which*
26 *cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my*
27 *new name.*

28

29 Revelation 3:21 (To the church in Laodicea)

30 *To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as*
31 *I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.*

32

33 Every church! Same challenge: OVERCOME! Finish strong!

34

35 Next Wednesday we deal with our Lord's challenge to the church in
36 ancient Philadelphia and Laodicea.