

BIBLE CLASS: NEW TESTAMENT CHURCHES
Wednesday nights at 7:00Pm September 22

Lesson 11

THE CHURCHES OF THYATIRA AND SARDIS

Not doing as well as they thought

Excerpt from the workbook, "New Testament Churches: Their Strengths and Weaknesses" by Carl MccMurray:

Introduction to Thyatira—Revelation 2:18-29

Thyatira was a wealthy town located on the River Lycus in the Roman province of Asia. The city was originally founded as a border garrison between two major powers and for centuries held strictly to that role. One problem in this area was that there was not a great deal of natural defense to this location. Being forced into a military role, however, the city developed a sense of military strength based on individual valor and readiness. Naturally this attitude ended up dominating the commerce and religious life of the community. The earliest settlers of the town adopted as their god, a local hero, shown in inscriptions as a warrior on horseback armed with a battle ax. The town was never a great metropolis since it was located on none of the Greek trade routes; however, it was still a busy commercial center in its day. Temples located in the city were dedicated to the sun god, Tyrimnos, as well as to the goddesses Boreatene and Sambethe.

Thyatira was especially noted for its well organized trade guilds, similar to labor unions today. Every artisan belonged to a guild and every guild was an incorporated organization possessing property, acquiring contracts, and wielding great influence. Two powerful guilds were the coppersmiths, and the guild of the dyers of which Lydia (Acts 16:14) was probably a member. The purple colored material which the guild sold is now identified by the dye called "Turkish red." The guilds were closely associated with pagan feasts and immoral religious practices so that they naturally became enemies of Christianity. The modern city goes by the name Akhisar and is little more than a large village railway stop of the ManisaSoma Railroad.

THOUGHT QUESTIONS:

1. Considering what you know of the culture of Thyatira, how might it have affected the church there? Feel free to elaborate or infer your conclusion.
2. What are some good points that Jesus commended the Christians in Thyatira for?
3. What is one of the dangers of doing well and feeling good about it?
4. What problem had these busy, working, loving Christians allowed to grow up in their midst?
5. What was probably the way that this false doctrine began to grow in Thyatira?

