

BETWEEN THE LINES

A Deeper Look...

#850- SAINTLY REWARDS FOR REVELATION'S SEVEN CHURCHES

On our broadcast we have considered the messages to the seven churches of Revelation 2 and 3. Let's dig a bit deeper into these magnificent messages by creating something of a chart. On this "chart" we'll detail the three possible interpretations of these messages. (Who says they can't all be right?) We'll also get to know those historic sites a bit better as we touch briefly on some of the history of those towns. Lastly we'll touch on the messages of the text... admonitions, counsel, compliments, and the rewards promised to the over-comers.

EPHESUS

ISSUES CONTEMPORARY TO JOHN IN THAT TOWN/CHURCH: The "Market of Asia", the center of the Diana/Atreus cultic practices and a city steeped in magic. (See BTL 925 on "Paul's Postmarks") Because of the constant focus on those two elements it would have been very easy for new Christians of that town to revert back to the old mercenary, Diana-focused way of life.

DEBATED DATES OF "TIME FRAME INTERPRETATION" FULFILLMENT: To death of apostles... circa a.d. 100.

CHARACTERISTICS FOR "PERSONALITY INTERPRETATION": Not at all unlike the thin topsoil type of person Jesus spoke of in His famous parable in Matthew 13.

ADMONITIONS: You've lost your first love.

COUNSEL: Remember what you've surrendered and repent.

COMPLIMENTS: I know how hard you tried in the beginning... it's just that you've left your moorings.

PROMISED REWARDS: I will return to you the first thing that you lost- access to the Tree of Life!

SMYRNA

ISSUES CONTEMPORARY TO JOHN IN THAT TOWN/CHURCH: A town noted in the empire for its perfume industry. Just as the flowers were constantly being "crushed" it was true that the church suffered the same, nearly continual fate. Eventually Polycarp dies there in 155 a.d.

DEBATED DATES OF "TIME FRAME INTERPRETATION" FULFILLMENT: Roughly a.d. 100 to 323 a.d.

CHARACTERISTICS FOR "PERSONALITY INTERPRETATION": The person who withstands constant rejection for Jesus... the ones who Matthew 5 states will inherit the kingdom of Heaven for having been persecuted "for righteousness sake".

ADMONITIONS: None, I understand your suffering.

COUNSEL: Don't be afraid of what you'll suffer... it's only temporary. Be faithful, even unto death, and I personally will give you the crown of life!

COMPLIMENTS: I know what you're going through. I've been there too!

PROMISED REWARDS: You'll face one death, but it's only for a while. The second death will not touch you at all.

PERGAMOS

ISSUES CONTEMPORARY TO JOHN IN THAT TOWN/CHURCH: The exalted capital of the Roman province of Asia. A city of great privilege in the empire. It contained mighty statues to Zeus, Dionysus, and Athena.

DEBATED DATES OF "TIME FRAME INTERPRETATION" FULFILLMENT: Circa a.d. 323-538

CHARACTERISTICS FOR "PERSONALITY INTERPRETATION": Someone who lives a very popular Christianity, whose faith is not challenged and therefore can become like the description of Jeshuran in Deuteronomy 32... "Jeshuran waxed fat and kicked..."

ADMONITIONS: Your existence is very dangerous. You're can easily sell out just as Balaam did.

COUNSEL: Beware and repent! This is no place to get lazy.

COMPLIMENTS: I know many of you have held your faith even though you dwell right in the very seat of Satan.

PROMISED REWARDS: I'll give you hidden manna (access to the ark?), a white stone (as chosen by lot?), and a new name (after all, you'll be married to God and not the world!).

THYATIRA

ISSUES CONTEMPORARY TO JOHN IN THAT TOWN/CHURCH: Though not the major center of any specific cultic system it appears that the trade guilds encouraged specific idolatries and drunkenness. (Both eventually were good for the business of the guilds.)

DEBATED DATES OF "TIME FRAME INTERPRETATION" FULFILLMENT: Perhaps a.d. 538-1517.

CHARACTERISTICS FOR "PERSONALITY INTERPRETATION": A message for good-hearted, well-meaning people who eventually care primarily about not making waves. So determined that they will not offend it appears they stand for nothing.

ADMONITIONS: I know you mean well, but you have grown much too comfortable with the poisonous atmosphere that will, without question, eventually kill you!

COUNSEL: Don't surrender the good part of yourself... face up to your weaknesses.

COMPLIMENTS: I know that when you overcome you will become more than you ever dreamed.

PROMISED REWARDS: I will give you quiet, inner power that will overcome nations (as Jesus did), and I will give you the morning star.

SARDIS

ISSUES CONTEMPORARY TO JOHN IN THAT TOWN/CHURCH: A city with a history of fabulous wealth, the capital of Lydia and the home of the fabled Croesus. Cyrus sacked the city and removed massive amounts of booty and treasure during the Persian expansion. Its wealth and resources continued to a degree but it was a town whose time had passed and was definitely in decline during John's day.

DEBATED DATES OF "TIME FRAME INTERPRETATION" FULFILLMENT: Perhaps a.d. 1517-1798.

CHARACTERISTICS FOR "PERSONALITY INTERPRETATION": Absolutely asleep in spiritual growth. Completely oblivious to their need.

ADMONITIONS: You carry all the actions of living but inside you are dead.

COUNSEL: Remember where you came from, what you've lost, and repent of the casual attitude that allowed it.

COMPLIMENTS: A few of you have hung on against incredible odds... and I know who you are!

PROMISED REWARDS: Over-comers will get white raiment, and will be confessed by the One who protects their name in the book of life.

PHILADELPHIA

DEBATED DATES OF "TIME FRAME INTERPRETATION" FULFILLMENT: Circa a.d. 1798-1844.

CHARACTERISTICS FOR "PERSONALITY INTERPRETATION": The most caring and hospitable of believers. These people are clear conduits of the love of Christ.

ADMONITIONS: God does not say one negative thing about Philadelphia... how very refreshing!

COUNSEL: None is necessary... just hold on.

COMPLIMENTS: You've kept my faith against incredible odds... Thank you!

PROMISED REWARDS: I'll make you an integral part of my temple, and you'll be marked with My name, the name of My Father, and the city of New Jerusalem.

LAODICEA

ISSUES CONTEMPORARY TO JOHN IN THAT TOWN/CHURCH: A town on a major trade route, with a well defined banking system, in a region that was becoming dominant while places like Ephesus were starting to decline. Laodicea was also known for its extensive aqueduct system that provided better water than the lukewarm sulfur springs near the town.

DEBATED DATES OF "TIME FRAME INTERPRETATION" FULFILLMENT: A.D. 1844 onward?

CHARACTERISTICS FOR "PERSONALITY INTERPRETATION": Only spiritual enough to be dangerous. Having enough religion to believe that they have enough.

ADMONITIONS: You are so lukewarm that you don't have a clue. Quite frankly your condition makes me nauseous... and the fact that I love you so much only makes it all the more painful!

COUNSEL: Be zealous in repentance. Let the Holy Spirit lead you into the whole truth about yourself and let me cover your nakedness with my own rich righteousness. (By the way, you are really naked... you just didn't know it!)

COMPLIMENTS: I'm sorry, I just don't have any.

PROMISED REWARDS: I will grant you the place of honor that was so coveted that it was the source of jealousy that caused all rebellion... You will sit with Me on My Father's throne!

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