

Revelation Study (Part 2)

SMYRNA (A.D. 270 – 530)

- the second time period of the Gospel Day
- 2nd letter = Revelation 2:8-11
- Many congregations in Asia in John's day
 - city of Smyrna best represents the second time period of the Gospel Day
 - Smyrna's characteristics, location & spiritual qualities

PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF SMYRNA:

- about 40 miles north of Ephesus, located at the mouth of a river that emptied into the Aegean Sea
 - **Note:** going north indicates going toward a colder climate
- Its cafes were fascinating and beautifully lit so that at night they looked like fairy houses.
- Its streets were rough with granite-like boulders, and the alleys were full of pits and holes, which made it dangerous at night.
- The city was morally bad. Plundering at night by vandals, bandits, and robbers made it unsafe to be out after dark.
- It was a rich, prosperous city. Camels laden with goods often crowded people off the streets.

WHO WAS THE MESSAGE GIVEN TO?

"And unto the angel of the church in Smyrna write" (Revelation 2:8).

- **"angel"** – same in each age (messenger or pastor)
- notice that the message is sent to the pastor, not directly to the people
- The Lord works through His ministry
 - Amos 3:7 says, *"Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets."*
- When Jesus fed the multitudes with seven (picture of completeness) loaves (bread of life; the Word), whom did He give it to first? (The disciples; Matthew 15:36)

WHO GAVE THE MESSAGE?

"These things saith the first and the last" (Revelation 2:8).

- **"first and the last"** – Christ is unchanging (people in this era were changing)
- **"the author and finisher of our faith"** (Hebrews 12:2)
- **"I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last"** (Revelation 22:13)

"And the second angel sounded, and as it were a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea: and the third part of the sea became blood" (Revelation 8:8).

- **"second angel"** sounded using a **"trumpet"** (What does the messenger sound? The preached message)
 - not every trumpet sounds forth a **"certain sound"** (sound doctrine)
 - message is determined by the results in the lives of the people
- this is the second trumpet age: but the message changed (look at what it produced)

- **"great mountain"** (refer to Nebuchadnezzar's dream & Daniel's vision); Stone became a great mountain (Mount Zion, the Church of God, the saints)
- **"burning with fire"** – church began on fire (Day of Pentecost); had the Holy Spirit
- **"was cast into the sea"** (keep in mind, this is the predominant spiritual condition of the age; Revelation 12:6, 14 tells us that the church was hid away)
- **"sea"** – (**Key:** Revelation 17:15 – *"the waters . . . are peoples"*)
- what kind of **"peoples"**? (**Key:** Isaiah 57:20 – *"the wicked are like the troubled sea"*)
- what defines **"wickedness"**? (**Key:** Psalm 50:16-17) = people who profess, preach, and practice religion but will not take the truth, hate instruction, and cast God's Word aside.

WHAT SPIRIT WAS WORKING IN THIS CHURCH ERA?

"And I beheld, and lo a black horse" (Revelation 6:5).

- **The black horse:**
 (**Key:** Zechariah 6:6 – *"black horses . . . go into the north country . . . have quieted my spirit"*)
 What is the "north country"? (**Key:** Jeremiah 46:10 – *"in the north country by the river Euphrates"*)
 Where is the Euphrates? (River that runs through Babylon)
 Speaking spiritually, Babylon = false religion
 When religious people quiet the Holy Spirit, they preach the Word w/out the Spirit
"the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life" (2 Corinthians 3:6)
- **"black horse"** = spirit of apostasy; there is no darkness so black as darkness that comes after having seen light
- *"Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you"* (John 12:35).
 – Light is progressive.
- *"I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not"* (Revelation 2:9)
 not speaking of literal Jews – New Testament Jews (spiritual)
- black horse is the spirit that produced the Dark Ages

BASIC FACTS ABOUT APOSTASY:

- **Works from within** – no force against the church from without has prevailed (martyrs)
"certain men crept in unawares" (Jude 4)
- **Comes through false teachers** (people in position)
"there shall be false teachers among you" (2 Peter 2:1)
- **False teachers teach false doctrine** (bringing confusion)
- **Compare literal Babylon to spiritual Babylon for clarity.**
"And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech" (Genesis 11:1)
 – Unity before Tower of Babel was built
"And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east" (Genesis 11:2)
 – Left light (from the east = apostasy)
"Let us make brick for stone" (Genesis 11:3)
 – Created a substitute (brick) for stone (Jesus = the Stone)
"Let us . . . build unto heaven" (Genesis 11:4)
 – Wanted to get to Heaven their own way
"Therefore is the name of it called Babel [or confusion]" (Genesis 11:9)
 – Anytime man creates creeds & doctrines instead of going God's way, it is confusion
 – Babylon (as a symbol, spiritual) = false religion

WHO IS THE RIDER OF THE BLACK HORSE?

"And I beheld, and lo a black horse; and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand" (Revelation 6:5).

- horse = spirit & its message
 - established that this is the spirit of apostasy
- rider = human representation upheld by the spirit (white horse & rider = Holy Spirit/Jesus's body; red horse & rider = spirit of unbelief/pagan Roman Empire)
- spirits need a human representation to work through
- reminder: spirits are out to capture people's souls
- to define rider, we must look at his description
- spirit upholding (or behind) this rider is represented by the black horse = **apostasy**
- rider is holding **"a pair of balances in his hand"**
 - balances are for weighing
 - God is the only One who should do the *"weighing"* (1 Samuel 2:2-3; Proverbs 16:2)
 - *"A just weight and balance are the Lord's: all the weights of the bag are his work"* (Proverbs 16:11).
 - Why should only God do the weighing? (Only God sees the heart.)
 - God decides who is in His church and who is not
 - the rider has taken God's place; this is a false balance
- we know this is a false balance for the rider is selling:
 - *"A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny"* (Rev. 6:6)
 - study & find that this is starvation measures
 - "penny," or the Greek Denarius, was the ordinary wages of a laborer for a whole day
 - measure = daily allowance of food for one man
 - laborer couldn't feed & support his family on such prices
 - *"falsifying the balances by deceit"* (Amos 8:5); deceiving people spiritually
 - *"they with feigned words [shall] make merchandise of you"* (2 Peter 2:3)
- **rider** measures out spiritual food (the Word of God) at a starvation rate
 - *"Behold, the days come, saith the Lord God, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord"* (Amos 8:11).

TO FURTHER ESTABLISH THE RIDER, WE MUST LOOK AT WHAT ELSE OCCURRED IN THIS TIME PERIOD:

"And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea" (Rev. 13:1)

- same sea that the mountain on fire fell into
- apostasy (spirit of the era) caused the fall & apostasy caused the rise of this "beast"
- out of the sea (minds of men) came a religious system
- this religious system would be fully formed (or firmly entrenched) by A.D. 530
- **"rider of the black horse"** = system of papal Rome (Roman Catholicism)

OTHER SYMBOLS:

- **open book** = (**Key:** Revelation 5:5) Jesus opened the book, bringing understanding
 - why is the book closed in this church era?
- **woman in scarlet** = (**Key:** Isaiah 4:1) false religion working in every church age

DEVELOPING DOCTRINES

- this system had its own doctrines ("*speaking lies*"; 1 Timothy 4:2)
 - **doctrines developing in that era:** this spirit had begun working before the end of the New Testament, but the system is still forming in this transitional era – Smyranean age)
 - ** "*Forbidding to marry*" (1 Timothy 4:1) = celibacy among clergy
 - ** "*commanding to abstain from meats*" (1 Timothy 4:1) = no meat on Friday (allowed fish, yet Jesus when Jesus asked, "Have ye here any meat?" The disciples "gave him a piece of a broiled *fish*" (Luke 24:41-42).
 - In this era of time, a hierarchical system was developing
 - ** some were more preeminent than others (superior); pope, cardinals, bishops, priests
 - ** "*I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not. Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church*" (3 John 1:9-10) = doctrine of excommunication

SPIRITUAL ECLIPSE

"And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord GOD, that I will cause the sun to go down at noon, and I will darken the earth in the clear day" (Amos 8:9).

- sun arose = morning time
- sun went down at noon = apostasy (a spiritual eclipse)
- public message going out of sight
- If you were to study history and read some of the writings of the supposed church fathers during this second century, you would find that their writings became heretical. They were false, and they brought in paganistic ideas.

SEVEN SEALS

"And I saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne a book written within and on the backside, sealed with seven seals" (Revelation 5:1).

- **Why was the book sealed?**
- Book was sealed (shut up; hidden) from people who were not supposed to receive understanding (**Key:** Isaiah 29:11 – "*And the vision of all is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed, which men deliver to one that is learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I cannot; for it is sealed.*")
- **Was it to always be sealed?** (Isaiah 29:18 – "*And in that day shall the deaf hear the words of the book, and the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity, and out of darkness.*")
- "*in that day*" (review: "*latter days*" Daniel 2:28; "*last days*" Joel 2:28-29; "*this is the day*" Acts 2:16-17) = the Gospel Day
 - Isaiah said "*in that day*" (Gospel Day) "*words of the book*" will be heard & seen
- **"words of a book"** = doctrine (**Key:** Isaiah 29:29 speaks of coming to understanding & learning doctrine)
- Doctrine = "*all Scripture*" (**Key:** 2 Timothy 3:16)
- The "*book that is sealed*" = the Word of God
- This book was "*sealed*" (shut up) under the Old Testament (they couldn't understand it)

- Daniel 12:4 – *"But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased."*
- **Are we still in a time when the seals are closed?**
- Revelation 5:5 – *"And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof."*
- **When did this happen?**
 - Revelation 5:6 – *"And I beheld . . . a Lamb as it had been slain"*
 - only after Christ's death & His sending the Holy Spirit could mankind have spiritual understanding
 - need Word (Christ) and the Spirit (loosing the seals, giving understanding)
- **Seals** = Holy Spirit giving understanding (**Key:** Ephesians 1:13; 4:30); seals will never be opened until Christ sends the Holy Spirit to give understanding)
- When the time was right, Christ (through the Holy Spirit) sent understanding to the hearts of people

WHAT ARE THE SEVEN SEALS?

- Seven letters (seven letters of praise & charges to local congregations, which best represented church periods of the Gospel Day)
- Seven trumpets (the message sounded during the Gospel Day – seven times)
- Seven seals (Christ sending the Holy Spirit to give understanding concerning the spiritual enemies God's people were facing – seven times)
- **1st seal** = vision of white horse (Holy Spirit) – A.D. 33-270
- **2nd seal** = vision of red horse (spirit of unbelief that motivated the pagan Roman empire) – A.D. 33-270
- **3rd seal** = vision of "black horse" (spirit of apostasy) – A.D. 270-530
- **4th seal** = vision of pale horse (spirit of compromise) – A.D. 530-1530
- **5th seal** = understanding of the message of holiness (Rev. 6:9-11) – A.D. 1730-1880
- **6th seal** = understanding of the message of unity of the faith & the message on the one church – A.D. 1880-1930
- **7th seal** = light of all seven days – A.D. 1930-end of time

The prevailing, spiritual condition of this age was darkness, coldness, and deadness. Nevertheless, God still had a faithful people. Notice, no charge against the people of Smyrna.