

The Book of Revelation



Pattern for the Letters

Ephesus – in danger of losing identity

Smyrna – faithful and loyal

Pergamum - compromise

Thyatira - compromise

Sardis - compromise

Philadelphia – faithful and loyal

Laodicea – in danger of losing identity

THE SEVEN CHURCHES OF REVELATION

CHURCHES:	STRENGTHS:	FAILURES:	INSTRUCTION:	PROMISE TO THE FAITHFUL:
EPHESUS "LOVELESS" REV. 2:1-7	HARD WORK; PATIENT ENDURANCE; REJECTED EVIL; PERSEVERANCE	YOU HAVE FORSAKEN YOUR FIRST LOVE	REPENT AND DO THE WORKS YOU DID AT FIRST	YOU WILL EAT FROM THE TREE OF LIFE
SMYRNA "SUFFERING" REV. 2:8-11	ENDURING YOUR SUFFERING AND POVERTY – YET YOU ARE RICH	NONE	REMAIN FAITHFUL EVEN WHEN FACING PRISON, PERSECUTION OR DEATH	I WILL GIVE YOU THE CROWN OF LIFE; YOU WILL NOT BE HURT BY THE SECOND DEATH
PERGAMOS "WORLDLY" REV. 2:12-17	LOYALTY TO CHRIST; REFUSE TO DENY HIM	TOLERATES CULTS, HERESIES, IDOLATRY AND IMMORALITY	REPENT!	HIDDEN MANNA AND A STONE WITH A NEW NAME ON IT
THYATIRA "WRONG DOCTRINE" REV. 2:18-29	LOVE, FAITH, WORKS; PATIENT ENDURANCE; CONSTANT IMPROVEMENT	TOLERATES PAGAN CULTS, IDOLATRY AND IMMORALITY; JUDGMENT COMING!	REPENT!	FAITHFUL WILL HOLD FAST UNTIL I COME; I WILL GIVE YOU THE MORNING STAR
SARDIS "SPIRITUALLY DEAD" REV. 3:1-6	ONLY A FAITHFUL FEW HAVE KEPT THE FAITH; CHURCH SPIRITUALLY DEAD	REPENT AND TURN BACK TO CHRIST	STRENGTHEN WHAT LITTLE FAITH REMAINS	FAITHFUL WILL WALK WITH JESUS AND NOT BE BLOTTED OUT OF THE BOOK OF LIFE
PHILADELPHIA "SPIRITUALLY ALIVE" REV. 3:7-13	KEPT MY WORD AND HAVE NOT DENIED MY NAME	NONE	YOU HAVE AN OPEN DOOR; I WILL KEEP YOU FROM THE HOUR OF TRIAL	I WILL MAKE YOU A PILLAR IN THE TEMPLE OF MY GOD
LAODICEA "COMPLACENT" REV. 3:14-22	NONE	NEITHER HOT NOR COLD; YOUR RICHES MAKE YOU IMPOVERISHED	TURN FROM INDIFFERENCE AND REPENT!	I WILL INVITE THOSE WHO OVERCOME TO SIT WITH ME ON MY THRONE



The Letter to Thyatira (2:18-29)

“a city of no first-rate dignity” (Pliny the Elder)



Ongoing Restoration at Thyatira

What Was Going On At Thyatira?

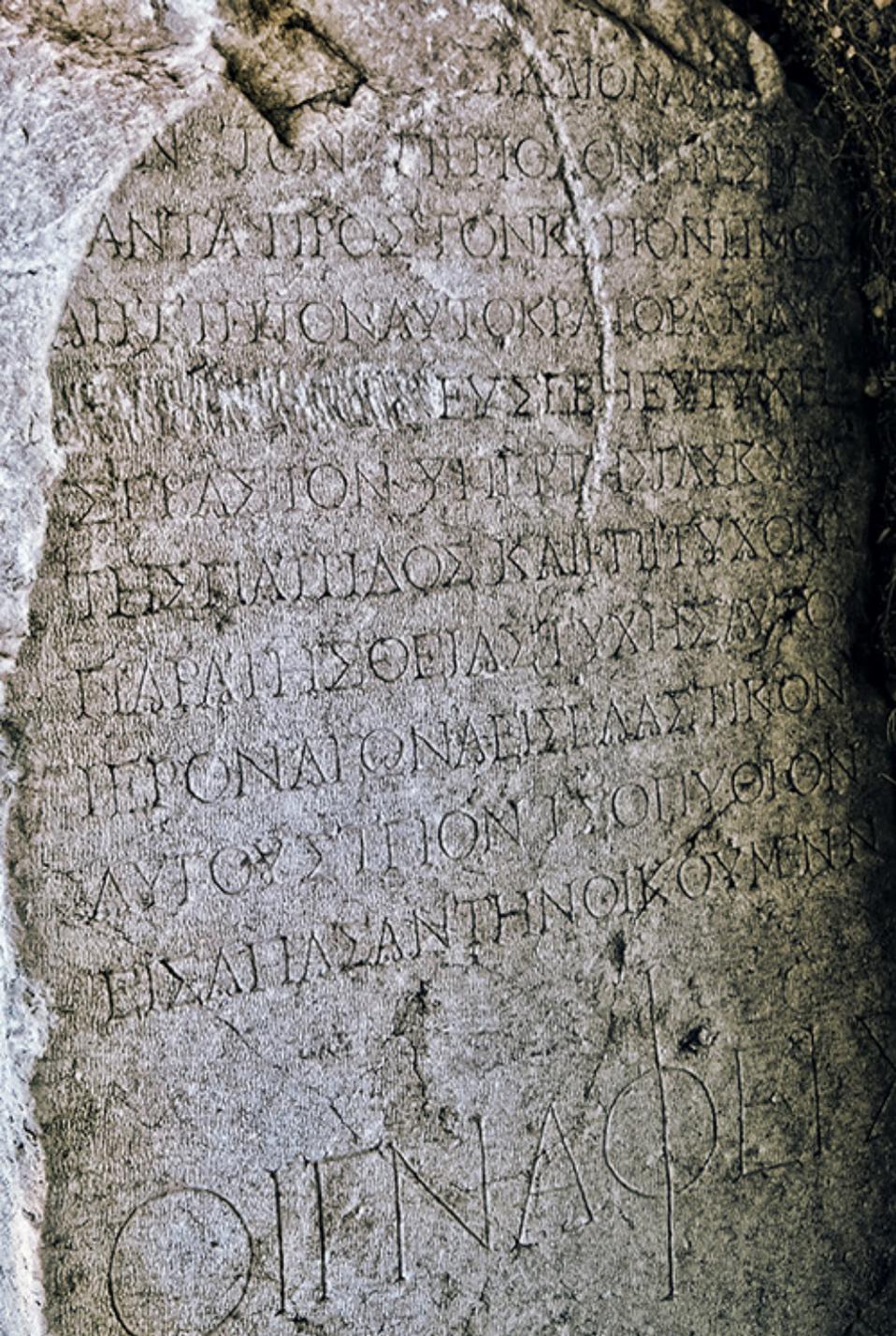
- Great at works, love, service, faith, patience, growth
- Imperial cult worship not a major issue here because an imperial temple was never dedicated in Thyatira. Records indicate that a few from here were sent to Pergamos for execution for refusal of imperial worship.
- Issues revolving around trade guilds, “Jezebel”, and the “depths of Satan”
- Unique in that a direct quotation from the OT occurs

Pressure from the Trade Guilds in Thyatira

- Home of Lydia, a "seller of purple" (Acts 16:14)
- Famous for its trade guilds ("feet with fine brass" – 2:18)
 - *"There are references to unions of clothiers, bakers, tanners, potters, linen-workers, wool-merchants, slave-traders, copper-smiths and dyers" (Hemer, "Unto the Angels of the Churches," Bible History 11 (1975). 110).*
 - *"No other city seems to have had so many guilds as Thyatira: coppersmiths, bronze workers, tanners, leather workers, dyers, workers in wool and linen, potters, bakers, and slave dealers" (Biblical Sites in Turkey, by Blake and Edmonds, p.132).*
 - *"Membership in these trade guilds, necessary for financial and social success, often involved pagan customs and practices such as superstitious worship, union feasts using food sacrificed to pagan gods, and loose sexual morality." (Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Dictionary)*

Trade Guilds & “Blotting Out” (cf. 3:5)

This inscription in Thyatira shows the erasure (blotting or wiping out) of the name of Emperor Marcus Aurelius Antoninus II, aka Elagabalus (A.D. 218-222) on the fifth line from the top (cf. 3:5). Note the last line – oi gnapheis – the fullers – one of the important trade guilds.



“Blotting Out” (3:5)



Inscription at Thyatira. It has the name of Titus Vespasian on the top line, but the name of his brother Domitian (Roman Emperor A.D. 81-96) is erased.

Pressure from Jezebel in Thyatira

- Jezebel is likely a figurative name, as Balaam was for Pergamos
- Wife of Ahab, a Phoenician, Baal worship (1Kgs 21:25)
- A pagan prophetess who was a member of the church there who promoted some kind of idolatry from within the church
- Given opportunity to repent, but refused, and will receive poetic justice from the hand of God
- Jesus reigns! (11:15-18; 12:10-11; 19:15-16)
- “I will give him the morning star” – hope in the light of God which will illuminate their dark era in God’s time

Pressure from “the depths of Satan”

- Connected to “Jezebel” and the trade guilds?
- Gnosticism/Mysticism?
- Syncretism?
- An early Montanism? Montanus later led a heretical movement that served as an early precursor to Pentecostalism





The Letter to Sardis (3:1-6)



The Letter to Sardis (3:1-6)

Herodotus, Histories, 1.84

“Now the taking of Sardis came about as follows:--When the fourteenth day came after Cræsus began to be besieged, Cyrus made proclamation to his army, sending horsemen round to the several parts of it, that he would give gifts to the man who should first scale the wall. After this the army made an attempt; and when it failed, then after all the rest had ceased from the attack, a certain Mardian whose name was Hyroiades made an attempt to approach on that side of the citadel where no guard had been set; for they had no fear that it would ever be taken from that side, seeing that here the citadel is precipitous and unassailable. To this part of the wall alone Meles also, who formerly was king of Sardis, did not carry round the lion which his concubine bore to him, the Telmessians having given decision that if the lion should be carried round the wall, Sardis should be safe from capture:

Herodotus, Histories, 1.84

“...and Meles having carried it round the rest of the wall, that is to say those parts of the citadel where the fortress was open to attack, passed over this part as being unassailable and precipitous: now this is a part of the city which is turned towards Tmolos. So then this Mardian Hyroiades, having seen on the day before how one of the Lydians had descended on that side of the citadel to recover his helmet which had rolled down from above, and had picked it up, took thought and cast the matter about in his own mind. Then he himself ascended first, and after him came up others of the Persians, and many having thus made approach, Sardis was finally taken and the whole city was given up to plunder.”

Temple of Artemis at Sardis



Temple of Artemis at Sardis



Pagan Worship of Artemis Overcome with Christianity



What Was Going On At Sardis?

- A comfortable city full of vice and lethargy
- A stronghold during war; irrelevant during peace
- The church was like the city!
- Their enthusiasm had faded
- They needed to be watchful (3:2; Matt. 24:43; 2 Pet. 3:10); this is a callback to their history as a city
- There was a faint flicker there, but it was burning out; just a few were remaining faithful and pure

What Was Going On At Sardis?

- There's a difference between corporate identity & individual accountability
- *"It is comforting to learn that in a church of spiritual corpses the Lord sees and knows the congregation as individuals and is mindful of each as a personal entity" (Hailey 146).*
- *"Though these letters are written to churches, notice that the Lord observes us one by one ... (some) were standing for righteousness even though the Lord describes the church as a unit as being dead spiritually. Saints work together in local congregations, but in the final day of judgment the Lord will reward everyone individually" (Harkrider 49-50).*
- Victory will be in the form of a white robe (a nod to the fact that Sardis had begun and perfected wool dyeing; also Roman triumphs) and a name recorded in the Book of Life (cf. Phil. 4:3; Ex. 32:32-33).

The Overall Message



In the end;
GOD WINS