

Occasional Update #11

11 February 2023

Our Lord said, "Seek the welfare of the **city** [Babylon!] where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the LORD on its behalf, for **in its welfare you will find your welfare. ...**"

"For surely I know the plans I have for you," says the LORD, "plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope. Then when you call upon Me, and come and pray to Me, I will hear you. When you search for Me, you will find Me; if you seek Me with all your heart, **I will let you find Me**", says the LORD, ... "

(Jeremiah 29:7, 11-14)

Praying for Cities

Isn't it amazing! – Jews were taken by force, and exiled for 70 years to Babylon (a pagan city), and yet God said, "**Seek the welfare of the city ...**"

In New Zealand, 86% of our people live in urban areas. If about 10% of them are Christians, then there is a huge mission field in our cities – about 4 million people who don't know the Lord and follow His ways.

It's interesting to notice that **Paul** wrote to the churches in 7 cities:

Rome, Corinth, Galatia, Ephesus, Philippi, Colossae, Thessalonica.

Galatia was actually a region (capital Ancyra, now called Ankara, capital of Turkey). Hence Paul addressed his letter to the churches (plural, not singular) in Galatia. Galatia had 7 main cities: Antioch, Lystra, Iconium, Perga, Derbe, Attalia, Ancyra.

Paul went **city by city** to the first six of these cities, to encourage the Christians and share the Gospel with Jews and Gentiles. He also ministered in *many* other cities and regions. See Acts, and: <https://www.biblestudy.org/maps/apostle-paul-all-cities-visited-large-map.html>

It's also interesting to note that God told **John** the Apostle, imprisoned on the island of Patmos, to write a letter to 7 churches in 7 cities in 'Asia' (now Turkey):

Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, Laodicea.

Revelation – to the 7 churches in 7 cities

Revelation 1:1-3 The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants what must soon take place; He made it known by sending His angel to His servant John, who testified to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw. Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of the prophecy, and blessed are those who *hear* and who *keep what is written in it*; for the time is near.

To: each church, in their city – the challenge to follow God's will together.

John, who wrote this book by divine revelation, had insight into what God was saying to seven churches, in seven cities, in today's Turkey. Each church was different, and each church received a different message that was applicable to them: a specific word from Jesus to the church in each city – its leaders, and its people, in that city.

John was told to "*Write in a book what you see and send it to the seven churches.*" So each church read about what God was saying to their church, and also to the other six! Revelation, insight, accountability, and challenge. God revealed His will for them; His blessings if they obeyed, and His warnings if they disobeyed.

There are 3 major themes in each of the messages, each **revealing God's will** for them:

1. What God saw that was pleasing to Him.
2. What God saw that was displeasing to Him.
3. What God told them to do – and the rewards for obedience, and consequences of disobedience.

The messages in Revelation 2 and 3 all end with the same invitation:

“Let those who have ears to hear, **hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches.**”

FOR MEDITATION – something to think about

A Suggestion: Read Revelation chapters 1 to 3 and see what God said to the church in each city, regarding the 3 major themes mentioned above.

Three Questions: What would God see, and say, to the church in our city/community?
What *needs to change* in the church in our city?
What should the church in our city be doing?

Paul's Letters: What were some major themes in each of **Paul's** letters to the churches he wrote to?

FOR PRAYER – something to pray about

Unity between elders, other church leaders, pastors, etc., both within a local church, and the churches in their city/town and community.

Not 'doing our own thing' but working together to do God's will, where we live.

Meeting together as churches, from time to time.

Praying together for our city: in our churches, leaders' meetings, prayer meetings, fellowship times and in homes.

Praying for each other individually.

Praying for outreaches into the community; and serving the community and its needs. Also praying for our city's leaders (1 Timothy 2:1-2)

Celebrating together, especially at the times when we celebrate, for example, Jesus' coming into this world (His birth), His death and resurrection, Pentecost, etc.

Praying against everything that fights against God's people, the Church, and churches within our city or town; pray for God's victory!

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