

Revelation, Part 4

The Letter to Thyatira

Rev 2:18 “And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write, ‘These things says the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet like fine brass: 19 “I know your works, love, service, faith, and your patience; and as for your works, the last are more than the first. 20 Nevertheless I have a few things against you, because you allow that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce My servants to commit sexual immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols. 21 And I gave her time to repent of her sexual immorality, and she did not repent. 22 Indeed I will cast her into a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of their deeds. 23 I will kill her children with death, and all the churches shall know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts. And I will give to each one of you according to your works. 24 “Now to you I say, and to the rest in Thyatira, as many as do not have this doctrine, who have not known the depths of Satan, as they say, I will put on you no other burden. 25 But hold fast what you have till I come. 26 And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations— 27 ‘He shall rule them with a rod of iron; They shall be dashed to pieces like the potter’s vessels’— as I also have received from My Father; 28 and I will give him the morning star. 29 “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.” ’

Thyatira is 40 miles west of our last church Pergamum and is a much smaller city. It was established as a Macedonian colony under Alexander the Great after the destruction of the Persian Empire. It is a rich agricultural area and was famous for its manufacture of purple dye. There are numerous references in secular literature of this period of the trade guilds which manufactured cloth. It is remarkable that Christ singled out this very unremarkable and obscure city and church for such an important letter. In my mind this tends to support the argument that these letters are more about the future church than these individual churches. The message certainly reaches beyond the immediate circumstances of church at Thyatira. There is only one other mention of this church in Scripture and that is Acts 16 where the conversion of Lydia is recorded.

Acts 16:14 Now a certain woman named Lydia heard us. She was a seller of purple from the city of Thyatira, who worshiped God. The Lord opened her heart to heed the things spoken by Paul. 15 And when she and her household were baptized, she begged us, saying, “If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay.” So she persuaded us.

There is no record in Scripture of evangelism in Thyatira. And it may be it was Lydia who brought the Gospel to her city. Her role as a “seller of purple” indicates that she was a representative of the thriving trade on purple cloth originating in Thyatira. This letter, the longest of the seven, may have been to the fruit of her witness. And all is not well in Thyatira as this letter is one of the most severe of the seven epistles.

Rev 2:18 “And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write, ‘These things says the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet like fine brass:

The description or characterization of Jesus is interesting in that He sees the necessity of defining His deity. “The Son of God” is used as His title in contrast to the “Son of Man” used back in chapter 1. This is in keeping with the judgment pronounced upon this church. Their diversion from true worship was so serious that Christ is calling for a reiteration of His deity.

The eyes like a flame speaks of burning indignation and purifying judgment. In a similar way His feet are declared to be like fine brass. The word translated as “fine brass” is interesting in that it represents an alloy of fine metals such as gold, silver, brass, or copper that was characterized more for its great brilliance than its content. The brilliant appearance enhances the revelation of Christ as judge.

Rev 2:19 “I know your works, love, service, faith, and your patience; and as for your works, the last are more than the first.

Though much is wrong in Thyatira the believers there are commended for their love, faith, service, and perseverance. The term “the last are more than the first” seems to say they were doing more as time went on rather than less like the church at Ephesus.

“Love” is *agape*, which we have previously established as a higher form of love and even classify it as the same love demonstrated by God not based on the attributes of the object of the love, what we called “unconditional love”. “Service” is *diakonia* a word that means service at the direction of others and is sometimes translated “ministry”. It comes from the same word from which we get “deacon”. That definition and the context suggests this is obedience to the guiding of the Spirit of God. “Faith” is *pistis* and means a state of certainty in regard to belief. “Patience” is *hypomone*, which we translate as endurance or steadfastness.

At least some portion of the church at Thyatira had it right. They demonstrated obedience to the truth. They experienced the fruit of the Spirit as seen in their love. They produced divine good as seen in the word for service. They demonstrated faith in all these things and were steadfast in their faith and in the truth. But Thyatira had serious problems in spite of this.

Rev 2:20 Nevertheless I have a few things against you, because you allow that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce My servants to commit sexual immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols. 21 And I gave her time to repent of her sexual immorality, and she did not repent. 22 Indeed I will cast her into a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of their deeds. 23 I will kill her children with death, and all the churches shall know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts. And I will give to each one of you according to your works.

Jesus’ major condemnation concerned “that woman Jezebel” who claimed to be a prophetess and taught believers to take part in the sexual immorality that accompanied pagan religion and to eat food sacrificed to idols. What was acceptable to that local society was abhorred by Christ. Their departure from morality had gone on for some time as suggested by verse 21. In some texts the word translated “that woman” is augmented with *sou* which changes the meaning slightly to “thy woman” or “thy wife. From this, some deduce that the “Jezebel” of Thyatira might have been the wife of the pastor to whom this was addressed. There was probably no woman named Jezebel, but evidently there was a woman within the church that acted in the capacity of Jezebel in the history of Israel. The church in Thyatira may have first heard the gospel from Lydia, converted through Paul’s ministry. Interestingly, now a woman, a self-claimed

“prophetess,” was influencing the church. Her name “Jezebel” suggests that she was corrupting the Thyatira church much like Ahab’s wife Jezebel corrupted Israel, which is the reference Christ is making here.

1 Kings 16:29 In the thirty-eighth year of Asa king of Judah, Ahab the son of Omri became king over Israel; and Ahab the son of Omri reigned over Israel in Samaria twenty-two years. 30 Now Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the Lord, more than all who were before him. 31 And it came to pass, as though it had been a trivial thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that he took as wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal, king of the Sidonians; and he went and served Baal and worshiped him. 32 Then he set up an altar for Baal in the temple of Baal, which he had built in Samaria. 33 And Ahab made a wooden image. Ahab did more to provoke the Lord God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel who were before him.

Pay attention because it gets complicated. Ahab was one of Israel’s worst kings, and under the leadership of his wife Jezebel, they led Israel into idolatry. She is one of the most evil characters in Scripture. She attempted to combine the worship of the idol Baal with the true worship of the Lord and, in effect, destroy it. She had a most unenviable record of evil. She killed practically all the prophets of the Lord and tried to kill the Prophet Elijah. Thus, she was singled out by Elijah for a special prophecy that she would come to a sudden end and that her body would be eaten by dogs, which was fulfilled in II Kings 9:33-35. She is considered the epitome of subtle corruption and the symbol of immorality and idolatry.

The worship of Baal incorporated the worship of the Lord, or more accurately, the idolatry of Baal was incorporated into the worship of the One True God in a manner that commingled the two systems. In other words, there was still the outward appearance of true worship but below that veneer was idolatry associated with the worship of “other” gods. Keep that definition in mind as we relate this to church history.

There are three areas of application we must deal with - the church at Thyatira, Israel, and the church in history, and there are two levels of application: literal and figurative. Jezebel seduced the Israelites into a form of idolatry, which included sexual immorality and the eating of things sacrificed to idols, both violations of the Law. Sexual immorality was introduced into the society and even worship. Fornication is mentioned in

many places in Revelation, but this is the only place it is viewed as adultery. What results is adultery in a literal sense with the destruction of the family unit, and spiritual adultery in the sense that Israel has violated her marriage vows to the Lord and is worshiping false gods — idolatry.

In the context of the church at Thyatira there was a “Jezebel” person, almost certainly a woman and perhaps even the wife of the pastor of the church at Thyatira. She is influencing the church into adopting the pagan practices of the area and commingling these practices with true worship. They were, therefore, not only permitted to participate in idolatrous feasts by eating things sacrificed to idols, but they were instructed to take part in the immorality that characterized the worship of idols. The boundaries that separated the church from the wicked world around them were broken down.

According to verse 21, she was given “space” or “time” to repent and she had not done so, as a result a terrible judgment is pronounced on her and she will be cast into a bed. The word can be translated a bed of affliction or one that carries a sick person. And those who shared in her deeds will be cast into great tribulation. The word translated “with” refers to an association with the deeds or practices.

This term “great tribulation” is the same term used in Matt 24:21; Rev 7:14, which there refers to our subject or at least the second half called the “Great Tribulation”. It is risky to make word connections like this. They may be accurate or they may not, so I don’t want to be too dogmatic, but I don’t think the terms used here are accidental. It looks like this church and its Jezebel practice of idolatry is sick and will enter the tribulation. But we are told that the church is not appointed to wrath.

1 Thes 5:1 But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you. **2** For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night. **3** For when they say, “Peace and safety!” then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape. **4** But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief. **5** You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness. **6** Therefore let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be sober. **7** For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk are drunk at night. **8** But let us who

are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation. 9 For **God did not appoint us to wrath**, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, 10 who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him. 11 Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing.

The church is not appointed to wrath but will be delivered, which is the meaning of “salvation” in this context. However, the church at Thyatira looks like it will experience “great tribulation” either literally during the second century or the church in history represented symbolically by Thyatira.

In Revelation 2:23 Christ says He will kill her children with death. This is a very strong pronouncement on top of what He has already said. I thought the double reference “kill” and “death” was very interesting. The first is a word that refers to the denial of human life or what we would normally think of as physical death. But the second term “with death” is a Greek word that refers to immortality, which in this context, I believe, suggests they do not have eternal life like believers do and experience the “second death” associated with unbelievers at the Last Judgment. Christ physically kills them, and they also die the second death. I have read a lot into the text here but I do not think it is unreasonable.

The message to the church at Thyatira seems to foreshadow that period in church history known as the Dark Ages (AD 590-1517) almost 1,000 years of darkness preceding the Protestant Reformation. In that period the church became extremely corrupt as it sought to combine Christianity with pagan philosophy and heathen religious practices. Much of the ritual of the church of that period is directly traceable to heathen rituals. During this period, began the exaltation of Mary the mother of our Lord. She was elevated to a plane of female deity through whom intercession to God could be made and apart from whose favor there can be no salvation. The prominence of the female Jezebel in Thyatira anticipates the prominence of this unscriptural exaltation of Mary.

Along with this the church experienced spiritual depravity, and idols in the form of religious statues and icons became common place in Christian churches. Not only did spiritual fornication result but we also had gross immorality where the clergy and even the Pope took wives and mistresses

in violation of their vows of chastity. “Nephews” of the Cardinals and the Pope were often given positions of power within the ecclesiastical system and even ordained to succeed them when they died. So we have both literal and spiritual fornication in the church during this period as the church sinned against its covenant relationship with the Lord.

The church is also accused of eating things sacrificed to idols. In the context of Thyatira, that referred not only to the eating of things sacrificed to idols but also participating in these practices as they were incorporated into the Christian church by this Jezebel person. In the historical context of the church, it was this period of the Dark Ages when the church changed the meaning of the Lord’s Table from one of remembrance to a re-sacrificing of Christ in the eucharist each time it was celebrated. It was during this time the host, as transformed literally into the body and blood of Christ, came into doctrinal standing within the church. It is likely this reference to eating things sacrificed to idols looks forward to this future idolatrous practice. The Protestant Reformation corrected this and changed it back into the biblically correct remembrance rather than a literal sacrifice.

The Bible tells us Christ was sacrificed once for all and repeating it as another literal sacrifice in the Eucharist is not biblical. Hebrews deals with this subject.

Heb 10:11 But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God

Heb 6:6 ...they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame.

Let me remind you that even though all this was going on, Christ still commended this church. He said, “I know your works, love, service, faith, and your patience; and as for your works, the last are more than the first.” Even though the church had many very serious problems, obviously, there remained a pivot of true believers within the church that remained faithful to the truth in spite of the ecclesiastical system they were a part of. They were characterized by selfless service and faith of which God is a rewarder without glossing over the evil inherent to the system as a whole.

That reference to the “last more than the first” suggests to me the possibility that within the church was a strong but probably very small pivot of believers who went largely unrecognized in human history. But the Lord knows their deeds, and they will be recognized at the Bema. “For He is the one who searches the minds and hearts” (V23).

Thyatira is a lesson to anyone who dares to corrupt the minds and hearts of believers with false doctrines, especially idolatry.

Rev 2:24 “Now to you I say, and to the rest in Thyatira, as many as do not have this doctrine, who have not known the depths of Satan, as they say, I will put on you no other burden. 25 But hold fast what you have till I come.

Here we have an exhortation to the godly element in Thyatira. For the first time a pivot is singled out from among the whole as being a true testimony for Christ. They are described as “many as do not have this doctrine, who have not known the depths of Satan”. They are exhorted to hold fast to that truth until He comes. And this is the first reference in Revelation to the return of our Lord. Even engulfed in an apostate system this church has hope.

Rev 2:26 And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations—

We previously established that the “overcomers” were born again believers.

Rev 2:27 ‘He shall rule them with a rod of iron; They shall be dashed to pieces like the potter’s vessels’ — as I also have received from My Father; 28 and I will give him the morning star. 29 “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.” ’

Note the following details concerning these overcomers.

- Given power over the nations
- Rule them (nations) with an iron rod
- They shall dash(ed) to pieces like potters vessels
- Authority received from “My Father”.
- Given the morning star

Church Age believers in resurrection bodies will have responsibilities in the Millennium, not all but some clearly do. Certain resurrected believers who advanced spiritually and were used mightily by the Lord during the Church Age will be given positions of authority and leadership during the Millennium. The word translated “rule” here means to “shepherd”. These believers will shepherd with the same iron rod of Christ under His authority, which came from the Father. “Given the Morning Star” likely refers to the close association of the ruling Christ, often referred to as the Morning Star.

2 Tim 2:8 Remember that Jesus Christ, of the seed of David, was raised from the dead according to my gospel, 9 for which I suffer trouble as an evildoer, even to the point of chains; but the word of God is not chained. 10 Therefore I endure all things for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory. 11 This is a faithful saying: For if we died with Him, We shall also live with Him. 12 If we endure, We shall also reign with Him.

Rev 2:4 And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.

Ps 2:7 “I will declare the decree: The Lord has said to Me, ‘You are My Son, Today I have begotten You. 8 Ask of Me, and I will give You the nations for Your inheritance, and the ends of the earth for Your possession. 9 You shall break them with a rod of iron; You shall dash them to pieces like a potter’s vessel.’ ”

The rule of Christ will be very strict (iron rod, smashed potters vessels). The way I interpret this is during the Millennium sin simply will not be permitted. There will be an extremely strict standard to be met, and failure to meet it will result in immediate consequences. The Millennium is seen as like returning to the conditions of the Garden, but that cannot be possible if the sin natures of those who survived the Tribulation and their offspring are allowed to run amok. Thus the “iron rod” rule. This is how the turning of the other cheek spoken of in Matthew is possible. Retaliation is not permitted. The Lord will take action immediately for any wrong.

The letter closes with the familiar He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. Some see this as significant in that, beginning with this letter, it comes after the exhortation. It is offered here to all who will hear, suggesting they have a chance to find their way out of this system.

The church at Thyatira was seen as the corrupt church, one that introduced pagan idolatrous practices into the church that perverted the truth by commingling the false teachings of Baal with that of Christianity. The result was a breaking of the covenant relationship associated with the Bride of Christ — spiritual adultery. With that came idol worship and practices associated with idolatry. Those of the church involved in this will suffer the second death, thus are not true believers. There was among this church some who remained faithful, and they are known to Christ and will be rewarded with rulership roles in the Millennium. Even during the church's darkest hours there remains a pivot of true believers.

The Church at Sardis

Rev 3:1 “And to the angel of the church in Sardis write, ‘These things says He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars: “I know your works, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead. 2 Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die, for I have not found your works perfect before God. 3 Remember therefore how you have received and heard; hold fast and repent. Therefore if you will not watch, I will come upon you as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you. 4 You have a few names even in Sardis who have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with Me in white, for they are worthy. 5 He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels. 6 “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”

Sardis, an ancient city located in western Asia Minor about 50 miles from Smyrna and 30 miles from Thyatira, was, at one time, the capital of the Kingdom of Lydia. It was an important and wealthy city sitting on east-west commercial trade routes. Much of its wealth came from its trade in textile, dyes and jewelry. Like most of the cities of this area, it was a very

pagan city involved in the all too numerous systems of idolatrous worship, with many “mystery” cults or secret religious societies there. The magnificent temple of Artemis, dating from the fourth century BC, was one of its points of interest and remains there as ruins. There is also the ruins of a Christian church right next to it, testifying to the post-apostolic Christian witness to this wicked and pagan city noted for its loose living. The church to whom the letter was written remained in existence until the fourteenth century but was never prominent. Today only the small village of Sart exists amid the ancient ruins.

Rev 3:1 “And to the angel of the church in Sardis write, ‘These things says He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars: “I know your works, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead.”

The letter to Sardis is one of rebuke and censor and almost devoid of any form of commendation as seen in the previous letters. Sardis was a city of the worst kind of idolatry. One of its idols was the mother goddess Cybele. Two columns 60 feet tall and over six feet in diameter remain of the temple to her. Worship to the god Dionysos usually involved sexual orgies in festivals dedicated to her.

In previous letters the Lord began with commendation and then shifted to condemnation, but there is not a word of commendation to this church as a whole. However, we will see that there remains a pivot, probably very small, which gets singled out for commendation.

Christ is introduced as the one who has the seven spirits of God and the seven stars, which is similar to what we saw in 1:4, where the seven spirits are declared to be before the throne. In both cases we are looking at a word picture of the Holy Spirit as captured in the symbolism for completeness or perfection. This is also seen in Revelation 5:6 “And I looked, and behold, in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as though it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent out into all the earth.” These portraits of Christ picture Him as having the qualities that qualifies Him as judge.

Christ is also revealed as the one who holds the seven stars previously identified as the messengers (or pastors) of the seven churches. We saw

this same symbolism in regard to Ephesus. This makes it clear that the leaders of the churches are responsible to no human representative of Christ and must give account only to Him.

We believe this is a picture of the church during the Protestant Reformation, which had an elaborate church hierarchy for which there is no support in Scripture. Churches were intended to be independent and self governing using Scripture to edify its members. No other model is seen in Scripture.

Christ declares, "I know your works." In His omniscience He knows what is in the hearts of man. Christ goes on and says, "You have a name that you are alive, but you are dead." "You have a name" refers to a proper name or calling. They are called "Christians". The word translated "you are alive" refers to eternal life. Literally, this seems to be saying, "You may be called Christians, implying that you have eternal life, but you are dead." That word translated "dead" can mean lifeless but it also means ineffective. This sounds to me like this church is being accused of being Christians in name only, and they are ineffective in their witness for Christ.

The world today is filled with nominal Christians who do not possess eternal life. They go through the motions and have the physical trappings of Christianity but they are no more born again than my cats and even less effective. This is a verbal picture of a spiritually dead and ineffective church, which pretty much sums up what the church had become at the time of the Protestant Reformation.

William Barclay observes of the church, "It is in danger of death when it begins to worship its own past ... when it is more concerned with forms than with life ... when it loves systems more than it loves Christ ... when it is more concerned with material things than with spiritual things."

Rev 3:2 Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die, for I have not found your works perfect before God. 3 Remember therefore how you have received and heard; hold fast and repent. Therefore if you will not watch, I will come upon you as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you.

"Strengthen the things that remain..." Evidently there is something of substance that is left to this church and it is in need of strengthening, as

whatever remains is “ready to die”. The word used for “ready to die” is one that is usually used for physical death but has strong spiritual connotations. There is an inferior quality to the works of this group. The word for “perfect” is one that means lacking or not complete. Robertson’s Word Pictures of the New Testament puts it this way, “Perfect passive predicate participle of *plēroō*. Their works have not measured up to God’s standard.”

The quality of the spiritual production of this pivot of believers is inferior to what it could and should be. Collectively, this is a picture of a church that is seen as barely functional, a pitiful shadow of its former self. But there remains just enough that there is a possibility the downward spiral can be reversed. They are encouraged to, “Remember therefore how you have received and heard; hold fast and repent” (v3). They are not so far gone that recovery isn’t possible, but that calls for recalling what they had received. I would classify that as two things: eternal life and doctrinal truths, not the traditions of man.

This calls for repentance, a complete change of mind, and for that to happen they cannot continue down this path and survive. Satan has a solid hold on this church and it is going down for the count.

“Therefore if you will not watch, I will come upon you as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you.” “Watch” is a Greek word that means to be vigilant or remain awake. We might say something like this today, “If you don’t wake up...” “If” is in the Greek third class condition, maybe you will and maybe you won’t. Christ says HE will come upon them like a thief, meaning it will be sudden and unexpected. Obviously, they do not grasp the status of their spiritual existence, so judgment will come out of the blue, “You will not know what hour I will come upon you.” This is the same language used for the Second Advent, which encompasses all associated with the Second Advent which begins with the Rapture. The judgment on Sardis will be sudden and unexpected.

Rev 3:4 You have a few names even in Sardis who have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with Me in white, for they are worthy.

This church is dead or dying, but there remains a weak and small remnant who have not defiled their garments. True believers are seen as dressed in white in eternity. While they are not as spiritually productive as they ought

to be, they are born again. “They have not defiled their garments” is a reference to temporal activity and not their eternal white garments. They are resisting the idolatry and decadence of their fellow “nominal” Christians. Though their witness and spiritual production are less than it ought to be, they are born again and will wear white in eternity.

Rev 3:5 He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels.

These overcomers, victorious over sin and death, who get to wear the white robe in eternity, will not have their name blotted out of the Book of Life. There are a number of positions on this, but I believe only one makes any sense and it is this: While it is clear from other passages that the Book of Life contains only the names of those who are saved, there are references to being removed (blotted out) from the Book of Life, as seen here. Based on one passage in 2 Samuel 12 where we have the account of King David mourning and praying concerning the pending death of his sick child by Bathsheba, we see David’s attitude suddenly change when the child eventually dies, perplexing his servants. His reply suggests that David knew exactly where that child would be in eternity.

2 Sam 12:22 And he said, “While the child was alive, I fasted and wept; for I said, ‘Who can tell whether the Lord will be gracious to me, that the child may live?’ 23 But now he is dead; why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? **I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me.**”

David will ultimately go to Heaven and there he will find that child he lost. “I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me.” While this is not conclusive, and the Bible does not clearly state so, I conclude that very person born gets his/her name written in the Book of Life. We do know that 1 John 2:2 says Jesus is “the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the **sins of the whole world.**” All sins were judged at the cross, yours, mine, and the sins of the entire world. That suggests the potential for God to show mercy toward those unable to make a free will decision to accept Christ as savior. We call this the “point of accountability” and some die before they ever reach that point.

If children and the mentally disabled who have not had the chance to make a free will decision to accept Christ as personal savior (point of

accountability), then they will not be held accountable as suggested by David's comment in 2 Samuel. Obviously, David's child never had the chance to make a free will decision for Christ, or in this OT context, to place faith in the coming Messiah and all that is promised concerning that person.

I believe all names are written in the Book of Life, and those who demonstrate negative volition to the Gospel message are "blotted out of the Book of Life" as suggested in Revelation 3:5 and 20:15. This blotting out most likely occurs at death. Those blotted out of the Book of Life will face the Second Death.

It is my position that God applies Christ's payment for sin to babies and those who are mentally handicapped, since they are not mentally capable of understanding their sinful state and their need for the Savior. Of this much we are certain: God is loving, holy, merciful, just, and gracious.

Rev 3:6 "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."

We have the usual close — You have been warned! You need to listen to what will be said by the pastor of the church, in this case, Sardis. The same is true for every century and every church. These warnings, while being addressed to specific first century churches who characterized specific problems, are for all churches and all ages. Any of us, either as a church body or as individual believers, can fall into these problems and suffer the same failings and consequences.

As a prophetic foreshadowing of the church in history most see the church at Sardis as representing the church from about 1517 to 1790, which is the church during the time of the reformation, when the great mass of Christendom were nominal Christians only and as spiritually dead as the church at Sardis is physically dead today. During these years only a small believing remnant took their stand for Biblical Christianity and trusted Christ as their Saviour. Those of the Reformation saw through the pageantry, ritual, and spiritual deadness of the Roman church and found Biblical truths upon which they took a stand at the risk of their very lives. They struggled to regain the footing of faith and demonstrate the truth of the Bible, casting aside the traditions of men. The remnant who had not soiled their earthly garments came out of the dead church, heeding the

warnings to the church at Sardis. They held fast to what they had heard and repented, then strengthened what little remained. Some had an ear and heard what the Spirit said to the churches.