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 al- lowed to grow up in their midst?
- 5. What was probably the way that this false doctrine began to grow in Thyatira?

Introduction to Sardis-Revelation 3:1-6

Sardis was one of the oldest cities in Asia Minor, predating the Roman Empire, the Macedonian Empire, and possibly the Medo-Persian Empire. It is possible that the city was founded about 1,200 BC, during the time of the Judges in Israel. The citizens considered themselves quite safe in Sardis because of it being situated on a mountain, at the edge of a high cliff with the River Pactolus flow- ing as a moat at its base. Because of their over-confidence and failure to keep watch, the city had been taken, not once, but twice as men scaled the cliff walls and invaded by stealth.

Gold and silver minted coinage had its origin here since the river was known for its rich flow from the mountains. The city was also noted for its fruits and wool as well as for its temple to the goddess Artemis and its temple dedicated to Cybele. Cybele's worship consisted of hysteria and mutilation and resembled worship to Diana. Today only two columns from that great temple are all that stands. It was also another seat of Caesar worship. It is told that when the citizens desired funds to build a temple for Caesar here, the envoys are recorded as speaking long and loud of the city's past glories and history. The city, as well as the church here it seems, had a name, or reputation, for being alive, but was really dead.

THOUGHT OUESTIONS:

JUGHT QUESTIONS:	
6.	What was one of three problems that Jesus rebuked the church at Sardis for, and how might we avoid it?
7.	What was the second of three problems at Sardis?
8.	What was the third of three problems at Sardis?
9. \	What is needed for a church to save itself and be declared faithful?