



Reviews

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The Apocalypse on video*

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FOLLOWING THE successful series of video tapes on Bible prophecy entitled *For Zion's Sake*, The Bible Magazine has begun to produce a series of videos with the title *Rediscovering the Book of Revelation*. The first tape, now available, is called *I Know Thy Works*, and was filmed at sites in Turkey, Rome, Israel, and Milton Keynes in the UK. The tried and tested trio of brethren, Paul Billington, Frank Abel and John Ramsden, are the commentators and readers.

This first tape covers the letters to the seven churches in Revelation chapters 2 and 3. It consists of two parts. The first looks at the messages to the first five ecclesias, and lasts for an hour; the second looks at the last two ecclesias, the wider topic of the development of apostasy today, and the futurist interpretation of Revelation, and lasts about fifty minutes.

The tape is well produced, like the prophecy series, stimulating the reading and study of the Scriptures in an effective way. We are taken to the ruins of each of the cities where the ecclesias existed in first-century Asia Minor, and, Bible in hand, Brother Frank Abel expounds the message of Christ to the individual ecclesias. The photography and production are both good, and there is a musical background, where appropriate, giving rise to a pleasing result, visibly and audibly.

But the real value of the video is in the robust presentation of the fulfilment of Christ's messages to the ecclesias. The tape starts by restating our preference for the use of 'ecclesia' rather than 'church', and then, with the ruins of **Ephesus** in the background, Brother Abel shows that, since 800 B.C., Ephesus has been connected with the worship of a virgin goddess, linking this with the way statuettes of Artemis, Mary and Diana can be purchased there today. This is, he says, due to the "grievous wolves" who entered into the ecclesia (Acts 20:29), causing the members to lose their first love for the Truth.

Moving to **Smyrna**, a port, he shows that a true Christian is an adopted Jew, having em-

braced the Hope of Israel, for which tribulation may result. Here there is a short digression expounding Revelation 1:3.

Regarding **Pergamos**, Brother Abel relates that there was a medical school there, shown by the 'serpent around the pole' motif for the medical profession, which originated here. The temple of Zeus was also here, one of the seven wonders of the ancient world, and a library that rivalled the one in Alexandria. Pergamos was a Roman city, an outpost of Rome in Asia Minor, and the Caesars were worshipped, much as the pope is revered today.

Regarding the reference to Balaam in the letter to Pergamos, Brother Billington makes a digression on how Revelation should be interpreted, using as his basis the assertion of Joseph in Genesis 40:8: "Do not interpretations belong to God?". There are, firstly, Old Testament echoes, such as the references to Balaam and Jezebel, which provide typical warnings and lessons. Secondly, there are symbols for which direct meanings are given, such as the seven stars and the seven lampstands (Rev. 1:20), and the harlot woman (17:18). The lesson and warning derived from Balaam was that he introduced compromise into the ecclesia of Israel, and the Balaamites and Nicolaitans were threatening the Pergamos ecclesia. The modern ecumenical spirit likewise threatens our ecclesias today.

Thyatira lay on east-west and north-south trade routes; Lydia, a founder member of the ecclesia at Philippi, came from this busy centre

* *I Know Thy Works*, the first in a series of videos on the theme, *Rediscovering the Book of Revelation*, published by The Bible Magazine at £15.00 + 97p postage in UK. Available from The Bible Magazine (Sister [Mrs] Judith White), 23 Brookvale Drive, Thornhill, Cardiff, CF14 9EG (Tel. 029 2075 0142), or from Bible Magazine agents overseas (see ALS Diary, p. 48).

of trade. One of the main faults of this ecclesia was that it tolerated teachers after the type of Jezebel, who cut off the prophets of the Lord and promoted idol worship.

The video has now reached **Sardis**, which, like Thyatira, lay on important trade routes. Against a background of the ruins of the temple of Artemis, Brother Abel explains that in 546 B.C. Cyrus conquered the city from the Lydians like a thief in the night. Persian soldiers scaled the walls, which were considered to be unassailable. The lesson to the Sardis ecclesia is unmistakable: they were not watching, they were dead spiritually, and Jesus would therefore come upon them as a thief. Jesus gives a similar warning to the ecclesias living in the days of the sixth vial.

A discussion of the decline of the ecclesias from Ephesus to Sardis brings the first tape to a close.

The second part of the video is introduced by the solemn and recurring theme of the conflict between the servants of God and the world. The ecclesia at **Philadelphia** escaped trials by invading armies in the first century because of their faithfulness and brotherly love. To them was held out the promise of a part in the Kingdom promised to David and his seed, when the peace of Jerusalem (Ps. 122:6-8) finally comes.

In contrast, **Laodicea** and its ruins testify to a city rich in material things, but spiritually, as the Spirit declares, lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold (Rev. 3:16). First-century Laodicea was famous for its medical school, which specialised in ear and eye treatment. Today the site is covered in rocks, thorns and thistles. Brother Abel links this with the teaching of Christ in the parable of the sower, in which rocks, thorns and thistles impede or choke the healthy growth of the Word of God in believers (Mt. 13:20-22). Laodicea was also famous for black sheep, which yielded an expensive, shiny wool; and the contrast is made between the material wealth gained by these sheep and the white raiment that Christ can give us.

Brother Billington now introduces the main theme that occupies the remainder of the tape: the contrasting fortunes down the ages of Zion and Babylon. The image that Nebuchadnezzar saw contains prophecy continuously fulfilled by

history right up to the return of our Master. The false church in Rome, predicted long ago by Tertullian, is active in promoting the ecumenical spirit that pervades Christendom.

The video now moves to Milton Keynes in the UK, where Brother Ramsden stands outside a recently founded ecumenical church where Anglicans, Baptists, Methodists, Roman Catholics and Congregationalists worship together. Both the Queen and the late Cardinal Hume were associated with its opening. Brother Ramsden contrasts with this the 1646 Protestant Westminster Confession of Faith, which declared that Jesus is the Head of the Church, and that the papacy is the Man of Sin, the antichrist and the son of perdition.

Since that time, the Jesuits have actively promoted the futurist view of Revelation in contrast to the continuous-historic view. This view enables the papacy to deny that the Roman Catholic Church has anything to do with the false religious system in Revelation. Brother Ramsden shows that by the nineteenth century many Protestant churches and their leaders had embraced the futurist view, including the Church of England, Presbyterians, Plymouth Brethren, members of the Oxford Movement and such scholars as Bullinger and Schofield. Today, evangelist teachers such as Billy Graham, Hal Lindsey, Pat Robertson and Orwell Roberts accept the Jesuit view.

Brother Abel then reminds us that the first-century ecclesia would have believed that the right way to interpret a prophecy such as Revelation is to compare the Old Testament prophecies where similar symbolic language is used. The tape ends with a reminder of the responsibilities of elders in the ecclesia to feed the flock of God with the Truth, especially maintaining the continuous-historic view, which has been tried and tested.

This tape could be used in Bible classes, for preaching or for young people's classes. The Bible Magazine has once again produced a means by which the Word of God, in particular the last message of our Master, is clearly expounded and set forth. If our Lord tarries, it will be good to see further expositions of the Apocalypse set forth in this robust and attractive manner.

Wanted

Someone to assist in publicising *The Testimony* at fraternals, family days, etc. Needs to be centrally based and able to get to a good number of such gatherings. If interested please contact the Publishing Editor, address rear cover.