

SERIES OF RADIO MESSAGES
on the
BOOK OF REVELATION
by
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We are happy to start with you under the good hand of God, a verse by verse, chapter by chapter study of this wonderful book of Revelation, the last book in the Bible. I want you to notice its title, the Revelation of John; but it would better be called the Revelation of Jesus Christ. Let's mark well its place in the canon, in the collection of Scripture as the final book and capstone of the Bible. It was written undoubtedly by John, the son of Zebedee, author of the Gospel according to John and of the three epistles of John. The Apostle John was exiled to Patmos, a little rocky island in the Mediterranean Sea.

You will notice that in the first chapter, the first verse, the fourth verse, the ninth verse, and in chapter 21 of the Revelation, the second verse, we read that John was the writer of this wonderful Revelation. And in the 22nd chapter, the eighth verse, again we have an indication of who the author was. It was written about 96 A.D. in the time of the Roman Emperor Domitian. It is remarkable, friends, but this is the only book with an express blessing for those who read, those who hear, and those who keep it. There is a warning that we are not to tamper with it; we are not to add to it, nor take away from it. Rev. 22:18-19. It is a revelation, you'll notice; it is an unveiling, or disclosure, not something that is hidden, but something that's unveiled, something that is now clear and now opened to our view.

Now, not all interpret the Book of Revelation alike. There are four distinct and chief approaches to the understanding of the Book of Revelation. There is what is called the historical view. That view says that the entire history of the Church is given in this book, and that the book pictures the antagonism of the forces of evil against the Church in the world. In other words, it is the entire history of the Church on earth as it battles the forces of evil in the world. That's the historical view. Then there is the preterist view, the past view, just as we have a preterite tense in grammar, that says that a greater part of the prophecy have been fulfilled, in the past. When? Especially in the struggle of the Church with the Roman Empire, and there we have the victory of the Church foretold. There are others who approach the book and interpret it along the line which is called the spiritual interpretation. They say the book has many, many details, but we can't be troubled with those; and it just in a wonderful way indicates the triumph of truth, God's truth, over error. Then there is a final view, the fourth view or approach, and interpretation and that is called the futurist. That is the view that we are going to be presenting each morning over the Bible Institute Hour, Lord willing. It is the position that is Biblical, time-honored, and set forth in the Scofield Bible. What is the futurist view? It holds that from chapter four, all in the book is future.

Now what is the purpose of the Book? Wouldn't 65 books have been enough in the Bible? No, beloved, we had to have 66 books. Why? This book is written to encourage believers in the time of great Roman persecution, showing the final victory of the Lord Jesus Christ. It was written to enlarge upon, to add to Old Testament prophetic truths dealing with the future. All of Scripture is wonderfully perfect, but is not complete. Otherwise, we would have had only one book in the Bible, or one chapter, but that didn't complete the story; not that it wasn't perfect, but it was incomplete. So the Old Testament was incomplete, and all of the New Testament was incomplete until we get the Book of Revelation which completes the entire book of God. And then the Book of the Revelation was given by God to present an unveiling, and this is so beautiful. It presents an unveiling of the Lord Jesus Christ, as He enters upon the purchased possession; He gets the earth as that for which He died. He enters upon His purchased possession and the plan of the book is a wonderful plan. Some folk say, I can't understand the Book of Revelation. Well, beloved friends, God meant for us to understand it, He pronounced the blessing upon those who read, upon those who hear, and the ones who keep it. He must have meant for us to understand it. And instead of being disorderly, disarranged, and haphazard, believe us, the plan of the Book of the Revelation is most

orderly arranged, most beautiful, most symmetrical. The first chapter, the 19th verse tells us...."Write therefore the things which thou sawest, and the things which are, and the things which shall come to pass hereafter." And this is the threefold outline of the Book of the Revelation. In 1:19 we have the things which thou hast seen; that is Chapter 1, the vision of the glorified Christ. The things which are cover Chapters 2 and 3; and then the things which shall come to pass hereafter, that is Chapter 4-22. In that division you have Chapters 4-19, the tribulation; in Chapter 20, the millennium; Chapters 21-22 eternity. Let me repeat, Rev. 1:19 gives you the plan of the Book. Remember that the book is a book that has a message in symbolical language, verse three of the first chapter. He sent and signified it, sign-i-fied it, made by signs. So there's symbolism in the book. Now that does not mean that everything is symbolism; there are many things that are literal. The symbolism in the book can only be understood in the light of the Old Testament Scriptures or other parts of the New Testament. It is not a book sealed, it is not a book hidden, but a book unveiled, disclosed, revealed, open to our gaze. And as we read in the first chapter, we have a vision of Christ. It is a view of Christ in the glory, the things which thou sawest. The first eight verses are introductory; the rest of the chapter is occupied with the vision of the glorified Christ.

Notice verse one, the channel of the message. The revelation is of Jesus Christ, that God gave Christ, gave Him to show unto His servants the things which shall come to pass, and He sent and signified it by His angel unto His servant John. The very means and medium whereby it came, show the tremendous importance of the message. It is God giving the message to Jesus Christ to show to Christ's servants, and that in turn is sent by an angel. Christ gives it to an angel, an interpreting angel, who gives it to John, who ultimately gives it to all the servants of the Lord Jesus Christ. John bears witness of the Word of God and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, even of all the things he saw. He didn't keep it to himself; he was faithful to the message that was given to him.

Then we have the benediction, and the great beatitude, if you will, on the one who reads, and they who hear the words of the prophecy. Remember, it is the prophecy. God said so Himself. You can not say that it has all been fulfilled. In verse four, John writes to the seven churches that are in Asia. He writes with grace and peace to Him that is and was and is to come. That is God the Father, with the seven spirits before His throne, or the sevenfold fullness of the Holy Spirit, as written in Isaiah 11:2. You have the whole Trinity here, first God the Father, the Holy Spirit, and then Jesus Christ, who is the first-born of the dead and the ruler of the kings of the earth. Christ is the faithful witness; this speaks of His prophetic ministry. He is the first-born of the dead; this is His priesthood. Then He is the ruler of the kings of the earth, which is His kingly ministry. He is connected with the earth; all this is significant for the message of the book. Then we read, "Unto Him that loveth us, and loosed us from our sins by His blood, and He made us to be a kingdom, to be priests unto His God and Father; to Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen." Thus John gives us the doxology. John still remembers that Christ loves us, and He is the One Who loosed us from our sins by His blood. He made us a kingdom, and priests. Just as there were kings and priests in Old Testament times, so now we are God's kings and God's priests; we are priestly kings and kingly priests. Why? Because the One we follow, the Lord Jesus Christ, is both king and priest. Thank God, that He loves us. He loves you, friend, and He washed you; He loosed you from your sins by His blood. You must trust Him this hour. That is the important message of the book.

Our first study was on the introduction of the Book of Revelation and the first six glorious verses in this book. We have noticed his wonderful ascription of praise unto the Lord Jesus Christ.

Notice now the wonderful words in the seventh verse, "Behold, He cometh with the clouds; and every eye shall see Him, and they that pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth shall mourn over Him. Even so, Amen." In the seventh verse of the first chapter, we are brought immediately to the main theme of the book: that is the revelation, the unveiling of the Lord Jesus Christ, His return. He comes with clouds visibly, manifestly, openly, personally, and with great glory. This time is the same as Zechariah 12:10. Those that pierced Him who shall see Him in that time are the tribes in the land of Palestine. He shall return and the spirit of grace and supplications shall be poured out upon Jerusalem, upon David and all His royal house, and all of the inhabitants of the land. They shall look unto Him whom they had pierced. They shall mourn for Him, as they who mourn for their only son; they shall be in bitterness for Him, as those who are in bitterness for their first-born. He is unveiled before their eyes.

One day when King Edward visited Northridge, we are told that 11,000 children sang "God save the King!" After he passed, a little girl was seen weeping, just weeping her heart out. "Why, didn't you see the King, dear?" asked the teacher. "Yes, but the king didn't see me," sobbed the child. But when the King of kings comes, He will see all, and every eye will see Him.

Now we read, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, saith the Lord God, who is, who was, and who is to come, the Almighty." The blessed source and the end of all things is God Himself. He is the first, He is the last, He is the Lord God, He is the Eternal One, He is the Almighty. How much ascription of praise there is here to God. He it is who is giving this wonderful revelation.

"I John, your brother and partaker with you in the tribulation and kingdom and patience which are in Jesus, was in the isle that is called Patmos." That is one of the rocky islands in the Mediterranean. He was there because he was exiled for the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus. He was in the Spirit, on the Lord's Day. He was not thinking this revelation up; it was not something that He has been studying in some book, but He was in the Spirit of God on the Lord's Day. Then he heard behind him a great voice, as of a trumpet. It was a matter of great and public concern. The text states where he was, why he was there, how he was positioned spiritually, and even the notation of the day. It was the first day of the week, the Lord's Day, the great memorial day of the resurrection triumph of the Lord Jesus Christ. He heard a voice as of a trumpet saying, "What thou seest, write in a book and send it to the seven churches." These were seven literal churches in Asia: Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea.

Notice next this picture of the glorified and resurrected Christ. His head and His hair were white as wool, white as snow; His eyes were as the flame of fire; and his feet were like unto the burnished brass, as if it had been refined in a furnace. It is a picture of judgment. His voice was as the voice of many waters, and He had in His right hand seven stars and out of His mouth proceeds a sharp two-edged sword. His countenance was as the sun shines in his strength. When John saw Him, he fell at His feet as one dead. Think of it: It is John who had companied with the Lord Jesus Christ for three and a half years. When he sees Him now in His resurrected body, he falls at the feet of the Lord Jesus Christ as one dead. He laid His right hand upon John, and said: "Fear not; I am the first and the last, the Living one; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades."

This wonderful picture from verse twelve through eighteen is of Christ. He is seen as the high priest coming in judgment, and He is also seen as a serving One, for He is wearing a girdle. There is an illusion here to the lampstand in the tabernacle. The difference is

that here are separate lampstands, and Christ is in the midst in the place of authority and preeminence. See Colossians 1:18. The churches are seen in the sphere of earthly testimony. The vision reminds us very much of Daniel 7, where there is a judgment set for the beast of the fourth kingdom, and rule is taken away from him. He is destroyed, and when that is done, there is one brought with a great retinue, one like unto the Son of man, unto the ancient of days. He received the kingdom which shall never pass away. Now it is not the voice that speaks in gentle tones, but the voice that roars out of Zion like a lion. He is coming in judgment now, and His voice is the voice of many waters. We are reminded of Psalm 29, that voice of omnipotent power. It is not like that voice that spoke peace to the troubled sea, or speaks peaceably to your heart and to mine, when we trust the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour. He is now come in judgment. What is the basis of His power? He is the first and the last, He is the Living One; He was dead, but He is alive forever more.

The Lord Jesus Christ, blessed be His Name, has wrested, has snatched away, the power from Satan and come out triumphantly. We need not be in fear of death and of the grave. Why? The Lord Jesus Christ has that glorious power. In a friendly conversation a French general said to a British general: "You won Waterloo, you've certainly won the battle of Waterloo, but it cost you a great deal." "Ah", said the British officer, "but it cost you more, it cost you a Napoleon." The great victory on Calvary cost the life of the Victor, the Lord Jesus Christ. But thank God, through death He destroyed him that hath the power of death, the devil. And unlike Napoleon, our blessed Victor is alive, alive forever more to die no more. Mark that in verse 19 we have the key verse of the book. It is the only safe guide to the correct interpretation of the book. "Write therefore the things which thou sawest, and the things which are, and the things which shall come to pass hereafter." We have seen the things which John saw, the vision of the glorified Christ. Then John speaks of the mystery of the seven stars in Christ's right hand. Those seven stars are the angels of the seven churches and the seven candlesticks are seven churches. What do we have here? The angels are not literal angels, nor are they true believers in general. We have here a reference to the basic meaning of angel. These are messengers to the churches. Who are the messengers? They are pastors of the churches; they are in the places of responsibility and authority. The Lord Jesus Christ is in the midst of the churches in the place of supervision, in the place of administration, in the place of complete and glorious and absolute control of the churches in their spheres of earthly ministry, shining for God. We are lights in the world, just as the Lord Jesus Christ was the Light of the world, when He was here. I wonder how well we are shining, friend. Let us make it very personal and intimate: are we telling folk about the Light of the world, are we telling them that Christ Jesus died the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God?

THIRD MESSAGE ON REVELATION

We saw that in the first chapter of the Revelation, in the nineteenth verse, we have the plan of the Book of the Revelation. The things which are relate to the Church age; in chapters two and three we have the things which are, that is, in the present Church age in which the Apostle John lived, and in which we live. Here we have a faithful portrayal of the course, the moral, spiritual course of the Church, from the beginning to its end here on earth. Now the first letter in this chapter is to Ephesus. We may call the Church of Ephesus, the church of departed love. It is the church of the apostolic age. These letters have seven exhortations to hear them, yet they are a sadly neglected portion of the Word of God. These messages have a spiritual and historical value. In the first three letters,

the exhortation to hear comes first, and in the last four, the order is reversed. Each has four parts, the manner in which Christ presents Himself, the encouragements and the commendation He gives, then the reward He promises, with the exhortation to hear. Now the messages are to seven distinct and literal churches in the province of Asia; but they also apply to successive ages in the history of the Church. It can well apply in any age to seven different types of believers in the life of a church. Ephesus means "desired"; in church history it speaks of the apostolic age, the first period of Church on earth.

Ephesus was the main seat and center of Greek culture and of heathen idolatry. It had the great temple of the goddess Diana, adored by all in Asia, one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. Here Aquilla and Priscilla labored, here Apollos worked, here Paul preached three years at one time, and here John, after leaving his home in Jerusalem, worked for about thirty years. Christ is seen in verse one in the proper place. He is guiding, controlling, ruling over all. Outwardly everything is in its proper order. In verse two, the Lord Jesus Christ reveals that He knows certain things concerning His church. This is repeated in each letter, showing the absolute knowledge Christ has of what goes on in His church at all times. The lampstand is not the light, but was set for the display of the light. The church is not a light-giver, but a light-bearer. He says I know your work, toil, patience; they are virtues, all of them. They seem not to be complete when we compare them with I Thessalonians 1:1-3; but He knows that which is present in the Ephesian Church. Then He says, I have tried you, I have put you to the test. The apostles were all disappearing, perhaps they were all gone except John; and some were coming in, and were claiming that they were apostles. The Ephesians did test them; they tested the ones who called themselves apostles and they were not. They found them false, and have had patience and have endured for His name's sake. They did not grow weary in doing it. But He goes from commendation to condemnation. The church of Ephesus had left her first love. Now what does that mean? Their hearts had been drifting away from Jesus Christ, the first love that gripped them when they saw Christ as all in all. The first danger sign of a Christian is growing cold toward Christ. A church can have great zeal for Christ, it can have soundness of doctrine and discipline, yet have love for Christ decline. It is a very, very subtle thing. Meticulous care with doctrine and discipline will not take the place of love. Notice the waning of affection in Paul's time already; some were loving this present world, and leaving off the things which are so near and dear to the heart of Christ. They left their first love. John's letter proves that evil doctrine and practice came in at this time. The Lord, on the other hand, is always mindful of the love of these people. Christ will have all of our love or none. First love was the love of espousal. Ephesus means "desired". Her love is desired by Christ. The greatest dishonor to heap upon Christ is not to love Him. Judas criticised the decision of Mary when she brought the sennecard to Christ. She did not look at the cost. Love in her gave lavishly, unstintingly. Some look upon lack of zeal as commendable, but oh, how fatal it is! One who woos a bride will not be satisfied with a servant. You remember what the Lord Jesus said, "You lost your first love." When Christ warned the Church of Ephesus to repent and do the first work, lest He come and move her candlestick out of its place, He did not mean that individuals were going to lose their salvation. But it means that the church would lose her place of light-bearing and witness. As a matter of fact, Ephesus is now wrapped in a mantle of unbelief and error; the light of Ephesus has been removed. They lost their testimony.

The Saviour loves to go on to commendation, and He takes up commendation again. He commends them for hating the works of the Nicolaitanes. Who were the Nicolaitanes? We do not know exactly who they were. The word "Nicolaitanes" comes from two Greek words, conquerors or domineers of the people, perhaps a clerical class who were lording it over the rest and bringing in fleshly practices. We shall see them later in the moral history of the church. After a call to hear, we have the reward indicated for the overcomer. Ephesus was trying to make her paradise here on earth, so she allowed her love to grow cold. Remember the overcoming is in I John 5:4. The victory we have in us is faith, God-given

faith; faith is the victory that overcometh the world. Adam was forbidden to eat of the tree of life, but we have access to this tree of life. All believers are overcomers and to such will be given to eat of the tree of life. They will be in the paradise of God. What does that mean? It expresses the blessedness of heaven. Do not allow anything, friend, between you and your love for the Lord Jesus Christ. Do you love Him less now than when you first believed in Him? Let nothing come in to mar, nothing between your soul and the Saviour. You do not have to lose that first love. Ask God right now to make that love real to you again and He will

FOURTH MESSAGE ON REVELATION

In the Book of the Revelation, second chapter and verse eight, we have the letter to the Church of Smyrna, the church of fiery persecutions. Ephesus was the church of departed love of the Apostolic age. Smyrna is the church of fiery persecutions, the time of the persecutions of the Roman Empire. Smyrna means myrrh. Myrrh was used in Scripture in the embalming of the dead. It had to be crushed to give out its fragrance. The martyr age saw the early Church crushed under the heel of pagan Rome. In those days when Christians were crushed, they gave forth a sweet fragrance unto God. Christ reveals himself here to John the apostle, as the first and the last. It expresses in absolute terms His deity. How could anyone deny it? The thought is that He is the supreme one, before all things, and before all time. He is also the last, the end, and the goal of all things, He was dead and lived again, speaking of His great triumph over death, wherein He has the keys of death and of Hades. He has destroyed death, and has the authority over Hades. How important it is that Christ should be revealed in this light to the suffering, tried, persecuted Church. The Lord says, "I know thy tribulation." Sometimes the Lord allows trials in our lives in order to rekindle lost first love. He knows not only the tribulation but He knows the poverty. Christ knew real poverty. He had no place to lay His head. When on earth He said He had no where to lay his head, though the foxes had holes, and the birds had nests. The Smyrna believers had suffered like the Hebrew believers of a former time. Heb. 10:34. They had suffered the loss of everything. They were reduced to beggary; confiscation of goods attended and followed the persecution. He says, "I know thy poverty, but thou art rich." Oh, blessed word of commendation, it is the estimate of the risen Christ. How rich they were; they were given all things in Christ. They had nothing, yet all things. They were poor in this world's goods but rich in faith.

But Christ indicates He knows the blasphemy of those who claim they are Jews and are not. This doesn't refer to the Jewish nation in general. What is meant is the legalizing movement of the early Christian era. It was Galatianism in the apostolic age and immediately after, because men's minds would, in spite of everything, dilute the Word of God with legalism and ceremonialism. Satan's synagogue here is seen as opposed to the Church of God. The first is a gathering together regardless of whom; that is the synagogue of Satan. The Church of God is a called out body from the world, with regard to faith in Christ. The enemy, Satan, attacked this Church from without with persecution, and from within by perversion of doctrine. The evil had evidently not made inroads into this group, for there is no censure or command to repent. A church in affliction is like a child in affliction or bodily weakness. It is spared words of censure. There is no word given them concerning repentance.

The interesting thing in this letter is that there is no word that they would escape their suffering. More than that, they are told that the trials would be more grievous. But they are not to fear. Christ reveals that He knows not only past trials, but those that are hid by the veil of the future. We know how they were tortured, exposed to wild bulls and lions that tore them to pieces. They were to be cast into prison. In the Roman Empire imprisonment was not a form of punishment as it is with us, because the government then was not willing to support a multitude of prisoners. A man in prison was waiting his trial or death. He mentions ten days; these have been likened to the ten persecutions from Nero to Diocletian. The trial has a limit; it is all under the seeing eye of God. They are told to be faithful unto death. Not faithful until death, but faithful unto death; Not just as long as you live, but even if it costs you your life. It speaks not of extensiveness but of intensity. In the Old Testament, saints were saved from death, as Daniel in the lions' den, but in the New Testament, saints triumph over death. The Lord's word for them was not that they should strengthen themselves for the coming trial, but that they should go on trusting and depending upon Him. Just the determined effort of self alone will not suffice.

It is looking to Him, through the trials, to the very end, and He says, "I will give you a crown of life." Some think it vulgar or common to think of rewards, but Christ Himself suffered under the spur of rewards. See Hebrews 12:2. The overcomer will not be hurt of the second death. Notice how well this is suited to those who were threatened with the first death. They will not know eternal separation from the Lord Jesus Christ. Throughout this letter, then, Christ identifies Himself with the suffering Church. The epistle reveals where there can be found real riches and real comfort.

As we turn to the twelfth verse, in this chapter, we have a letter to Pergamum. Pergamum means "marriage" and "elevation". This was the period in the history of the Church when she was elevated to the place of power and carried on as one married to the world. Church and State came together under the reign of Constantine in 313 A.D. Christ in speaking to the Church of Pergamum says He is the One who has the sharp two-edged sword. That is the Word of God seen in judgment, Heb. 4:12. Since this church was beginning to tolerate error, it needed the measuring stick of God's Word brought into action. Satan is spoken of as the prince of this world because of his usurped power. In the Smyrna age, Satan tried to destroy the Church by persecution; in the next century he tried to ruin their testimony by patronage without and false principles within. Constantine's attitude toward the Church brought many into the church who were really pagan at heart.

Gibbon, the great historian, said: "The salvation of the common people was purchased at an easy rate." In one year 12,000 people were baptized in Rome, besides a proportionate number of women and children. A white garment with twenty pieces of gold was promised by the emperor to every convert. In many cases heathen were won over by adoption of pagan rights and festivals as parts of Christian worship. Someone has said that God has put the Church in the world and the devil has put the world in the Church. In our own day we see the mixing of the Church and the world. Thank God, our country stands for the separation of Church and State, and may it ever be so.

In those early days gorgeous heathen temples and sumptuous costly vestments of pagan priests were used for Christian service. Pagan rights and ceremonies were introduced to satisfy the rich pagans of Constantine's day who came into the Church. But Christ said, "Thou holdest fast my name." There was controversy over the things concerning Christ in that age, over whether Christ was really deity. The truth of the essential deity of Christ prevailed. We do not know who the Antipas of verse 13 was. His name means "against all." He may be unknown to us, but God remembers all His faithful witnesses and martyrs. In Ephesus there was one cause of censure, but here Christ said there were "things" needing censure. Notice the decline; you have the deeds of the Nicolaitanes hated in the Ephesus age of the Church. In Pergamum it is the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes that was tolerated and held. The teaching of Balaam and that of the Nicolaitanes are distinct, although they have the same disastrous results. Balaam was the destroyer and

devourer of the people. He taught Balak how to draw Israel away from their place of separation. This teaching of the Nicolaitanes is clericalism. It came rapidly into the Church. For the overcomer there is the hidden manna. What is it? In the Old Testament it was not hidden; but in the New Testament, what is the hidden manna? It is feasting upon Christ in the heart. He is the hidden manna. And a white stone is to be given; such were used to cast a vote of approval. You and I also have a vote to cast. If you have never trusted Christ, you have never cast a vote for Christ. If you are a believer, and have cast a vote for Him, then you do have the victory that overcomes the world.

FIFTH MESSAGE ON REVELATION

We come in our studies to the second chapter and the eighteenth verse, the letter to the Church of Thyatira. The eighteenth verse indicates that the Lord Jesus in speaking to the angel of the Church in Thyatira bids him write: "These things saith the Son of God, who hath His eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet are like unto burnished brass: I know thy works, and thy love and faith and ministry and patience, and that thy last works are more than the first. But I have this against thee, that thou sufferest the woman Jezebel, who calleth herself a prophetess; and she teacheth and seduceth my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed to idols." This is the only Church of the seven that was a woman in it. It is the longest of all the letters; it marks the beginning of the second group of letters in which the moral and spiritual history goes on till the second coming of Christ. In this and the following letters, the call to hear comes after the promises. The title "Son of God" is used only here in the Book of Revelation.

The name Thyatira probably means "continual sacrifice." The name is really hard to define clearly. Some suggest that it may mean from "daughter" and "to hold" meaning woman's oppression. Now the period designated here is that from the seventh century on to the Reformation Period in the sixteenth century. If we take the Ephesus Church as the Church of departed love, or of the Apostolic age, the Church of Smyrna as the Church of fiery persecutions during the Roman persecutions, the Church of Pergamum as the Church of worldly alliance, then Thyatira is the Church of clerical domination, the Church of corrupt doctrine. Notice that in verse eighteen, our Lord Jesus is designated as the Son of God, because this corrupt Church, the Church of the Middle Ages, made so much of Christ as the Son of Mary. Here the title is meant to convey power and authority. He is seen as such, because the Church of the Middle Ages had shut Christ out of His rightful place in His Church. It is not Peter, but Christ who is the foundation, and the administrator of the Church. Christ is revealed here as searching, penetrating, judging. His eyes search out evil for He cannot morally tolerate it. His feet of brass speak of stamping out the evil with judgment. The picture here in this church is one of judgment. In verse nineteen, you will notice, the Saviour, the risen Lord said, "I know thy works." He commends it. The Church has much evil in it, but Christ looks first at that which He can commend. Before the rebuke, these are the strongest words of commendation addressed to any of the churches. There were devotedness and zeal in the Middle Ages in spite of the apostasy and corruption. Her last works are more than the first because the darker the night, the more zealous and ardent were the company of the godly minority.

But He has this against that church, that she suffers the woman Jezebel. Jezebel means literally "chaste" in the Hebrew language. But this was not true of this corrupt Church. Now Balaam attacked the people of God from without, Jezebel does so from within. Notice that she was a stranger in Israel; she was responsible for the worst idolatry in the land of Israel and for the persecution of the saints and the servants of God. She calls herself a prophetess. That is the claim of the corrupt Church to infallibility, in directing discipline and setting forth doctrine, claiming new revelation from God. This Jezebel speaks of the corrupt Church which is an abomination unto the Lord. She teaches

and seduces; she seduces by her teaching. She leads men astray from worshipping Christ and Him alone. She is given the place of mediator which rightfully belongs to Christ alone. The servants referred to were a group of servants, a remnant of the faithful even in the midst of the corruption.

Then we read in verse twenty of the fornication and idolatry of this Church as the counterpart of Jezebel of old. The first is illegal intercourse with the world. What was begun in the Pergamum Church reaches its climax here in the corrupt Church of the Middle Ages. Spiritual fornication is the idolatry seen in this Church which was really pagan at heart. Customs and ceremonies were brought in which took the place of Christ or obscured His person which is definitely idolatry. I John 5:20,21. She was given time to repent. Before the Reformation, this corrupt Church of Rome was called upon to repent by many men of God, as John Huss and others, but they refused to do so. There is here, therefore, no call to repentance, because she refused to do that. Only judgment remained for this Church. She is fixed in her corruption, so her doom is set. She will incorporate in herself all the evil systems of the world under the heading of "Mystery Babylon the Great, the Mother of Harlots." We read that the Lord will cast her into a bed of judgment. The three groups here now are Jezebel, those who dabble with her system, supposedly from the spirit of tolerance and unity, and then her children who are her followers and her adherents. The lesson in verse 23 is both general and individual.

Who are the rest of verse 24? The Waldenses, the Albigenses of those days, and others, those who denounced the corruption. Since there is no hope in the corrupt Church that she may repent, the godly remnant in her can only look for the coming of the Lord, as we find in verse 25. The fact that the Thyatira overcomers are seen to go on till the time of Christ's return, reveals that the Church as such goes on beyond its period in the Middle Ages. And then we have the wonderful promise.... "I will give authority to the one who overcomes, authority over the nations." If we endure, we shall also reign with Him. Those who reject the advantages of the world which Jezebel and her followers enjoy, will yet enjoy other blessed privileges, the privileges of the Lord. Jezebel sought world-wide dominion over soul and body. Those who come to Christ and overcome by faith will be given what Jezebel so eagerly sought after. They share in Christ's kingdom. Thank God, And they are given the bright and the morning star. You will notice, the morning star mentioned in verse twenty-eight. That's the promise of being with Christ before the day breaks. The promise of the rapture you can find in Revelation 22:16. Israel awaits the Sun of Righteousness, the Church awaits the Morning Star. This message, as all the rest, has an application to all believers of all time.

Notice the letter to Sardis in the third chapter, the first six verses. In Sardis we have the general condition of the Church during and after the Reformation time. In the letter to Thyatira we have it before the Reformation. Both conditions go on until the end of the age. Sardis represents the Church of empty profession, whereas Thyatira represents the Church of clerical domination. Now Sardis means "remnant." This Church deals with the Church of the Reformation. It is those who have escaped the moral corruption of the corrupt Church of the Middle Ages. The flagrant violations of all decency on the part of the corrupt Church, their exploitation of the people, and the evangelical teaching of the Church of God brought matters to a head. In the first verse we read "To the angel of the church in Sardis write: these said He that hath the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars." Paul speaks of the unity of the Person of the Spirit. John emphasizes the diversities of His attributes and actions and the fullness and the completeness of His power and Person. The Holy Spirit was not given the prominent place He deserves, as can be seen in the different creeds of Christendom. The seven stars of verse one are an allusion of the way in which Christ was revealed in the Ephesus Church. But there is a difference: there He held the stars; here He has the stars. There it was precise order; here it is by way of testimony and not proper order. In the Reformation time churches were formed according to the will and choice of certain leaders such as Luther, Zwingli, Calvin, Hubmeier,

and others. The Reformation was God's work; the resulting churches were man-made systems. Man is prone to error, and the result of the Reformation period is the revelation of the presence of error and short-coming. Said Christ to this church, "Thou hast a name that thou livest." The Lord commends nothing in this church. The measure of its profession and privileges is the measure of its responsibilities. It was full of empty profession; it has all the forms but not Christ Himself. And so it is dead. The state churches set up by Zwingli, Luther, and Calvin included many that were not saved. The church started well, but soon had more profession than life. They were ambitious, as the Medieval Church was and still is, for numbers and wanted to accomplish that end as soon as possible.

Oh, what a reproach to have a name that you live and to be dead. Dr Hall tells the story of a Scotchman who sang most piously the hymn, "Were the whole realm of nature mine, that were a present far too small." And all through his singing he was fumbling in his pocket for the smallest silver coin for the collection plate. All in the Sardis Church may have seemed alike, but the scrutinizing eyes of the risen Christ, who was in possession of the sevenfold Spirit, can discern the difference between the possessors and the professors.

The Lord indicates that this Church is to be watchful. "Be thou watchful." The church's spiritual leaders are to assume and carry out their responsibilities. What there is of truth is to be maintained and to be carried on. They are to strengthen the things and to establish the things that remain. They have the testimony of God's Word more fully than the ones who had sunk in the ecclesiastical formalism of the Middle Ages. But sadly enough, none of her works was perfected. Some people feel that all truths were covered by the Reformation, and that if a doctrine cannot stand in the light of the Reformation confessions, it is unscriptural. The Reformation is not the standard of divine truth. It was not a complete return to the Apostolic Church. Individual godliness was absent. The truths of Ephesians and Colossians were unknown or unemphasized. They were occupied largely with the doctrine of justification by faith. The gospel was not fully expounded; the Bible was sometimes left out of account and the teachings were added to. Liberty of conscience was denied to others. There was no emphasis on the Holy Spirit, none on life truths, none on prophetic truth. Remember, in verse three, we are told to remember therefore how thou hast received and didst hear, and keep it and repent. She is told to repent. In view of all they had, they were to repent, in view of the recovered truth they are to keep what good they had. Repent, He says of the inadequate use they had made and were making of it and watch. For if Protestantism unites with the world, it will also have to bear the world's doom as the corrupt Church did. And the Roman Church and Protestantism have run along side by side. Their differences are decreasing and they will unite. The Church here is threatened with the world's judgment. And the Lord will come as a thief when we do not expect Him. But He has a few names, that godly remnant in Sardis. In verse four, we note that they did not defile themselves. Their blamelessness and holiness are publicly manifested. They are worthy; this is a reckoning of grace; they have been made so by His grace. Now notice the three promises, first white garments—they have been made white in the blood of the Lamb. Secondly, they will not be wiped out of the book, those whose names were placed there by the authority of God. God will not blot them out, never will their names be removed from the book of life. They will be there for all eternity. The Church at Sardis is then the Church of dead orthodoxy; it has more professors than possessors. So what appears to be alive is dead; they may have activity in abundance, but no progress or growth, because there is no life. This is true of rocking horse Christians. There are a lot of Christians who have much motion, but no progress. Claiming saving grace without possession is worse than no profession at all. These are twice dead, as Jude said; they are dead in sins and dead in their profession. May God grant that we shall be kept from such a situation as this.