Overview discussion

NO NEW DOCTRINE – NO NEW COMMANDMENTS – JUST REINFORCING WHAT WE ALREADY KNOW.

THIS EVENING, WE ARE GOING TO LOOK AT THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST, CHAPTER 2, VS 1-17.

THE CHURCHES IN EPHESUS, SMYRNA AND PERGAMOS

SLIDE 2-4

STUDY GUIDES





CHAPTER 1 SETS UP THE BOOK OF REVELATION.

IT DESCRIBES HOW JOHN CAME TO RECEIVE THE REVELATION.

JOHN IS TOLD TO RECORD IN WRITING THE THINGS THAT HE IS ABOUT TO HEAR.

AND SO IN CHAPTER 2 THE REVELATION BEGINS.

THE REVELATION STARTS OUT IN A LETTER FORMAT. LETTERS WRITTEN TO SEVEN CHURCHES IS ASIA MINOR.

TONIGHT WE ARE GOING TO LOOK AT MESSAGES GIVEN TO THREE OF THOSE CHURCHES (CONGREGATIONS)

THERE WERE MORE THAN SEVEN CHURCHES IN ASIA MINOR AT THAT TIME.

SO WHY WASN’T A LETTER WRITTEN TO EACH CONGREGATION?

THE LOGICAL CONCLUSION: IT WASN’T NECESSARY.

PERHAPS THESE CHURCHES AND THEIR PRACTICES, WERE SUFFICIENTLY REPRESENTATIVE OF ALL THE CHURCHES THAT EXISTED AT THAT TIME.

IN OTHER WORDS, THE MESSAGE TO EPHESUS COULD HAVE BEEN APPLICABLE TO OTHER CHURCHES THAT DID NOT RECEIVE A MESSAGE.

I DON’T THINK IT WAS BY COINCIDENCE THAT THERE WERE SEVEN CHURCHES THAT RECEIVED MESSAGES.

SEVEN REPRESENTS COMPLETENESS- COMPLETE CYCLE.

JESUS CHRIST SAID WHAT NEEDED TO BE SAID IN THE MESSAGES TO THE SEVEN CHURCHES.

NOW THERE WILL BE SOME THAT CONTEND THAT THE SEVEN CHURCHES REPRESENT SEVEN DIFFERENT STAGES IN THE APOSTASY OF THE CHURCH.

BUT I BELIEVE THE MESSAGES WERE MEANT FOR ACTUAL CHURCHES IN THESE CITIES.

BUT IF THAT WERE THE CASE, WHAT WOULD BE THE POINT OF THE BOOK OF REVELATION TO THE EARLY CHRISTIANS?

WHAT WOULD BE THE INTENDED MESSAGE TO THESE CHRISTIANS?

WE ARE GOING TO DISCOVER THAT THE MESSAGES TO ALL SEVEN OF THESE CHURCHES WERE NOT ONLY APPLICABLE TO THE CHRISTIANS IN JOHN’S DAY, BUT THEY ARE APPLICABLE TO CHRISTIANS OF ALL AGES, INCLUDING TODAY.

**Slide 5**

LET’S READ REV 2: 1-7

**Slide 6**

WE ARE GOING TO FIND THAT THERE IS A SPECIFIC PATTERN THAT IS FOLLOWED IN THESE LETTERS.

THE LETTERS ARE BASICALLY COMPRISED OF SEVEN PARTS:

1. SALUTATION: ADDRESSES THE CONGREGATION
2. IDENTIFICATION: THE AUTHOR, JESUS CHRIST, IS DESCRIBED USING DESCRIPTIONS FOUND IN CHAPTER 1
3. COMMENDATION AND COMFORT:
	1. “I KNOW THY WORKS”
4. POINTS OUT SHORTCOMINGS (EXCEPT FOR SMYRNA AND PHILADELPHIA)
5. COUNSEL AND CALL TO REPENTANCE OR CHANGED BEHAVIOR
6. PLEAD TO OVERCOME (SMYRNA, PHILADELPHIA, CONTINUE IN FAITHFULNESS, HOLD FAST)
7. PROMISE
	1. “HE WHO HAS AN EAR LET HIM HEAR” THE MESSAGE FROM THE SPIRIT

THE FIRST MESSAGE FROM THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST WAS DIRECTED TOWARDS THE CHURCH IN EPHESUS.

**Slide 7**

**Salutation and Identification**

WE KNOW A LITTLE ABOUT THIS CITY FROM PAUL’S EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS.

EPHESUS WAS A VERY WELL-KNOWN CITY IN ASIA MINOR SITUATED ON THE SHORES OF THE AEGEAN SEA

IT WAS PART OF THE REGION CALLED IONA. AND IONIA WAS THE MOST BEAUTIFUL AND FERTILE PART OF ASIA MINOR.

IT WAS ONCE CONSIDERED TO BE THE MOST SPLENDID CITY IN ASIA MINOR.

IT WAS SETTLED ALMOST WHOLLY BY GREEK COLONIES.

IT HAD A MILD CLIMATE

IT BECAME THE FAVORITE RESORT OF FOREIGNERS IN THE WORSHIP OF DIANA, A PAGAN IMAGE.

AND I WONDER HOW MUCH THAT HAD A NEGATIVE INFLUENCE ON THE CHURCH.

THERE WERE DEFINITELY MANY WORLDLY DISTRACTIONS IN EPHESUS.

**Slide 8**

**Commendation**

IN VERSE 2, WE ARE TOLD THAT THIS MESSAGE COMES FROM “HE WHO HOLDS THE SEVEN STARS IN HIS RIGHT HAND, WHO WALKS IN THE MIDST OF THE SEVEN GOLDEN LAMPSTANDS”

AT THIS POINT I WOULD LIKE TO DIRECT YOU BACK TO CHAPTER ONE.

WE SEE, STARTING IN REV 1:10 THRU VS 20 THE MANY WAYS IN WHICH JESUS CHRIST IS DESCRIBED.

SOME NOTEWORTHY POINTS OF THESE DESCRIPTIONS:

1. EACH PROVIDES A UNIQUE GLIMPSE INTO THE MAGNIFICENCE AND POWER OF JESUS CHRIST.
2. EACH LETTER TO THE SEVEN CHURCHES REPEATS SOME OF THESE DESCRIPTIONS. (IE, EPHESUS REV 1:16 SMYRNA – REV 1: 11, 18, PERGAMOUS RV 1:16

I ALSO THINK THIS IS A SUBTLE HINT OF HOW THE BOOK OF REVELATIONS IS STRUCTURED.

WE ARE GOING TO SEE A RE-TELLING OF A STORY – WE ARE GOING TO SEE THAT REVELATION IS DIVIDED INTO SEVEN SECTIONS.

AND THEY ARE ALL GOING TO CONTRIBUTE TO A DIFFERENT VANTAGE POINT OF THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST

MORE ON THAT TO COME LATER.

BUT IF YOU HEARD GEORGE BATTEY’S SERMON IN GREEN OAKS TITLED “THE MUSIC OF REVELATION”, THEN YOU KNOW WHAT I AM TALKING ABOUT.

NOW THE LETTER TO THE CHURCH IN EPHESUS STARTS OUT ON A POSITIVE NOTE.

AND YOU ARE GOING TO SEE THAT PATTERN REPEATED TO THE OTHER CHURCHES.

FIRST THE POSITIVE, THEN THE NEGATIVE, IF ANY.

WE SEE IN VS 2 THAT THEY WERE NOT LAZY – THEY LABORED

THIS WAS AN ACTIVE GROUP. THEY HAD, AS SOME WOULD SAY, A “ WORKING FAITH”.

AND THEY WERE PATIENT

THIS MEANS THAT THEY WERE PERSISTENT.

AND THEY WOULD NOT TOLERATE THOSE THAT DID EVIL

THIS IS MOST LIKELY A REFERENCE TO THE GNOSTICS THAT WERE STARTING TO TAKE ROOT IN THE MEDITERRANEAN WORLD.

GNOSTICS TAUGHT THAT

* MATERIAL WORLD WAS FORMED BY WORKS OF A LOWER GOD
* THAT ALL MATTER IS EVIL
* THAT THE CREATOR OF THE MATERIAL UNIVERSE IS NOT THE SUPREME GOD AND THAT TO ACHIEVE SALVATION, ONE NEEDS KNOWLEDGE (GNOSIS)

SO ALL IS LOOKING GOOD SO FAR.

LETS KEEP GOING.

THEY TESTED THOSE WHO CLAIMED TO BE APOSTLES AND WERE NOT AND FOUND THEM TO BE LIARS.

THAT TELLS ME THAT THEY WERE CAUTIOUS, THEY WERE VIGILANT AND SHREWD.

THEY WERE FAMILIAR WITH BIBLICAL TEACHINGS AND THEY WERE PERCEPTIVE.

THUS, THEY WERE ABLE TO ROOT OUT FALSE TEACHERS.

THEY HAD PERSEVERED. THEY ENDURED MUCH. WE DON’T KNOW WHAT, BUT THEY OBVIOUSLY HAD SOME SORT OF TRIAL AND HAD LABORED.

BUT THEY WERE NOT WEARY. THEY WERE NOT COMPLAINERS. THE LORD’S WORK WAS NOT A BURDEN TO THEM – IT DID NOT MAKE THEM WEARY.

ALL THIS IS SOUNDING GOOD.

AND MAKE NO MISTAKE – THESE ARE GOOD THINGS.

BUT IN VERSE 4 THE HAMMER DROPS

**Slide 9**

**VS 4 Complaint**

“NEVER THE LESS, I HAVE THIS AGAINST YOU, THAT YOU HAVE LEFT YOUR FIRST LOVE.”

THAT MUST HAVE COME AS A DEVASTATING BLOW TO THESE CHRISTIANS.

THE LETTER WAS GOING SO WELL. AND THEN THIS.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN “YOU HAVE LEFT YOUR FIST LOVE”?

IT MEANS WHATEVER IT NEEDS TO MEAN. IT’S ALL ENCOMPASSING – IT COVERS EVERYTHING.

AND IT NEGATES THE POSITIVE THINGS THAT WERE PREVIOUSLY SAID ABOUT THE CHURCH IN EPHESUS.

THEY HAD LOST THEIR LOVE FOR CHRIST.

WHAT DID IT MEAN SPECIFICALLY? WE ARE NOT TOLD.

BUT THEY KNEW. HOW DO I KNOW?

**Slide 10**

**Call to repentance**

LOOK AT VS 5

“REMEMBER THEREFORE FROM WHERE YOU HAVE FALLEN: REPENT AND DO THE FIRST WORKS”

THEY NEEDED TO LOOK BACK AT WHERE THEY HAD GONE ASTRAY.

REMEMBER WE TALKED ABOUT THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN INTERPRETATION AND APPLICATION?

THE CHURCH AT EPHESUS KNEW HOW TO INTERPRET THIS PASSAGE.

WE TODAY NEED TO KNOW HOW TO APPLY IT.

WHEN DON’T NEED TO KNOW HOW THE EPHESIANS WENT WRONG IN ORDER TO UNDERSTAND THE MESSAGE TO US.

THE MESSAGE TO US IS: DON’T STRAY. STAY TRUE TO GOD AND TO THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST AND TO HIS DOCTRINES.

THAT’S HOW WE CAN KEEP OUR FIRST LOVE.

THERE IS A VERY SERIOUS WARNING GIVEN TO THE CHURCH IN EPHESUS.

VS 5 “ REPENT AND DO THE FIRST WORKS, OR ELSE I WILL COME TO YOU QUICKLY AND REMOVE YOUR LAMPSTAND FROM ITS PLACE – UNLESS YOU REPENT.”

WELL I THINK WE CAN INTERPRET THAT EASILY ENOUGH.

IF THEY DON’T REPENT, CHRIST WILL REMOVE THEIR LAMPSTAND.

LAMPSTAND MEANS CHURCH.

IF THEY DON’T REPENT, THEY WILL NO LONGER BE CONSIDERED A FAITHFUL CHURCH.

THIS IS A VERY SERIOUS SITUATION.

BUT ITS SO EASY TO TURN IT AROUND.

ALL THEY NEED TO DO IS REPENT.

THE TONE OF THE LETTER SOFTENS IN THE NEXT VERSE:

READ VS 6

HERE THEY HAVE SOMETHING VERY IMPORTANT IN COMMON WITH JESUS CHRIST.

THEY BOTH HAVE A DISDAIN FOR THE DEEDS OF THE NICOLAITANS.

WHO WERE THE NICOLAITANS?

WELL WE GET A CLUE IN THE LETTER TO THE CHURCH IN PERGAMOS IN VS 14,15

READ VS 14/15

SO, WE SEE THAT IT MOST LIKELY IS CONNECTED TO THE FALSE DOCTRINE OF BALAAM, INVOLVING SEXUAL IMMORALITY.

BIBLICAL COMMENTARY MARVIN VINCENT DESCRIBES THE NICOLAITANS AS:

*“A SECT SPRINGING, ACCORDING TO CREDIBLE TRADITION, FROM NICHOLAS A PROSELYTE OF ANTIOCH, ONE OF THE SEVEN DEACONS OF JERUSALEM (ACTS 6:5), WHO APOSTATIZED FROM THE TRUTH, AND BECAME THE FOUNDER OF AN ANTINOMIAN GNOSTIC SECT. THEY APPEAR TO HAVE BEEN CHARACTERIZED BY SENSUALITY, SEDUCING CHRISTIANS TO PARTICIPATE INT THE IDOLATROUS FEASTS OF PAGANS, AND TO UNCHASTITY. HENCE, THEY ARE DENOTED BY THE NAMES OF BALAAM AND JEZEBEL, TWO LEADING AGENTS OF MORAL CONTAMINATION UNDER THE OLD TESTAMENT DISPENSATION. BALAAM ENTICED THE ISRAELITES, THROUGH THE DAUGHTERS OF MOAB AND MIDIAN, TO IDOLATRY AND FORNICATION (NUMBER 25:31:16) JEZEBEL MURDERED TO LORD’S PROPHETS AND SET UP IDOLATRY IN ISRAEL. THE NICOLAITANS TAUGHT THAT, IN ORDER TO MASTER SENSUALITY, ONE MUST KNOW THE WHOLE RANGE OF IT BY EXPERIENCE; AND THAT HE SHOULD THEREFORE ABANDON HIMSELF WITHOUT RESERVE TO THE LUSTS OF THE BODY, SINCE THEY CONCERNED ONLY THE BODY AND DID NOT TOUCH THE SPIRIT.*

IF THIS IS AN ACCURATE DESCRIPTION, THEN WE CAN SEE WHY THEY WERE A DESPISED GROUP.

IN VERSE 7 THEY CHURCH IN EPHESUS IS GIVEN A PROMISE:

READ VS 7

**Slide 11**

**Promise/Reward**

ALL THE LETTERS TO THE SEVEN CHURCHES END WITH THE PHRASE “HE WHO HAS AN EAR LET HIM HEAR”

IF SOMETHING IS REPEATED SEVEN TIMES THEN I THINK WE NEED TO GIVE IT CONSIDERATION.

JESUS USED THIS EXPRESSION THROUGHOUT HIS MINISTRY AS WELL.

THIS MEANS THAT HE IS GOING TO SAY SOMETHING VERY IMPORTANT AND YOU HAD BETTER TAKE NOTICE.

HE SAYS THAT HE WHO OVERCOMES IS GOING TO RECEIVE SOMETHING WONDERFUL.

THE IDEA OF “OVERCOMING” IS GOING TO BE A RE-OCCURRING THEME IN THE BOOK OF REVELATION.

THE CHURCH IS ALWAYS GOING TO BE UNDER ATTACK.

THERE WILL ALWAYS BE THINGS THAT MAY TEMPT US.

BUT IF WE REMAIN FAITHFUL, REMAIN TRUE, THEN THERE WILL BE A GREAT REWARD.

IN VERSE 7, THE EPHESIANS ARE PROMISED TO EAT FROM THE TREE OF LIFE.

ADAM AND EVE WERE FORBIDDEN TO EAT FROM THE TREE OF KNOWLEDGE OF GOOD AND EVIL.

BUT THE EPHESIANS WERE PROMISED TO BE ABLE TO EAT OF THE TREE OF LIFE IF THEY OVERCAME THE STUMBLING BLOCKS BEFORE THEM.

NEXT, WE ARE GOING TO LOOK AT THE LETTER TO THE CHURCH IN SMYRNA.

AND THINGS ARE GOING TO GO A LOT BETTER FOR THIS CHURCH.

**SMYRNA**

**Slide 12**

**The church in Smyrna**

READ VS 8-11

SMYRNA WAS A VERY PROSPEROUS COMMERCIAL CITY IN ASIA MINOR.

IT WAS ON THE AEGEAN SEA.

IT WAS ABOUT 40 NORTH OF EPHESUS.

IT WAS ONE OF THE MOST FLOURISHING CITIES OF ASIA DURING THE FIRST ROMAN EMPEROR.

IT WAS DESTROYED BY AN EARTHQUAKE IN 177 AD, REBUILT, BUT SUFFERED FROM ADDITIONAL EARTHQUAKES.

TODAY IT IS CALLED IZMIR

**Slide 13**

**Vs 8 Salutation and Identification**

IDENTIFICATION:

THE LORD IDENTIFIES HIMSELF AS THE FIRST AND THE LAST, WHO WAS DEAD AND CAME TO LIFE.

THESE ARE DESCRIPTIONS USED IN REV 1:11, 17 AND 18

HE HAS BEEN THROUGH WHAT THEY ARE SUFFERING.

HE IS WELL QUALIFIED TO SYMPATHIZE AND COMFORT THEM AND ASSURE THEM THAT ALL WILL END WELL FOR THEM IF THEY REMAIN FAITHFUL.

**Slide 14**

**Vs 9 – 10 Compliment**

COMPLIMENT – VS 9

AGAIN HE REPEATS THE PHRASE “ I KNOW THY WORKS”

THAT IMPLIES AN INTIMATE ACQUAINTANCE WITH ALL THAT PERTAINED TO THE CHURCH.

NOTHING IS HIDDEN FROM THE LORD.

HE SEES ALL.

HE ALSO SEES THEIR TRIBULATION

AND THEIR POVERTY.

THE CITY WAS FLOURISHING, BUT THE CHURCH MEMBERS WERE NOT.

WE DON’T READ OF THE 6 OTHER CHURCHES BEING DESCRIBED AS POOR.

RAY SUMMERS IN HIS BOOK “WORTHY IS THE LAMB” ATTRIBUTES THEIR POVERTY DUE TO THE ROMAN EMPEROR DOMITIAN CONFISCATING THEIR PROPERTY AS A MEANS OF PERSECUTING THE CHRISTIANS.

THIS COULD EXPLAIN THE USE OF THE WORD “TRIBULATION” IN VS 9

BUT THEIR LACK OF FINANCIAL MEANS DIDN’T SEEM TO DAMPEN THEIR SPIRITUALITY.

IN FACT, JUST THE OPPOSITE.

JESUS IMMEDIATELY CONTRASTS THE WORD POVERTY WITH “BUT YOU ARE RICH”

WHEN HE SAYS THAT THEY ARE RICH, HE IS DESCRIBING THEIR CHARACTER, THEIR SPIRITUALITY, THEIR DEVOTION.

THEY WERE RICH IN GRACE AND FAVOR OF GOD.

HE “KNOWS THE BLASPHEMY OF THOSE WHO SAY THEY ARE JEWS AND ARE NOT BUT ARE A SYNAGOGUE OF SATAN.”

RAY SUMMERS SPECULATES THAT THESE JEWS ESCAPED PERSECUTION AND THE CONFISCATION OF THEIR PROPERTY BY SOME SORT OF COMPRISE.

THEN TURNED AROUND AND MOCKED AND RIDICULED THE CHRISTIANS THAT REMAINED TRUE TO THEIR FAITH.

BARNES NOTED THAT THERE WAS A MARTYR NAMED POLYCARP. SECULAR HISTORY CONTENDS THAT POLYCARP WAS MARTYRED IN SMYRNA IN THE SECOND CENTURY.

BARNES CONTENDS THAT THE JEWS OF SMYRNA WERE AMONG THE BITTER OF THE ENEMIES OF CHRISTIANS, AND AMONG THE MOST VIOLENT IN DEMANDING THE DEATH OF POLYCARP.

PERHAPS THIS IS WHY THEY ARE REFERRED TO AS A SYNAGOGUE OF SATAN.

THEY ARE NOT DOING GOD’S WORK, THEY ARE DOING THE WORK OF THE DEVIL.

IN VS 10 THEY TOLD NOT TO FEAR THE PERSECUTION WHICH THEY ARE ABOUT TO EXPERIENCE.

THEY WERE NOT TOLD THAT THEY WOULD AVOID SUFFERING.

INSTEAD THEY WERE TOLD TO NOT FEAR THE THINGS THAT THEY WERE ABOUT TO SUFFER.

HE SAYING, IT’S COMING. SOME OF YOU WILL BE THROWN INTO PRISON.

AND THEY WOULD HAVE TRIBULATION FOR TEN DAYS.

NOW WE NEED TO ASK OURSELVES, IS THAT LITERAL, OR FIGURATIVE?

IT IS MOST LIKELY FIGURATIVE, IN KEEPING WITH THE REST OF THE BOOK OF REVELATION.

DON MCCORD IN HIS COMMENTARY SUGGESTS THAT THE TRIBULATION OF 10 DAYS REPRESENTS THE PERSECUTION OF 10 YEARS, WHICH IS EXACTLY THE DURATION OF THE PERSECUTION UNDER DIOCLETIAN.

NOW THERE ARE OTHER BIBLICAL SCHOLARS THAT CONTEND THE 10 DAYS TO MEAN EXTREME,

COMPLETE TRIBULATION.

EITHER CASE, THIS PASSAGE DOES SEEM TO BE FORETELLING OF THE MARTYRDOM OF POLYCARP.

HERE IT IS A GOOD TIME TO STOP AND CONSIDER THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN INTERPRETATION AND APPLICATION.

WHAT DID THIS PASSAGE MEAN TO THE CHURCH IN SMYRNA? THAT’S INTERPRETATION.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO US: THAT’S APPLICATION.

WHAT’S OUR TAKE AWAY MESSAGE FROM THIS PASSAGE?

WELL LET’S LOOK AT THE REST OF THE VERSE:

“BE FAITHFUL UNTIL DEATH AND I WILL GIVE YOU THE CROWN OF LIFE.”

SO HERE IS THE TAKE AWAY MESSAGE FOR US TODAY.

“JUST BECAUSE WE ARE FAITHFUL, OBEDIENT CHRISTIANS DOESN’T MEAN THAT WE WON’T FACE PERSECUTION, TRIBULATION, TEASING, TAUNTING, PEOPLE RIDICULING US, OR EVEN DOING US HARM.

BUT IF WE REMAIN FAITHFUL THEN THE LORD WILL TAKE CARE OF US. WE WILL RECEIVE OUR CROWN.

ALL THE SUFFERING WILL BE WORTH IT.

OR AS GARY SAYS: “DON’T BE A CHICKEN – STAND YOUR GROUND”

**Slide 15**

**Vs 11 Promise/reward**

VS 11

WE ARE IMPLORED TO TAKE THE MESSAGE TO HEART.

“HE WHO HAS AN EAR, LET HIM HEAR”.

HE WHO OVERCOME SHALL NOT BE HURT BY THE SECOND DEATH.

SECOND DEATH MEANS ETERNAL PUNISHMENT.

HEBREWS 9:27 TELLS US: “IT IS APPOINTED UNTO MAN ONCE TO DIE, AND AFTER THIS THE JUDGEMENT.”

SOMEONE WHO IS NOT A CHRISTIAN, OR SOMEONE THAT WAS ONCE A CHRISTIAN BUT GOES ASTRAY DIES AND FIND WHAT AWAITS HIM IS A SECOND DEATH.

**PERGAMOS**

**Slide 16**

**Pergamos**

**Vs 12-17**

THE THIRD AND FINAL CHURCH WE ARE GOING TO READ ABOUT IS THE CHURCH IN PERGAMOS.

IT WAS SITUATED ON THE BANKS OF A PROMINENT RIVER NAMED CAICUS.

THE VALLEY FORMED BY THE RIVER IS REPORTED TO BE VERY BEAUTIFUL AND FERTILE.

IN ABOUT 200 BC THE CITY BECAME AN IMPORTANCE PLACE FOR LITERATURE AND THE ARTS.

THE LIBRARY IN PERGAMOS HELD ABOUT 200,000 VOLUMES.

IT WAS EVENTUALLY PLUNDERED AND TAKEN TO QUEEN CLEOPATRA.

WHAT WAS EVEN MORE REMARKABLE, SINCE PAPYRUS WAS NOT AVAILABLE, MANUSCRIPTS WERE WRITTEN ON SHEEP AND GOAT SKINS.

THEY BECAME VERY SKILLED AT THIS, AND FROM THE WORD PERGAMOS CAME PERGAMENA OR PARCHMENT.

RAY SUMMERS IN HIS BOOK “WORTHY IS THE LAMB” DESCRIBES THE CITY OF GREAT WEALTH AND FASHION AND A HEADQUARTERS FOR EMPEROR WORSHIP.

IT WAS THE CHIEF CITY IN THE PROVINCE, AND WITHIN THIS CITY WAS A GROUP CALLED THE CONCILA.

THEY WERE IN CHARGE OF STATE RELIGION AND THE OFFERING OF INCENSE TO AN IMAGE OF THE SITTING EMPEROR.

THE CITY HAD ALWAYS BE LOYAL TO ROME, THUS IT WOULD RIGOROUSLY PERSECUTE CHRISTIANS.

LET’S READ 2:12-17

**Slide 17 church in Pergamos**

**Vs 12-Salutation and Identification**

AGAIN WE HAVE THE LORD IDENTIFYING HIMSELF WITH DESCRIPTIONS USED IN CHAPTER 1.

HE IS DESCRIBE AND “HE WHO HAS THE SHARP TWO-EDGED SWORD.

THE DESCRIPTION HERE MAY HAVE A TWO-FOLD SYMBOLISM.

A SWORD IS USED FOR PROTECTION.

AND THESE CHRISTIANS WERE IN GREAT NEED OF PROTECTION.

THUS THE LORD REPRESENTING HIMSELF AS A SWORD.

THE OTHER SIDE OF THIS TWO-SIDE SWORD IS THE ABILITY TO CUT THROUGH FALSE DOCTRINE AND EXERCISE JUDGEMENT

AFTER THE INTRODUCTION, WE HAVE THE COMPLIMENTS.

**Slide 18 church in Pergamos**

**Vs 13-Complement**

IN VERSE 13 HE MENTIONS SATAN’S THRONE.

THIS COULD BE A GENERIC DESCRIPTION OF EVIL.

OR IT COULD BE SOMETHING THAT WAS SPECIFIC TO PERGAMOS.

IN 29 BC, AN ALTAR WAS BUILT FOR THE WORSHIP OF AUGUSTUS.

IF YOU DIDN’T WORSHIP AUGUSTUS, THEN YOU WERE CONSIDERED AN ENEMY OF ROME.

AND YOU WERE PERSECUTED.

SO THIS COULD BE WHAT WAS MEANT BY “SATAN’S THRONE”

IN SPITE OF THIS, THEY HELD FAST TO THE NAME OF CHRIST.

IN OTHER WORDS, THEY SAID THAT CHRIST WAS KING, NOT CESAR AUGUSTA.

THE LORD SAYS THAT THEY DID NOT DENY HIS FAITH, MEANING CHRISTIANITY.

THEY EVEN REMAINED FAITHFUL AFTER ONE OF THEIR OWN, A MAN NAMED ANTIPAS WAS MARTYRED.

WE DON’T KNOW A LOT ABOUT THIS PERSON ANTIPAS.

THIS IS THE ONLY TIME HE IS MENTIONED IN THE SCRIPTURES.

AND SECULAR HISTORY DOESN’T CONTRIBUTE ANY ADDITIONAL INFORMATION EITHER.

SO, WE CAN GATHER FROM THIS PASSAGE THAT THERE WAS A FAITHFUL CHRISTIAN THAT WAS PUT TO DEATH BECAUSE OF HIS FAITH.

THAT’S THE ENVIRONMENT THAT THE CHURCH OF PERGAMOS WAS EXPERIENCING.

IT’S NO WONDER THAT CHRIST REFERRED TO THIS AREA AS “SATAN’S THRONE.”

SO, IT COULD HAVE BEEN REFERRED TO AS SATAN’S THRONE BECAUSE THERE WAS AN ALTAR FOR THE WORSHIP OF AUGUSTUS.

IT COULD HAVE BEEN REFERRED TO AS SATAN’S THRONE BECAUSE THERE WAS SO MUCH VICIOUS AND INTENSE PERSECUTION OF THE CHRISTIANS.

AND AS WE ARE GOING TO SEE IN VERSE 14 AND 15, THERE WAS PAGAN WORSHIP IN THIS CITY.

SO FOR ANY THREE OF THESE REASONS, OR PERHAPS A COMBINATION OF ALL THREE COULD BE WHY CHRIST REFERRED TO THIS CITY AS “SATAN’S THRONE.”

TO BE CLEAR, HE IS NOT SAYING THAT THE CHURCH IN PERGAMOS IS SATAN’S THRONE.

WE COULD SPECULATE FOR HOURS WHY IT WAS CALLED SATAN’S THRONE.

BUT THE APPLICATION FOR US IS: THIS WAS AN ENVIRONMENT THAT WAS VERY HOSTILE TOWARDS CHRISTIANS, YET THERE WERE MANY THAT STOOD UP TO THIS AND CHRIST TAKES NOTICE WHEN WE TAKE A STAND FOR CHRISTIANITY.

BE BRAVE, STAND FIRM AND RECEIVE THE REWARD.

AND THE REWARD IS GOING TO BE DESCRIBED IN VS 17

**COMPLAINT OR CONDEMNATION**

**Slide 19**

**Vs 14 Complaint**

AFTER VS 13, CHRIST IS GOING TO LAY OUT HIS COMPLAINT AGAINST THE CHURCH IN PERGAMOS.

HE LAYS THESE OUT IN VERSE 14 AND 15

THERE ARE MEMBERS OF THAT CONGREGATION THAT HOLD TO THE DOCTRINE OF BALAAM, WHO TAUGHT BALAK TO PUT A STUMBLING BLOCK BEFORE THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL.

SO WHAT IS THE DOCTRINE OF BALAAM, AND WHO IS BALAK.

THIS IS EXPLAINED IN NUMBERS CHAPTERS 22 THRU 25.

BALAAM WAS A PROPHET OF THE LORD.

AND BALAK WAS KING OF THE MOABITES.

THE MOABITES WERE NOT A TRIBE OF ISRAEL – THEY WERE A HEATHEN NATION. NOW AT THIS TIME, THE ISRAELITES WERE FLOURISHING AND EXPANDING THEIR TERRITORY. THEY WERE ENCROACHING ON THE LAND OF MOAB.

SO BALAK SENT FOR BALAAM TO PUT A CURSE ON THESE PEOPLE. BUT BALAAM REFUSED TO GO.

BALAK SENT FOR HIM A SECOND TIME. AGAIN, BALAAM REFUSED TO GO. BUT HE DID TELL THE MESSENGERS OF BALAK TO SPEND THE NIGHT AND ALLOW BALAAM TIME TO ASK GOD IF HE COULD GO.

GOD TOLD BALAAM, YOU MAY GO, BUT ONLY IF THEY ASK YOU AGAIN. WE DON’T SEE RECORD OF THEM ASKING, BUT BALAAM DECIDED TO GO ANYWAY. GOD BECAME ANGRY. HE SENT AN ANGEL OF THE LORD TO STOP THE PATH OF HIS DONKEY. THE DONKEY COULD SEE THE ANGEL OF THE LORD, BUT BALAAM COULD NOT. EVENTUALLY GOD OPENED UP HIS EYES. HE SAW THE ANGEL OF THE LORD.

EVIDENTLY, BALAAM’S MOTIVES WERE NOT GOOD, BECAUSE THE ANGEL OF THE LORD SAID TO HIM:

“BEHOLD, I HAVE COME OUT TO STAND AGAINST YOU, BECAUSE YOUR WAY IS PERVERSE BEFORE ME”.

BALAAM OFFERED TO TURN BACK, BUT THE ANGEL OF GOD TOLD HIM TO GO, BUT TO ONLY SAY THE WORDS THAT GOD TELLS HIM TO SAY.

SO BALAAM WENT. BALAK ASKES BALAAM TO PUT A CURSE ON THE ISRAELITES. BUT INSTEAD GOD TELLS BALAAM BLESS THEM. WHICH HE DID. THIS ANGERED BALAK.

THIS WENT ON 4 TIMES. AFTER THE FOURTH TIME, BALAK STOPPED ASKING FOR A BLESSING. AND THEY DEPARTED COMPANY.

BUT ALL WAS NOT WELL.

THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL REMAINED IN THE AREA. AND THEY BEGAN TO COMMIT HARLOTRY WITH THE WOMEN OF MOAB.

AND THEY INVITED THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL TO EAT OF THE FOOD SACRIFICED TO THEIR IDOLS, AND TO BOW DOWN TO THEIR IDOLS. WHICH THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL DID.

SO, IN A WAY, BALAK WON IN THE END. ALTHOUGH THE ISRAELITES DID NOT LEAVE THE LAND, THEY BECAME ASSIMILATED IN THE MOABITE CULTURE AND IDOLATROUS WAYS.

WHERE WAS BALAAM IN ALL OF THIS? HE HAD TURNED A BLIND EYE.

GOD LAID BLAME ON BALAAM, AS WE CAN SEE IN NUMBERS 31:16

*“LOOK, THESE WOMEN CAUSED THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL, THROUGH THE COUNSEL OF BALAAM, TO TRESPASS AGAINST THE LORD IN THE INCIDENT OF PEOR, AND THERE WAS A PLAGUE AMONG THE CONGREGATION OF THE LORD.*

IN 2 PETER 2:12-17, PETER IS CONDEMNING THOSE WHO PRACTICE UNRIGHTEOUSNESS AND CAROUSE IN THE DAYTIME.

IN VS 15,16, HE SAYS: *“THEY (THE ONES THAT WERE DOING EVIL) HAVE FORSAKEN THE RIGHT WAY AND GONE ASTRAY, FOLLOWING THE WAY OF BALAAM THE SONE OF BEOR, WHO LOVED THE WAGES OF UNRIGHTEOUSNESS.”*

BALAAM WAS A PROPHET OF GOD. BUT HE LIKED TO LEWD BEHAVIOR AND IDOLATRY THAT HE SAW IN MOAB.

UNFORTUNATELY, THERE WERE THOSE IN THE CHURCH IN PERGAMOS THAT ENJOYED THE SAME THING.

THERE WERE ALSO THOSE THAT HELD TO THE DOCTRINE OF THE NICOLAITANS.

THE CHURCH IN EPHESUS HATED THE DEEDS OF THE NICOLAITANS, BUT THERE WERE THOSE THAT EMBRACED IT.

SO THESE ARE TWO VERY SERIOUS EVIL PRACTICES.

NEXT, THEY ARE GOING TO RECEIVE THEIR WARNING.

WE SEE THIS IN VS 16-17

**Slide 20**

**Vs 16 Call to repentance**

THEY ARE TOLD TO REPENT, OR THE LORD WILL QUICKLY COME AND FIGHT AGAINST THEM WITH THE SWORD OF HIS MOUTH.

THE SAME SHARP TWO-EDGED SWORD THAT HE USES TO PROTECT FAITHFUL CHRISTIANS IS THE SAME SWORD HE WILL USE TO FIGHT AGAINST UNFAITHFUL CHRISTIANS.

THE CHURCH IS TOLD TO REPENT.

NOTICE THE CALL FOR REPENTANCE ISN’T LIMITED ONLY TO THOSE WHO ARE ACTING IN SIN.

RATHER THE CHURCH IS TOLD TO REPENT.

THE CHURCH IS TO REPENT OF THE LENIENCY TOWARDS THESE EVIL PRACTICES AND FOR GIVEN CLEMENCY TO THOSE WHO COMMITTED THESE EVIL DEEDS.

CHRISTIANS HAVE AN OBLIGATION TO CONFRONT SINFUL BEHAVIOR THAT IS BLATANTLY PUBLIC.

NEXT, COMES THE PROMISE OF REWARD.

**Slide 21**

**Vs 17 Promise/reward**

READ VS 17

THE PROMISE IS TWO-FOLD

1. RECEIVE HIDDEN MANNA
2. RECEIVE A WHITE STONE WITH A NEW NAME WRITTEN, KNOWN TO NO ONE EXCEPT THE PERSON WHO RECEIVES IT.

WHAT IS MEANT BY HIDDEN MANNA?

WELL, WE KNOW THAT THE ISRAELITES RECEIVED MANNA TO SUSTAIN THEM WHILE THEY WERE IN THE WILDERNESS.

THAT WAS SOMETHING PHYSICAL, FOR ALL TO SEE. THEY COULD SEE IT, TOUCH IT, EAT IT AND TASTE IT.

IT SUSTAINED THEM PHYSICALLY.

SO HIDDEN MANNA WILL SUSTAIN US SPIRITUALLY. BUT IT’S HIDDEN, SO THE WORLD WILL NOT BE ABLE TO SEE IT. THEY WILL NOT BE ABLE TO UNDERSTAND.

THEY WILL NOT BE ABLE TO UNDERSTAND HOW CHRISTIANS CAN REMAIN STRONG UNDER SUCH PERSECUTION.

NOW LETS LOOK AT THE WHITE STONE.

IN REVELATION, THE COLOR WHITE IS SYMBOLIC OF PURITY OR RIGHTEOUSNESS.

WHAT IS THE SYMBOLISM OF THIS STONE?

ACCORDING TO RAY SUMMERS, THERE ARE 4 POTENTIAL ANSWERS:

WHITE STONE WAS MINED IN THE PERGAMOS.

SO THIS WAS SOMETHING THEY WERE FAMILIAR WITH.

WHITE STONE WAS USED FOR SEVERAL REASONS

1. WHITE STONE WAS GIVEN TO A MAN WHO HAD BEEN TRIED IN COURT, BUT JUSTLY ACQUITTED. HE CARRIED IT AS A SIGN THAT HE WAS AN INNOCENT MAN.
2. WHITE STONE WAS GIVEN TO A MAN WHO WAS FREED FROM SLAVERY.
3. WHITE STONE WAS GIVEN TO A MAN WHO WAS A WINNER OF A RACE OR CONTEST.
4. WHITE STONE WAS GIVEN TO A SOLDIER THAT HAD RETURNED FROM A BATTLE WHERE HE PREVAILED OVER THE ENEMY.

SO ALL OF THESE REPRESENT A SIGN OF PURITY AND VICTORY.

OK, IT MIGHT BE INTERESTING TO SPECULATE ON THE INTERPRETATION OF HIDDEN MANNA AND WHITE STONE.

BUT WHAT IS THE APPLICATION TO US TODAY?

THE APPLICATION IS THE LORD WILL GIVE US WHAT WE NEED TO SUSTAIN US. – THAT’S THE HIDDEN MANNA.

AND IN THE END, WE WILL BE VICTORIOUS – OUR NAME WILL BE WRITTEN IN THE BOOK OF LIFE. WE WILL BE GIVEN SOMETHING THAT SIGNIFIES OUR VICTORY.

BEFORE WE CLOSE, I WANT TO POINT OUT SOMETHING THAT IS IN ALL SEVEN OF THE LETTERS TO THE CHURCHES.

THEY ALL END WITH A DESCRIPTION OF THE REWARD WE WILL RECEIVE IF WE OVERCOME THE DEVIL.

INTERESTINGLY, ALL THE REWARDS ARE DESCRIBED DIFFERENTLY, BUT ESSENTIALLY POINT TO THE SAME THING.

I FIND IT INTERESTING THAT JUST AS WE ARE SHOWN SEVEN DIFFERENT DESCRIPTIONS OF CHRIST IN THESE LETTERS, WE ARE SHOWN SEVEN DIFFERENT REWARDS.

AND YOU’LL SEE THIS PATTERN OF THINGS EXPLAINED SEVEN DIFFERENT WAYS THROUGHOUT THE BOOK OF REVELATION.

**Slide 22**

**Rewards promised to the Seven churches**

REWARDS:

1. **EPHESUS; REV 2: VS 7 EAT FROM THE TREE OF LIFE WHICH IS IN THE MIDST OF THE PARADISE OF GOD**
2. **SMYRNA: REV 2:VS 10 & 11: WILL RECEIVE A CROWN OF LIFE, WILL NOT BE HURT BY THE SECOND DEATH**
3. **PERGAMOS: REV 2: VS 17 HIDDEN MANNA TO EAT, WHITE STONE W/ A NEW NAME KNOWN ONLY TO THE PERSON WHO RECEIVES IT.**
4. THYATIRA: REV 2: VS 26-28 – POWER OVER THE NATIONS, GIVEN A MORNING STAR
5. SARDIS: REV 3:5 CLOTHED IN WHITE GARMENTS, NOT BLOT OUT HIS NAME FROM THE BOOK OF LIFE, CONFESS HIS NAME BEFORE GOD AND HIS ANGELS
6. PHILADELPHIA: REV 3: VS 12: WILL BE MADE A PILLAR IN THE TEMPLE OF GOD, CHRIST WILL WRITE ON HIM THE NAME OF HIS GOD AND THE NAME OF THE CITY OF HIS GOD. CHRIST WILL WRITE ON HIM HIS NEW NAME
7. LAODICEANS: REV 3:VS 21: CHRIST WILL ALLOW THIS PERSON TO SIT WITH HIM ON HIS THRONE.

LOOK FOR PATTERNS AS YOU READ THE BOOK OF REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST.

MATT SAID THAT IT WAS GOOD JUST TO SIT DOWN AND READ IT IN ONE SITTING – AND LET THE MESSAGE FLOW.

AND I WOULD AGREE. THERE’S VALUE IN THAT. READ IT A COUPLE TIMES

YOU WILL SEE REFERENCES TO OLD TESTAMENT VERSES

UNDERSTANDING THE OLD TESTAMENT CONTEXT HELPS IN UNLOCKING THE MEANING IN THE BOOK OF REVELATION.

HEAR

BELIEVE

REPENT

CONFESS

BAPTIZE

REMAIN FAITHFUL, LIKE THE CHRIST TOLD THE CHURCH IN SMYRNA