

Sent: Wednesday, October 13, 2021 5:07 PM  
Subject: Last Nite's MOB Study on Revelation 2:18-3:6

"Only hold fast what you have until I come! The one who overcomes and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations!" (Revelation 2:25-26)

We're into the second part of our study of the book of the Revelation--about the "things that are"--concerning the seven churches! This is God speaking through His Son, Jesus Christ, and an angel, giving important "revelations" to the apostle John on Isle of Patmos! Important things He wanted believers and followers of Christ, then and now, to know and understand--things that not only were, but are, and are to come!

The past two weeks we learned what the Lord had to say to the angel of the churches of Ephesus, Smyrna, and Pergamum--the "loveless" church, the "persecuted" church, and the "compromising" church. All three of these churches received various "commendations," warnings, and promises! Only the persecuted (and loyal) church of Smyrna failed to receive serious and significant reprimands or exhortations from the Lord!

Last nite we examined what God had to say about the churches of Thyatira and Sardis!

The Lord identified Himself to the church of Thyatira as the "Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and feet like burnished bronze"! The only church to whom He identified Himself as the Son of God, which emphasized His deity and position as the "righteous Judge" of all humanity!

The city of Thyatira was a thriving town located about 40 miles southeast of Pergamum, a city established as a Macedonian colony by a cohort of Alexander the Great after the destruction of the Persian empire. It became an important business center and, Constable notes, had more trade guilds than any other Asian city! But more importantly, from our standpoint, it became famous for its manufacture of purple dye!

It was after the apostle Paul received his "Macedonian vision" that he went to Philippi and on a certain Sabbath day, Acts 1:13 says, went outside the gate to the riverside, to a place of prayer, where he met with a group of women who had assembled there, including a woman named Lydia!

Lydia, a "seller of purple" (there you go!) was somewhere along the line led to the Lord by the apostle Paul, and became a strong convert and advocate for Christ, "after the Lord opened her heart to the things spoken by Paul"--and apparently was one who first brought the gospel message to Thyatira and helped start the church of Thyatira (perhaps meeting in her home)! And, ironically, the church became one of the seven churches to whom the Lord would address a "special" letter! Interestingly, the longest of the seven letters sent apparently to the smallest of the seven churches!

The Lord wrote to the church of Thyatira that He "knew their deeds, and their love and faith and service and perseverance, and that their deeds of late were greater than at first"! Impressive sounding commendations seemingly superior to those delivered to the other churches! And particularly the "love" aspect! And yet, the Lord had something very important against them!

They tolerated a woman in the church, identified as Jezebel, who "called herself a prophetess" (although she wasn't one!) and taught and led "My bond-servants astray so that they committed acts of immorality and ate things offered to idols"! A very serious offense to the Lord!

The name Jezebel assigned to her must have brought back reminders of the Jezebel of the Old Testament, who--along with her husband, King Ahab--"did more to provoke the Lord God of Israel than all the kings of Israel who were before him"! (so says 1 Kings 16:33)

And yet the Lord notes, in Revelation 2:21-22, that He gave her (the Jezebel of Thyatira) time and opportunity to repent (demonstrating again His wondrous grace and mercy) but she chose not to repent! And so, He said He would bring great tribulation upon her and her followers--and even "kill her children with pestilence...so that "all the churches would know that He was (and is) a God who searches the minds and hearts and will give to each one according to his deeds"!

But as a further demonstration of His grace and mercy, He said that He would not place the same burden (or judgment) on "the rest who are in Thyatira, who did not hold to this teaching...those who hadn't known the so-called deep things of Satan"! They, on the other hand, were charged with "holding fast, until I come..." with the promise that those who would "overcome and keep His deeds until the end would be given authority over the nations and rule with Him (obviously speaking of His second coming, when He would come to rule over the earth--a topic we'll be getting into more as we continue our study of the Revelation)!

Then there's the promise too of the "morning star" (in Revelation 2:28), which is identified in Revelation 22:16 as Jesus, the "root and descendant of David"! (Although other Scripture also likens believers as one day sharing in the same kind of heavenly glory! For example, Daniel 12:3 says that "Those who have insight will shine brightly like the brightness of the expanse of heaven, and those who lead the many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever!" And Matthew 13:43 promises that "the righteousness will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of the Father"!

Then there's the message of the Lord (in Revelation 3:1-6) to the "angel of the church in Sardis...described as the One who has "the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars"! Establishing that He is "Lord" over the church and the leaders of the church--and, again, we are reminded that He knows all about what is going on--in the church, certainly, but also in our world, and in our lives!

We notice immediately that the commendation to the church is very abbreviated! The church apparently had a (good?) reputation in the world, but apparently not with the Lord!

The church of Sardis was apparently a little bit like the city itself! The city of Sardis was situated on a steep hill and supposedly impregnable! But it was secretly captured by Cyrus and the Persians, back in 547 B.C. and later again by others, due to overconfidence in its position, and becoming negligent and careless in guarding its welfare! And that same kind of negligence apparently characterized the church of Sardis as well!

"Wake up, and strengthen the things that remain, which are about to die; for I have not found your deeds completed in the sight of My God"! And He continues: "So remember what you have received and heard; and keep it, and repent!" And if you don't wake up, I will come like a

thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come to you!" Wow! Sounds like the "second coming" of the Lord (as described in I Thessalonians 5:2, and elsewhere), but it's only a "foreshadowing" of that great dawning!

There is a positive message! To "the few people in Sardis, who have not soiled their garments..." the Lord promises that "they will walk with Me in white, for they are worthy!" The "remnant"! The "overcomers"! And He says these "will be clothed in white garments, and they will not be erased from the book of life"! And He will confess them before His Father and before His angels"! Wow!

In the ancient world, white garments symbolized purity and "victory"! And use of this term is found throughout the Bible as well! Remember the transfiguration of Jesus (recorded in Matthew 17), where the face of Jesus "shown like the sun, and His garment became as "white as light"! And, in Matthew 28:3, at the resurrection of Christ, when the angel of the Lord who descended and rolled away the stone had the appearance of lightning and clothing as white as snow"! And Revelation 7:9 says, "There will be a great multitude (in heaven someday), which no one could number, from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues, who will stand before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes..."!

In case you missed it, there's apparently some "book-keeping" going on in heaven too! Not that God needs to record things in books since He's omniscient! But various Scripture speaks of the "books being opened" someday and, according to Revelation 21:27, "only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life will be able to enter the city of God"! These are the "overcomers" referred to several times in our text in Revelation! Who are the "overcomers"? I John 5:4 makes it clear that these are "believers"! "For whoever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that overcomes the world--even our faith!"

And so, what can we take with us from this lesson? Here are few, in the words of John Neal:

- The church must be firm in its intolerance of sin and false teaching within the body!
  - A church that blends well with the world is most likely dead in spiritual matters!
  - God knows the motives and intentions of His church, and of all who try to undermine it!
- And we're reminded of God's message to the "overcomers" of the church of Thyatira: "Only hold fast what you have until I come! The one who overcomes and keeps My works until the end, to him will I give authority over the nations!"

May God be with you 'til we meet again!

Lowell