

Revelation Study (Part 4)

THYATIRA (A.D. 1530-1730): the fourth time period of the Gospel Day (also called the Lutheran era)

- 4th letter = Revelation 2:18-29
- Characteristic of this city/congregation best represent the fourth time period of the Gospel Day
- 48 miles southeast of Pergamos; move toward east (light) & south (warmth)

PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THYATIRA

- Its early history is not well known, for until it was refounded by Seleucus Nicator (301-281 B.C.) it was a small, insignificant town.¹
- known for its trade guilds (unions); every skilled tradesman belonged to a guild
- each guild possessed property in its own name & had great influence
- the streets of this city were paved with fragments of sculptured stone from wrecked temples of worship
- The word *Thyatira* literally means "dominating female"

HOW DID CHRIST APPEAR TO THIS CANDLESTICK AGE?

"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" (Revelation 2:18).

- Christ knew what the church in each era would be dealing with; He appeared according to their spiritual needs
- **Ephesus** - stars (ministry) in Christ's right hand (control)
- **Smyrna** - first and last (unchanging Christ)
- **Pergamos** - sharp sword with two edges (the Word was what they needed to overcome)
- **Thyatira** - eyes like unto a flame of fire (the sword—the Word—would come through the eyes, the ministry; Hebrews 1:7)
 - Christ's eyes = His ministry
 - the ministry would wield the sword, delivering a deadly wound to the beast (Catholicism)

THE REFORMATION BEGINS

- Until now (in the Gospel Day) the move has always been north & west
 - now moving out of the "north country" (cold condition)
 - gradual restoration of truth
- Light on justification
 - Catholicism taught salvation through works
 - God gave Martin Luther light – *"the just shall live by faith"* (Romans 1:17).
- Who was Martin Luther?
 - He was a German monk (monk = one who lives with other monks, separate from the

¹ <http://www.bible-history.com/isbc/T/THYATIRA/>

- public, devoting his life to the rules of that order)
- highly educated with a doctorate degree.
- Luther was extraordinarily successful as a monk. He plunged into prayer, fasting, and extreme self-denial practices—going without sleep, enduring bone-chilling cold without a blanket, and beating himself. As he later commented, "If anyone could have earned heaven by the life of a monk, it was I." ²

SCALA SANCTA

- "Holy Stairs" in Rome that tradition says were the original steps Jesus climbed when standing before Pilate.
 - These were supposedly brought to Rome in the 4th century by St. Helena (mother of Constantine).
 - Catholicism teaches that indulgences can be earned by climbing these steps on your knees.
 - In Catholic theology, an **indulgence** is the full or partial remission of temporal punishment due for sins which have already been forgiven.³
 - Some writings say Luther received light on Romans 1:17 while climbing these stairs.
- "At last meditating day and night, by the mercy of God, I began to understand that the righteousness of God is that through which the righteous live by a gift of God, namely by faith. Here I felt as if I were entirely born again and had entered paradise itself through the gates that had been flung open." (Martin Luther) ⁴

INDULGENCES:

- Luther began to object to the indulgences being sold by Johann Tetzel
 - Indulgences were documents prepared by the church and bought by individuals either for themselves or on behalf of the dead that would release them from punishment due to their sins
 - indulgences: not payment for sin, but payment for punishment (partial or complete)
 - Tetzel was to raise money for building St. Peter's Basilica (world's largest church)
 - This greatly disturbed Martin Luther

THE NINETY-FIVE THESES:

- Luther wrote "Disputation of Martin Luther on the Power and Efficacy of Indulgences," which came to be called *The Ninety-Five Theses*.
 - **Theses**: lengthy, formal document based on research to advance one's point of view

Examples:

#32 – Those who believe that they can be certain of their salvation because they have indulgence letters will be eternally damned, together with their teachers.

² <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ch/131christians/theologians/luther.html>

³ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Plenary_indulgence

⁴ <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ch/131christians/theologians/luther.html>

#36 – Any truly repentant Christian has a right to full remission of penalty and guilt, even without indulgence letters.

#86 – Why does not the pope, whose wealth is today greater than the wealth of the richest Crassus, build this one basilica of St. Peter with his own money rather than with the money of poor believers? (Note: Crassus was believed to be the richest man in Roman history.)

- October 31, 1517, Luther posted the ninety-five theses, which he had composed in Latin, on the door of the Castle Church of Wittenberg, according to university custom.
 - It wasn't unusual to post an argument in this manner and invite public debate.
 - But word of this soon reached the Pope.
- June 15, 1520, Pope Leo X issued a rebuttal to Luther's Ninety-Five Theses. But in 1518 (two years earlier) thanks to the invention of the printing press, the Theses had already been printed & spread throughout Europe.
- In the Pope's rebuttal was a warning to Luther that if he didn't recant this Theses (and other writings), he would be excommunicated. Luther publicly set fire to the "bull" (papal letters) and was excommunicated January 3, 1521.

PAPAL ROME'S EXCLUSIVE POWER WAS BROKEN

- Martin Luther used the sword of truth, and dealt a "deadly wound" to the beast (Revelation 13:12).
- A.D. 1530 – The Diet of Augsburg
 - Diet of Augsburg = an assembly (diet) of representatives from many of the states met together to make decisions
 - Luther was invited by the Emperor Charles V, who hoped Luther would recant his teachings
 - Some princes (who pressured the Emperor to invite Luther) hoped this would weaken papal Rome's exclusive power
 - Didn't work out as the Emperor & Papal Rome hoped:
 - Luther stopped & preached in towns on his way
 - When he arrived, he was welcomed & cheered by the people
 - Luther wouldn't take back his teachings: "Unless I am convinced by Scripture and plain reason - I do not accept the authority of the popes and councils, for they have contradicted each other - my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and I will not recant anything for to go against conscience is neither right nor safe. God help me. Amen."⁵
 - Luther couldn't be arrested; he had a letter of safe conduct
 - Luther & others presented *The Augsburg Confession* to the Emperor & others at the Diet
 - *The Augsburg Confession*: Articles that set forward what the "Lutherans" believed
 - The Emperor did his best to suppress the reading of these articles, delegating the place for the reading: "the little chapel."
 - Against the Emperor's wishes, Christian Beyer (Saxon chancellor) stepped into the middle of the assembly & began to read. The reading "lasted two hours and was so

⁵ <http://www.luther.de/en/worms.html>

distinct that every word could be heard outside." ⁶

- The Emperor declared Luther an outlaw and made it a crime for anyone to give Luther shelter or food. It also permitted anyone to kill Luther without legal consequences.
- But God protected Luther. He went on to translate the Bible into German, he wrote many pamphlets and many hymns (*A Mighty Fortress Is Our God*).

A GREAT STAR FELL

"And the third angel sounded, and there fell a great star from heaven, burning as it were a lamp, and it fell upon the third part of the rivers, and upon the fountains of waters; And the name of the star is called Wormwood: and the third part of the waters became wormwood; and many men died of the waters, because they were made bitter" (Revelation 8:10-11).

- **"third angel sounded"** = ministry with the message of truth on justification
 - The Thyatiran age had only one light—the message of justification.
 - Most of what they had was cloudiness, confusion, and darkness.
 - So when people of the Thyatiran era failed to continue to walk in light, Jesus said the light that was in them became darkness (John 12:35).
- **"stars"** = pastors or ministry
 - this was a **"great star"** because the darkness had been so great
- **"burning"** = ministry had fire (Holy Spirit)
- **"a lamp"** = lamp is the Word
 - *"Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path";* Psalm 119:105
 - more specifically, this ministry had the truth about salvation (Isaiah 62:1 – *"Salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth."*)
- **"fell"** = star was in Christ's hand (Revelation 1:16), but the ministry started wandering (Jude 13) and they fell out of Christ's hand and into the hands of men
 - Just as when the mountain fell into the sea, the fire went out; when this burning star fell, the fire went out.
- **"made bitter"** = The ministry became bitter; the people became bitter; and they died.
 - Compare to the name of the rider of the pale horse (Death); Protestantism killed (spiritually) those who were once spiritually alive

ANOTHER BEAST

"And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon" (Revelation 13:11).

- **"two horns"** (horn = power)
 - political powers of two locations = England & Germany
 - spiritual powers of two eras = Thyatira & Sardis
- **"like a lamb"** – much more deceptive than Catholicism; looks like the real thing
 - lamb = sheep
 - Matthew 7:15 – *"Beware of **false prophets**, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves."*
 - Jesus compared them to "false prophets"

⁶ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Augsburg_Confession

- Revelation 16:13 also calls this organization "the false prophet"
- notice: this beast doesn't have near as many descriptors as the previous beast; why? (Protestantism takes many forms)
- **"spake as a dragon"**
 - dragon = paganism
 - what is an example of "dragon talk"?
 - paganism had many gods; Protestantism has multiple faiths: "go to the church of your choice."
 - This beast looked like a Christian system, but it was when he began to talk—teach, speak, and preach—that he showed exactly what he was.
- This beast is also called **"the image of the beast"** (Revelation 13:15).
 - what does it mean to make an image of something? (a likeness)
 - the literal streets of Thyatira being paved w/fragments from wrecked pagan temples is a picture of the Lutheran era breaking the exclusive rule of papalism into fragments with the sword of truth. Yet, although they broke it up into fragments, they did not remove those fragments. They did not remove those teachings. They continued to travel and conduct business on them.

THE WOUND WAS HEALED

"And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth . . . saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live" (Revelation 13:14).

- they healed the very wound that they had inflicted; how?
 - In the beginning they taught against salvation by works, but today Lutheranism is as full of works as Roman Catholicism.
 - Today Lutheranism has catechism classes, confirmations, christenings, and infant baptism just like Catholicism; they burn candles and observe Lent just like Catholicism.
- The word *Thyatira* literally means "dominating female."
 - In Jesus' letter to Thyatira, He said, "Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel" (to teach, seduce & eat things sacrificed to idols)
- Why the reference to Jezebel?
 - Jezebel means "unhusbanded" (without a husband; uncultivated, wild)
 - In the Old Testament, she was a strong-willed, domineering woman.
 - The system of Protestantism refused to allow the husband His proper place. (Review "seven women" – own bread, own apparel.)
- In the literal, Jezebel was a dominating female who seduced Israel and caused them to commit idolatry and spiritual adultery.
 - Protestantism is a very dominate religion that causes people to do such things as ***"eat things sacrificed unto idols"*** (4th letter; Revelation 2:20).
 - Many of Protestantism's practices came from papalism; papalism got them from paganism. These practices are not godly or even Christian.
- One of the things that Protestants disliked so much about Rome was her intolerance.
 - However, in time Protestantism became just as intolerant.
- This Protestant system is a **"beast"** just like papalism is a beast.

"Great strides of progress were made during the days of the reformation until disagreement arose among the reformers. They could not agree on certain points of doctrine, so division came among them. The disagreements became so bitter that the different groups began to oppose one another and went so far as to send armies on the battlefields to support their creed with carnal weapons. Each group made their own regulations, wrote their own creeds and disciplines, and upheld them by every possible means. Luther denounced Zwingli as a heretic. The Calvinists would have no dealings with the Lutherans. Calvin consented to the burning of Servetus because of differences of religious views. While in England, we are told, the Anglican Protestants waged bitter war against the Catholics and also Protestants who would not conform to the established church." (*Come Out of Her My People* by Harold Barber)

(Answers for handout)

- (1) "third trumpet angel" = ministry proclaiming the message on justification
- (2) "another beast" – also known as the false prophet (Revelation 16:13) and the image of the beast (Revelation 13:15).
- (3) "two horns" (horns = power); spiritual power (2 eras); political power (2 locations)
- (4) book the Word is beginning to open, showing that understanding is opening up