

Handout: Revelation Lesson 5

I, Jesus, have sent my messenger [angelos] to attest these things to you, for the sake of the churches, I am the sprig from the root of David and the bright star of the morning.

Revelation 22:16

The Covenant Treaty Format in the Letter to Thyatira

1. **Preamble:** *Here is the message of the Son of God who has eyes like a burning flame and feet like burnished bronze (Rev 2:18).*
2. **Historical prologue:** *I know your activities, your love, your faith (Rev 2:19).*
3. **Ethical Stipulations:** *Nevertheless, I have a complaint to make (Rev 2:20-21).*
4. **Sanctions:** *Look, I am consigning her to a bed of pain (Rev 2:22-24).*
5. **Succession Arrangements:** *hold on firmly to what you have until I come. To anyone who proves victorious and keeps working until the end, I will give the authority over the nations which I myself have been given by my Father (Rev 2:25-29).*

The Preamble to the church at Thyatira begins with the identification of the sender of the letter as the Son of God, described like the mysterious figure from the prophet Daniel’s vision (Dan 10:6) and John’s vision in Chapter 1: *and in the middle of them, one like a Son of Man ... his eyes like a burning flame, his feet like burnished bronze (Rev 1:13-15).*

Jesus compares the heresy at Thyatira with the sin of adultery and compares the offender who led the community astray with Jezebel, the daughter of Ethbaal, the pagan king of the Phoenician city-state of Sidon, married to King Ahab of Israel (1 Kng 16:31-21: 26 and 2 Kng 9:22-37).

Covenant Marriage as a Symbolic Image of the Old Testament Prophets

Image Groups	Part I Covenant relationship	Part II Rebellion	Part III Redemptive Judgment	Part IV Restoration Fulfilled
Covenant Marriage Examples in Scripture	Israel Bride of Yahweh Isaiah 61:10-11; Jeremiah 2:2; Ezekiel 16:4-14	Unfaithful adulteress/harlot Isaiah; 1:21; Jeremiah 3:6-8; 13:22-23, 26; 23:10; Ezekiel 16:15-34; 23:1-12; Hosea 4:10-14	Humiliated, abused & abandoned by lovers Jeremiah 3:1b-2; 4:30-31; Ezekiel 16:23-61; 23:35-49; Amos 4:7-8; Hosea 2:4-15	The Bride restored to her Bridegroom Matthew 9:15; John 3:28-29; 2 Corinthians 11:2; Ephesians 5:25-27; Revelation 19:7-9; 21:2, 9; 22:17

22 *“Look, I am consigning her to a bed of pain, and all her partners in adultery to great hardship, unless they repent of their practices and all her partners in adultery to great hardship.”* Jesus repeats the word “repent” three times in verses 21 and 22, and appears to use a play-on-words in verse 22. The Greek word translated “bed” is *kline*, which can mean a bed that you slept on or the couch one reclined on at banquets. All of these interpretations fit symbolically: 1. the couch on which she ate the pagan meal in pleasure would yield intense pain from polluted (with sin) meat; or 2. such indulgence in heresy/adultery would lead to a bed of death in eternal fire, or 3. as most of the commentaries suggest, the bed is a sickbed as a result of sin.

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The Covenant Treaty Format for the Church at Sardis

1. **Preamble:** *Here is the message of the one who holds the seven spirits of God and the seven stars (Rev 3:1a)*
2. **Historical Prologue:** *I know about your behavior (Rev 3:1b)*
3. **Ethical Stipulations:** *Wake up; put some resolve into what little vigor you have left (Rev 3:2)*
4. **Sanctions:** *Repent! If you do not wake up, I shall come to you (Rev 3:3)*
5. **Succession Arrangements:** *There are a few ... Anyone who proves victorious will be dressed in white robes; I shall not blot that name out of the book of life, but acknowledge it in the presence of my Father and his angels (Rev 3:4-6)*

The Book of Revelation refers to the saints being “clothed in white garments” seven times (Rev 3:4, 18; 4:4; 6:11; 7:9, 13; 19:14), and the Bride of Christ dressed in dazzling white linen (Rev 19:8). In Scripture, white robes symbolize righteousness and purity with origins in the sun-white brilliance of the Glory-cloud of God. In their resurrection in Christ, the saints are re-created in the image of God and clothed with the grace of Christ. This verse is a description of an aspect of salvation in which all who “persevere to the end” have an eternal inheritance.

The Book of Life is a registry of the names of those destined for glory, written by God, and kept secure in Heaven (Ex 32:32-33; Ps 69:28; 138:16; Dan 7:10; 12:1; Mt 10:32; Phil 4:3; Rev 3:5; 20:11-12; 21:27). The Book of Revelation records those whose names not found in the Book of Life will be thrown into the fire of the Hell of the Damned (Rev 3:5; 13:8; 20:15).

Faith is an entirely free gift that God makes to man. We can lose this priceless gift, as St. Paul indicated to St. Timothy: (1Tim 1:18-19) “Wage the good warfare, holding faith and a good conscience. By rejecting conscience, certain persons have made shipwreck of their faith.” To live, grow, and persevere in the faith until the end we must nourish it with the word of God; we must beg the Lord to increase our faith; it must be “working through charity”: abounding in hope, and rooted in the faith of the Church (CCC 162).

The Old Testament imagery is from the prophetic period when God’s prophets called the covenant people to repent and a return to their relationship with the One, True God and also to the period of the Divided Monarchy:

1. The reference to the Spirit and the “seven stars” speak of prophetic witness.
2. The warnings to “wake up,” to “repent,” and to “strengthen the things that remain,” recall the period of the Northern Kingdom of the Divided Monarchy of Israel and a disobedient people submitted to the influence of pagans like Queen Jezebel.
3. That “a few people” remained faithful recalls the prophetic language concerning the Holy Remnant in the time of apostasy (Is 1:5-23; 6:9-13; 65:8-16; Jer 7:1-7; 8:11-12; Ez 37:1-14), and the past warnings of imminent judgment (Is 1:24-31; 2:12-21; 26:20-21; Jer 4:5-31; 7:12-15; 11:9-13; Mic 1:2-7; Zeph 1). After the final Babylonian exile of the Southern Kingdom of Judah that had remained loyal to the Davidic kings (587/6 BC), only a remnant held on to right doctrine, remained faithful, and returned to resettle Judah (c. 538 BC). Some also returned to the Galilee, and it was from that faithful remnant that Jesus chose His Twelve Apostles to be the spiritual fathers of the New Covenant Kingdom of the Church.

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