

The Book of Revelation

Chapter 3

Bible Study Notes

“He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life”

Revelation 3:5

v.1-6

The Message to the Church in Sardis:

The **Reformation** also called the **Protestant Reformation** or the **European Reformation** was a major movement within Western Christianity in 16th-century Europe that posed a religious and political challenge to the Catholic Church (*the Beast power*) and in particular, to papal authority, arising from the wide spread errors, abuses, and discrepancies by the Catholic Church in their teachings, spoken of by the Apostle John as the ‘*wine of her fornications*’.

The Reformation was the start of Protestantism and the split of the Western Church into Protestantism. It is also considered one of the events that signified the end of the ‘*dark ages*’ and beginning of the Early modern period in Europe.

It was during this time in Church history, **1517AD-1798AD**, that the Church of Sardis is being spoken of. As we remember from our studies on the Churches in Pergamos and Thyatira, there was a period of compromise and corruption which had crept into the Church and as a result the Church became corrupted from within. Also, as we stated before, papal dominion (*the rulership of the Pope over Western Europe; the 10 horns of Daniel 7:7-8*) started to take off from the year **538AD** and this lasted right up until the year **1798AD**, *the end of the period of the Church in Sardis*.

Because of the widespread errors within the Church at this time, there were a few great, faithful Christian men who stood up for truth, many of them at the loss of their lives before the year **1517AD** (*Peter Waldo, John Wycliffe, Jan Huss, etc*), however, most theologians do agree that the Reformation in its true sense of the word, commenced in **1517AD**, when Martin Luther, a German reformer, publicly opposed the Roman Catholic Church of which he was a part of, because of their false doctrines and teachings. As a result of his bold actions and zeal for God, other similar reformers stood up across Western Europe, all opposing the Catholic Church and their preference for tradition over the Holy Scriptures. Names such as Huldrych Zwingli, John Calvin, Gustav Vasa, Hans Tausen, Thomas Cranmer, John Knox among many other names all stood up for truth and it was because of the work of these early protestant reformers that we today are blessed with the Holy Scriptures in English and many other languages that we see today.

Prior to and during this period, possession of a Bible was made illegal by the Roman Church, and the translation of the Bible into the *lay language* (the language of the common people) was strictly prohibited. The Scriptures at that time were to be owned only by the Church and it was to be in Latin only, as Latin was the language spoken by the European aristocrats and Roman Church leaders in those days. Interesting enough, **Daniel 7:7-8**, tells us that the ‘*little horn*’ or Roman Papacy, shall itself be a part of the fourth beast that Daniel sees, and we know this Beast to represent the Pagan Roman Empire.

We see that this little horn ‘*arose*’ amongst the other *10 horns* (western Europe) and when we trace through history we very clearly see that after the fall of the Western Roman Empire, there were 10 major divisions namely: the Alemanni (Germany), Burgundians (Switzerland), Franks (France), Lombards (Italy), Saxons (England), Suevi (Portugal), Visigoths (Spain), Heruli, Vandals and the Ostrogoths, of which the latter three as we can tell from history were ‘*plucked up*’, **See: Daniel 7:1-8,15-28 & Bible Study Notes ‘Daniel 2 & 7**. It was from amongst these ‘*10 horns*’ that the little horn arose and grew stout.

These reformers are they of which Jesus speaks of in verses 4 saying, ***“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.”***

We owe a lot to these Early Reformers; the translation of the KJV Bible traces its roots back to the Early English Reformers in the year 1611.

What we gather from Jesus’ message to the Church in Sardis is that just like Pergamos and Thyatira, there was corruption, and the devil was at work spreading false teaching and false doctrine through the church; spiritual darkness abounded, and many were ignorant to the truths in the Bible, they were admonished to be watchful, and return to their first works, not to be complacent and repent, for ***“Woe to those that are complacent in Zion”, Amos 6:1.***

v.7-13

The Message to the Church in Philadelphia:

The age of the Christian Church from **1798AD-1844AD** is here spoken of as the Church of Philadelphia, which in the original Greek means *‘brotherly love.’* It, along with the Church in Smyrna, **Revelation 2:8-11**, are the only 2 Churches out of the 7 to receive unmixed praise.

This period of the Church in Philadelphia commenced after the *Beast* received its mortal wound, that is, when the Papacy lost its authority as a state power under Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte of France during the Napoleonic Wars, and it was now subject to the powers of Europe; it could no longer use its state power to influence the kingdoms of Europe, for a time.

“And I saw one of his heads as if it had been mortally wounded, and his deadly wound was healed. And all the world marvelled and followed the beast.” Revelation 13:3

From then onwards, because the widespread persecution of the true Church of God had subsided, as the *Beast* was now ‘mortally’ wounded, the Gospel message was then able to be taken all over the world.

There was now a time of religious revival throughout the world and many of the now widespread Christian denominations & organisations came to life throughout America and the rest of the world, independent of their British & European origins. Denominations such as the Methodists, Wesleyans, Episcopalians, & Adventists among others sprang up in the USA and spread to other nations outside of Europe. The American Bible Society was also created during this time, which led to the word wide distribution of the Word of God, bearing in mind that just a few decades prior, to own a Bible was outlawed and punishable by death in Europe under the rulership of the Papacy.

This period led to the development of several well-known Christian Colleges & missionary societies, as the gospel was now going out to the entire world with speed and power after being suppressed for 1,260 years under Papal dominion, **538AD-1798AD**. It was during this period, which theologians refer to as the *‘second great awakening’*, in which there was widespread revival and zeal in the Church, it was a period of widespread *‘brotherly love.’*

Here Jesus admonishes the Church of Philadelphia to hold on to their faith that no man might take their crown of life which He has promised them; He is the one who sits upon the throne of David, **Revelation 3:7, 1st Samuel 7:16, Psalm 89:3-4,29**, He is the one who opens doors which no man can close and also closes doors that no man can open, He is the one that shall give His saints a new name at His blessed and glorious coming.

v.14-22

The Message to the Church in Laodicea:

This 7th period of Church history commenced from **1844AD** and in the context of seven being the number of completeness, shall be completed at the Second Coming of Christ; this Church of Laodicea represents the end time Church or the Church in the last days.

This time period which commenced in 1844 is a very important year in the context of Bible prophecy.

Says the angel Gabriel to the Prophet Daniel, ***“And he said to me, “For two thousand three hundred days; then the sanctuary shall be cleansed.” Daniel 8:14***

Now as we have studied in our previous studies, we know that in a time prophecy, one prophetic day represents one literal year, See: **Numbers 14:33-34, Ezekiel 4:5-6.**

Knowing this we can apply the same principle to the 2300-day prophecy, and understand that it represents 2300 literal years, of which it began in **457BC**, when the decree was given by the Persian King Artaxerxes to restore and rebuild Jerusalem and ended in **1844AD**, exactly 2300 years later.

See: The 70-week prophecy in **Daniel 9:24-27**, which shows us when the beginning of the 2300-year prophecy would begin.

See: **Ezra 7:11-28** when the command was given by King Artaxerxes and the 2300-year prophecy began.

It was at the culmination of this final & longest time prophecy given in the Bible, that the 7th and final Church age began, The Church in Laodicea, which comes from the original Greek word meaning *‘to judge the people’*.

The Laodicean Church commences the time of judgement for the Church, for those who profess to be followers of Christ.

“For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God?” 1st Peter 4:17

As we noticed in one of our previous Bible Studies *‘Thy Way Oh God is in the Sanctuary’*, the earthly sanctuary was a copy of the Heavenly one, **Hebrews 8:1-5, Hebrews 9:11**, and in the same way the earthly sanctuary had to be cleansed once a year from the record of sin, by the earthly high priest, in the day of judgement for the people of Israel, **Leviticus 16**, in the same way, the Heavenly Sanctuary, has to be cleansed from the record of sin by the True High Priest, Jesus Christ, **Hebrews 4:14**, and it is at this time that the judgement begins. This is what was meant by Gabriel when he said, ***“For two thousand three hundred days; then the sanctuary shall be cleansed.” Daniel 8:14.***

NB. I suggest going through my study notes on *‘Thy Way Oh God is in the Sanctuary’*, to get a better understanding of what the Bible has to say on the earthly and Heavenly Sanctuary and their relationship. It is imperative that we understand the Sanctuary in these last days.

It was at this time that the final age of the Church began, and it shall continue until the Second Coming of Jesus.

It is interesting however, to note the spiritual state of this last day Church.

“I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth.” **verse 15-16**

These professed followers of Christ are luke-warm, neither hot nor cold and there is nothing worse than luke-warm water; it should be hot, or it should be cold. Therefore, because of this luke-warm spiritual state, Jesus wants to spew us from His mouth.

Widespread throughout these last days are many self-professed Christians who are living a life so close to that of the world that there is no noticeable difference or line of demarcation between present day Christians and those who live in world.

They reject the truth in the Word of God, giving no effort or time to read and study in God’s Word and as a result, there is no transformation of character in these individuals.

Says the Apostle James, ***“Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.”*** **James 4:4**

“Because you say, I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing’—and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked...” **verse 17**

Those of the Church of Laodicea see themselves as rich, spiritually that is, not seeing their need, not realising that they need true heart conversion and heart circumcision. They do not realise that they are wretched in the sight of God, miserable, spiritually poor, blind, and naked, not clothed in the righteousness of Christ.

Jesus admonishes us to buy from Him ‘gold tried in the fire’ and ‘white garments that we may be clothed’ in His righteousness. We are to seek Him that He may anoint our eyes with ‘eye-salve’ that our eyes may be opened spiritually, that we may be aware of what is transpiring around us in these last days. Many events are transpiring around us that are so significant in the context of where we are in the stream of time, yet many in the Church are blind and just like the five foolish virgins, **Matthew 25: 1-13**, are fast asleep and unprepared for the Coming of the Bridegroom. **Revelation 21:2**

We must see our need and realise that we can do nothing without Christ, we must lose the self-righteousness and pride in the Church and repent of our sins, seeking forgiveness and a humble heart. We are living in the time of the investigative judgement, **Daniel 7:9:13**, and just like in the days of old when the earthly high priest was to judge the people in the Day of Atonement, they were to afflict their souls and seek forgiveness of their sins, humbling themselves before God, so we, living in the time of the judgement of the Church, must seek forgiveness and humility, seeking to be transformed into the character of Christ that we shall be found righteous in the sight of a righteous God; for we do not know when our names shall be reached in the Lamb’s Book of Life for judgement.

Jesus is knocking at the door of our hearts, let us heed the call and let Him in, surrendering fully to Him that He may transform our worldly sinful characters into His righteous character, for without this transformation, we shall never enter through the gates of the New Jerusalem.

“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”

Revelation 3:22