Revelation: An Exegetical Study of the Greek Text

I. Purpose: An examination of the Greek text of the book of Revelation designed to supply the student with a general knowledge of the book and its interpretive questions.

II. Course Requirements: To accomplish the above mentioned goal the student will be required to read a commentary on Revelation, as well as the attached notes. These notes are based on A.T. Robertson’s Word Pictures in the New Testament. Then the student will be required to answer, in essay form, the questions found at the end of the lectures. A working knowledge of Greek is also a prerequisite for the course.

III. Textbooks: Select a commentary on Revelation for your textbook. Possibilities would be the two volumes by Robert L. Thomas: Revelation 1-7: An Exegetical Commentary and Revelation 8-22: An Exegetical Commentary, or the two volumes in the International Critical Commentary by R.H. Charles, Revelation I and II. Single volume commentaries include J.M. Ford's Revelation, which is part of the Anchor Bible Commentary or Leon Morris' Revelation, part of the Tyndale New Testament Commentary. There are many others. It is to your advantage as a student to get more than one commentary, preferably from several theological perspectives. These commentaries can be ordered from The Campus Bookstore.

Introduction

The book of Revelation is perhaps the most misunderstood, and misused of all Biblical books. It has been ignored or misapplied by thousands of Christians for thousands of years. It has been interpreted (or perhaps better, misinterpreted) and made to say things that would, no doubt, horrify John the Seer.

The book has suffered such misunderstanding for a variety of reasons. The primary reason is that many interpreters have failed to take seriously the first verse of the book. This verse is the key to the entire text.

The second reason that the book has been misunderstood is that interpreters have failed to take into account the historical situation of the text. One cannot rightly interpret any material if one does not know why and when it was written.

Now it is an understatement to say that Revelation can be interpreted in a variety of ways; some interpret it as a map of the distant future. Others see it as a description of the whole of human history. There are premillenial interpretations, post millenial, and a-millenial. All of these views compete for followers. The problem, in my view, with all these attempts, is that they fail to take seriously the first verse, which, as I have already said, is the key to the whole book. That is, in short; the book is an unveiling of Jesus. The book is about Jesus! Who is he, and what has he done? That is what the book is about. That is what the first verse says!

Now we must discover the historical situation which gave birth to the book. At the end of the first century the Church (in certain areas) was suffering persecution. The emperor was demanding worship and the Christians were refusing to do so. In consequence the emperor was killing some and seizing the property of others. Here is
how it worked:

In each village and town, as well as the larger cities, a representative of the emperor made an appearance each year. The citizens of the region were required to bring their taxes and present them as an offering to the emperor. They were also asked to swear an oath to the emperor and vow to pray to him yearly. This the Christians could not do. So, as punishment, they were made to forfeit their property. If they continued to refuse they could be (and some were) killed.

In the midst of this dreadful situation the Church was asking, where is Jesus. Has he abandoned us? Does he no longer care for us? John gives answer. As we make progress in discussing the text of the book the historical situation will be brought to bear in order to enlighten the text.

Thus the book was written at the end of the first century in Asia Minor by an exiled Christian who had lost his property and his citizenship for refusing to worship the emperor.

1:1 Ἀποκάλυψις Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ ἡν ἐδωκεν αὐτῷ ὁ θεὸς δειξαι τοῖς δούλοις αὐτοῦ ἢ δεῖ γενέσθαι ἐν τάχει, καὶ ἐσήμανεν ἀποστείλας διὰ τοῦ ἄγγελου αὐτοῦ τῷ δούλῳ αὐτοῦ Ἰωάννη,

Apokalupsis, from apokalupto, old verb, to uncover, to unveil. In the Epistles apokalupsis is used for insight into truth (Eph_1:17) or for the revelation of God or Christ at the second coming of Christ (2Th_1:7; 1Pe_1:7). It is interesting to compare apokalupsis with epiphaneia (2Th_2:8) and phanerosis (1Co 12:7). The precise meaning here turns on the genitive following. Hort takes it as objective genitive (revelation about Jesus Christ) and in this he is most certainly correct. The Revelation is about Jesus, not about the future or the past apart from Him. dei genesthai en tachei. Second aorist middle infinitive of ginomai with dei. See this same adjunct (en tachei) in Luk_18:8; Rom_16:20; Rev_22:6. It is a relative term to be judged in the light of 2Pe_3:8 according to God’s clock, not ours. As one commentator notes, rightly, “Jesus is the medium of all revelation” (Moffatt).

2 δὲ ἐμαρτύρησεν τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ ὃσα εἶδεν.

Emarturesen is an epistolary aorist here, referring to this book. ton logon tou theou Subjective genitive, given by God. The prophetic word as in Rev_1:9; Rev_6:9; Rev_20:4, not the personal Word as in Rev_19:14.

3 Μακάριος ὁ ἀναγινώσκων καὶ οἱ ἀκούοντες τοὺς λόγους τῆς προφητείας καὶ τηροῦντες τὰ ἐν αὐτῇ γεγραμμένα, ὁ γὰρ καιρὸς ἐγγύς.

ho anaginōskōn. Present active singular articular participle of anaginōskō (as in Luk_4:16). Christians in their public worship followed the Jewish custom of public reading of the Scriptures (2Co_3:14.). The church reader (anagnōstēs, lector) gradually acquired an official position. John expects this book to be read in each of the seven churches mentioned (Rev_1:4) and elsewhere. kai tērountes. Present active participle of
tereō, a common Johannine word (1Jo 2:4, etc.). Cf. Mat 7:24. “The content of the Apocalypse is not merely prediction; moral counsel and religious instruction are the primary burdens of its pages” (Moffatt). ho gar kairos eggus. Reason for listening and keeping. On kairos see Mat 12:1, time of crisis as in 1Co 7:29. How near eggus (at hand) is we do not know any more than we do about en tachei (shortly) in Rev 1:1. See also Mark 13:31ff.

4 Ἰωάννης ταῖς ἐπτὰ ἐκκλησίαις ταῖς ἐν τῇ Ἀσίᾳ· χάρις ὑμῖν καὶ εἰρήνη ἀπὸ ὦν καὶ ὧν καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος καὶ ἀπὸ τῶν ἐπτὰ πνευμάτων ὁ ἐνώπιον τοῦ θρόνου αὐτοῦ

These seven cities were the best points of communication with seven districts (Ramsay). There is the one Holy Spirit with seven manifestations here to the seven churches. There are not 7 Holy Spirits!

5 καὶ ἀπὸ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, ὁ μάρτυς, ὁ πιστός, ὁ πρωτότοκος τῶν νεκρῶν καὶ ὁ ἄρχων τῶν βασιλείων τῆς γῆς. Τῷ ἀγαπώντι ἡμᾶς καὶ λύσαντι ἡμᾶς ἐκ τῶν ἀμαρτίων ἡμῶν ἐν τῷ αἴματι αὐτοῦ,

The use of martus of Jesus here is probably to the witness (Rev 1:1) in this book (Rev 22:16.), not to the witness of Jesus before Pilate (1Ti 6:13). ho prōtoton toû nekron. A Jewish Messianic title (Psa 89:27). This indicates that John is addressing a Jewish audience- or at least a congregation very familiar with Jewish Scripture. lusanti. First aorist active participle of luō (Aleph A C), though some MSS. (P Q) read lousanti (washed), a manifest correction. Note the change of tense. Christ loosed us once for all, but loves us always.

6 καὶ ἐποίησεν ἡμᾶς βασιλείαν, ἱερεῖς τῷ θεῷ καὶ πατρὶ αὐτοῦ, αὐτῷ ἡ δόξα καὶ τὸ κράτος εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας [τῶν αἰῶνων]: ἀμήν.

The idea here is that Christians are the true spiritual Israel in God’s promise to Abraham as explained by Paul in Gal 3; Rom 9.

7 Ἰδοὺ ἐρχεται μετὰ τῶν νεφελῶν, καὶ δίσται αὐτῶν πᾶς ὁ φθαλμὸς καὶ οἱ τίνες αὐτῶν ἐξεκέντησαν, καὶ κόψονται ἐπὶ αὐτῶν πᾶσαι αἱ φυλαὶ τῆς γῆς. ναὶ, ἀμήν.

Compare the manifestation of God in the clouds at Sinai, in the cloudy pillar, the Shekinah, at the transfiguration” (Vincent). ekekentēsán. First aorist active indicative of ekkenteō, late compound (Aristotle, Polybius, lxx), from ek and kenteō (to stab, to pierce), in N.T., only here and Joh 19:37, in both cases from Zec 12:10, but not the lxx text (apparently proof that John used the original Hebrew or the translation of Theodotion and Aquila). kopsontau. Future middle (direct) of koptō, old verb, to cut, “they shall cut themselves,” as was common for mourners.

8 Ἐγώ εἰμι τὸ άλφα καὶ τὸ ω, λέγει κύριος ὁ θεός, ὁ ὦν καὶ ὧν καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος, ὁ παντοκράτωρ.
Only here and Rev_21:5. is God introduced as the speaker.

9 Ἔγω Ἰωάννης, ὁ ἀδελφός ὑμῶν καὶ συγκοινωνός ἐν τῇ θλίψει καὶ βασιλείᾳ καὶ ὑπομονή ἐν Ἰησοῦ, ἐγενόμην ἐν τῇ νήσῳ τῇ καλουμένῃ Πάτμῳ διά τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ.

Patmos is a rocky sparsely settled island some ten miles long and half that wide, one of the Sporades group in the Aegean Sea, south of Miletus. The present condition of the island is well described by W. E. Geil in The Isle That Is Called Patmos (1905). Here John saw the visions described in the book, apparently written while still a prisoner there in exile.

10 ἐγενόμην ἐν πνεύματι ἐν τῇ κυριακῇ ἡμέρα καὶ ἡκουσα ὑπίσω μου φωνῆν μεγάλην ὡς σάλπιγγος

Deissmann has proven (Bible Studies, p. 217ff.; Light, etc., p. 357ff.) from inscriptions and papyri that the word kuriakos was in common use for the sense “imperial” as imperial finance and imperial treasury and from papyri and ostraca that ἡμέρα Σεβαστῆ (Augustus Day) was the first day of each month, Emperor’s Day on which money payments were made (cf. 1Co_16:1). It was easy, therefore, for the Christians to take this term, already in use, and apply it to the first day of the week in honour of the Lord Jesus Christ’s resurrection on that day (Didache 14, Ignatius Magn. 9).

11 λεγούσης· ὁ βλέπεις γράφων εἰς βιβλίον καὶ πέμψων ταῖς ἐπὶ ἐκκλησίαις, εἰς Ἐφεσον καὶ εἰς Σμύρνην καὶ εἰς Πέργαμον καὶ εἰς Θυάτειρα καὶ εἰς Σάρδεις καὶ εἰς Φιλαδέλφειαν καὶ εἰς Λαοδίκειαν.

12 Καὶ ἐπέστρεψα βλέπειν τὴν φωνήν ἡτὶς ἔλαλει μετ’ ἔμοι, καὶ ἐπιστρέψας έίδον ἐπὶ λυχνίας χρυσάς

13 καὶ ἐν μέσῳ τῶν λυχνιῶν ὄμοιον υἱὸν ἀνθρώπου ἐνδεδυμένον ποδήρη καὶ περιεξωσμένον πρὸς τοῖς μαστοῖς ζώνην χρυσάν.

pros tois mastois. Old word for breasts of a woman (Luk_11:27; Luk_23:29) and nipples of a man, as here. High girding like this was a mark of dignity as of the high priest (Josephus, Ant. III. 7. 2).

14 ἡ δὲ κεφαλὴ αὐτοῦ καὶ οἱ τρίχαις λευκαὶ ως ἔριον λευκόν ως χιών καὶ οἱ όφθαλμοί αὐτοῦ ως φλὸς πυρός

15 καὶ οἱ πόδες αὐτοῦ ὄμοιοι χαλκολιβάνῳ ως ἐν καμίνῳ πεπυρωμένης καὶ ἡ φωνή αὐτοῦ ως φωνὴ ὑδάτων πολλῶν,

chalkolibanō. This word has so far been found nowhere else save here and Rev_2:18. Suidas defines it as an ἐλεκτρόν (amber) or a compound of copper and gold and silver (aurichalcum in the Latin Vulgate). It is in reality an unknown metal.
16 καὶ ἔχων ἐν τῇ δεξιᾷ χειρὶ αὐτοῦ ἄστεράς ἐπτὰ καὶ ἐκ τοῦ στῶματος αὐτοῦ ῥομφαία δίστομος ὀξεία ἐκποιημένη καὶ ἡ ὀψις αὐτοῦ ὡς ὁ ἥλιος φαίνει ἐν τῇ δυνάμει αὐτοῦ.

*Romphaia* (as distinct from *machaira*) is a long sword, properly a Thracian javelin.

17 Καὶ ὅτε εἶδον αὐτόν, ἔπεσα πρὸς τοὺς πόδας αὐτοῦ ὡς νεκρός, καὶ ἔθηκας τὴν δεξιὰν αὐτοῦ ἐπὶ ἐμὲ λέγων. μὴ φοβοῦ, ἐγὼ εἰμί ὁ πρῶτος καὶ ὁ ἕσχατος καὶ ὁ ζῶν, καὶ ἐγενόμην νεκρός καὶ ἑδοὺ ζῶν εἰμὶ εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰῶνων καὶ ἔχω τὰς κλείς τοῦ θανάτου καὶ τοῦ ἄνου.

tou thanatou kai tou haidou. Conceived as in Mat_16:18 as a prison house or walled city. The keys are the symbol of authority, as we speak of honouring one by giving him the keys of the city. Hades here means the unseen world to which death is the portal. Jesus has the keys because of his victory over death.

19 γράψον ὅν ἀ εἰδες καὶ ἀ εἰσίν καὶ ἀ μέλλει γενέσθαι μετὰ ταῦτα.
20 τὸ μυστήριον τῶν ἐπτὰ ἁστέρων οὐς εἶδες ἐπὶ τῆς δεξιᾶς μου καὶ τὰς ἐπτὰ λυχνίας τὰς χρυσὰς. οἱ ἐπτὰ ἁστέρες ἄγγελοι τῶν ἐπτὰ ἐκκλησιῶν εἰσίν καὶ οἱ λυχνίαι οἱ ἐπτὰ ἐκκλησιῶν εἰσίν.

to mystērion tōn hepta asterōn. mystērion means the inner meaning (the secret symbol) of a symbolic vision. Various views of *aggelos* here exist. The simplest is the etymological meaning of the word as messenger from *aggello* (Mat_11:10) as messengers from the seven churches to Patmos or by John from Patmos to the churches (or both). Another view is that *aggelos* is the pastor of the church, the reading τέν γυναίκα σου (thy wife) in Rev 2:20 (if genuine) confirming this view. Some would even take it to be the bishop over the elders as *episcopos* in Ignatius, but a separate *aggelos* in each church is against this idea. Some take it to be a symbol for the church itself or the spirit and genius of the church, though distinguished in this very verse from the churches themselves (the lampstands). Others take it to be the guardian angel of each church assuming angelic patrons to be taught in Mat_18:10; Act_12:15. Each view is encompassed with difficulties, perhaps fewer belonging to the view that the “angel” is the pastor.

2:1 Τῷ ἄγγελῳ τῆς ἐν Ἐφέσῳ ἐκκλησίας γράψον. Τάδε λέγει ὁ κρατῶν τοὺς ἐπτὰ ἁστέρας ἐν τῇ δεξιᾷ αὐτοῦ, ὁ περιπατῶν ἐν μέσῳ τῶν ἐπτὰ λυχνιῶν τῶν χρυσῶν.

en Epheso. Near the sea on the river Cayster, the foremost city of Asia Minor, the temple-keeper of Artemis and her wonderful temple (Act_19:35), the home of the magic arts (Ephesian letters, Act_19:19) and of the mystery-cults, place of Paul’s three years’ stay (Act_19:1-10; 20:17-38), where Aquila and Priscilla and Apollos laboured (Act_18:24-28), where Timothy wrought (1 Tim. and 2 Tim.), where the Apostle John preached in his old age.
2 oîda tâ ergâ sou kai tôn kópon kai tîn ùpomônîn sou kai õti ou dúnh vbastôsas kakôus, kai épeírasas toûs légontas êautôús ápóstôlous kai ouk eisîn kai eîrres aûtôús ùpheîdeîs.

oida. Rather than ginôskô and so “emphasizes better the absolute clearness of mental vision which photographs all the facts of life as they pass” (Swete). See Rev 14:13 for sharp distinction between erga (activities) and kopoi (toils, with weariness). Êndurance (hupomone) in hard toil (kopos).

3 kai ùpomônîn êxeis kai êbâstasas diâ tò ònôma mou kai ou kekopîakês.

“Tired in loyalty, not of it. The Ephesian church can bear anything except the presence of impostors in her membership” (Moffatt).

4 álla êxw kata sô õti tîn âgâpîn sou tîn prôtîn âphîkes.

5 mnêmôneue ouîn pôthên péptôkak kai metanôsîon kai tâ prôtâ erga poîsînon. Êi dê mî, êrchoîaî sou kai kînhsi tîn luçhîsan sou êk tû tôpou aûtîs, êân mi metanôsîsîs.

ei de mê. Elliptical condition, the verb not expressed (metanoeis), a common idiom.

6 álla tôuto êxeis, õti mîseîs tâ erga tîn Nikolaiâtôn kai kâðî miwî.

Trench tells of the words used in ancient Greek for hatred of evil (misoponêria) and misoponêros (hater of evil), neither of which occurs in the N.T. Irenaeus and Hippolytus take this sect to be followers of Nicolaus of Antioch, one of the seven deacons (Act 6:5), a Jewish proselyte, who is said to have apostatized. There was such a sect in the second century (Tertullian), but whether descended from Nicolaus of Antioch is not certain, though possible (Lightfoot). It is even possible that the Balaamites of Rev 2:14 were a variety of this same sect (Rev 2:15).

7 Ō êxwv ouûs âkousâtôv tî tîn pñwvma légei tâis êkkhêsíais. Tû vikônti dúwv aûtî fageîn êk tû tô xûlou tîs zôhîs, õ êstîn ên tû paradoîsw tûv ðeou.

en tôi paradêisoi tou theou. Persian word, for which see Luk 23:43; 2Co 12:4. The abode of God and the home of the redeemed with Christ, not a mere intermediate state. It was originally a garden of delight and finally heaven itself (Trench), as here.

8 Kâi tô ãggêlî tîs ên Smûrneê êkkhêsías grafôn. Tâde légei õ prôtôs kai ô êschatoûs, õc êgêneto nekroûs kai êxîsen:

en Smurnêî. North of Ephesus, on a gulf of the Aegean, one of the great cities of Asia (province), a seat of emperor-worship with temple to Tiberius, with many Jews hostile to Christianity who later join in the martyrdom of Polycarp, poor church (rich in grace) which receives only praise from Christ, scene of the recent massacre of Greeks by the
Turks. Ramsay (op. cit., p. 251) terms Smyrna “the City of Life.” Christianity has held on here better than in any city of Asia.

9 οἶδα σου τὴν θλίψιν καὶ τὴν πτωχείαν, ἀλλὰ πλούσιος εἶ, καὶ τὴν βλασφημίαν ἐκ τῶν λεγόντων Ἰουδαίους εἶναι έαυτούς καὶ οὐκ εἰσὶν ἀλλὰ συναγωγῆ τοῦ σατανᾶ.

10 μηδὲν φοβοῦ ἡ μέλλεις πάσχειν. Ἰδοὺ μέλλει βάλλειν ὁ διάβολος ἐξ ύμῶν εἰς φυλακὴν ἵνα πειρασθῆτε καὶ ἔξετε θλίψιν ἡμερῶν δέκα. γίνου πιστὸς ἀρχι θανάτου, καὶ δύσω σοι τὸν στέφανον τῆς ζωῆς.

**hina peirasthēte.** Purpose clause with **hina** and the first aorist passive subjunctive of **peirazo**. John himself is in exile. Peter and John had often been in prison together. James the brother of John, Paul, and Peter had all suffered martyrdom. **ginou pistos.** “Keep on becoming faithful” (present middle imperative of **ginomai**), “keep on proving faithful unto death”.

11 Ὅ ἔχων οὖς ἀκουσάτω τί τὸ πνεῦμα λέγει ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις. Ὅ νικών οὐ μὴ δικικῇ ἐκ τοῦ θανάτου τοῦ δευτέρου.

12 Καὶ τῇ ὁγγέλῳ τῆς ἐν Περγάμῳ ἐκκλησίας γράψον. Τάδε λέγει ὁ ἔχων τὴν ρομφαίαν τὴν δίστομον τὴν ὀξεῖαν:

**en Pergamōi.** In a north-easterly direction from Smyrna in the Caicus Valley, some fifty-five miles away, in Mysia, on a lofty hill, a great political and religious centre. Ramsay (Op. cit., p. 281) calls it “the royal city, the city of authority.” Eumenes II (b.c. 197-159) extended it and embellished it with many great buildings, including a library with 200,000 volumes, second only to Alexandria. The Kingdom of Pergamum became a Roman province b.c. 130. Pliny termed it the most illustrious city of Asia. Parchment (**charta Pergamena**) derived its name from Pergamum. It was a rival of Ephesus in the temples to Zeus, Athena, Dionysos, in the great grove Nicephorium (the glory of the city). Next to this was the grove and temple of Asklepios, the god of healing, called the god of Pergamum, with a university for medical study. Pergamum was the first city in Asia (a.d. 29) with a temple for the worship of Augustus (Octavius Caesar).

13 οἶδα ποῦ κατοικεῖς, ὅπου οἱ θρόνοι τοῦ σατανᾶ, καὶ κράτεις τὸ δόμομα μου καὶ οὐκ ἤρνησω τὴν πίστιν μου καὶ ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις Ἀντίπας ὁ μάρτυς μου ὁ πιστὸς μου, δς ἀπεκτάνθη παρ’ ὑμῖν, ὅπου ὁ σατανᾶς κατοικεῖ.

Satan not simply resided in Pergamum, but his “throne” or seat of power of king or judge (Mat_19:28; Luk_1:32, Luk_1:52). The symbol of Asklepios was the serpent as it is of Satan (Rev_12:9; Rev_20:2). There was, besides, a great throne altar to Zeus cut on the Acropolis rock, symbol of “rampant paganism” (Swete) and the new Caesar-worship with the recent martyrdom of Antipas made Pergamum indeed a very throne of Satan. **Antipas** Nothing is really known of this early martyr in Pergamum before the writing of the Apocalypse. One legend is that he was burnt to death in a brazen bull. Other martyrs followed him at Pergamum (Agathonice, Attalus, Carpus, Polybus).
Balaam, as Josephus and Philo also say, showed Balak how to set a trap for the Israelites by beguiling them into the double sin of idolatry and fornication, which often went together (and do so still).

Psēphon leukēn. This old word for pebble (from psaõ, to rub) was used in courts of justice, black pebbles for condemning, white pebbles for acquitting. The only other use of the word in the N.T. is in Act_26:10, where Paul speaks of “depositing his pebble” (katēnegka psēphon) or casting his vote. The white stone with one’s name on it was used to admit one to entertainments and also as an amulet or charm.

En Thuateirois. Some forty miles south-east of Pergamum, a Lydian city on the edge of Mysia, under Rome since b.c. 190, a centre of trade, especially for the royal purple, home of Lydia of Philippi (Act_16:14.), shown by inscriptions to be full of trade guilds, Apollo the chief deity with no emperor-worship, centre of activity by the Nicolaitans with their idolatry and licentiousness under a “prophetess” who defied the church there.

tēn gunaika Iezabel. Symbolical name for some prominent woman in the church in Thyatira, like the infamous wife of Ahab who was guilty of whoredom and witchcraft (1Ki_16:31; 2Ki_9:22) and who sought to drive out the worship of God from Israel. Some MSS. here (A Q 40 min.s) have sou̱ (thy wife, thy woman Ramsay makes it), which if correct means she is the pastor’s wife!

21 καὶ ἔδωκα αὐτῇ χρόνον ἵνα μετανοήσῃ, καὶ οὐ θέλει μετανοῆσαι ἐκ τῆς πορνείας αὐτῆς.

22 Ἰδοὺ βαλὼν αὐτὴν εἰς κλίνην καὶ τοὺς μοιχεύοντας μετ’ αὐτῆς εἰς θλίψιν μεγάλην, ἐὰν μὴ μετανοήσωσιν ἐκ τῶν ἔργων αὐτῆς,
23 Kai ta tēkna autēs ἀποκτενῶ ἐν θανάτῳ. Kai γνώσονται πᾶσαι αἱ ἐκκλησίαι ὅτι ἐγὼ εἰμὶ ὁ ἐραυνῶν νεφροῦς καὶ καρδίας, καὶ δῶσο ὑμῖν ἐκάστῳ κατὰ τὰ ἔργα ὑμῶν.

*ta tekna autees*). “Her spiritual progeny” who have completely accepted her Nicolaitan practices.

24 ὑμῖν δὲ λέγω τοῖς λοιποῖς τοῖς ἐν Θυατερίοις, διὸς οὐκ ἠχουσιν τὴν διδαχὴν ταύτην, οἵτινες οὐκ ἠγνοοῦσαν τὰ βαθέα τοῦ σατανᾶ ώς λέγουσιν· ὦ βάλλω ἔφ᾽ ὑμᾶς ἄλλο βάρος,

*ta batheia tou Satanaa*. The Ophites (worshippers of the serpent) and other later Gnostics (Cainites, Carpocratians, Naassenes) boasted of their knowledge of “the deep things,” some claiming this very language about Satan (the serpent) as Paul did of God (1Co_2:10). It is not clear whether the words here quoted are a boast of the Nicolaitans or a reproach on the other Christians for not knowing the depths of sin. Some even claimed that they could indulge in immorality without sinning (1Jo_1:10; 1Jo_3:10). Perhaps both ideas are involved.

25 πλην ὁ ἔχετε κρατήσατε ἄριστε τῷ θεῷ. 26 Καὶ ὁ νικῶν καὶ ὁ παρὼν ἄριστον τὰ ἔργα μου, δῶσω αὐτῷ ἔξουσίαν ἐπὶ τῶν ἐθνῶν
27 καὶ ποιμανεῖ αὐτοὺς ἐν βάρβῳ σιδηρῷ ώς τὰ σκεύη τὰ κεραμικά συντρίβεται,
28 ὡς κάγῳ εἰληφα παρὰ τοῦ πατρὸς μου, καὶ δῶσω αὐτῷ τὸν ἀστέρα τὸν πρωίνον.
29 ὁ ἔχων οὓς ἀκουσάτω τί τὸ πνεῦμα λέγει ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις.

3:1 Kai to ἄγγελῳ τῆς ἐν Σάρδεσιν ἐκκλησίας γράφων· Τάδε λέγει ὁ ἔχων τὰ ἔπτα πνεῦμα ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ τοὺς ἐπτὰ ἀστέρας· οἶδα σου τὰ ἔργα ὅτι ὄνομα ἔχεις ὅτι ζῆς, καὶ νεκρῶς εἶ.

*en Sardesin*. Some thirty miles south-east of Thyatira, old capital of Lydia, wealthy and the home of Croesus, conquered by Cyrus and then by Alexander the Great, in b.c. 214 by Antiochus the Great, at the crossing of Roman roads, in a plain watered by the river Pactolus, according to Pliny the place where the dyeing of wool was discovered, seat of the licentious worship of Cybele and the ruins of the temple still there, called by Ramsay (*op. cit.*, p. 354) “the city of Death,” city of softness and luxury, of apathy and immorality, “a contrast of past splendour and present unresting decline” (Charles). Along with Laodicea it was blamed most of all the seven churches.

2 γίνου γρηγορῶν καὶ στήρισον τὰ λοιπὰ ἀ ἔμελλον ἀποθανεῖν, οὐ γὰρ εὐ ῥηκα σου τὰ ἔργα πεπληρωμένα ἐνώπιον τοῦ θεοῦ μου.

*ginou grēgorōn*. Periphrastic imperative with present middle of ginomai (keep on becoming).
3 μνημόνευε ὁδὸν πῶς ἐξήρθας καὶ ἢκουσας καὶ τῆρει καὶ μετανόησον. ἐὰν ὁδὸν μὴ γρηγορήσῃς, ἤξω ὡς κλέπτης, καὶ ὁδὸν μὴ γνώσῃς ποίαν ὥραν ἤξω ἐπὶ σέ.

hōs kleptēs. As Jesus had already said (Mat_24:43; Luk_12:39), as Paul had said (1Th_5:2), as Peter had said (2Pe_3:10), as Jesus will say again (Rev_16:15).

4 ἀλλὰ ἔχεις ὅλιγα ὄνοματα ἐν Σάρδεσιν ὅ ὁδὸν ἐμόλυναν τὰ ἴματια αὐτῶν, καὶ περιπατήσουσιν μετὶ ἔμοι ἐν λευκοῖς, ὧτι ἄξιοί εἰσιν. ὁ νικῶν οὕτως περιβάλεται ἐν ἴματισι λευκοῖς καὶ ὁδὸν μὴ ἐξαλείψῃ τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ ἐκ τῆς βίβλου τῆς ἰωῆς καὶ ὅμολογησά τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ ἐνώπιον τοῦ πατρὸς μου καὶ ἐνώπιον τῶν ἀγγέλων αὐτοῦ.

ek tēs biblou tēs zōēs. Ablative case with ek. This divine register first occurs in Exo_32:32. and often in the O.T. See Luk_10:20; Phi_4:3; Rev_13:8; Rev_20:15; Rev_21:27. The book is in Christ’s hands (Rev_13:8; Rev_21:27).

5 ὁ ἔξων οὗς ἀκουσάτω τί τὸ πνεῦμα λέγει ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις. Καὶ τῷ ἀγγέλῳ τῆς ἐν Φιλαδέλφειᾳ ἐκκλησίᾳ γράφον· Τάδε λέγει ὁ ἄγιος, ὁ ἀληθινός, ὁ ἔχων τὴν κλεῖν Δαυΐδ, ὁ ἀνοίγων καὶ οὐδεὶς κλείσει καὶ κλείων καὶ οὐδεὶς ἀνοίγει·

en Philadelphiāi. Some twenty-eight miles south-east of Sardis, in Lydia, subject to earthquakes, rebuilt by Tiberius after the great earthquake of a.d. 17, for a time called in coins Neo-Caesarea, in a wine-growing district with Bacchus (Dionysos) as the chief deity, on fine Roman roads and of commercial importance, though not a large city, called by Ramsay (op. cit., p. 392) “the Missionary City” to promote the spread of the Graeco-Roman civilization and then of Christianity, later offering stubborn resistance to the Turks (1379-90 a.d.) and now called Ala-Sheher (reddish city, Charles, from the red hills behind it). The chief opposition to the faithful little church is from the Jews (cf. Rom 9-11). There are some 1,000 Christians there today. ho echōn tēn klein Daueid. This epithet comes from Isa_22:22, where Eliakim as the chief steward of the royal household holds the keys of power.

6 οἱ δὲ εὖ τὸ ἔργα, ἰδοὺ δέδωκα ἐνώπιον σου θύραν ἰδευχόμενην, ἡν οὐδεὶς δύναται κλέψαι αὐτὴν, ὅτι μικρὰν ἔχεις δύναμιν καὶ ἐτήρησας μου τὸν λόγον καὶ οὐκ ἤρνησα τὸ ὄνομά μου.

7 hina hekusin kai proskunosin. “That they come and worship” (final clause, like facio ut in Latin, with hina and the future active of hekō and proskuneō). The language is based on Isa 45:14; Isa 60:14. The Jews expected homage (not worship in the strict sense) from the Gentiles, but it will come to the Christians at last (1Co_14:24). Later Ignatius (Philad. 6) warns this church against Judaizing Christians, perhaps one result of an influx of Jews.

8 ὁδὸν ἔχεις ἔνωσιν σου ποιήσῃ καὶ προσκυνήσουσιν ἐνώπιον τῶν ποιῶν σου καὶ γνώσετε ὅτι ἐγὼ ἡγάπησά σε.
10 ὅτι ἐτήρησας τὸν λόγον τῆς ὑπομονῆς μου, κἀγὼ σε τηρήσω ἐκ τῆς ὁρας τοῦ πειρασμοῦ τῆς μελλούσης ἐρχεσθαι ἐπί τῆς οἴκουμενής ὅλης πειράσαι τοὺς κατοικοῦντας ἐπί τῆς γῆς.

11 ἔρχομαι ταχὺ· κράτει ὁ ἔχεις, ἵνα μὴ δείξης λάβῃ τὸν στέφανον σου.

12 Ὑπὸ τοῦ ποιήσαι αὐτὸν στύλον ἐν τῷ ναῷ τοῦ θεοῦ μου καὶ ἔξω αὐτὸν ἡ ἑξέληθη ἢ καὶ γράψῃ ἐπὶ αὐτὸν τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ θεοῦ μου καὶ τὸ ὄνομα τῆς πόλεως τοῦ θεοῦ μου, τῆς καὶ τοῦ Ἰερουσαλὴμ ἢ καταβαίνουσα ἐκ τοῦ οὕρανον ἀπὸ τὸν θεοῦ μου, καὶ τὸ ὄνομα μου τὸ καίνον.

13 Ὅ έχων οὖς ἀκουσάτω τι τὸ πνεῦμα λέγει ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις.

14 Καὶ τῷ ἀγγέλῳ τῆς ἐν Λαοδίκειᾳ ἐκκλησίας γράφων: Τάδε λέγει ὁ ἅμην, ὁ μάρτυρς ὁ πιστὸς καὶ ἀληθινός, ἢ ἀρχή τῆς κτίσεως τοῦ θεοῦ:

en Laodikiai. Forty miles south-east of Philadelphia and some forty miles east of Ephesus, the last of the seven churches addressed with special messages, on the river Lycus on the border of Phrygia, near Colossae and Hierapolis, recipient of two letters by Paul (Col_4:16), on the great trade-route from Ephesus to the east and seat of large manufacturing and banking operations (especially of woollen carpets and clothing, Ramsay, Cities and Bishoprics of Phrygia, p. 40ff.), centre of the worship of Asklepios and seat of a medical school, home of many Jews, called by Ramsay (op. cit., p. 413) “the City of Compromise,” the church here founded apparently by Epaphras (Col_1:7; Col_4:12.), now a deserted ruin, one of six cities with this name (meaning justice of the people). No praise is bestowed on this church, but only blame for its lukewarmness.

15 σῶδα σου τὰ ἔργα ὃτι οὔτε ψυχρός ἐι οὔτε ξεστός. ὅψελον ψυχρός ἢς ἢ ξεστός.

oute psuchros. Old word from psuchó, to grow cold (Mat_24:12), in N.T. only Mat_10:42 and this passage. oute zestos. Late verbal from zeō, to boil, (Rom_12:11), boiling hot, here only in N.T.

16 οὔτως ὁτι χλιαρός ἐι καὶ οὔτε ξεστός οὔτε ψυχρός, μέλλω σε ἐμέσαι ἐκ τοῦ στόματός μου.

chliaros). Tepid. Old adjective from chlio, to liquefy, to melt, here alone in N.T. mello. “I am about to,” on the point of. se emesai. First aorist active infinitive of emeō, old verb to vomit, to reject with extreme disgust, here alone in N.T.

17 ὅτι λέγεις ὃτι πλουσίως εἶμι καὶ πεπλούτηκα καὶ οὐδὲν χρείαν ἔχω, καὶ οὐκ οἶδας ὃτι σὺ εἰ ὁ ταλαίπωρος καὶ ἐλεείνος καὶ πτωχός καὶ τυφλός καὶ γυμνός,
18 συμβουλεύω σοι ἀγοράσαι παρ᾽ ἐμοῦ χρυσίον πεπουρωμένον ἕκ πυρὸς ἵνα πλουτήσῃς, καὶ ιμάτια λευκὰ ἵνα περιβάλῃ καὶ μὴ φανερωθῇ ἢ αἰσχύνῃ τῆς γυμνότητός σου, καὶ κολλαλύριον ἐγχρίσαι τούς ὀφθαλμούς σου ἵνα βλέπῃς. 19 ἐγὼ δόσος ἐὰν φιλῶ ἐλέγχω καὶ παιδεύω· ζήλευε οὖν καὶ μετανόησον.

See Ps 89:31-34

20 Ἐδώ ἔστηκα ἐπὶ τὴν θύραν καὶ κρούω· ἐὰν τις ἀκούσῃ τῆς φωνῆς μου καὶ ἀνοίξῃ τὴν θύραν, [καὶ] εἰσελέυσομαι πρὸς αὐτὸν καὶ δειπνήσω μετ’ αὐτοῦ καὶ αὐτὸς μετ’ ἐμοῦ.

21 ὁ νικῶν δύσω αὐτῷ καθίσαι μετ’ ἐμοῦ ἐν τῷ θρόνῳ μου, ὡς κἀγὼ ἐνίκησα καὶ ἐκάθισα μετά τοῦ πατρὸς μου ἐν τῷ θρόνῳ αὐτοῦ.

Each of these seven messages begins alike and ends alike. Each is the message of the Christ and of the Holy Spirit to the angel of the church. Each has a special message suited to the actual condition of each church. In each case the individual who overcomes has a promise of blessing. Christ the Shepherd knows his sheep and lays bare the particular peril in each case.

22 ὁ ἔχων οὖς ἀκουσάτω τί τὸ πνεῦμα λέγει ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις.