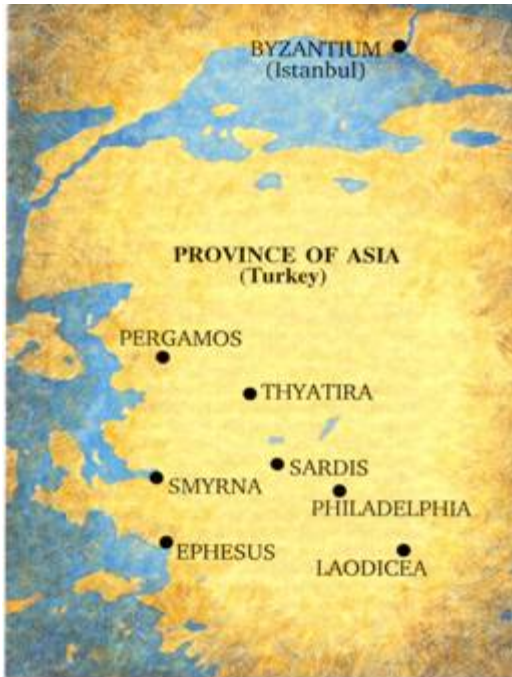


Date: November 24, 2009

Reading: Revelation 1-3

Revelation is a “circular letter” addressed to seven churches located in the Roman province of Asia. Within that letter are seven brief letters (the material in chapters 2 & 3), one to each of the individual



congregations. The letters follow a similar pattern. Each one is actually addressed to “the angel of the church” in a particular city. The writer is God the Son, identified in nearly every case by means of a detail drawn from the vision of the One among the lamp stands in the first chapter. He continues by stating “I know your works” and offers both praise and criticism (as each applies to the specific churches). He then gives counsel and promises a reward to those who “overcome.” Another feature common to each letter is the invitation to “hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”

Although each letter has a similar format, each congregation is unique. Smyrna and Philadelphia receive no criticism, only praise. Laodicea receives only criticism and no praise. The other churches receive a combination of praise and criticism, but several things stand out.

***For instance, the Ephesian congregation is the only one warned about the possible removal of its lamp stand. Not

even Laodicea is given this warning.

***As a congregation, Sardis receives no praise, but some of the individual members are described as “worthy” and have “undefiled garments.”

***Judgment is not ultimately congregational in its nature, but the Lord “will give to each one of [us] according to [our] works” (2:23).

***Congregational reputation and true spiritual condition are not necessarily the same (3:1-2).

***Congregational members are responsible for their own behavior...and for what they tolerate in others (2:14-16, 20).

The Lord knows the condition of each of the churches; He is, after all, standing in the midst of the lamp stands. I doubt anything has changed from the first century until now in that regard. The Lord knows the spiritual condition of the Kelly Spring Road congregation as a whole and every member in particular.

May each of us hear what the Spirit says to the churches!

Happy reading,
Allen

Date: November 27, 2009

Reading: Revelation 12-15



At the conclusion of chapter eleven, the seventh trumpet has sounded and it appears that God's vengeance has been completed.

It appears that the second half of Revelation tells the same story, i.e., the accomplishing of God's vengeance, as the first half of the book, but from a different perspective. The seals and trumpets of chapters 1-11 revealed in a general way how God's wrath would be visited upon the enemies of His people, but

in the second half of the book, the enemies of God's people are identified.

Chapter twelve is a key chapter in understanding the storyline of Revelation. Chapter twelve identifies the mission of the dragon.

Chapter twelve, however, takes us back to the time of the birth of the Messiah, the One who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron (Psalm 2:9; Revelation 12:5). The dragon (identified as Satan in 12:9) wished to destroy the male child, but was unable. He also persecuted the woman who gave birth to the Messiah, but was unable to destroy her due to divine protection.

Frustrated, he made war with "the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ" (12:17). The dragon's war against the saints is the reason for their suffering and their prayers to God for vengeance.

In chapter thirteen, we are introduced to two of the dragon's accomplices – the sea beast (13:1) and the land beast (13:11). It is clear that the sea beast is an ally of the dragon; it is the dragon who gives authority to the beast (13:2, 4) and the sea beast is likewise a persecutor of the saints (13:7).

The land beast supports the sea beast and encourages people to worship the sea beast (13:12-14). Later in the book we will meet another persecutor of the saints, Babylon the Great, but in our reading for today, her fall is already announced (14:8).

As in the first half of the book, the number seven is significant in chapter fifteen. At the conclusion of that chapter, seven angels are given seven golden bowls full of divine wrath and they are prepared to pour out their bowls, one at a time, upon the earth. In our next reading, the bowls will be poured out!

Blessed is he who reads,
Allen

Date: November 30, 2009

Reading: Revelation 19-22

Chapter nineteen opens with rejoicing at the judgment of the great harlot. The harlot, however, was not the only persecutor of God's people. She was carried by the sea beast who was also a persecutor of Christians (13:5-7). We remember that the sea beast was given his authority by the dragon (13:2) and the land beast supported the sea beast.

The harlot had been judged (chapter 18), but would God judge the other persecutors? In chapter nineteen, John saw a white horse with a Rider identified as the Word of God. An angel cried with a loud voice, inviting all the birds in the midst of heaven to gather for the "supper of the great God" (19:17), to eat the flesh of those who fight against God. The apostle saw the sea beast and his forces gathered together to make war with Him who sat on the white horse, but the sea beast was captured along with the false prophet (the land beast; compare 13:11-16). Both were cast into the lake of fire burning with brimstone (19:20).

The dragon was restrained and cast into the bottomless pit, not allowed to deceive the nations for a period of time. Eventually the devil will also be cast into the lake of fire where the sea beast and false prophet are (20:10).



In the final two chapters of Revelation, John saw the New Jerusalem, the holy city, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband (21:2). That same city, the holy Jerusalem, is also identified as the Lamb's wife (21:9).

It appears that the city represents the church. It is the church which is described as being married to Christ (cf. Ephesians 5; 2 Corinthians 11:2). The beauty and opulence of the city, with its golden street and precious stones, suggests the value of the saints to God. The emphasis of the descriptions in chapters 21 & 22 is upon the fellowship the saints have with God and His loving care for them (21:3-4, 6-7, 22-23; 22:1-5).

The book of Revelation closes with God's judgment upon the other persecutors of the saints and pictures the victorious saints. The book ends with the same prediction as that which began the book – the Lord would come in judgment quickly; the things John saw were going to take place shortly.

To saints who were suffering this book would have been comforting and encouraging. Its message is that God is still in control and He loves His people. Although they may suffer for a time, in the end God wins!