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'A Church Between' Solihull URC Away Day 12 October 2019



7. Laodicea Revelation Ch3 v14-22

Status: Threat of Extinction

Attributes of Jesus: The Amen, faithful & true witness
Ruler of creation

Declaration: - Deeds, lukewarm and disgusting
- Believe they are rich when they are poor

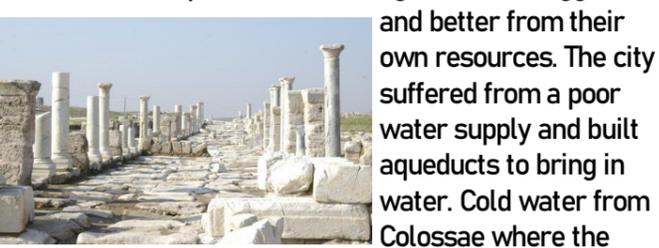
What to do: Turn to Jesus to supply their needs
Be earnest, repent, allow Jesus in

Consequence of doing: Jesus will come in
Hear.

Overcome = Sit with Jesus on the throne.

Notes: Geography, History, Culture etc.

Laodicea was the wealthiest city in Phrygia during Roman times and had a population of about 120,000. It was widely known for its banking establishments (it was wealthy enough to mint its own coins), its medical school (where a famous eye salve was used and a book of ophthalmology written there was used right into the middle-ages) and its textile/fashion industry. It was an innovative and self-made city. It rejected an offer of money from Rome to rebuild after an earthquake in AD60 because it had been earlier offended by Rome who called it 'a city of insufficient means' to house a temple to Tiberius. They were proud and wanted to prove Rome wrong, so rebuilt bigger



and better from their own resources. The city suffered from a poor water supply and built aqueducts to bring in water. Cold water from Colossae where the mountain is snow capped 11 months of the year and hot water from Hierapolis where there are hot water springs—the trouble was the cold water was warm by the time it got to Laodicea and the hot water was cooled—both, you might say, were lukewarm.



2. Smyrna

Status Unqualified praise

Attributes of Jesus: First & Last
Died & rose again

Declaration: + Suffered afflictions and poverty
+ Slandered

What to do: Do not be afraid (some will go to prison & persecution for 10 days)
Be faithful (even to the point of death)

Consequence of doing: Gain crown of life
Hear.

Overcome = Not be hurt by the second death

Notes: Geography, History, Culture etc.

Smyrna was a proud and beautiful Asian city with stunning views out to sea. It survives today as the city of Izmir. Smyrna was closely aligned with Rome with Cicero saying that Smyrna was one of Rome's most faithful allies. The first temple to the goddess Roma was built here. It was founded around 1000 BC and was successful for 400 years and was then totally destroyed and abandoned until in about 200BC when Alexander The Great rebuilt it to its original stature and magnificence. Jews were exempt from cult worship and as the first Christians were Jewish they were protected by this law. As time went on the Jews began to feel in danger of losing this status because the Christians were becoming noticed and problematic. To protect themselves the Jews began handing over the Christians explaining that they were not a part of their group. Without exemption and without joining in with the cult worship the Christians were thrown out of the market place and were black-listed—unable to get a job anywhere. Thus in a very wealthy city the church was poor.



1. Ephesus

Revelation Ch2 v1-7



Notes: Geography, History, Culture etc.

Ephesus was the most important city in western Asia (now Turkey) equal in fame and stature to Rome, Corinth, Antioch & Alexandria. It was a harbour city near the western coast, 3 miles inland up the Cayster River which emptied into the Aegean Sea. The port is now silted up. Trade and commerce gave the city its importance—every people, every religion, from everywhere. The theatre could seat 25,000 people. There was a pagan temple to Diana (Roman) /Artemis (Greek) - one of 7 wonders of ancient world. Artisans made statues to Artemis and conversion to Christianity put trade at risk (such as in Acts 19). It was a multi religious society and embraced Roman Imperial cult worship—Temple to Domitan was built in Ephesus. Domitan, Roman Caesar, was particularly power hungry, called himself 'lord and god'. His son died and Domitan deified him. He issued a coin depicting baby son over the world with 7 stars around. 7 stars of Ursa Major (big dipper) associated through legend with Zeus, the most powerful god thus a symbol of power.

Status: Threat of extinction

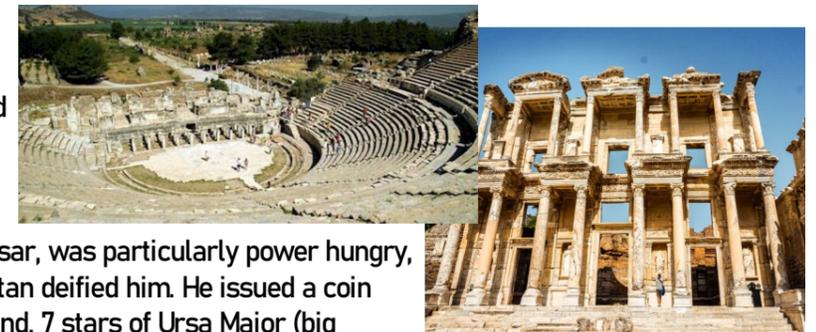
Attributes of Jesus: Holding 7 stars in right hand
Walks amongst the 7 golden lampstands

Declaration: + Deeds, hard work, perseverance
+ Don't tolerate wickedness
+ Tested apostles
+ Persevered, endured hardship for the Name
+ Not grown weary
- Forsaken first love

What to do: Remember, Repent & do what did at first

Consequence of not doing: Their lampstand will be removed
Hear.

Overcome = Right to eat from the tree of life which is in the paradise of God



3. Pergamum

Revelation Ch2 v12-17

Status: Mix of good and bad
Attributes of Jesus: Has the sharp double-edged sword
Declaration: + Remain true to the Name despite Satan having his throne there
 + Did not renounce faith even when Antipas martyred
 - Tolerate people who are corrupt teachers in the likeness of Balaam
 - Embrace Nicolaitans (people who called themselves Christian but who had compromised their way of life and thinking to fit in with society)
What to do: Repent
Consequence of not doing: Jesus will come and fight against them with the sword of his mouth
Hear.
Overcome = Receive some of the hidden Manna and a white stone with a new name on it



Notes: Geography, History, Culture etc. Pergamum is the most northerly of the

circuit of cities in Revelation and Bergama is the city today nearby. Pergamum was the ancient capital of Asia, with the cone shaped hill rising 1000+ feet above the surrounding valley. Atop the hill were the worship centres of pagan gods and imperial cult worship— Pergamum had competed, Olympics style today, to host imperial temples and had been awarded them twice! One of the temples is for Trajan who claimed to be fully god and fully man, the only one who could grant, peace, justice, eternal life and forgiveness. He also carried the 'Right of the sword'. This gave the Caesar, or his delegate, the authority to pardon or condemn (Pontius Pilate on Good Friday was exercising this Authority). The largest known alter (for Zeus) was at Pergamum (now in Berlin). Athena, the god of wisdom, was second of 4 Patron Gods for the city. Pergamum housed the second largest library after Alexandria. The other 2 also had great edifices there.

4. Thyatira

Revelation Ch2 v18-29

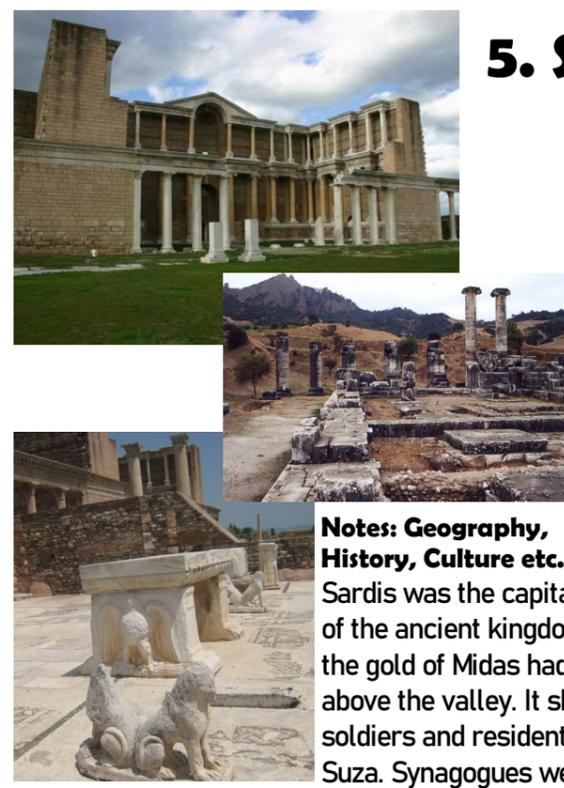
Notes: Geography, History, Culture etc. Thyatira is distinct among the 7 churches in that it is located on an open plain and was not a citadel. A town rather than a city it was on the major trade route connecting Asia to Europe. It was important in trade and archaeologists have found here more evidence of trade guilds than anywhere else in the region. Being part of the trade guild was essential as you could not trade without membership and it was the social security of the day. The two biggest trades in Thyatira seem to have been the bronze workers and the dyers (Lydia from Acts 16 was a trader in purple cloth and was from Thyatira). Each Guild had a patron god who was worshipped every few weeks with sacrificing, eating, drunkenness and orgies. Not participating was to try to bring down the wrath of the god against the guild and cause the guild to fail. You would be expelled. No membership, no trading, no money, no food. What was the Christian to do? Apollo was the son of Zeus—the most powerful deity (therefore Apollo was the 'son of god') and Apollo was the most important deity in the town.

Status: Mix of good and bad
Attributes of Jesus: Eyes like blazing fire
 Feet like burnished bronze
Declaration: + Deeds, love, faith, service, perseverance
 + Doing more than did before
 - Tolerate a 'Jezabel' who calls herself a prophetess who misleads by her teaching
What to do: 'Jezabel's' followers: Repent
 Faithful few: Hold on to what you have
Consequence of not doing: Each repaid according to deeds
Hear.
Overcome = Authority over the nations
 Receive the Morning Star



5. Sardis

Revelation Ch3 v1-6



Notes: Geography, History, Culture etc. Sardis was the capital

of the ancient kingdom of Lydia. It was a city of great wealth and fame. According to legend, the gold of Midas had washed into the city. The Acropolis was a natural citadel 1500 feet above the valley. It should have been impregnable but due to a lack of vigilance on the part of soldiers and residents it was taken twice in its history! There was a great road from Sardis to Suza. Synagogues were started to preserve the Jewish culture when the Israelites were taken into captivity at Suza (Book of Esther) and as they began to be persecuted the Jews moved along the road to Sardis. There was a long-established and large Synagogue at Sardis. But the people of Sardis had a get-along-with-everybody-at-whatever-cost attitude and had allowed Greek and Roman images into the synagogue that compromised their faith—but people liked the images, so never mind. Sardis had a list of citizens which gave those citizens rights and privileges but if you upset people you would be struck off and lose your standing. There was a textile industry that made the white togas of the traditional clothing of the Greek.

Status: Mix of good and bad
Attributes of Jesus: Holding the seven-fold Spirit
 Holding the seven stars
Declaration: + Deeds
 + There are a few who have not soiled their clothes
 - Reputation of being alive but are dead
What to do: Wake up, strengthen what remains
 Remember what received and heard, Obey, Repent
Consequence of not doing: Jesus will come like a thief (at an unknown time) with judgment
Hear.
Overcome = will walk with Jesus dressed in white
 never have name blotted out from book of Life

6. Philadelphia

Revelation Ch3 v7-13



Notes: Geography, History, Culture etc. Philadelphia means 'the city of him who loves his brother' and was founded in 189BC by Eumenes II and named for the love of his brother who would be his successor. Eumenes II was surnamed Sotor meaning 'saviour' (see notes elsewhere on Roman imperial cult worship)

Status: Unqualified Praise
Attributes of Jesus: Holy and True
 Holds the Key of David
 He opens and shuts
Declaration: + Deeds, little strength but kept Word & didn't deny the Name
 + Endured patiently
What to do: Hold on
Consequence of doing: No one will steal crown
Hear.
Overcome = Become pillar in temple of God forever
 With Name, New Jerusalem & Jesus name

Philadelphia is located in an area of extensive fertile volcanic soil and grew an excellent quality grape which rivalled those of Rome. However its location meant that it suffered earthquakes and was devastated in 17AD. Tiberius suspended taxation for 5 years for which the city extended honours to him by changing its name. Unfortunately no further assistance was offered and they soon became disenchanted with Rome and changed their name back. In 70AD the same happened again and to make matters worse, in 92AD, Dolmition tore out all the vines as they were rivaling Rome and he wasn't having it. The town felt neglected, overlooked and abandoned. It had an identity problem with all its flip-flopping back-and-forth. It was weak and small.