

## Revelation Class 8

2:18-3:6

### Letters to the churches of Thyatira and Sardis

Thyatira, was the smallest of the cities but strategic nonetheless. It controlled a corridor connecting the Hermus and Caicus valleys. Founded by Seleucus I of Syria, one of Alexander the Great's generals, in the 4<sup>th</sup> Century BC. Taken by Rome in 133 BC. It remained an important point in the Roman road system, on the road connecting Pergamum and Laodicea and the eastern provinces. It was a center of manufacturing, dyeing, garment making, pottery, and brass-working. Lydia, a Jewish worshipper, and overseas agent for the textile industry, is from this town. Paul meets her in Philippi in Acts 16:14. Guilds were an important part of the economic life of this city and therein lay the issues confronting believers in Thyatira.

Vv.18ff "And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write: "The words of the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and whose feet are like burnished bronze. 'I know your works, your love and faith and service and patient endurance, and that your latter works exceed the first. But I have this against you, that you tolerate the woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess and is teaching and beguiling my servants to practice immorality and to eat food sacrificed to idols. I gave her time to repent, but she refuses to repent of her immorality. Behold, I will throw her on a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her I will throw into great tribulation, unless they repent of her doings; and I will strike her children dead. And all the churches shall know that I am he who searches mind and heart, and I will give to each of you as your works deserve. But to the rest of you in Thyatira, who do not hold this teaching, who have not learned what some call the deep things of Satan, to you I say, I do not lay upon you any other burden; only hold fast what you have, until I come. He who conquers and who keeps my works until the end,

## **Revelation Class 8**

**2:18-3:6**

### **Letters to the churches of Thyatira and Sardis**

**I will give him power over the nations, and he shall rule them with a rod of iron, as when earthen pots are broken in pieces, even as I myself have received power from my Father; and I will give him the morning star. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”**

**There are several things to notice right off...that works are expected, that judgment based on deeds is discussed by Jesus, that Great Tribulation is occurring in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century, that time is an opportunity to repent, that repentance can restore a relationship with God even if broken by gross sin, that Jesus acts like Yahweh acts in the OT in judgment, that Satan is seen as behind the opposition to Jesus and His people in the world and also behind the mutiny and rebellion and corruption within the church.**

**Notice also the reference to Jezebel...what do you know about her? See 1 Kings 16:31; 21:25; 2 Kings 9. The content of her teaching is referred to as ‘the deep things of Satan’. Here the name is in all probability a symbolic name for a woman claiming to speak for God but teaching contrary to God and his word. She was teaching compromise and sought to seduce Christ-followers into the ways of the world and the ways of paganism, described as idolatry, immorality, and adultery...all euphemisms for idol worship but which may have involved sexual immorality as well. The saints are urged not to compromise but to hold on, to keep persevering...to have faith and to keep ‘faithing’ or to believe and keep believing.**

## Revelation Class 8

2:18-3:6

### Letters to the churches of Thyatira and Sardis

Jesus as Judge, is a primary theme of the NT in general and Revelation in particular. Notice he judges exactly as God, we are told will judge, see Ps 62:12. In light of this the faithful ones are urged to hold fast until the end, and the not so faithful ones are urged to repent while there is still time. Notice the threats and promises...this is characteristic of prophecy. The Prophetic message is first an introduction of the covenant Lord, and his servant people, then an indictment and enumeration of violations, with descriptions of the future in light of the blessings and curses of the covenant and a call to repentance prior to the judgment...that is most certainly coming. Let us look at how Jesus is described in this letter recalling the original vision in chapter 1. Eyes like a flame of fire and feet like burnished bronze...go back to 1:14,15 and see the cross references...where do they send us? Dan 10:6; Rev 19:12; Jer 11:20. His point is that Jesus is who Yahweh is.

As we discussed last week, the word 'conquer' is a loaded term and one employed on the side of light and darkness. The darkness seeks to 'conquer' through misleading and false teaching and false promises and intimidation while the Jesus side seeks to conquer as He did by ironically seeming to be 'conquered' or perishing under the onslaught of the darkness. Jesus conquered by means of the Cross and taught that His disciples must 'conquer' in the same way...by cross-bearing. But conquering implies real triumph and rule...see Ps 2:8 and Dan 7:27 and Eph 1:15-2:10. The Kingdom or Reign of God belongs to Jesus but is a reign and rule that He shares with those who are His. See also Rev 22:16. Jesus also promises the 'morning star'...a symbol of authority and rule also a name once belonging to the one who became Satan or Adversary but once was known

## **Revelation Class 8**

**2:18-3:6**

### **Letters to the churches of Thyatira and Sardis**

as ‘the morning star’ Is 14:12. See Num 24:17...Rev 22:16. Note the tie between this Num 24 prophecy issued by Balaam and the teaching of Jezebel and their overthrow by the rightful ruler of the nations and His righteous torah.

The letter to the church in Sardis 3:1-6 “And to the angel of the church in Sardis write: ‘The words of him who has the seven spirits of God and the seven stars. “I know your works; you have the name of being alive, but are dead. Awake, and strengthen what remains and is on the point of death, for I have not found your works perfect in the sight of my God. Remember then what you received and heard; keep that, and repent. If you will not awake, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come upon you. Yet you have still a few names in Sardis, people who have not soiled their garments, and they shall walk with me in white, for they are worthy. He who conquers shall be clad thus in white garments, and I will not blot his name out of the book of life; I will confess his name before my Father and before his angels. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”

Sardis, was once the capital of the Lydian kingdom. It enjoyed proverbial wealth under its still famous king Croesus. It is thought that much of its wealth came from gold found in the river Pactolus, which flowed through the center of the city. It was once a nearly impregnable fortress. However, it was conquered by Cyrus in 549 BC and later by the Seleucid king Antiochus the Great in 214 BC using the treacherous cliffs that towered above city to lower soldiers into the city under the cover of darkness. Under the Romans it never regained its former glory and lost out in its bid to become the ‘Temple

## Revelation Class 8

2:18-3:6

### Letters to the churches of Thyatira and Sardis

warden' for a temple to Augustus when Smyrna was chosen over it.

Notice again what parts of the original vision from chapter 1 are connected to Sardis...the one who has the 'seven spirits of God and the seven stars.' Here Jesus appears as the one who holds the churches in His hand and possesses the Spirit which alone makes the Temple holy and whose presence is the light and power of the church's witness. This depiction is nearly identical to how Jesus is described in 2:1ff to the church in Ephesus...with a similar purpose. This church appears successful but is not as it appears...and its Lord is not fooled.

There is in vv.1b and 2 a play on words...on the verb 'to be'...from which Yahweh gets His name. "You have a name or reputation for being alive and or but are dead'. Their appearance is deceiving...they are thought 'to be' alive...like their living Lord, I am...but 'are' not or 'are' dead. They/we are to be like our Lord, the Living God. However, they needed to Awake or Wake Up! They were in danger and did not realize it. Their works were not 'perfect' or better 'complete'. Their works needed to be 'filled up'.

V.3 The second imperative is issued...First Wake Up...and now Remember...a primary covenant duty...can you think of other things we are commanded to remember? Note the role of repentance...in the book of Leviticus...we are told that there is no sacrifice for intentional sin...the only way intentional sin can be atoned for...is that first the sinner must confess and name their sin, and then and only then may they seek to make atonement through sacrifice. Relationships require this kind of

## **Revelation Class 8**

**2:18-3:6**

### **Letters to the churches of Thyatira and Sardis**

honesty and reality about sin and its destructiveness. However, if a person will repent, confess and seek reconciliation they/we will find that God is Ps 103:8-13. Remarkably, repentance fulfills the torah...the word fulfills is the word about what is lacking in their 'works'. But note the threat of judgment looming over them...'but if you will not awake...I will come like a thief...'

Vv.4, 5 Still they are not without some who are faithful, unsoiled ones...who will be given 'white robes' and who will walk with Him see Rev 6:11; 7:9,13. Those who walk recall the Exodus experience...while God delivered many on the night of Passover they were called to walk to the Promised Land...and did not inherit what was Promised unless they did. If they stopped along the way they would perish failing to inherit what God had promised. Those who conquer...again by enduring...by continuing to walk all the way to the Promised fulfillment will not have their name erased from the Book of Life...again an image that appears in Rev 20. See Mt 10:32. For the Book of Life see Dan 11:35 12:1,10; Is 4:3; Ex 32:32,33; Ps 69:28.