

Behold, I Come Quickly...

A Study of Revelation

PART 1 Revelation 1:1 - 3:22

The Seven Churches

LESSON 5 Revelation 2:8 - 2:29

The Seven Churches - Part 2

Behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book. (Revelation 22:7)

REV 2:8-29

To the Church in Smyrna - Poor and Persecuted, but Rich (The Suffering Church)

REV 2:8 And unto the angel of the church in Smyrna write; These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive;

The city of Smyrna today is the modern Turkish city of Izmir located at the foot of Mt. Pagros, at the mouth of the Melas River on the South Shore of the Gulf of Izmir. It was one of the most ancient of the Greek settlements in Asia Minor. It was established in the 10th century BC and remained a Greek community until the destruction of the Greek population by the Turkish government in 1923. It was considered one of Rome's most important provincial cities, being one of the four centers of provincial assembly. The other cities were Ephesus, Sardis, and Pergamum. By the beginning of the 13th century AD it stood alone as the greatest city in the Aegean.¹

"Smyrna means Myrrh or bitterness, a sweet perfume for embalming the dead – an appropriate reference to Christ's suffering and death." This knowledge of Christ's suffering gave comfort to those undergoing great persecution in the suffering church of Smyrna.²

REV 2:9 I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan.

10 Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.

Characteristics of this church include tribulation, poverty, and affliction. This church was severely persecuted. They knew poverty. Smyrna was a city of guilds (unions), which regulated trade. Because Christians were hated, their trade or shops were boycotted, resulting in financial hardship. They were materially

¹ Freedman, "Smyrna," THE ANCHOR BIBLE DICTIONARY, Vol. VI, pp. 73-75.

² Levy, REVELATION: Hearing the Last Word, p. 36.

poor, but rich in their relationship to Jesus Christ.³ The church at Smyrna was like those described in the following verse:

2CO 6:10 As sorrowful, yet alway rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; **as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.**

The prophetic era represented by this church, 100 to 312 AD, was a time of the most severe persecutions of Christians.

There were those who said that they were "Jews, and are not." They were described as "the synagogue of Satan." The Jews at Smyrna bitterly opposed Christianity. They were not truly Jewish in their worship however. "The Jews, who might have been "the Church of God," had now, by their opposition, become the 'synagogue of Satan.'" They carried wood with their own hands to execute John's disciple Polycarp, the Bishop of Smyrna, in the arena at Rome around 155 AD.⁴ Polycarp, when asked by his judges to denounce his faith in Jesus Christ, replied: "Four score and six years have I served the Lord, and He never wronged me: How then can I blaspheme my King and Savior?"⁵ The false Jews may also refer to false teachers and to churches that teach false doctrine.

There were two basic heresies extant during this period of church history before the end of the second century. The first heresy, a false doctrine of Christ, questioned the deity of Christ, His virgin birth, His bodily resurrection, His physical ascension into heaven, and His promise to return. The second mixed law and grace, adding works as essential to salvation, in addition to grace through faith.⁶

The church at Smyrna was successful in withstanding these false teachers and teachings. Today these same teachings are with us in one form or another in cults such as Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses, and even in many of the mainline denomination's seminaries producing the church leaders of today. According to recent polling, many pastors graduating from major seminaries today do not believe in the essential doctrines of our faith such as the virgin birth or the deity of Christ.⁷

The "ten days" may refer to the ten major periods of persecution under Roman emperors, beginning with Nero in 54 AD and ending with Diocletian in 305 AD. Diocletian was considered the worst. He tried to destroy the Bible by burning it. Christians were fed to lions and dogs. They were crucified, covered with tar and set afire to serve as torches. During the second and third centuries five million Christians were martyred for the testimony of Jesus Christ. Many were boiled in oil and burned at the stake like Polycarp.⁸

Some though believe that the "ten days" refer to the last ten years of the age (303 to 312 AD) when the most severe persecutions occurred under Diocletian.⁹ Whatever these "ten days" represented, the message then, as now, is to be faithful, even if it costs you your life. Then you will receive your eternal "Crown of Life."

The "ten days" may, in fact, refer instead to a literal ten days of severe persecution that this church was subjected to.¹⁰

The church reached its greatest numbers in proportion to world population during this era of Rome 100 to 312 AD. Thirst for God's Word was evidenced by the many hand-copied manuscripts and translation of the Scriptures into many languages. From the time of Constantine, 312 AD, the church was favored by Rome. The church became such a dominant factor in the Roman Empire that the Emperor Theodosius made it the state church by 380 AD.¹¹

REV 2:11 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.

The tribute to this church is that Christ does not condemn it. We are exhorted to be overcomers. We then have His promise that we will not see the "second death."

³ LaHaye, REVELATION ILLUSTRATED AND MADE PLAIN, pp. 31, 32.

⁴ JAMIESON, FAUSSET, AND BROWN COMMENTARY, Electronic Database, Revelation 2:9. Levy, REVELATION: Hearing the Last Word, p. 36.

⁵ Walvoord, THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST, p. 64.

⁶ LaHaye, REVELATION ILLUSTRATED AND MADE PLAIN, pp. 31-33.

⁷ LaHaye, REVELATION ILLUSTRATED AND MADE PLAIN, p. 39.

⁸ LaHaye, REVELATION ILLUSTRATED AND MADE PLAIN, pp. 29-31. Lindsey, THERE'S A NEW WORLD COMING, p. 33. Levy, REVELATION: Hearing the Last Word, pp. 36, 37. Walvoord, THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST, p. 62.

⁹ LaHaye, REVELATION ILLUSTRATED AND MADE PLAIN, p. 34. Levy, REVELATION: Hearing the Last Word, p. 37.

¹⁰ Levy, REVELATION: Hearing the Last Word, p. 37. Walvoord, THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST, p. 62.

¹¹ Bruce L. Shelley, CHURCH HISTORY IN PLAIN LANGUAGE, Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1982, 2nd Edition 1995, p. 96.

REV 20:11 And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. **12** And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and **the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.** **13** And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. **14** And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. **This is the second death.** **15** And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.

If you are undergoing trials in your life because of your faith, you may be comforted by the testimony of this church.

To the Church in Pergamum - Compromise with the World-System

REV 2:12 And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write; These things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges;

A. W. Tozer wrote some years ago, "A new Decalogue has been adopted by the neo-Christians of our day, 'Thou shalt not disagree,' and a new set of Beatitudes too, 'Blessed are they that tolerate everything, for they shall not be made accountable for anything.'"¹² Compromise was a problem for this church.¹³

Pergamos, or Pergamum, means "married to power."¹⁴ Pergamum was the provincial capital of Asia. The name Pergamum comes from the word for parchment, a type of paper.¹⁵ It had the second largest library in the world (200,000 volumes), and was a center of learning attracting many princes, priests and scholars. Only the library at Alexandria, Egypt was larger. The library was later transferred to Egypt as a gift from Anthony to Cleopatra after 88 BC.¹⁶ Pergamum today is the modern Turkish city Bergama.¹⁷

REV 2:13 I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is: and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth.

Pergamum was the first to erect temples to Caesar Augustus, to Zeus, and to the serpent-god Asclepius (the god of healing). "Satan's seat" may refer to the seat of Roman authority in Asia, or to the religious practices taking place there. However, the great altar of Zeus, one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World was located there. It was the world's largest altar. This was the center of the Babylonian religious system. Pergamum inherited the religious mantle of ancient Babylon when Babylon fell in the days of Belshazzar. The Babylonian priests migrated at that time to Pergamum bringing the Babylonian mystery cults. "Satan's seat or throne" is thus a literal description of the invisible principalities and power centered at Pergamum.¹⁸

The prophetic age represented by Pergamum was 312 to 606 AD and the age is noted for its record of increasing corruption of the church and a departure from biblical doctrine. Many unscriptural practices crept into the church during this age in an attempt to combine Christian theology with pagan philosophy.¹⁹ According to Dr. John Walvoord:

As a result the church soon lost its hope of the early return of Christ, and biblical simplicity was replaced by a complicated church organization which substituted human creeds and worship of Mary, the mother of our Lord, for true biblical doctrine. The church committed the

¹² Cited by: Levy, REVELATION: Hearing the Last Word, p. 41. Wiktionary, *Decalogue* = A synonym for the Ten Commandments. Any set of rules that have the weight of authority.

¹³ Levy, REVELATION: Hearing the Last Word, p. 41.

¹⁴ Gregg, REVELATION, FOUR VIEWS: A PARALLEL COMMENTARY, p. 70.

¹⁵ Levy, REVELATION: Hearing the Last Word, p. 41.

¹⁶ Gregg, REVELATION, FOUR VIEWS: A PARALLEL COMMENTARY, p. 68. Levy, REVELATION: Hearing the Last Word, p. 41.

Walvoord, THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST, p. 65. Bromiley, et al, THE INTERNATIONAL STANDARD BIBLE ENCYCLOPEDIA, Pergamum, Vol. 3, p. 769.

¹⁷ Freedman, "Pergamum," THE ANCHOR BIBLE DICTIONARY, Vol. V, p. 228.

¹⁸ Morris, THE REVELATION RECORD, p. 57. Walvoord, THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST, p. 66.

¹⁹ LaHaye, REVELATION ILLUSTRATED AND MADE PLAIN, pp. 35, 37. Walvoord, THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST, p. 69.

same sin of which Israel was guilty in the Old Testament, namely, the worship of idols and union with the heathen world.²⁰

See Appendix, Figure 1.

The early Christians were fervently looking for the soon return of Jesus Christ. However, this hope disappeared from Christian literature from about 300 AD until the 18th century. Even then, the 18th century Christian had a return to the hope of the Second Coming, but was still not seeking the rapture of the church. It was not until the 19th century that the church returned to an expectation of the rapture of the church.²¹

The literal interpretation of the Bible teaches that Christ will return and set up a millennial kingdom of a thousand years after the seven-year tribulation (premillennialism). Postmillennialism was introduced during this period of the Pergamum church age (312 to 606 AD) after the fervor of the first 300 years abated. "Postmillennialism is the view that the present age will see the whole world Christianized and the prophecies of the millennial age fulfilled before Christ's return."²² That is, Christ will return after the millennium. Postmillennialists are not consistent in their interpretive views. In contrast, premillennialism is the view that Christ's second coming will occur prior to Christ's literal 1000-year millennial kingdom and after a 7-year tribulation. Premillennialism is consistent with the literal interpretive method. Another view is amilennialism, the belief that there is to be no literal millennium. The early church was premillennial in their views, but Christ had not returned as quickly as they had hoped. After a few hundred years of watching, and Christ had not yet returned, postmillennialism replaced the doctrine of the imminent return of Jesus Christ. The belief in the imminent return of Christ had caused the Christians to continue looking for His soon return. An early church father, Irenaeus (A.D. 120-202), in Against Heresies, Book 5, Chapter 29, says:

"And therefore when in the end the church shall be suddenly caught up from this evil age, it is said, there shall be tribulation such has not been since the beginning, neither shall be."²³

According to David Hocking, this is clearly a pre-tribulational statement.²⁴ The wording of this early church Father is such that the Christians expected to be raptured before the seven-year tribulation. I believe we are intended to continue to expect His return at any moment. Two thousand years is imminent in God's eternity.

Postmillennialism took hold from the time of Constantine when Christianity finally became the state religion.²⁵ It said everything was getting better and better and that Christ's kingdom was now, and that He would come at the end of a thousand years (some believe that the 1000 years refers to "a long period of time rather than a literal 1000 years). This doctrine required a redefining of Israel. It was said that Israel was cast off forever and that the promises of Israel now applied to the church. Anyone believing this should read Romans chapter 11, where Paul clearly indicates that God has not cast off Israel. It would take another 1400 years to return to the doctrine of "imminent return" which would excite evangelistic fervor once more. Whenever a church has a strong emphasis on the "Second Coming," a strong missionary evangelistic fervor is present.²⁶

At the Council of Nicaea, in 325 AD, the church successfully defended the deity of Christ against the heresy of Arias. Arius argued that Christ was not of the same essence as the Father. Today's cults, such as Jehovah's Witnesses, persist in this heresy, denying the deity of Jesus Christ.²⁷

The word "martyr" and "witness" are translated from the same Greek word. Antipas was a faithful witness who was slain. It seems that Antipas was a real person who was martyred at Pergamum; although nowhere else in scripture do we find him. His name can mean "against all" suggesting he also represents any believer willing to stand to the death for his faith in the name of Jesus Christ against all opposition.²⁸

²⁰ Walvoord, THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST, p. 69. Emphasis mine.

²¹ Norbert Lieth, HIDDEN SIGNS IN THE OLIVET DISCOURSE, The Olive Press, 2005, pp. 138-140.

²² Floyd H. Barackman, PRACTICAL CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY, Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1981, 1984, 1990, 1992, p. 540.

²³ Alexander Roberts & James Donaldson, editors, ANTI-NICENE FATHERS, Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1885, 1994, Vol. 1, Irenaeus, AGAINST HERESIES, Book 5, Chapter 29, p. 558.

²⁴ David Hocking, THE RAPTURE QUESTION, *Hope For Today*, Audio CD.

²⁵ Floyd H. Barackman, PRACTICAL CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY, Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1981, 1984, 1990, 1992, p. 540.

²⁶ LaHaye, REVELATION ILLUSTRATED AND MADE PLAIN, p.37, 38.

²⁷ Earle E. Cairns, CHRISTIANITY THROUGH THE CENTURIES: A History of the Christian Church, Grand Rapids, MI: Academie Books, Zondervan Publishing House, 1954, 1981, p. 133. LaHaye, REVELATION ILLUSTRATED AND MADE PLAIN, p. 38.

²⁸ Morris, THE REVELATION RECORD, p. 57.

REV 2:14 But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication.

Even though this church held fast Jesus' name, and didn't deny His faith, pagan practices were allowed to creep into the church during the age represented by this church, 312-606 AD. From the "converted" Roman Emperor Constantine onward, a blending of pagan and Christian beliefs began as the church and state were merged.²⁹

For more than one thousand years the church upheld the deity of Christ, until rationalism produced 19th and 20th-century Modernism (see Figure 2 in Appendix). Today, there is a high percentage of liberal pastors, churches, and seminaries that deny the virgin birth and deity of Jesus Christ.³⁰ The theological doctrines of this church were correct, but their practical doctrines were evil.

In the book of Numbers chapters 22 to 31, Balak, the king of Moab had fear of Israel passing through his land. He hired the prophet Balaam to prophesy against Israel. Whenever Balaam attempted to do so, a blessing instead of a curse came from his mouth. Balaam then encouraged Balak to put a stumbling block in Israel's path through an unholy alliance. Israel, accepted the bait, intermarried with Moabites and was polluted socially and spiritually.

The doctrine of Balaam represented an enticement to those in Pergamum to fall prey to corruption and the destruction of the Christian family by mixed marriages with pagans, bringing them in contact with idolatry, and tempting them with fornication. As with Israel, paganism began to dominate the church of Pergamum. We need to avoid alliances with the world. When we start down a path of compromise with the world's system we become guilty of the sin of Balaam.³¹ There seems to be a close association between the doctrine of Balaam and the Nicolaitanes in that both attempted infiltration and pollution of sound doctrine.³²

REV 2:15 So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes, which thing I hate. 16 Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.

Nicolaitanes were false teachers. No one knows who they were exactly, but it has been speculated that they may have been followers of the early deacon, Nicolas of Antioch, who later became heretical in his beliefs.³³ Historically, the cult of the Nicolaitanes professed faith in Christ, but taught freedom to live without moral law. They lived immoral lives.³⁴ A more complete discussion of this group is found under Revelation 2:6 in Part 1, Lesson 4. As in the church at Ephesus, some members held false teaching.

REV 2:17 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.

The "hidden manna" is the spiritual food (strength) provided by God in His Word and fellowship with Christ. Just as the Israelites had to individually gather the "manna" of their sustenance provided by God in the wilderness, the individual Christian is responsible to gather the "hidden manna" from God's Word and have faith in His providence for his spiritual sustenance.³⁵

"White" in the Bible refers to the righteousness of God. A white stone meant acquittal. In ancient courts jurors signified acquittal by laying down a white stone. In this respect it stands for eternal acquittal, a symbol of Christ's assurance and acceptance to all those that have overcome through persecution.³⁶ Today at Sonoma, California, the Jesus Seminar scholars use white and black stones or balls to determine whether

²⁹ Walvoord, THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST, p. 69.

³⁰ LaHaye, REVELATION ILLUSTRATED AND MADE PLAIN, p. 39.

³¹ LaHaye, REVELATION ILLUSTRATED AND MADE PLAIN, p. 40. Levy, REVELATION: Hearing the Last Word, p. 44. Walvoord, THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST, p. 68.

³² Bromiley, et al, THE INTERNATIONAL STANDARD BIBLE ENCYCLOPEDIA, p. 534.

³³ Gregg, REVELATION, FOUR VIEWS: A PARALLEL COMMENTARY, pp. 64, 65. Morris, THE REVELATION RECORD, p. 51. Walvoord, THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST, p. 58.

³⁴ Levy, REVELATION: Hearing the Last Word, p. 44. Walvoord, THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST, pp. 68, 69.

³⁵ LaHaye, REVELATION ILLUSTRATED AND MADE PLAIN, pp. 41, 42. Walvoord, THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST, p. 70.

³⁶ LaHaye, REVELATION ILLUSTRATED AND MADE PLAIN, p. 42. Levy, REVELATION: Hearing the Last Word, p. 45. Walvoord, THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST, pp. 70, 71.

Jesus said what the Bible reports Him as saying. In the Masonic Lodge a white or black ball is used to determine the wishes of the members. A candidate for Masonic membership must receive a ballot of white balls or he is denied membership, "blackballed."

To the Church in Thyatira - The Great Counterfeit

REV 2:18 And unto the angel of the church in Thyatira write; These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet are like fine brass;

19 I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last to be more than the first.

Thyatira was founded by Alexander the Great in 300 BC.³⁷ It is said that Thyatira means, "to be ruled by a woman."³⁸ It comes from two words meaning "sacrificed" and "continual."³⁹ Today, Thyatira is modern Akhisar in Turkey. It was an important center of the wool trade. Trades associated with the wool industry would include dyers and fullers.⁴⁰ Lydia, a woman from Thyatira, "a seller of purple," visited Philippi while Paul was there, as described in Acts 16.

ACT 16:14 And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul. **15** And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there. And she constrained us.

Lydia was Paul's first convert in Europe (Philippi). It is possible that she evangelized Thyatira.⁴¹

Thyatira was a city that worshiped the sun god, thus we see that Christ's deity is emphasized in the title "Son of God."⁴²

The prophetic church of Thyatira is the middle church of the seven and thus represents the Middle Ages, 606-1517 AD.⁴³ Even though, as we shall see, this church took on the trappings of paganism, their works, love for mankind, ministry (service), faith, and endurance represented by the long survival of this church, was found as something to be commended.⁴⁴

REV 2:20 Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols.

Jezebel in the Old Testament was a woman who brought Baal worship into Israel and perverted the nation.⁴⁵

1KI 16:31 And it came to pass, as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that **he took to wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Zidonians, and went and served Baal, and worshipped him.** **32** And he reared up an altar for Baal in the house of Baal, which he had built in Samaria. **33** And **Ahab made a grove [wooden images]**; and Ahab did more to provoke the LORD God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel that were before him.

³⁷ Levy, REVELATION: Hearing the Last Word, p. 45. Walvoord, THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST, p. 71.

³⁸ Gregg, REVELATION, FOUR VIEWS: A PARALLEL COMMENTARY, p. 72.

³⁹ LaHaye, REVELATION ILLUSTRATED AND MADE PLAIN, p. 44.

⁴⁰ Freedman, "Thyatira," THE ANCHOR BIBLE DICTIONARY, Vol. VI, p. 546. Wikipedia: **Fulling** or **tucking** or **walking** ("waulking" in Scotland) is a step in **woollen clothmaking** which involves the cleansing of cloth (particularly wool) to eliminate oils, dirt, and other impurities, and making it thicker. The worker who does the job is a **fuller**, **tucker**, or **walker**.

⁴¹ Phillips, EXPLORING REVELATION, p. 56.

⁴² Levy, REVELATION: Hearing the Last Word, p. 46.

⁴³ Gregg, REVELATION, FOUR VIEWS: A PARALLEL COMMENTARY, p. 72. LaHaye, REVELATION ILLUSTRATED AND MADE PLAIN, p. 43. Lindsey, THERE'S A NEW WORLD COMING, p. 40.

⁴⁴ LaHaye, REVELATION ILLUSTRATED AND MADE PLAIN, pp. 46, 47.

⁴⁵ LaHaye, REVELATION ILLUSTRATED AND MADE PLAIN, p. 47.

Jezebel was the daughter of Ethbaal, king of Tyre and Sidon, and lived about 918 BC. She married Israel's King Ahab and induced him to introduce her native idols. Ahab became an idolater himself (he "made a grove"). Ahab then used his power to establish idol worship in the nation.⁴⁶

In the New Testament the Jezebel concept of false religion is represented by the woman who mixed leaven (a symbol of evil) in three measures of meal "till the whole was leavened."⁴⁷

MAT 13:33 Another parable spake he unto them; **The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened.**

The false religion of Jezebel was twofold. First, it was used "to seduce [and lead into false teaching] my servants to commit fornication," a symbol of idolatry. Second, it caused God's people "to eat things sacrificed to idols," a symbol of the union of the church with the world. Rome sought, and still seeks, to bring the kingdom of the world under the domination of the pope in Rome.⁴⁸ The last pope and this current one are seeking accommodation with other religions of the world.

The church at Thyatira is a counterfeit, a false church. The church at Thyatira is the story of a church merging with paganism (See Appendix, Figure 3).

2PE 2:1 But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. **2** And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of.

Like Jezebel, it is a church that fabricated a system to bind the people to image-worship, superstition, and priestcraft. Jezebel encouraged the Christians in Thyatira to continue their worship of pagan idols.⁴⁹ Jezebel caused Israel to worship the mother-goddess Ashtaroth, called "the Queen of Heaven." The church in the Middle Ages introduced the worship of Mary.⁵⁰

JER 44:17 But we will certainly do whatsoever thing goeth forth out of our own mouth, **to burn incense unto the queen of heaven**, and to pour out drink offerings unto her, as we have done, we, and our fathers, our kings, and our princes, in the cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem: for then had we plenty of victuals, and were well, and saw no evil. **18** But since we left off **to burn incense to the queen of heaven**, and to pour out drink offerings unto her, we have wanted all things, and have been consumed by the sword and by the famine. **19** And when **we burned incense to the queen of heaven, and poured out drink offerings unto her, did we make her cakes to worship her**, and pour out drink offerings unto her, without our men?....
22 So that the **LORD could no longer bear, because of the evil of your doings, and because of the abominations which ye have committed**; therefore is your land a desolation, and an astonishment, and a curse, without an inhabitant, as at this day. **23** **Because ye have burned incense, and because ye have sinned against the LORD**, and have not obeyed the voice of the LORD, nor walked in his law, nor in his statutes, nor in his testimonies; therefore this evil is happened unto you, as at this day.

The Roman Catholic Church, in particular, and other churches with ecclesiastical religious systems are examples of the church at Thyatira. During the Thyatira church age, 606-1517 AD, "the church became corrupt as it sought to combine Christianity with pagan philosophy and heathen religious rites so that much of the ritual of the church of that period is directly traceable to comparable ceremonies in heathen religion." It was during the middle ages that the false teaching of the continual sacrifice of Christ was instituted changing the observance of the Lord's Supper into a perpetual sacrifice; thus forsaking the "once for all" sacrifice of Jesus on the cross (refer to Heb 7:24-27).⁵¹

⁴⁶ Barnes, NOTES ON THE NEW TESTAMENT: REVELATION, p. 82.

⁴⁷ LaHaye, REVELATION ILLUSTRATED AND MADE PLAIN, p. 47.

⁴⁸ LaHaye, REVELATION ILLUSTRATED AND MADE PLAIN, p. 47.

⁴⁹ Lindsey, THERE'S A NEW WORLD COMING, p. 40. Walvoord, THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST, p. 73.

⁵⁰ Gregg, REVELATION. FOUR VIEWS: A PARALLEL COMMENTARY, p. 72.

⁵¹ Walvoord, THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST, p. 73, 75.

As previously noted, "Thyatira" comes from two words meaning "sacrifice" and "continual." Is it a coincidence that the Roman Catholic Church's perpetuates a continuing sacrifice?⁵² The sacrifice of the Mass is a repeated sacrifice of Jesus' death daily. The Catholic priest re-presents Christ's sacrifice on the cross. In other words, Christ's death is still happening in a perpetual manner according to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.⁵³ Other sacraments continue this concept. The Sacrament of Penance is a works system where man pays a penalty for his sins rather than accepting the atoning sacrifice of Jesus once for all.⁵⁴ The writer of Hebrews declares that there was one sacrifice, not a perpetual sacrifice for the remission on sin:

Heb 7:26 For **such a High Priest [Jesus]** was fitting for us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and has become higher than the heavens; **27 who does not need daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the people's, for this He did once for all when He offered up Himself.** NKJV

The writer of Hebrews reiterates as follows:

Heb 10:10 By the which will **we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.** **11** And **every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins:** **12** But this man, after he had offered **one sacrifice for sins for ever,** sat down on the right hand of God; **13** From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. **14** For **by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.** KJV

Likewise, Paul wrote that salvation was by "grace" not "works." We can do nothing for remission of sins other than through faith in what Christ has already accomplished.

Eph 2:8 For **by grace are ye saved through faith;** and that not of yourselves: **it is the gift of God: 9 Not of works,** lest any man should boast.

But, some say that James wrote that works is necessary for salvation (James 2:17-26). But a careful reading of what James wrote reveals that "faith without works is dead." He was saying that if you are truly trusting in God as His disciple, then works will surely accompany faith. In other words, because I love God I do the works. In this sense, works are a fruit of faith. Faith without the accompanying works is not true faith. Salvation is not obtained by my works but what Christ has done on my behalf. If a man is truly "born-again" then he should be bearing fruit.

REV 2:21 And I gave her **space to repent** of her fornication; and **she repented not.**
22 Behold, **I will cast her into a bed,** and them that commit adultery with her **into great tribulation, except they repent** of their deeds.
23 And **I will kill her children with death;** and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and **I will give unto every one of you according to your works.**

"Space" means "plenty of time." Thyatira was given plenty of time to repent.⁵⁵

"Bed" is literally "sickbed." This church will still have power well into the Great Tribulation.⁵⁶ Those who follow the false teachings of the church of Thyatira and are still alive, unrepentant, during the end times will suffer the wrath of God during the Great Tribulation.⁵⁷ The children of the fruit of this church are in danger of suffering the "second death."⁵⁸

⁵² LaHaye, *REVELATION ILLUSTRATED AND MADE PLAIN*, p. 44.

⁵³ *CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH*, New York, NY: An Image Book published by Doubleday, 1994, Parts 1364-1368, pp. 380, 381. See also: Loraine Boettner, *ROMAN CATHOLICISM*, Phillipsburg, NJ: The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1962, pp. 172-174.

⁵⁴ LaHaye, *REVELATION ILLUSTRATED AND MADE PLAIN*, pp. 44-46.

⁵⁵ LaHaye, *REVELATION ILLUSTRATED AND MADE PLAIN*, p. 47.

⁵⁶ Lindsey, *THERE'S A NEW WORLD COMING*, p. 40.

⁵⁷ LaHaye, *REVELATION ILLUSTRATED AND MADE PLAIN*, p. 47.

⁵⁸ LaHaye, *REVELATION ILLUSTRATED AND MADE PLAIN*, p. 48.

REV 20:11 And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. **12** And I saw **the dead, small and great, stand before God**; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and **the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works**. **13** And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and **death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them**: and they were judged every man according to their works. **14** And **death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death**. **15** And **whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire**.

Some say "kill her children" represents the horrible plagues, including the Black Death beginning in 1347 AD that decimated the European population during the Middle Ages.⁵⁹ According to the Jamison, Faussett, and Brown Commentary:

*If it is to be taken literally, it is in accordance with what is often threatened in the Scriptures, that children shall be visited with calamity for the sins of parents, and with what often occurs in fact, that they do thus suffer. For it is no uncommon thing that whole families are made desolate on account of the sin and folly of the parent.... If it is to be taken figuratively, then it refers to those who had imbibed her doctrines, and who, of course, would suffer in the punishment which would follow from the propagation of such doctrines. The reference in the word "death" here would seem to be to some heavy judgment, by plague, famine, or sword, by which they would be cut off.*⁶⁰

The Jamison, Faussett, and Brown Commentary has this to say about how this church will be judged:

*According to your works - to be judged, not according to the act as it appears to man, but with reference to faith and love, the only motives which God accepts.*⁶¹

Are we saved by our works? Paul affirms that we are not.

Eph 2:8 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: **9** Not of works, lest any man should boast.

REV 2:24 But unto you I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak; I will put upon you none other burden. **25** But that which ye have already hold fast till I come. **26** And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations:

Those who reject the false religion will not suffer the same fate.⁶² The believing remnant that holds fast will be delivered at Christ's return.⁶³ Those that overcome to the end will have a position of leadership during the Millennium.⁶⁴ The overcomer is he that believes that Jesus is the Christ.⁶⁵

1JO 5:1 Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him. **2** By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments. **3** For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous. **4** For **whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world**: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.

Notice in the following verses that those who keepeth His works He will give power over the nations.

⁵⁹ Gregg, REVELATION, FOUR VIEWS: A PARALLEL COMMENTARY, p. 72.

⁶⁰ Revelation 2:23: (from Barnes' Notes, Electronic Database Copyright © 1997, 2003, 2005, 2006 by Biblesoft, Inc. All rights reserved.)

⁶¹ Revelation 2:23: (from Barnes' Notes, Electronic Database Copyright © 1997, 2003, 2005, 2006 by Biblesoft, Inc. All rights reserved.)

⁶² LaHaye, REVELATION ILLUSTRATED AND MADE PLAIN, p. 48.

⁶³ Lindsey, THERE'S A NEW WORLD COMING, p. 40.

⁶⁴ LaHaye, REVELATION ILLUSTRATED AND MADE PLAIN, p. 48. Levy, REVELATION: Hearing the Last Word, p. 47.

⁶⁵ LaHaye, REVELATION ILLUSTRATED AND MADE PLAIN, p. 48.

1CO 6:2 Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? And if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters?

DAN 7:18 But the saints of the most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever.... **27** And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him.

REV 2:27 And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father.

28 And I will give him the morning star.

29 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

Notice the reference to a potter's vessel in the following verse:

PSA 2:7 I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; **this day have I begotten thee**. **8** Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. **9** **Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel**.

So that you are not confused with the phrase "this day have I begotten thee," remember that we saw in lesson 2 that five times Christ is called "the first begotten." Another five times He is called "the only begotten." The term "only begotten" refers to His incarnation, while "first begotten (or firstborn) refers to His resurrection.⁶⁶ It does not refer to His being a created being.

The word for "rule" is actually "tend" or "feed," like a shepherd or pastor. The "rod" is the same word as "sceptre" in Hebrews 1:8.⁶⁷

HEB 1:8 But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: **a sceptre** of righteousness is **the sceptre** of thy kingdom.

Notice also that God the Father is referring to the Son, Jesus Christ, as God (see also Psalm 45:6). Christ is the "Morning Star." This is the promise of Christ, to abide in the believers that overcome.⁶⁸

REV 22:16 I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. **I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star**.

APPENDIX

Figure 1: Unscriptural Practices:⁶⁹

- 300 AD - Prayers for the dead**
- 300 AD - Making sign of the cross**
- 375 AD - Worship of saints and angels**
- 394 AD - Mass first instituted**
- 431 AD - Worship of Mary begun**
- 500 AD - Priests began dressing differently than laymen**

⁶⁶ Van Impe, REVELATION REVEALED, p. 13, 14.

⁶⁷ Morris, THE REVELATION RECORD, p. 63. Levy, REVELATION: Hearing the Last Word, p. 47.

⁶⁸ Levy, REVELATION: Hearing the Last Word, p. 48.

⁶⁹ LaHaye, REVELATION ILLUSTRATED AND MADE PLAIN, p. 37. Refer also to: Schaff, HISTORY OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH, Vol. III, p. 478, 479; and: Cairns, CHRISTIANITY THROUGH THE CENTURIES: A History of the Christian Church, p. 160; and: Stuart P. Garver, WATCH YOUR TEACHING: A Comparative Study of Roman Catholic and Protestant Teaching Since Vatican Council II, Hackensack, NJ: Christ's Mission, Inc., 1973, p. 162; and: George J. Dyer (editor), et al, AN AMERICAN CATHOLIC CATECHISM, New York, NY: A Crossroad Book, The Seabury Press, 1975, pp. 130, 131.

526 AD - Extreme unction (Sacrament for the dying)
 593 AD - Doctrine of purgatory introduced
 600 AD - Worship services conducted in Latin
 600 AD - Prayers directed to Mary

Figure 2: MODERNISM

- **Pre-Modernism can be described as:**
 It was the dominant worldview from the beginning until the enlightenment (18th century).
 It believed: There is truth and it comes from God. Truth has a supernatural source, and men believed that it was found in their religion; whether Christian or pagan – your religion defined your truth.
 The Christian believes that truth is found in the Word of God.⁷⁰
- **Modernism would say:**
 There is truth.
 We can know the truth through human reason, not through the supernatural, not through a revelation from God, and it cannot be found in the Bible.
 Science is the key – we can know truth through science and philosophy.
 This worldview lasted about 250 years from the 18th century until well into the 20th century, until the collapse of communism. Modernism brought out godless totalitarian governments because men thought they knew the truth and therefore dictated the truth through dictatorial regimes. During this period we saw fascism, Nazism, and communism – And the genocide of millions of people.⁷¹
 We also saw the rise of Darwinism in 1859, and shortly after that we saw evolutionary principles applied to our system of laws when our legal system was changed from Blackstone’s law based on Biblical principles to “Case” law, based on the evolution of law through precedence, not on whether it is morally right in the eyes of God.⁷²
- **Post-Modernism**
 We are now living in the post-modern world. This worldview says that:
 There may be truth, but we cannot be sure of the truth.
 Truth may be from God, but we can’t know it.
 Post-modernism embraces mystery – we can’t know the truth.
 My truth is my truth and your truth is your truth.
 Everyone has his own truth – truth is relative.
 Since we can’t know the truth we must be tolerant of the beliefs of others – “This is who I am, and how I live; you must accept me the way I am.”
 Truth is whatever you think it is.
 Truth is not universal.
 Truth is experiential.
 Therefore, the virtues of this worldview are tolerance, ambiguity, and mystery.
 There are no absolutes and therefore, we cannot know what is right or wrong.
 We can’t know what the Bible means.
 Man can now invent whatever religion he wants, without challenge.
 The modern Emerging Church movement has embraced this idea – It’s okay to be homosexual; it’s who you are.⁷³

⁷⁰ John MacArthur, Phil Johnson , WHAT’S SO DANGEROUS ABOUT THE EMERGING CHURCH?, Audio interview, 2006.

⁷¹ MacArthur, Johnson , WHAT’S SO DANGEROUS ABOUT THE EMERGING CHURCH?.

⁷² Dr. Del Tackett, THE TRUTH PROJECT, Focus on the Family, Video, 2007, Lesson 10 (Law).

⁷³ MacArthur, Johnson , WHAT’S SO DANGEROUS ABOUT THE EMERGING CHURCH?.

Figure 3: Thyatira Paganism⁷⁴

The following took place during the time of the prophetic church of Thyatira:

607 AD	Boniface III made first Pope (or Gregory I (590-604)) ⁷⁵
709 AD	Kissing of Pope's foot
786 AD	Worshipping of images and relics
850 AD	Use of "holy water" begun
995 AD	Canonization of dead saints
998 AD	Fasting on Fridays and during Lent
1079 AD	Celibacy of the priesthood
1090 AD	Prayer beads
1184 AD	The Inquisition
1190 AD	Sale of Indulgences ⁷⁶
1215 AD	Transubstantiation ⁷⁷
1220 AD	Adoration of the wafer (Host)
1229 AD	Bible forbidden to laymen
1414 AD	Cup forbidden to people at communion
1439 AD	Doctrine of purgatory decreed ⁷⁸
1439 AD	Doctrine of seven sacraments affirmed
1508 AD	The Ave Maria approved

This pattern continued even to modern times as follows:

1534 AD	Jesuit Order founded
1545 AD	Tradition granted equal authority with the Bible
1546 AD	Apocryphal books put into Bible
1854 AD	Immaculate Conception of Mary ⁷⁹
1864 AD	Syllabus of Errors proclaimed ⁸⁰
1870 AD	Infallibility of Pope declared
1950 AD	Assumption of the Virgin Mary ⁸¹
1965 AD	Mary proclaimed Mother of the Church

⁷⁴ LaHaye, REVELATION ILLUSTRATED AND MADE PLAIN, p. 44.

⁷⁵ Halley, HALLEY'S BIBLE HANDBOOK, p. 771. Halley disagrees and names Gregory I (590-604 AD) as the first real Pope.

⁷⁶ Schaff, HISTORY OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH, Vol. VI, p. 757: Indulgences are generally a release from the punishment of sins, especially that of purgatory.

⁷⁷ Cairns, CHRISTIANITY THROUGH THE CENTURIES: A History of the Christian Church, pp. 200, 216, 217, 243: Transubstantiation is the doctrine that the elements of communion become the actual body and blood of Jesus Christ at the priest's repeating the consecration formula in the Mass.

⁷⁸ "purgatory," MERRIAM WEBSTER'S COLLEGIATE DICTIONARY: TENTH EDITION, Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, Inc., 1995, p. 948: An intermediate place of punishment where those who die in God's grace may make restitution for past sins and become fit for heaven.

⁷⁹ Dyer (editor), et al, AN AMERICAN CATHOLIC CATECHISM, p. 81: Mary was conceived, in her mother's womb, free from the stain of original sin (the sin of Adam).

⁸⁰ Cairns, CHRISTIANITY THROUGH THE CENTURIES: A History of the Christian Church, p. 392: The Syllabus of Errors was a list of condemnations that included condemnation of Bible Societies, and condemnation of the view that the pope had no temporal power, among other condemnations.

⁸¹ Dyer (editor), et al, AN AMERICAN CATHOLIC CATECHISM, p. 82: This was the doctrine that Mary was taken up, body and soul, to heaven at her death.