

Lucan: It's time to begin; Bro. David, will you please open with prayer?

Zahakiel: Almighty and loving Father in Heaven, We give you thanks for the many blessings you have poured upon us in the past week. We thank you for health and strength, and for everything that pertains to godliness. We gather now in your presence with thanksgiving, and with hearts and minds open to your particular Sabbath blessing, which is brought to us through your servant by your Holy Spirit. May we each draw from this the intended light, for we ask it in Yahshua's name. Amen

Pastor Chick: Amen.

Lucan: Amen

Adriel777: Amen

daphna dee: Amen

Elyna: Amen.

Barb: Amen

Naraiel: Amen

Lucan: Tonight I will be sharing the first of a two part study of the seven church ages in Revelation. This is a revision of a study I gave in Canada several years ago, and as it runs long in text, tonight will be primarily a refresher of the ages leading up to the era of "present truth" under Adventism, where much of the meat for our time is found.

In a recent meeting we discussed the use of the word "angel" in prophecy, as applied at times to a messenger or movement with a message to bear. Revelation begins with messages to be sent "unto the angel of" seven different churches in Asia, which are understood to be messages to the ministers of those churches, or the movements and periods they are active in. While the entire book of Revelation is written to these seven particular churches (Revelation 1:11), it also indicates that it was intended to be spread well beyond them, both through the world and through the ages, until the time of Yahshua's return. (Revelation 22:18, 19; 1:3, 19)

Why, then, these particular seven churches, of all the churches in Asia and the world? As is common in prophecy, and when interacting with Yahweh in general, we find that names are important. As with John's other writings, Revelation repeats itself in a number of ways; just as there are seven seals and seven thunders, there are seven churches, each belonging to a particular successive age or era of the gospel church. The names of and warnings to the churches give insight into their application, and while we will cover those briefly, I would also like to call special attention to the message Yahshua has for the movement in each age regarding Himself.

In each message to the churches, Yahshua introduces Himself with a different description, calling attention to some particular aspect of His character that is particularly relevant to the believers in that era. We will begin where Scripture begins, with Ephesus:

"Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks; I

know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars: And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted. Nevertheless I have [somewhat] against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent. But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. 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 tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God." (Revelation 2:1-7) (LMK)

Zahakiel: Finished

Barb: F

Naraiel: F

Pastor Chick: F

Gloria: F

daphna dee: F

Elyna: F

Lucan: With Ephesus, we begin with the very first stage of the gospel dispensation, the Apostolic church. The name means "desirable," and is a fitting description of first century Christianity – the era in which the writings which would become the New Testament were authored, and in which those who walked with Yahshua personally were still active in combating apostasy. There is a reason that the Scriptures written in this time, are the standard by which truth is to be measured. Regarding those who say they are apostles and are not, we see examples in what were then modern writings: "For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ." (2 Cor. 11:13)

"That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand." (2 Thess. 2:2)

Of the Nicolaitans and their deeds, we have very little written in history or Scripture aside from the two mentions in Revelation. The name itself is a composite of the words "nikos," meaning "victory, to utterly vanquish, to conquer or destroy", and "laos," meaning "people" – the root from which the word "laity" was taken to refer to non-clergy. We see a name, then, that means the victory over and conquering of the people. This we also see arising in the time of the Apostles:

"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)

This is a spirit, we may note, that is increasingly common among independent Adventists in this generation. Yahshua does not have words of commendation for such that hold the deeds of the Nicolaitans.

Yahshua introduces Himself to the Ephesian church era as the one that holds the seven stars, and walks in the midst of the seven candlesticks. For what this means, we need only look a chapter earlier:

"The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches." (Revelation 1:20)

Yahshua here presents Himself as the one that is in the midst of the Church from beginning to end, and who holds the messengers/angels/movements of them in His hand. In a time where apostasy and the delay of Yahshua's expected return were the major challenges to the faith, this was no small comfort.

Continuing with Smyrna, then: "And unto the angel of the church in Smyrna write; These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive; 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. 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. 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." (Revelation 2:8-11)

"Smyrna" means "Myrrh," an aromatic spice with a sweet smell that only is only released when crushed. The next age of the Church is that of persecution at the hands of pagan Rome, a time during which Christians were martyred widely. This is the time during which Christians hid in the Roman catacombs, and to the many souls called to suffer death in this time, Yahshua introduces Himself as the one who had Himself been dead, but has overcome and is now alive. He ends His message by reminding them that, while they may be called to suffer the first death, those who overcome will not be hurt by the second death. (Revelation 2:8-11)

The ten days of tribulation follow the rule of prophecy in which a day equals a year, and corresponds a 10 year period between 303 and 313 A.D. under Emperor Diocletian. Beginning with the "Edict against the Christians" and ending with the much less directly named "Edict of Milan," this period is noted as the most bloody and severe of the pagan Roman persecutions against Christianity. The "synagogue of Satan," composed of those who say they are Jews and are not, has application to those in this era who failed to take part in the new covenant, and thus were not truly the children of Abraham. This is a group that is mentioned again later in the prophecy, and as such, we will spend some additional time reviewing it now.

When the veil between the holy and Most Holy was torn, the old covenant passed away; the way was no longer open for mediation by the Levitical priesthood. New light had come, and those who remained behind were left in darkness. Those who claimed to be Jews, yet stood before God without a High Priest to atone for sin, composed the "synagogue of Satan." Paul speaks of this elsewhere:

"For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God. Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel: Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called. That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed." (Romans 2:28, 29; 9:6-8) (LMK)

Pastor Chick: F

Adriel777: F

Gloria: F

Barb: F

daphna dee: F

Zahakiel: Finished

Elyna: (Please continue, I have to catch up)

Naraiel: F

Lucan: Thus, the only true Jew is a spiritual one, and those who claim to be the children of God while rejecting (or perverting) the gospel are not true Jews. Whether this is done by a rejection of Yahshua Himself, a rejection of His power to save fully from sin, or a denial of the banner He has called us to bear makes no difference in the sight of God. This is a principle we will revisit in the next half of the study, when the Synagogue of Satan returns in a much later age. For now, we will continue to the next age after the Roman persecutions, Pergamos:

"And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write; These things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges; 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. 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. So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate. Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth. 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]." (Revelation 2:12-17) (LMK)

Zahakiel: Finished

Gloria: F

Adriel777: F

Barb: F

daphna dee: F

Pastor Chick: F

Lucan: Pergamos is a name that applies in two ways to the next age of the Church after the Roman persecutions. "Pergamos" means height or elevation, and is derived from the word for "tower." While this has application to Babel and the elevation of Christianity under the embrace of Rome that occurred in the era symbolized by this church, it is also worth noting that "gamos" means "marriage." The word "per" is often untranslated, but when attached to a word gives it the meaning of "thoroughly" – meaning that the word to which it is attached must be taken to its fullest possible extent. Therefore, "Pergamos" means "Height and elevation" as in a tower, and also can be read as "thoroughly, completely married." It should come as no surprise that this era applies to the time in which the church took another husband than Christ. Satan's seat and place of dwelling are mentioned twice in this prophecy, and a study of Revelation 13 demonstrates this to be Rome under the symbol of the dragon.

The Nicolaitans are brought into view again, and the meaning is consistent; in this era the conquering and subjugation of the people again takes place, with the result that "Antipas," a faithful martyr, was slain among them. As with most names in this prophecy, there is no record in Church history of an individual named Antipas. The name, however, means "Anti-Father." It is worth noting that the word "Pope" comes from the Latin translation of this word, making the rendition "Anti-Pope" valid. Those who opposed the rise of the bishops and popes to political power were martyred in body and in principle, and are here called faithful.

Now, we briefly mentioned the "Edict of Milan" as the end of the persecutions in Smyrna. This is a bit of Church history that is familiar to any who have read the article, "The Controverted Name" http://www.faithofjesus.to/sda_name.html on our websites; this edict is the one that returned the property to "the Christians." It was this edict that was used by the Christians in Rome to assert their authority as the only true "Christians," and to ask the emperor to enforce that particular trademark name. Thus, we see the commendation to those who "holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith."

The doctrine of Balaam, inducing the faithful to fornicate and commit idolatry, is well mirrored in the acceptance of a multitude of pagan doctrines and practices into Christianity during this age. This doctrine of compromise with the world had results that are evident to this day in false doctrines such as the trinity, the immortality of the soul, and the mixing of churches with corporate dealings and worldly policy. It was in this age that religious corporations were born, that the use of civil power to settle religious identity disputes arose, and that the "complete marriage" of the church to the world took place. As A.T. Jones well said, "Thus was formed the union of church and state, out of which came the Beast, and all that the papacy has ever been, or ever can be."

As with the beast, so with the image.

To those enduring the trials of this era, standing fast against the arbitrary authority of church and state, Yahshua describes Himself as the one who has the sharp sword with two edges: "For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." (Hebrews 4:12)

This period extends from the beginning of the union of church and state under Constantine, beginning in 313 as the persecutions of Smyrna ended, and lasts until the complete rise to power of the Papacy in 538 A.D. While we ourselves occupy a different era in the prophecy, we also are familiar with resisting the image of the beast that was first formed during this era, and the indescribable comfort found in the support of the Word for such resistance.

The next church has one of the longest messages given to it, and covers one of the longest periods of time:

"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; 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. 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. And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not. Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds. 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. 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. But that which ye have [already] hold fast till I

come. And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: 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. And I will give him the morning star. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." (Revelation 2:18-29) (LMK)

Zahakiel: Finished

Pastor Chick: F

Gloria: F

Barb: F

Adriel777: F

daphna dee: F

Lucan: "Thyatira" has an uncertain origin, with interpretations ranging from "Odor of affliction," "Sweet savor of labor," and "sacrifice of contrition." Comparing the first and second elements of each, a picture emerges: Odor/sweet savor/sacrifice, and affliction/labor/contrition. We see then a period of the Church in which great difficulty and trial brings about a sweet smelling sacrifice before Yahweh.

To the saints during the 1260 year period of Papal domination, between 538 and 1798 A.D., Yahshua describes Himself as the Son of God, with eyes like fire and feet like fine brass: "Then I lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and behold a certain man clothed in linen, whose loins [were] girded with fine gold of Uphaz: His body also [was] like the beryl, and his face as the appearance of lightning, and his eyes as lamps of fire, and his arms and his feet like in colour to polished brass, and the voice of his words like the voice of a multitude." (Daniel 10:5, 6)

This description would call the readers to the prophecies of Daniel, which we will see in a moment was an important message to receive in this era. The application of the name Thyatira is quite similar to that of Smyrna, however while Smyrna had no reproof given to it in their resistance of pagan persecution, those in the age of Thyatira had a few things against them. The teachings of Jezebel, who called herself a prophetess, are the precise same as those of Balaam listed in the previous church age. This shows that the "space given her to repent of her fornication" was not taken advantage of, whereas those who were faithful improved their works til the last were better than the first. Whereas before it was "them that hold the doctrine of Balaam," now it is a Woman with children and a name meaning "unchaste", falsely calling herself a prophetess of God. This description mirrors that of Babylon, mother of harlots in later chapters, as do the warnings of judgments against her.

Once more, as with the beast, so with the image; a time of probation was extended to those in apostasy and liaison with the world, yet rather than repent, they cemented their rebellion in persecution and unchurched themselves. It is for this reason that Yahshua rebukes His people for allowing the woman to teach them, leading them into error.

Covering the 1260 year period between 538 and 1798 AD, the age of Thyatira spans the domination of the Papacy over the people of God while at the head of the Roman Catholic Church, or "that woman Jezebel." The "odor of affliction" certainly arose during this era from such affronts as the inquisition, the crusades, and the many martyrdoms covered in works such as Foxes' Book of Martyrs.

This era covers not only the early Reformation of Luther's time and following, but also the centuries before the people of God declared in no uncertain terms that the Roman system was in no way, shape, or form the Church of Christ any longer. To both those who were ignorantly within the system, "which have not known the depths of Satan," and those who had removed themselves, Yahshua reproves them for allowing the false prophetess to teach and seduce His servants.

Well would it be for those who still sit at the feet of the General Conference's teachers, seeking to "work from within," to consider the principles of this rebuke. Yahweh does not authorize His people to seek light among the fallen, or to invite the teaching of those who have rejected His warnings and instructions.

Nonetheless, Yahshua commends this age for their works twice, with the last being more than the first. This indicates an improvement in their spiritual state, which is frequently the result of persecution. It further speaks to their rejection of several of the errors introduced in the age of Pergamos, and Yahshua closes by instructing them to hold fast that which they do have until He comes.

Whereas the false church in this era made war against the saints and prevailed against them using the power of the nations, Yahshua promises to those who are faithful that they will have power over the nations, which will be broken into pieces before them. This concludes the message to Thyatira and brings us to the time of the end, beginning with Sardis, "that which remains."

It is during this next age that the scene is set for the Adventist people's appearance in the prophecy, and it is in the next three messages to the churches that we will find the messages and events with which we are most directly involved. We will resume with Sardis when we meet for the conclusion of this study; for now, we will conclude for the evening.

Are there any questions or comments on what we've covered so far? If not, I'll ask Pastor to close with prayer.

Pastor Chick: Dear Father in Heaven. We know where we are on the prophetic clock and we are thankful for Your Guidance as we finish the work of the 3 angels in the power of the fourth angel. We thank You for blessing our Sabbath with Your continued Presence. In Yahshua's holy name, Amen.

Gloria: Amen.

daphna dee: Amen

Lucan: Amen

Barb: Amen

Zahakiel: Amen.

Elyna: Amen.

gadriel: Amen

Adriel777: Amen