

HELPS FOR THE BIBLE STUDY ON THE BOOK OF REVELATION

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LESSON 7 (Revelation 2: 19:29): The Church of Thyatira

1. Vs. 18. Address and self-designation; a. Thyatira: a city of Asia Minor southeast from Pergamos, on the road to Sardis. Noted for the art of dyeing. Lydia, the seller of purple was from Thyatira. Acts 16:14. b The Lord announces Himself here as: (1) The Son of God. This not found in the vision of 1:13ff. Emphasizing omniscience, vs. 23; and referring to the quotation from Ps. 2 in vs. 27. (2) Whose eyes are like a flame of fire, penetrating into the hidden things of the heart. (3) And whose feet are like fine brass, executing judgment upon all the evil.
2. Vs. 19. Commendable features: a. The Church presents a warm, lovable attractive picture: (1) she is not a picture of strength (in truth and discipline). (2) But presents those features that manifest a warm love and an active faith: I know thy works (this in general), and charity (active love to God and the brethren), and service (diaconia, ministry to the poor, destitute, sick and all the saints), and faith (active faith is meant, bearing fruit), and patience (presupposing that the Church had suffered reproach and has been faithful). b. And in all this (and thy works) she had been increasing: the last were more than the first. In a sense it may be said that Thyatira is the very opposite from Ephesus.
3. Vss. 20 & 24a: Reproof: in a very vivid contrast with the good characteristics of this church are her bad features. Notice: a. that she permits a woman to teach, who was not allowed to teach in the Church. b. That this woman claimed to a prophetess; she taught by special “revelations”, apart from the revealed Word of God. The Church, evidently, accepted her as such. c. That she taught a horrible doctrine. The doctrine of the Nicolaitanes again: fornication, eating of meat sacrificed to idols. D. That this doctrine made an appeal to profound piety and experience of sin and grace: they said “we have known the depth of Satan”, vs. 24. Hence: let us sin that grace may abound! c. That she had seduced many “servants” of the Lord. d. And that, therefore, the Lord calls her Jezebel, with reference to the wicked wife of King Ahab.
Note. The peculiar weakness of Thyatira was not that she was negligent in discipline (like Pergamos), although she was. If we take all her good and bad features together, we get the impression that she was a Church with a strong tendency to false mysticism: (1) Giving heed to the “revelation” and “experiences” of a wicked women. (2) Rather than to the objective Word of God.
4. Vs. 21-23. The Lord’s judgment on Jezebel c.s.: a. Notice that the Lord does not enjoin the Church to cast out the evil ones, as He had instructed Pergamos. She could not “try them that said they were apostles”. He Himself will manifest His wrath upon the wicked and show (1) That He proves the reins and the hearts (the hidden things of man). (2) And that He rewards every man according to his work. “Let us abide in sin that grace may abound” does not meet with His favor. c. He will do so in the following way: (1) Cast Jezebel into a bed of sickness (she had time to repent, but

- without avail). (2) Bring tribulation to those that share her sin, unless they repent. (3) Kill her children.
5. Vss. 24-29. Message to the faithful: a. Exhortation, vss 24,25: (1) To as many as were not contaminated with the corrupt doctrine of Jezebel, and who had not known the depth of Satan, as they speak, i.e. as the false teachers themselves spoke, not their opponents. (2) Hold fast that which ye have: (a). The Lord will lay upon them no other burden. The reference is to Acts 15:28; hence, a burden of precepts, not of punishment is meant. (b). But they must hold fast His precepts and truth as they poses it , until He comes, i.e. until the end, the parousia. b. Promises (1) To the victor, that “keeps the works” of Christ until the end. (2) The promise of power over the nations. Reference is to Ps. 2:8, 9. Nations are referred to as heathen and wicked. To rule them with a rod of iron is to have complete power over them. To break them into pieces like a potter’s vessel is to destroy them utterly. This power Christ now has received from His Father; His people Christ now received from His Father; His people shall share it, now spiritually, and fully at His coming. (3) The promise of the morning star. See for the figure of the star: Dan. 12:3; Matt. 13:43 (shine as the sun); Rev. 22:16; II Peter 1: 19. Notice: the Lord will give us the morning star. Hence, to be understood as the harbinger of the eternal day: hope, the glory of the resurrection morning.
- He that hath an ear let him hear!

LESSON 8 (Revelation 3:1-6): The Church of Sardis

1. Vs. 1a. Address and Self-designation of the Lord: a. Sardis, a city located in a rich plain, mostly south from Thyatira and east from Ephesus. The city was noted for its wealth and luxury. This may have something to do with the condition of the church there. b. Christ designates Himself here as (1) The One that hath the Seven Spirits of Christ as He dwells in the Church. The principle or author of life in the Church. (2) And the One that have the seven stars; the angels of the churches on earth. cf. ch. 1:16-20. This self-designation is related to the dead condition of the church in Sardis and the threatened judgment.
2. Vss. 1b, 2, 4. The condition of the Church: a. First there is again the general “I know thy works”. b. Then the condition of the Church is described in: thou hast a name that thou livest and are dead”. (1) The meaning is not that there was absolutely no spiritual life left in the Church, for then the Lord would not have admonished her to repent, and, besides, some there had not defiled their garments, vs. 4: but that the Church a whole was in a spiritual stupor, without a healthy manifestation of spiritual life and activity. (2) This applied (a) to the angel or bishop first of all. Some think that his proper name meant “life” (like Zosimus, for instance), and that for this reason the Lord writes: “thou hast a name that thou livest”. Better: as a Christian, and emphatically as a minister he had a reputation that he lived. Yet, he was dead. There was no zeal, no faithfulness in his holy calling. He was a “dead preacher”. (b) Then also to the Church: as Church she had a name that she lived; yet she lacked in every activity of life, she was dead. Swallowed up by the world. c. This is further specified in (1) “I have not found they works perfect before God” does not mean merely that all her works were defiled with sin (which is always true), but that her works were not

- complete: she did not do the works of a Church of Christ, such as the preaching of the Word, discipline, confession, charity, a holy walk, etc. (2) The fact that many had defiled their garments (only a “few names” had not, vs.4). By “garments” in this case we may understand all that belongs to external membership of the Church, baptism, Lord’s Supper, confessions, etc. The “uniform” of Christ. To defile these is to be friends with the world, live in sin. (3) And in the suggestion that the Church was about to die, vs. 2. The flame of life almost had gone out.
3. Admonition and threat of judgment. Vss. 2, 3. a. Admonition: (1) Like the whole letter the admonition is addressed to the whole Church, of course; nevertheless, we feel that the “angel of the Church” is meant first of all. (2) Be watchful: the whole Church is in a condition of sleep, must wake up, watch against the enemy; but this calling rests emphatically upon the “angel”, the office bearers. (3) “And strengthen the things which remain”. (a) “The things which remain” may refer to the spiritual virtues and activities still left in the Church, or to the few faithful, or to both. (b) We prefer the last: whatever spiritual life became still manifest was surely due to the “few names that had not defiled their garments”. (c) This element must be strengthened, supported, quickened, till it is the dominating element. This, too, is the calling of the whole Church; emphatically of the “angel”. (3) “Remember therefore... and repent”. (a) Like the Church of Ephesus, that of Sardis must recall the former days, when they heard and received the gospel with zeal and joy. (b) She must hold fast the truth. (c) And repent of her present attitude over against it. b. Judgment: (1) The Lord will come as a thief in the night: to take away the Church’s light (the star) and life (the “seven spirits”). (2) And He will come unawares, so that they will not even notice that He has come. The Church will die and not know it!
 4. Promise. Vss. 4-6: a. To the faithful (that “overcome”), that art “worthy” because they did not defile their garments (through the grace of Christ, of course), and that hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches. b. They shall be “clothed in white raiment” and walk with Christ in white”. (a) White is the color of righteousness and holiness and victory. (b) Hence: heavenly fellowship with Christ in glory. c. Their names shall not be blotted out of the book of life: (1) the book of life is “election unto eternal life”. (2) Hence: the promise of certain life in glory. d. Christ shall confess their names before His Father and His holy angels: before God and in public claim them as His own, for whom He died and rose and whom He wills to be with Him forever!

LESSON 9 (Revelation 3: 7-13): The Church in Philadelphia

1. Address and self-designation; vs. 7; a. Philadelphia, a city situated to the south east of Sardis. It is evident from the letter that the Church there had to suffer from the hostility of the influential Jews in that city. b. The self-designation of the Lord: (1) is not verbally derived from the vision of 1:12ff. but certainly as to its idea. (2) He that is holy, he that is true (This with emphasis over against the lies of the Jews concerning Him). He is the Holy One, that was to come; the genuine Messiah. And as, such, i.e. as the Anointed of the Lord He has the keys of David. (3) Keys of David: (a) See Isa. 22:22. He that had the keys of David had general supervision over the king’s business; authority to admit into the presence of the king or to refuse

admittance. (b) Christ alone had authority in the Kingdom of God; power to open and to shut efficaciously.

2. Condition of the Church; vss. 8, 10a: a. First again the general: "I know thy works". b. Then, specifically; (1) The Church had little strength: (a) This does not mean that the Church was spiritually weak, for the contrary is evident from this letter. (b) But that it was weak according to the standard of the flesh: in numbers, and as to the position in the world, in influence and possessions. (2) but she was faithful and that in the midst of adverse circumstances, hatred and persecution. (a) Had kept the Word of Christ: in doctrine and teaching, in confessions and walk. (b) Had not denied the name of Christ: "not denied" is "confessed"/ the negative form suggests that there had been plenty of temptation and trial to deny it. The Church had suffered persecution, especially from the "synagogue of Satan", the Jews. (c) The Word of Christ's patience she had kept (vs. 10), i.e. the whole Word of God as it requires patience to keep it and exhorts to patience throughout. Also this presupposes that the Church had suffered persecution.

NOTE: In many respects this Church is similar to that of Smyrna. Both are weak. Both suffer persecution. Both are faithful. Neither (and they are the only two of the seven) receives a rebuke.

3. The promise of an open door; vss. 8, 9: a. The "open door" is an effective entrance for the preaching of the gospel into the hearts of others. See Acts 14: 27; I Cor. 16: 9; II Cor. 2:12; Col. 4:3. (1) Only Christ can open this door. Without His operation even the preaching of gospel is of no positive avail. (2) And He does it irresistibly: "no man can shut it". This is, therefore, a promise of fruit and growth; an encouragement to continue preaching the Word. b. This open door applies especially to the Jews in the city: (1) The "synagogue of Satan" see chap. 2:9. (2) Christ will make them come to the Church they hated and persecuted (a) in humility: "worship before the feet". Does not mean that they will pay divine homage to the Church, but that they will repent and humble themselves before the Church. (b) Because they shall know and acknowledge that Christ loved them; the past tense "loved" or "have loved" probably refers to the love revealed at the cross. These Jews would see the cross in a new light.
4. Promise of being kept out of the hour of temptations; vs. 10: a. The hour of temptation is a period of tribulation to try them that dwell on the earth". Concerning this we note (1) that it is called an "hour": it will be brief. (2) That it is general: all the earth. (a) May refer to a period of persecution at the time. (b) Includes all the tribulation in this dispensation. (c) Shall be finally realized in the last "great tribulation". b. Be kept from (1) Does not mean that the church shall not be in tribulation (contrary to all Scripture), as the Chiliasts have it. (2) But that they shall be spiritually preserved and delivered from it.
5. Exhortation; vs. 11: a. "Hold fast", etc. (1) The Church had the word of Christ's patience. (2) It she must hold fast. Remain faithful. (3) Which is the only way to attain to the crown of victory? (4) But this perseverance is possible only through Christ's preservation. b. Encouragement: "Behold I come quickly".
6. Promise of future blessing vs. 12; a. For him that overcometh. b. Pillar in the temple of my God: (1) the temple here is the glorified Church. (2) And pillar denotes (a) Permanence ("shall go no more out); (b) Firm support; (c) Adornment. c. A threefold

- name (1) Name here denotes property and identity. (2) Name of “my God”: the glory of God’s likeness, perfect son ship. (3) Name of New Jerusalem: the right of citizenship in the “city of God”. (4) Christ’s new name: share in His glory.
7. He that hath an ear, etc. vs. 13.

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