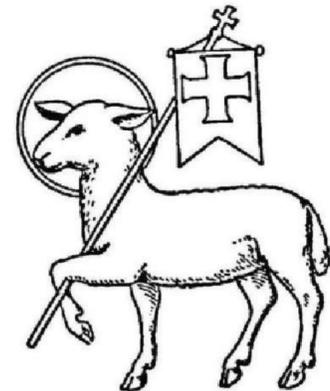


THE BOOK OF REVELATION

3 Church – get ready!

(Chapters 2-3)



Introduction

- There is 'a day' coming (Acts 17:31; Matthew 24:36)
- What if we knew that day was coming in four weeks time – What changes would there be in our lives and in our churches?
- The answer to that shows how similar we are to the 'seven churches' in Revelation
- First delivered to the seven churches in Asia Minor (Turkey), but for all ages.

Getting ready

'The Christian of the future will be a mystic or they will not exist at all.' (Karl Rahner)

- Von Hugel's three stages: institutional, critical, mystical (first hand experience of God)
- Ready for the Apocalypse and persecution. Jewish apocalyptic literature (e.g. Daniel) to encourage during suffering and persecution and to look forward to the 'Messianic hope'.
- Ready for heaven (or resurrected life in a transformed universe)

The 'angel' of the churches?

- (a) A messenger who visited John at Patmos?
- (b) The leader, pastor or bishop of the church?
- (c) A way of personifying the 'spirit' of the church?
- (d) A heavenly guardian angel?

Seven periods of church history?

- Dutch & German 17th century scholars and mid 19th century Plymouth Brethren.
(But these characteristics, both good and bad, have been seen in many sections of the Church in the past 2,000 years! It's framework is entirely western and Protestant (not world-wide or universal).)

Jesus in the midst of his church

No matter how far these churches have departed, Jesus is still in the 'midst of the candlesticks'

The setting of each church

- History; geography; local deity; trade, commerce.

The structure of each letter (see over)

1. Salutation from Jesus – with a description of him from chapter 1
2. Commended for ... There is good in the worst of churches
3. Condemned for ... and bad in the best of them!
4. The way back. Judgement is never without mercy. *God is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.* (2 Peter 3:9)
5. Promise to the Overcomer. All these find their fulfilment in Revelation 22.

1. **EPHESUS** (2:1-7)

- An early church was here visited by Paul (Acts 18:19-28; 19:1-41)
- Paul's prophecy about false teachers arising in the Ephesian church (20:29)
- The temple of Diana and the silversmiths of Ephesus (19:34-41)
- The apostle John was bishop of the church here.
- Lost their first love (to Christ and one another); Sound on truth but hard.
- Retrace your steps – do the things you used to do.

2. **SMYRNA** (2:8-11)

- Acts 19:10 suggests that the church there was founded during Paul's third missionary journey.
- The goddess Cybele's metaphorical descent into death and resurrection.
- Suffering was coming; imprisonment and martyrdom
- The martyrdom of bishop Polycarp of Smyrna 169AD.

3. **PERGAMUM** (2:12-17)

- 'Satan's throne' may have been the *Aesculapoiium* (healing centre with snake god)
- Antipas. Antipas was martyred during the reign of Nero (54-68) by burning in a brazen bull-shaped altar for casting out demons worshiped by the local population.
- Balaam (Numbers 22-24) Balaam told King Balak how to get the Israelites to commit sin by enticing them with sexual immorality and food sacrificed to idols. The 'spirit of Balaam' is often repeated (2 Peter 2:15; Jude 1:11)
- Nicolaitans (linked to the teachings of Balaam) perhaps a Gnostic or anti-nomian sect (no rules – live as you please).
- Hidden manna and white stone.

4. **THYATIRA** (2:18-29)

- Commended for their love, faith, service, patient endurance.
- But tolerant of 'Jezebel' – again the 'spirit of Jezebel' (1 Kings 18)
- The 'deep things of Satan' mystery cults like Gnosticism, not divine but diabolical.

5. **SARDIS** (3:1-6)

- The city thought she was impregnable (but built on shifting mud not solid rock)
- The church was outwardly successful.
- Jesus coming 'like a thief in the night' will only be for those who are 'asleep', not to those who are awake (1 Thess 5:4; Revelation 3:2 'Wake up!')

6. **PHILADELPHIA** (3:7-13)

- Names after the 'brotherly love' of brothers Attalus and Eumenes (4th cen BC)
- Ignatius of Antioch (97 – 118AD) writes to the Philadelphian church speaking of a large number of Jews who were suddenly converted to Christ and came in contrition.

7. **LAODICEA** (3:14-22)

- Lukewarm water flowing into the city.
- City famous for ointments such as eye salve.
- Christ on the outside of the church, but longs to come in.

The Seven Churches of Asia (Revelation Chapters 2 & 3)

Church	Present name in Turkey	Local pagan deity	Characteristics of city	Name of Jesus from chapter 1	Commended	Condemned	The way back	Promise to the overcomers from chapters 21 & 22
Ephesus	Seljuk	Diana	Wealth, trade, occult, magic,	Him who holds the seven stars (16)	Hard work, patient endurance, discernment of false apostles,	Lost their first love	Remember; repent; do the things you did at the beginning.	To eat of the tree of life. (2)
Smyrna	Izmir	Cybele	Commerce, tobacco, grapes, olives, wine.	The first and the last (17)	Affliction seen by Jesus, warned of suffering to come			Not harmed by the second death. (21:8; 15)
Pergamum	Bergama	Zeus	Wealth, prosperity	Has the two edged sword (16)	Holding fast, not denying,	Some hold the teaching of Balaam & Nicolaitans: (immorality; eating defiled food)	Repent	Hidden manna, white stone, a new name. (4)
Thyatira	Akhisar	Apollo	Trade guilds, textiles, pottery	Eyes of fire, feet like burnished bronze (14,15)	Love, faith, service, patient endurance.	Toleration of Jezebel	Those who hold her teaching are to repent.	Authority over the nations; the morning star. (5, 16)
Sardis	Sart	Cybele	Partly on a hill of mud.	Who has the seven spirits of God and seven stars. (16)		A name of being alive, but in reality, dead.	Remember what you once heard and received, obey and repent. Wake up.	Clothed in white; name not blotted out of book of life; confessed before the Father. (21:27 14)
Philadelphia	Alasehir	Bacchus	Many earthquakes	Who has the key (18)	Service, faithful, opportunity, missionary,			A pillar in the temple of God; Jesus new name. (4)
Laodicea	Denizli	Zeus	Springs of lukewarm water, black wool	The Amen, the faithful witness, origin of creation. (5)		Lukewarm ; think they have no needs; wretched, poor, blind.	Exchange what you have for what I have; be sincerity, repent; open the door for me.	Sit with me on my throne and reign (5)

7 Churches of Revelation

