

*The Capstone of God's Revelation to Man*

# The Book of Revelation

Bible Study Notes and Outline

*“Write the things which you have seen,  
and the things which are, and the things  
which will take place after this”*

Revelation 1:19

## About These Notes:

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*The following notes and comments are gleaned from other studies, commentaries, and books - incorporated with my own insights as gained over forty years of Bible study. This is not an exhaustive commentary, but rather a synopsis of notes, ideas and lessons taught during the current live study. Where applicable, I have cited sources used. General references are provided in the Bibliography at the back of the notes. As with any study, I am indebted to the work and careful study of others who have come before; and, above all, to the insights the Holy Spirits gives as we are diligent to study His Word.*

J.Gifford, 2015

# BACKGROUND

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## OVERVIEW OF THE BOOK

While exiled to the island of Patmos because of his activities in spreading the Gospel, John is given powerful visions, known as the revelation of Jesus Christ. He receives messages to send to seven churches, and is shown in apocalyptic symbolism what will be happening in the world through to the end of Earth's history, from the activities of the Church of Jesus Christ, to the coming of the evil World Ruler, and the final battle and return of the true King of Kings to rule for 1000 years. At the very end, all the present worlds pass away, and are replaced with a new, everlasting heavens and earth. The victory is the LORD'S! Amen. Even so, come Lord Jesus.

The Book of Revelation has been largely overlooked by many in the Church - this despite the fact that it is the only book of the Bible that promises a special blessing to the reader. It is often misunderstood and considered too mysterious and difficult to warrant serious study. However, those who hold such a position could not be further from the truth. As we will see, Revelation is logical, relevant and clear in its presentation - as you would expect from the Creator of the universe.

Revelation is the capstone of the Bible, bringing to completion God's plan of redemption as revealed in scripture. Indeed, in its 404 verses, the Book makes more than 500 allusions to the Old Testament alone. Its many idioms and symbols derive from virtually every book of the Bible.

## OUTLINE OF THE BOOK

The Book of Revelation contains its own divinely inspired outline. Jesus Himself provided the key to the structure of the book. In Chapter 1 verse 19, John is told to write:

- The things which you have seen, and (Ch 1)
- The things which are (Ch 2-3)
- The things which shall be hereafter (Ch 4-22).

The "things which you have seen" refers to the vision of our risen Lord just experienced previously in Chapter 1. The "things which are" refers to the seven churches which were existing at that time in Chapters 2 and 3. Interestingly, the Lord's letters to the churches in these two chapters are the most relevant part of the book for you and me today. And, the "things which shall be hereafter (*meta tauta*)" refers to the remainder of the book.

## Prologue - Setting & Context

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**Hermeneutics** – Ground rules for interpretation. How we approach scripture is key to our understanding of its meaning. Therefore, our study of scripture will be guided by the following basic principles:

1. The Bible does not contain the Word of God – it IS the Word of God.<sup>1</sup>
2. The Bible is inerrant in the original autographs.<sup>2</sup>
3. God says what He means and means what He says. Symbols and types are interpreted by the text and the context and with expositional constancy.<sup>3</sup>
4. Scripture must be taken in context and in relationship to other scripture.<sup>4</sup>
5. When the plain sense makes perfect sense, seek no other sense.
6. All 66 Books of the Bible are an integrated whole supernaturally engineered and edited by the Holy Spirit.
7. All scripture points to Jesus Christ and seeks to introduce men to Him.<sup>5</sup>

*“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.” 2 Tim 3:16,17*

Theopneustos - Theos (God) pneustos (breath)

- ✓ doctrine – proper things about God and His work
- ✓ reproof – testing of ideas, thoughts
- ✓ correction – sort out those things that are contrary
- ✓ instruction – teaching in the way of right living

### 1. Problem of Interpretation

- a. Literal Approach - where literal means "in accordance with, involving, or being the primary or strict meaning of the word or words; not figurative or metaphorical
  - i. Position of the Jews at Jesus first coming and of the early Church. (cf. Dan 9:2 - Daniel interpreted Jeremiah's prophecy as a literal 70 years)
- b. Allegorical Approach - a representation of an abstract or spiritual meaning through concrete or material forms.

### 2. Competing Views

- a. **Futurist** – the events prophesied in the New Testament are in the future (perhaps having some partial fulfillment in past events) with notable the exception of the siege of Jerusalem and destruction of the Temple which occurred in 70 AD.
- b. **Preterist** - the events prophesied in the New Testament were fulfilled by 70 AD.
  - i. *Full/Consistent Preterists* – all prophecies even Jesus second advent
  - ii. *Partial/Moderate Preterists* – Christ's second advent was not fulfilled in 70 AD (and may also exclude other selective prophetic events as well.)
- c. **Amillennialist** – no "earthly" millennial reign, no "earthly" 1000 year reign.
  - i. Jesus has no earthly throne or kingdom
  - ii. Jesus will return to judge not to rule an earthly kingdom

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<sup>1</sup> 2 Tim 3:16, 17;

<sup>2</sup> Luke 21:33

<sup>3</sup> Rev. 1:

<sup>4</sup> 2 Pet 1:20, 21

<sup>5</sup> Jn. 5:39

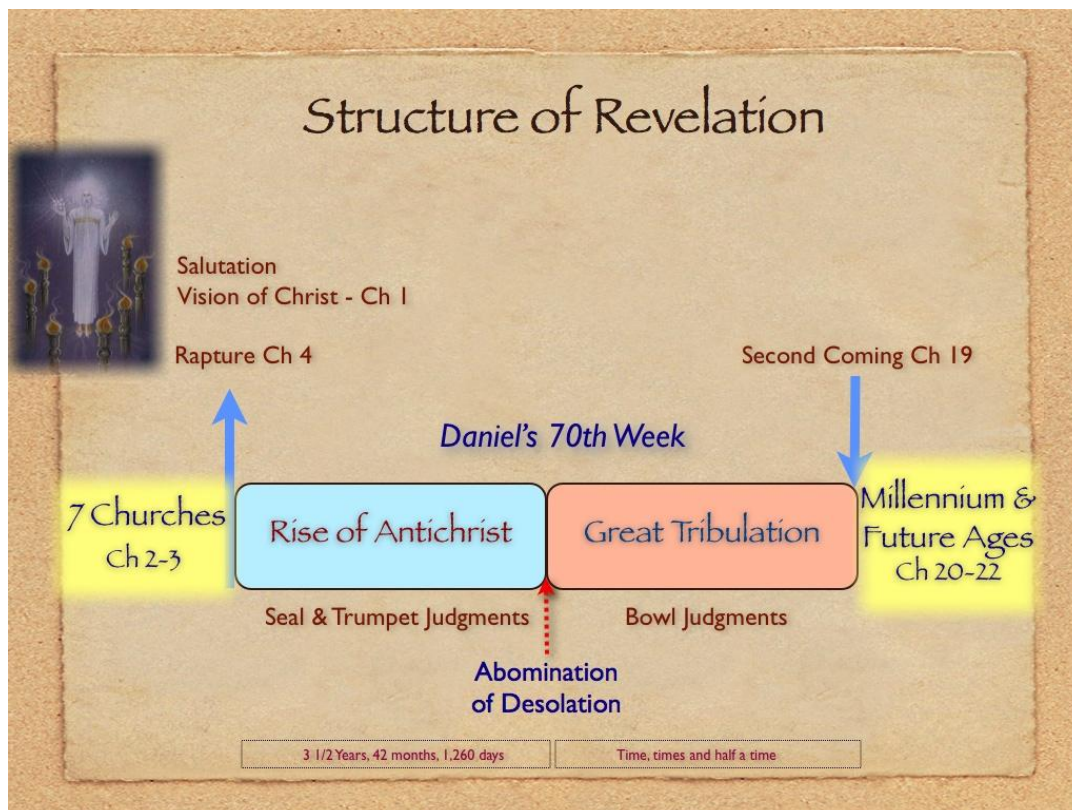
- d. **Postmillennialist** – Jesus will return **after** a golden age or millennial period. Jesus' earthly kingdom is now being extended throughout the world and will culminate in a golden age of righteousness, peace, and prosperity on earth
- e. **Premillennialist** – Jesus will return **before** the millennium. Jesus' will reign on earth for a literal 1000 years.

### 3. Authorship of the Book

- a. John (Rev 1:1,4,9, 22:8) John the Apostle, the son of Zebedee, written about A.D. 95.
  - i. From the Isle of Patmos - where John was sent in exile.
- b. Given a vision of Christ (Ch 1); letters to 7 Churches (Ch 2-3); detailed visions describing events during the 70th Week of Daniel (Ch 4-19 [Dan 9:24-26]); and visions of the final disposition of believers, the lost and the Kingdom of God (Ch 20-22)

### 4. Structure of the Book

- a. The Book of Revelation contains its own divinely inspired outline. Jesus Himself provided the key to the structure of the book. In Chapter 1 verse 19
  - i. The things which you have seen (Ch 1)
    - 1. The "things which you have seen" refers to the vision of our risen Lord just experienced previously in Chapter 1. Past event in 95 A.D.
  - ii. The things which are (Ch 2-3)
    - 1. The "things which are" refers to the seven churches which were existing at that time in Chapters 2 and 3. Current events of the Church through history up to the present day.
  - iii. The things which shall be hereafter (Ch 4-22)
    - 1. the "things which shall be hereafter (meta tauta)" refers to the the things that transpire after the foregoing events - remainder of the book - post Rapture (Gr. *Harpazo* - cf 1 Thess 4:17)



# CHAPTER 1

## Vision of Christ

### 1. Greeting and Salutation

- a. Introduction to the revelation (1:1-3)
  - i. Revelation (Gr. *apokalipsis* - unveiling) of Christ.
  - ii. For His servants - things which quickly (Gr. *en tachei* - in rapid succession) - not necessarily immediate.
  - iii. Rendered into "signs" (Gr. *sēmaínō* - sign-i-fy -- to express ideas by means of signs, symbols, tokens) (cf. Jn 12:33).
  - iv. Things which he, John, saw (Gr. *oida* - perceived, deciphered - cf. Jn 13:7; *vis ginosko* - know by experience)
  - v. Unique promise of blessing
- b. Trinitarian greeting and doxology (1:4-6)
  - i. The I AM (cf. Ex 3:14) - He is all that is needed and all that is important.
  - ii. The term "firstborn" (Gr. *prōtotokos*), emphasizes His position not His generation (Ps. 89:27; cf. Jer 31:9).
- c. Eschatological announcement (1:7,8)
  - i. "In the Spirit" imilar experience of Peter (Acts 10:10) and Paul (Acts 22:17) as an "ecstasy" (Gr. *ekstasis*).
  - ii. Lord's Day - Day of the Lord (Gr. *en kyriakē hēmera*).

### 2. The Vision of the Glorified Christ

Each aspect of Christ's description is used subsequently in the Book to show His provision and/or ability to deal with any contingency or need. He IS the I AM.

- a. As the vision unfolds he hears the voice first - Like a trumpet - (Rev. 4:1). It is interesting that the first thing heard in Revelation 4:1 (a picture of the rapture) is a voice like a trumpet. (also see the "trumpet of God" in 1 Thes. 4:16).
- b. Devine outline (see notes at section 4 on pg 4)
- c. Walk "in the midst of" the Seven Golden Lampstands (Gr. *luchnia* - light bearers (Ex 25:31-40)). Gold? (cf. 1 Pet 1:17)

### The Heptadic Structure: The Sevens

- Seven Churches 1:4,11,20; 2; 3
- Seven Seals 5; 6
- Seven Trumpets 8, 9
- Seven Bowls 15; 16; 17:1; 21:9
- Seven Lampstands 1:12, 13, 20; 2:1
- Seven Spirits 1:4; 3:1; 4:5; 5:6
- Seven Stars 1:16, 20; 2:1; 3:1
- Seven Lamps 4; 5
- Seven "Title-pairs" 2; 3
- Seven Promises to the Overcomer 2;3
- Seven Horns 5:6
- Seven Eyes 5:6
- Seven Angels 8:2,6; 15:1,6,7,8; 16:1; 17:1;21:9
- Seven Thunders 10:3, 4
- Seven Thousand 11:13
- Seven Heads 12:3; 13:1; 17:3, 7, 9
- Seven Crowns 12:3
- Seven Plagues 15:1, 6, 8; 21:9
- Seven Mountains 17:9
- Seven Kings 17:10,11

### Seven Beatitudes

- Blessed is he that read and they that hear and keep those things... (Rev 1:3).
- Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord (Rev 14:13).
- Blessed is he that watches and keeps his garments (Rev 16:15).
- Blessed are they who are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb (Rev 19:9).
- Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection (Rev 20:6).
- Blessed is he that keeps the words of the prophecy of this book (Rev 22:7)
- Blessed are they that wash their robes (Rev 22:14).

### (More Subtle) Sevens

- Seven Letter Divisions 2, 3
- Seven Years of Judgments 11:3; 12:6,14; 13:5
- Seven "I Am's" of Christ 1:8, 11, 17, 18; 21:6; 22:13,16;
- Seven Doxologies in heaven 4:9-11; 5:8-13; 7:9-12; 11:16-18; 14:2,3; 15:2-4 ;19:1-6. Ω



- i. “are the seven churches” Rev. 1:20. Jesus said “I am the light of the world” (Jn 8:12 9:5); He also said “You are...” (Matt.5:14; Phil 2:15,16). He holds the stars (Angels) in His right hand - representative of His righteousness and protection (cf. Isa 41:10):
- ii. He walks among the Churches and also holds them – “Where two or three...in the midst (Matt. 18:20)
- d. As the High Priest and Head of the Church.
  - i. Missing – crown, vestiges of the crucifixion
  - ii. Garments of the High Priest, the Head of the Church
  - iii. Eyes like fire, feet like burning brass – Judge (able to see and do as He wills - cf. all things naked to Him- Heb 4:13 our work is tried by fire 1 Cor 3:15-17; He is the refiner’s fire - Mal 3:2
  - iv. Hair, head: wool, snow Dan 7:9, 13, 22 “ancient of days”
  - v. Feet like brass (judgment - see Jn 3:14,15; cf. Num 21:6-9).
- e. First and the Last (7 times • Isaiah 41:4 , 44:6, 48:12, Rev. 1:11, 1:17-18, 2:8 “was dead and am alive”, 22:13) He is both the beginning and the end of all things – encompasses everything. All things are held together by Him (Col. 1:17).
- f. Keys of Death and Hell
  - i. He alone has taken that which Satan usurped and now reigns in life. (Isa. 24:22; 1Pe. 3:19)
  - ii. The grave holds the body, hell imprisons the soul. In this sense, death and Hades were “raided” by Jesus Who liberated man who was destined to this fate by the curse (Gen. 3:19).
  - iii. Jesus is the “firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep” (1Cor. 15:20).
  - iv. His resurrection “turned the key” in the gates of Hades and death liberating us to eternal life. Our liberation grants us freedom from the bondage of the fear of death (Heb. 2:15).
- g. Angels of the Churches - Two views:
  - i. A Human leader of the church in each city (elder or bishop).
    - 1. Inconsistent with Church history
    - 2. Does not lend itself to a prophetic view of the 7 Churches.
  - ii. Heavenly guardian angels of the churches
    - 1. Consistent with "stars" elsewhere in the Book (Rev 9:1).
    - 2. Administrator of the Church and Church age. (cf. Dan 10:20)



## CHAPTER 2

### Seven Letters to Seven Churches

#### Four Levels of Meaning

There appear to be at least four levels of application to these letters:

1. **Local:** These were actual, historic churches, with issues consistent with those cited in the letters. Archaeological discoveries have confirmed this.
2. **Admonitory:** In each of the letters there appears the key phrase, "Hear what the Spirit says to the churches". Note the plural, churches. It turns out that each of the letters applies to all churches throughout history.
3. **Homiletic:** Each of the letters also contains the phrase, "He that hath an ear let him hear..." Each letter applies to each of us. There are some elements of each of these seven "churches" in each of us.
4. **Prophetic:** These letters describe, with remarkable precision, the unfolding of all subsequent church history. If these letters were in any other order, this would not be true!

#### Seven Key Elements

A key aspect to understanding the letters is to grasp the structure of their design. A careful examination of the letters reveals seven key elements:

1. The name of the church being addressed;
2. The title of Jesus, each chosen as the "cure" to that particular church;
3. The commendation of things that have been done well;
4. The concerns of things that need attention;
5. The exhortation, specific to the particular church;
6. Admonition and warning
7. The promise to the "overcomer" included with each letter;

It is interesting to note that the key phrase in element 7 is the final element in the last four letters, but appears before the "Promise to the Overcomer" (element 6) in the first three, leaving the promises as a kind of post script after the body of the letters themselves. Why? This design may suggest that the first three letters and the last four share some particular characteristic. It may be because last four letters include explicit (3) and general (Laodicea) references to our Lord's Second Coming.

#### The Meaning of Names

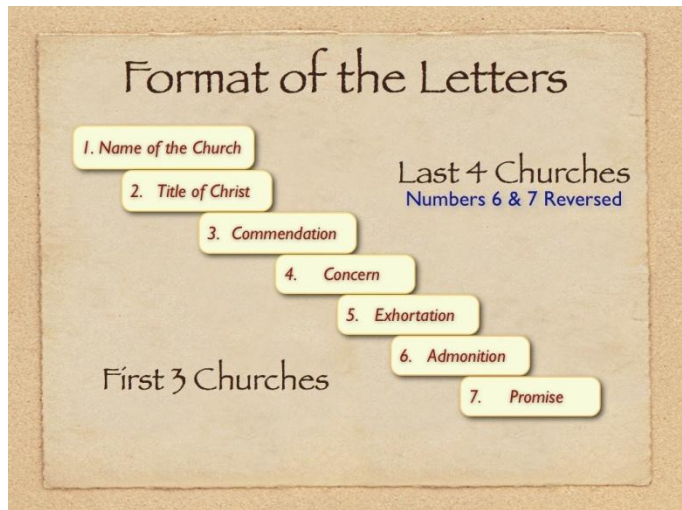
Ephesus:	The Desired One, "darling"
Smyrna:	Myrrh; Death, martyrs for Christ
Pergamos:	Mixed Marriage, married to the world
Thyatira:	Semiramis (Mother of Tamuz) Paganism
Sardis:	Remnant - undefined term, many "names"
Philadelphia:	Brotherly Love, evangelistic church
Laodicea:	People Rule, church run by the laity

## 1. The Church at Ephesus

In the New Testament period Ephesus was the largest city of its day. As the harbor gradually became unusable, traffic diverted to Smyrna. Paul's first visit was brief and was directed toward the Jewish community; he later made a second visit--he was driven from the synagogue and settled in the school of Tyrannus for two years until the uproar in 58 A.D. (Acts 19:24-41; 20:1).

Timothy is alleged to have become its first bishop (1 Tim 1:3). I Corinthians was penned during his second visit.

John is said to have spent time in Ephesus. According to Eusebius and others, John returned there in 95 A.D. after Patmos, and spent his closing years there. His Gospel was apparently written from there. His tomb is there.



### a. **Title of Christ**

- He comes to this church as the one who IS the central theme of all churches – in the midst and holding them in His right hand. (1 Pet 1:10)

### b. **Commendation** - Doctrinal purity: abhorrence of heresy.

- Nicolaitans* -- May be referring to a first-century sect abusing their liberty in Christ; However, most likely from an un-translated word. *Nicao* Conquer, overcome, rule *Laos* Laity; people Thus, using their overseer position to rule over the laity. (Cf. 1 Pet 5:3) The “deeds” that Ephesus had rejected had become the “doctrine” at Pergamos.

### c. **Concern**

- “They left their first love” - being too busy on the business of the King rather than for the King Himself. He wants devotion, not just doctrine.
  - First commandment: Sh'ma: (Deut 6:5; Mk 12:30).
  - Love is key to all service: “If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels and have not love, I am nothing...” (Jn 1:45; 5:39; 1 Cor 13)
  - Symptoms
    - Going nowhere, but making good time.
    - Tired and uninspired.
    - Bored --- some “new” thing --- doctrinal error.
  - Examples
    - Mary vs. Martha – devotion is to be prized more than service. (Lu 10:38-42)
    - David vs. Solomon – wisdom and riches are not to be desired more than “to dwell in the house of the Lord forever.” (Ps 27:4)

### d. **Exhortation** - Remember and return to the first love (cf. Song of Solomon)

### e. **Admonition** - Removal of their ministry (Lamp stand) - (cf 1 Cor 9:24; 2 Cor 13:15)

### f. **Promise** - Eat from the Tree of Life in the Paradise of God

## 2. The Church at Smyrna

The name “Smyrna” (from “myrrh”) comes from the Greek word “*Smurna*” which derives from the Hebrew root *mur* (death). Myrrh was an ingredient in perfume (Ps 45:8), prominent in Song of Solomon, etc. It was also an ingredient in holy anointing oil for priests (Ex 30:23) and the purification of women (Esther 2:12). It was used in embalming (Jn 19:39) and was a gift of the Magi at Christ’s birth (Matt.2:11): Gold = royalty; Frankincense = deity, priesthood; Myrrh = suffering, death. In Jesus’ Second Coming gold and frankincense are offered, but NO myrrh (Isa 60:6) since his death is now behind him—but it was offered to Christ at cross (Mk 15:23).

- a. **Title of Christ**
  - i. Source of life and the conqueror of death.
  - ii. “First and the Last” ( Isa 41:4; 44:6; 48:12; Rev 1:11; 1:17-18; 2:8; 22:13)
- b. **Commendation** - Faithful under persecution and devoted to Christ - spiritually rich.
- c. **Concerns** - none
- d. **Exhortation**
  - i. Don't be afraid, don't be dismayed by those who persecute you.
  - ii. No other burden to bear
- e. **Admonition** - Hold on, it's going to get rough, but God is in control. You will ultimately have the victory (Rev 12:11)
- f. **Promise** - Crown of Life; the "second death" will have no power over them.

### Question: What is the “Ten Days” of Tribulation?

There has been much speculation as to the meaning this designation. It could simply mean God has set a limit on the time of persecution. It may also refer to the ten periods of persecution under ten different Caesar’s alluded to by the early church historian Eusebius and church father Augustine. They were:

1.	54-68	Nero (Paul beheaded; Peter crucified upside-down)
2.	95-96	Domitian (John exiled)
3.	104-117	Trajan (Ignatius burned at the stake)
4.	161-180	Marcus Aurelius (Polycarp martyred)
5.	200-211	Septimus Severus ( killed Irenaeus)
6.	235-237	Maximinus (killed Ursula and Hippolytus)
7.	249-251	Decius
8.	257-260	Valerian
9.	270-275	Aurelian
10.	303-313	Diocletian

Ten is the number of testing in Scripture. Daniel and his friends asked to be tested for 10 days as to keeping themselves undefiled (Dan 1:12). Rebecca's testing (Gen 24:10-14). Ten Commandments given to Israel and to mankind (Ex 34:28).

### 3. The Church at Pergamos

[*Pergamos* is the feminine form; *Pergamum* is the neuter form of the name; both were used.] Pergamos was located 70 miles north of Smyrna. Smyrna was the great commercial center; Ephesus, the great political center; Pergamos, the great religious center. The name is derived from two Greek terms: *Peri* (mixed) *gamos* (marriage). It is the church that is married to both Christ and the World.

#### a. **Title of Christ**

- i. The one with the sharp two-edged sword – the Truth of the Word of God. With all the paganism creeping into the church, Christ will discern between truth and error by His word.

#### b. **Commendation**

- i. Holding fast under Satanic persecution and in the midst of evil influences.
- ii. Did not deny the Faith

#### c. **Concerns**

- i. They have allowed compromise with the world and idolatry to enter the church.
- ii. Balaam was a Gentile “soothsayer” (Josh 13:22) from Mesopotamia (Deut 23:4,5) by Euphrates, Aram (Num 22:5; 23:7) who was hired by Balak, King of Moab. Balaam was rebuked by his donkey (Num 22) and refused to curse Israel (Num 23, 24) but taught how to defeat Israel (Num 31:16) by introducing idolatry and compromise
  1. “Doctrine of Balaam” Rev 2:14 – Spiritually unchaste; marriage with the world.
  2. “Way of Balaam” 2 Pet 2:15 – Hireling = making a “market” for his gift.
  3. “Error of Balaam” Jude 11 – Sacrificing eternal riches for temporal gain.

#### d. **Exhortation** - done well given the oppressive Satanic influences.

#### e. **Admonition** - Repent from the idolatrous practices and the doctrine Balaam and of the Nicolaitans.

#### f. **Promise**

- i. Hidden Manna - Who is the true manna? Christ (Jn 6:35)
  1. He is available and effective only to those who are his own. (Mt 7:23)
- ii. White Stone - (Gr. *psēphos* - a smooth stone worn down by running water)(cf Eph 5:26)
  1. White stone used to acquit accused prisoners.
  2. May also refer to a *tesserae* - a white stone with a title or name inscribed that demonstrated pardon and/or entrance to a special event or place.
- iii. New Name
  1. Permanently inscribed.
  2. Known only to the one who receives it and to the Lord
    - a. Personal, individual. Denotes worth.

#### 4. The Church at Thyatira

The original name of the city was Semiramis . Thyatira was known for its dyes—particularly its scarlet dyes derived from the madder-root which is prolific in the area. Lydia was a trader in dyed garments from Thyatira but residing in Philippi (Acts 16:14,15). The danger to the church at Thyratira did not arise from the persecutions of imperial Rome nor from the hostility of the Jewish population. It arose from *within* the church itself—all the more serious and dangerous.

##### a. **Title of Christ**

- i. The Son of God (in contrast to the son of Mary), with flaming eyes and feet like brass – Judgment.

##### b. **Commendation**

- i. Love, service, faith. Many good works, the later end of the church more than the former.

##### c. **Concerns**

- i. The church is allowing Jezebel (type) to operate within the church, corrupting His followers.
- ii. Jezebel was the daughter of Eth-Baal, King of Sidon, Priest of Astarte. She married King Ahab to seal a profitable trade alliance between Israel and Phoenicia. Jezebel sought to exterminate prophets of YHWH (1 Kgs 18:13) during the time of Elijah. She and Ahab ushered in the worst period of idolatrous worship in Israel's history (1 Kgs 16:30,33).
- iii. "Kill her children with death"? Sounds redundant. There is the implication that only a remnant survives (cf. 3:4). Within this church was an evil for which no remedial measures are sufficient. Thus the "children" (adherents) to Jezebel's doctrine must be eliminated from the body.
- iv. "*Bathos*" = deep things of Satan vs. Deep things of God (1 Cor 2:10); "*Baros*" = burden. The term probably implies that it is Christ's intention to destroy the corrupt fruit of this doctrine. This is part of His ministry to the Church – that of the guardian of the true and the He who purges of the false . As John the Baptist stated of Him: *Whose fan [is] in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.*" Matt.3:12
- v. Cast into "tribulation" - The Great Tribulation?

#### Babylonian Roots

Most of the pagan religions have their origins in Babylon. Nimrod founded the original Babylonian religion - involving the birth of his son (Tammuz) to his wife Semiramis (Queen of Heaven). From these roots come the worship of the Winter solstice (December 21 - Saturnalia), the Yule Log and many other practices. These player were later incorporated in succeeding empires and known as:

- Semiramis & Tammuz of Babylon
- Ashtoreth & Tammus of Phoenicia
- Isis & Horus of Egypt
- Aphrodite & Eros of Greece

When Cyrus conquered Babylon, the Babylonian priesthood fled to Pergamos. In 325 A.D Constantine issues his Edict of Toleration that established freedom of religion; favored Christians at court; exempted Christian ministers from taxes; issued a general exhortation to all his subjects to become Christians. Then in 378-395 Theodosius made Christianity the state religion, and forced conversions. Pagan priests slipped into office as Christian priests. All pagan priest were required to accept Christianity or lose their livelihood. Many joined but brought their pagan practices with them.

Thus Paganism was Christianized; pagan temples became Christian churches and heathen festivals were converted into Christian ones. These facts give us insight into what the "Mystery Babylon" is all about in Revelation 17.                   Ω

- d. **Exhortation** - Hold fast to sound doctrine "till I come". First mention of His second coming.
- e. **Admonition** - No other burden but to keep sound doctrine. (cf. Jude 1:3 - contend for the faith)
- f. **Promise**
  - i. Rule the nations with Christ
  - ii. The Morning Star - Jesus Himself is the "bright and Morning Star" (Rev 22:16). Thus, in contrast to the false idols of Jezebel, Christ offers Himself and the true and genuine God.

## 5. The Church at Sardis

Seven hundred years before this letter was written, Sardis was one of the greatest cities in the world. It is reputed to be one of the oldest cities of Asia. "Sardis" = "Red stone"? Gr. *'odem*; cf. Ex 28:17; 39:10; Ezek 28:13). Much used by the ancients for seals, as being tough yet easily worked, beautiful, and susceptible of high polish; the best stone for engraving. The name Sardis became synonymous with: pretensions unjustified; promise without performance; appearance without reality; and, false confidence and self reliance that heralded ruin. They betrayed themselves by lack of watchfulness and diligence.

The letter keeps emphasizing their "name" (v. 3:1,4,5 [2x])

- a. **Title of Christ**
  - i. He who possesses the seven Spirits of God – the total and complete manifestation of the Holy Spirit (cf. Isa. 11). Most denominations today are very uncomfortable with the Holy Spirit—it's one major cause of division within the church.
- b. **Commendation**
  - i. None!
- c. **Concerns**
  - i. They act like they're alive, but they are spiritually dead.
- d. **Exhortation** - Hold fast and strengthen the little bit of true spiritual life that you have left.
- e. **Admonition** - Some "names" in Sardis have not followed the hypocritical was of the rest - they will walk in Christ's presence, clothed with His righteousness.
- f. **Promise**
  - i. Walk in white (righteousness)
  - ii. Not be blotted out of the Book of Life . What does that mean? (cf. It appears that every human being born is written into the Book of Life. Those who reject Christ suffer the "second death" i.e. separation from God and are thus removed (blotted out) of the Book. Those who, through faith in Christ, have received the gift of life (Rom 6:23) are not blotted out. (cf. Ex 32:33; Ps. 69:25-28; 139:16).
  - iii. Will be confessed as belonging to Christ before the Father (cf. Matt 10:33)

**A chronology of the “Names” that came through the reformation:****16th Century**

1517 Lutheranism - Martin Luther  
 1521 Anabaptists Scandinavians Lutherans  
 1534 Anglican - Henry VIII  
 1536 Mennonites - Menno Simons  
 1536 Calvinism - John Calvin  
 1540s German Reformed Church  
 1560s French Calvinists (Huguenots)  
 1560s Scottish Presbyterian - John Knox  
 1560s Congregationalism Puritans  
 1570s Dutch Reformed Church

**17th Century**

1606 English Baptists - John Smyth  
 1647 Quakers - George Fox  
 1690 Amish - Jacom Ammon

**18th & 19th Century**

1739 Methodist - John Wesley  
 1785 Episcopal Church  
 1800 United Brethren in Christ  
 1831 Disciples of Christ - Thomas Campbell  
 1863 Seventh-Day Adventists - William Miller  
 1865 Salvation Army - William Booth  
 1914 Assemblies of God

**6. The Church at Philadelphia**

Seven hundred years before this letter was written, Sardis was one of the greatest cities in the world. It is reputed to be one of the oldest cities of Asia. “Sardis” = “Red stone”? Gr. *’odem*; cf. Ex 28:17; 39:10; Ezek 28:13). Much used by the ancients for seals, as being tough yet easily worked, beautiful, and susceptible of high polish; the best stone for engraving. The name Sardis became synonymous with: pretensions unjustified; promise without performance; appearance without reality; and, false confidence and self reliance that heralded ruin. They betrayed themselves by lack of watchfulness and diligence.

The letter keeps emphasizing their "name" (v. 3:1,4,5 [2x])

**a. Title of Christ**

- i. He who is Holy and True. He with the "keys" - i.e. regal authority. He shuts and opens at His will and none can change the result.

**b. Commendation**

- i. They have kept (guarded) His word and not denied His name - they have maintained Him as the Lord of Heaven and the Son of Man. Thus given an “open door” “Open doors”: 1 Cor 16:9; 2 Cor 2:12; Col 4:3 Door(s) of deliverance: “I Am the Door,” (Jn 10:7, 9); Noah’s Ark: closed by God (Gen 7:16; 7 days before the flood); The door at the wedding (Matt.25:1-10).
- ii. The Gates (doors) of Hell cannot stand before His Church (Matt 16:18)

**c. Concerns**

- i. None.

**d. Exhortation** - You have a little strength (in the natural) but are strong in the Lord - walk through the open door. (cf. 1 Cor 1:27)**e. Admonition** - Those who oppose them will come to worship God; bowed at the feet of the Saints. Preserver - keep running the race to obtain the reward (crown). What does it mean to have someone else take your crown? [v.11] We are all saved by grace through faith. But we can earn rewards. Christ is encouraging those in this

church to use the open door and thus secure their crown (reward). Don't let another take your ministry!

f. **Promise**

- i. To be kept out of the hour (time period) of testing (great tribulation). It is interesting that this church is promised an escape from the great tribulation. It is clear from the context that the great tribulation is in view (v. 10) because it is a time that will come upon "the whole world to test those who dwell on the earth." By inference then, to be kept from that time is to be taken out of the world – to not be a dweller there. To strengthen this, the phrase "keep you from" is a translation of the Greek word *EK*- which always means out of, not merely protected from. This church will be kept out of the tribulation.

7. **The Church at Laodicea**

Laodicea stood midway between the hot springs of Hierapolis and the cold waters of Colossae. (It was fed by an aqueduct from Hierapolis, the water being lukewarm when it arrived.) A highly successful commercial and financial center, remains of a theatre, aqueducts, baths, gymnasium and stadium still survive to testify of its former luxury.

When the City was destroyed by an earthquake, they famously rebuilt the city without any help from the Roman government - relishing their independence and "need of no outside help".

a. **Title of Christ**

- i. The AMEN = the truth. Use of the word "beginning" of the creation of God (v. 14) - arche means first origin, first cause; ruling power, authority, ruler: Cf Rev 1:8, a quote from Isa 41:4. Used of rank and honor (unique expression here and Col 1:15 ).

b. **Commendation**

- i. None.

c. **Concerns**

- i. They were uncommitted - not hot, not cold.
- ii. They were deceived by their riches into thinking they had no need of spiritual things. They became miserable, wretched, poor, blind and naked.

d. **Exhortation -**

- i. Enter into a transaction (purchase) with the living Christ, the Truth and the source of life. Ditch the program and embrace the Source. Walk in faith (gold), white garments (righteousness by faith in Christ alone), eye salve (to see the spiritual [cf. 1 Cor 2:14])

e. **Admonition**

- i. The church has so lost its way that Christ appeals to *individuals* within the church structure.

f. **Promise**

- i. To sit down (rest) upon Christ's throne.

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