

chieftians as kings and emperors; the grateful Frankish kings defended the popes against all their enemies . . . Such in broad outline was the way in which grew up the papacy."

Myers Ancient History pages 585, 586.

Thus for centuries we behold union of church and state until July 2, 1871 when Victor Emmanuel entered Rome and took up his residence there.

"The occupation of Rome by the Italian government marked the end of the temporal power of the pope, and the end of an ecclesiastical state, the last in Europe, which from long before Charlemagne had held a place among the temporal powers of Europe . . . the papal troops, with the exception of a few guardsmen, were disbanded. . . . By a statute known as the Law of the papal guarantees (1871), the pope was assured in the exercise of his spiritual functions."

Thus, finally, as a result of the reformation the doctrine of the Nicolitanes, "which thing I hate" said Christ, was refuted, both in its spiritual and temporal functions. However, it must be said in the interest of truth that the doctrine still holds sway, spiritually, in the overlordship of the papacy over the Roman church, and, temporally, in the eternal struggle of the pope to regain his power over the nations.

In these letters we have revealed or uncovered to us those tactics the great adversary, the devil, employs against the church of Christ.

vs. 29 Again we meet with the statement which indicates that Thyatira, like the three churches before it, represents not just one church, but the churches of a period. "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the *Churches*."

CHAPTER III

THE SALUTATION

THE SARDIS CHURCH

Text (3:1-6)

3 And to the angel of the church in Sardis write: These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars: I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and thou art dead.

SEVEN-FOLD ARRANGEMENT of the SEVEN LETTERS

	Chapters I & II				Chapter III		
	EPHESUS Verse	SMYRNA Verse	PERGAMOS Verse	THYATIRA Verse	SARDIS Verse	PHILADELPHIA Verse	LAODICEA Verse
• SALUTATION	1	8	12	18	1	7	14
• DECLARATION OF WORKS	2	9	13	19	1,2	8	15
• PRAISE OR CENSURE	3	9	13	20	2	9,10	15a
• REPROOF	4,6	None	14	21,22	3	None	16,17
• EXHORTATION	5	10	16	23-25	4	11	18
• ADMONITION	7	11	17	Promise 26-28	5	12	21
PROMISE	7	11	17	Admonition 29	6	13	22
APPROXIMATE TIME	Pentecost to A.D. 100	A.D. 100 to 313 A.D.	313 A.D. to 533 A.D.	533 A.D. to 1517 A.D.	1517 A.D. to 1809 A.D.	1809 A.D. to 1909 A.D.	1909 to End
OF CHURCH PERIODS	Doctrinally Right	Persecuted	Compromised	Apostacized	Denomi-national	Restored	Lukewarm
CHARACTERISTICS	The First Church	Church of 2nd, 3rd. Centuries	Church of 4th, 5th Centuries	Catholic	Denomi-national	Church of Christ	Present Church

2 Be thou watchful, and establish the things that remain, which were ready to die: for I have found no works of thine perfected before my God. **3** Remember therefore how thou hast received and didst hear; and keep it, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee. **4** But thou hast a few names in Sardis that did not defile their garments: and they shall walk with me in white; for they are worthy. **5** He that overcometh shall thus be arrayed in white garments; and I will in no wise blot his name out of the book of life, and I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels. **6** He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches.

The character of the last three messages to the churches is definitely different from the four preceding.

In the first four church periods we are given the uncovering of the development of an abominable doctrine which progressed through the stages from "the deeds of the Nicolaitanes," "the synagogue of Satan," "the seat of Satan," until it reached "the depths of Satan" in the fourth church period.

Beginning with Sardis we find, not the rise and progress of a system of satanic wickedness, but a state of decline and decay, dying out of spirituality and love for the truth.

While one church period blends into and intermingles with the preceding and succeeding periods, yet each epoch has an individual entity of its own.

Following the great, and longest period of Thyatira, or the Roman Catholic epoch, we know from history that there followed the weaker and declining period of denominationalism. The Sardis church ushers in the days of the Reformation. The preceding dark ages had left the church spiritually dead and decadent. After the reformation begun by Zwingli, Luther, Calvin and Knox, the church era was marked by multiple divisions, declining weakness and diminishing spirituality. This decline became so marked that the Wesleys spent their lives in an effort to restore some spirituality to a dying and decadent Christendom.

vs. 1 Hitherto, Christ has begun each letter with words of commendation, but here he commences with words of condemnation.

He presents Himself as "He that hath the seven spirits of God, and the seven stars. As already pointed out the "seven spirits" symbolize the fullness of the One Spirit. Upon Christ, the divine spirit abides in all the perfection of his operation and power. The seven stars represent the entire sweep of the life of the church from

Pentecost to the end of the age. He is asserting his complete authority over the church in all the Christian dispensation. He is able to impart spiritual life—the life that was lacking in this church period addressed. “*I know thy works,*” says the Christ. The denominational period has had a reputation for feverish activity. Services well attended and carefully conducted, with working committees and many social activities. This period has been characterized by great financial drives, building programs and world-encircling movements. “*Thou has a name that thou livest.*” How appropriate!

Perhaps nothing has so characterized the denominational epoch as the wearing and stressing of human names. Men have gloried in this name or that—names that gave no honor to the Christ, or his church, but rather have divided the followers of Christ into competing sects.

Since an outstanding trait of this church was its weakness, it is altogether logical that denominational names should be worn.

The word comes from the same root from which we get the word “denominator,” which means fractional, or below par. The wearing of a denominational name is an unconscious confession of being fractional and below par excellence. It cannot be too well noted that God has never permitted a church, which did not take the Scripture for full and final authority for its rule of practice, to wear the Scriptural name. Proclaiming part truth, they ever wear an unscriptural and below par, fractional, or denominational name.

So it is looked upon, by Christ, as dead.

vs. 2 But to this church period Christ makes a patient and gracious appeal. “Be watchful and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die.”

The denominational period has thrown off much of the doctrine of Baalam and the overlordship of the Nicolaitanes. Pagan practices borrowed from heathenism by the Thyatira church, have been expunged.

But there are still traces of compromising with error, setting up of ecclesiastical establishments to govern the beliefs and practices of its adherents.

Yet over against this there has been an awakening after the passing of the dark ages and the spiritual Renaissance which followed. The Bible has been loosed from the cloister pale, and translated and printed in over a thousand languages and dialects.

However, in spite of this noble endeavor, there has been a tendency to chain the Bible, not to a book shelf of the monastery, but to the prejudiced interpretation of denominational bias.

He declares, "I have not found thy works perfect before God," but be watchful and strengthen the things that remain.

vs. 3 To stimulate the church of this period to action, He makes an appeal to remember the better days. It shows that they had now heard His word, because they are to "remember how thou hast received and heard."

Church history discloses how the church of the Sardis, or denominational period, has lost its fervor for the Word of God and has turned to humanism, modernism, skepticism, and even outright doubt and infidelity. If they do not watch He says, "I will come on thee as a thief in the night."

While He is not announcing his immediate return, yet here seems to be the beginning of the calling to the church's attention that the return must be kept in mind. How significant! The denominational period of the church has throughout its days stressed, with increasing tempo, the return of Christ.

While a few misguided souls have set dates, Christ both in His ministry, through the voice of His apostles and here in his apocalypse, declared His coming would be "as a thief in the night." (Matthew 24:36-51) (1 Thess. 5:2) (2 Peter 3:10) (Rev. 16:15) The coming of Christ is a blessed hope to the watchful and ready, but to the unprepared it will be an event of surprise and terror.

vs. 4 But there were a few who had kept pure, both in faithfulness to God's Word and in life. "Thou hast a few names in Sardis which have not defiled their garments."

How true it is that throughout denominationalism there are to be found those who, though wearing a fractional name, are living beyond the teaching of their particular group. They have outstripped their church in a return to New Testament belief, practice and living.

There are fine folk who have thrown off human creedalism, infant baptism, papal sprinkling (a practice authorized by the pope in the Council of Revenna in A.D. 1311), closed communion, human ecclesiasticism and many other unscriptural practices in order to stand free in Christ. These things need to be strengthened.

A few have not defiled their garments, either doctrinally or spiritually. These shall be clothed in white because they walk with the Lord. Their belief and practice kept step with Christ's commands. How well did Amos write, "Can two walk together except they be agreed?" (Amos 3:3)

White is often applied to divine and heavenly things. The garments of the bride are to be "fine linen, clean and white."

On the earth, man is the only one of God's countless species of living creatures that has no natural clothing. Sin stripped him of his garments of glory and beauty, wherein he stood in the likeness of God. So he is the most shabbily dressed creature in the whole world.

But the worthy of Sardis are promised to one day walk with Him, dressed in the whiteness of the purity of His righteousness. (1 Cor. 1:30)

vs. 5 "I will not blot his name out of the Book of Life."

The book of Life is prominent in the last chapters of Revelation (Rev. 13:8; 17:8; 20:12, 15; 21:27; 22:19). The mention of it in the letters to the Sardis period is very appropriate in view of the fact that life and death are the main theme of the letter.

Among all denominations of this period there have been rare souls, who have not defiled their garments either doctrinally, or ecclesiastically, having obeyed the gospel and by that obedience and subsequent faithfulness have their names upon the book of life.

The final clause of this verse of promise recalls Christ's promise recorded in (Matt. 10:32, 33).

vs. 6 Then comes the final admonition, as in all seven letters. "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." This regularly repeated injunction emphasizes the truth that each message is addressed to more than an individual church, but to many churches, represented in successive periods of church history.

The Salutation
The Philadelphia Church
Text (3:7-13)

7 And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth and none shall shut, and that shutteth and none openeth: 8 I know thy works (behold, I have set before thee a door opened, which none can shut), that thou hast a little power, and didst keep my word, and didst not deny my name. 9 Behold, I give of the synagogue of Satan, of them that say they are Jews, and they are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee. 10 Because thou didst keep the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of trial, that hour which is to come upon the whole world, to try them that dwell upon the earth. 11 I come quickly: hold fast that which thou hast, that no one take thy crown. 12 He that overcometh, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go out thence no more: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God, and mine own new name. 13 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches.

INTRODUCTION

The Salutation—Christ does not present Himself to this church in characters taken from the sevenfold description of Him in chapter one.

To the other churches He addressed himself as holding the seven stars in his right hand, walking amidst the golden candelsticks, as the first and the last, as He which hath the sharp sword with two edges, as “He who hath his eyes like a flame of fire and feet like fine brass, etc.

Here, he uses an entirely new set of symbols of himself in this salutation to Philadelphia.

In each letter Christ reveals himself in a character that is in keeping with the condition of that particular church.

Since the conditions in Philadelphia are quite different from that of every other church, we find He presents Himself in an entirely different manner.

vs. 7 “These things saith He that is Holy.”

There is no reference here to the eyes of flame or the feet of brass, nor the sword of His mouth. The very words indicate that the church in Philadelphia is in such a state of spirituality and harmony with God’s will as to know Him who is holy, and who is true. Here Christ makes a strong assertion of His diety, for only

God can say, "I AM HOLY." "Because it is written, Be ye holy, for I am holy" (1 Peter 1:16). "For thus saith the High and Lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is holy." Isaiah 57:15.

"These things saith He that is true."

These words, "He that is true" take us to John 17:3, where He says, "And this is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only True God." "And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding that we may know Him *THAT IS TRUE*, and we are in HIM *THAT IS TRUE*, even in His Son, Jesus Christ." (John 5:20)

"These things saith "He that hath the key of David."

The study of this key becomes intensely interesting when we remind ourselves that these seven churches represent seven church periods. The period following the denominational period represented by "Sardis" which had the name it lived, is the Restoration period, in which there appeared again on earth the church restoring the practices of the first century.

As the first period of the church was marked by the first love, the restoration period is marked by the name, Philadelphia, meaning "brotherly love." Love had again been restored in the church. The Ephesian period was marked by leaving its first love, the Restoration period is one in which love is restored.

As the first church was given the keys (Matt 16:16-19)so here the keys are being restored.

The first use of the key to indicate restoration was in Isaiah 22:22 "And it shall come to pass in that day that I will call my servant Eliakim . . . And the key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder, so he shall open and none shall shut; and he shall shut and none shall open." The key was laid upon Eliakim's shoulders in that he was given the key of government, or authority, so in the Restoration period, God is again setting up the kingdom, restoring it in that he is reigning in the church instead of the rule of church councils, presbyteries, synods, conference, etc. Christ's authority is again being restored.

Eliakim means "God will set up" and as in Eliakim's day, so the Restoration period, God is setting up or restoring the kingdom.

In Eliakim's case none could shut when he had opened nor open when he had shut, so it is in the Restoration period.

The key was given to Eliakim when there were breeches in the walls of Jerusalem (Isa. 22:9), and the key was restored in the

Philadelphia or Restoration period when there were breeches in the spiritual Jerusalem, caused by denominational division.

A lock on a door has a combination and a key must have the same combination as the lock in order to open the door.

When Jesus was about to leave His apostles He gave His commission under which they were to labor in opening up the Kingdom to the sinner.

This commission is found near the end of what are called the "synoptic" gospels, namely, Matthew, Mark and Luke. They are so called because they have a common or similar view. The commission, according to these three records of the gospel, reads as follows:

"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."—Matthew 28; 19, 20)

"And He said unto them, go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.

He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." (Mark 16:15, 16)

"And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day: And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things."—(Luke 24:46-48)

This commission is predicated upon all the right of absolute authority, and all the force of absolute power. Shall we present a breakdown of these three records.

Matthew mentions *going, teaching, baptizing* into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit and *teaching* the baptized hearers to *observe all things whatsoever* I have commanded you, or in other words to continue in the things heard.

Mark mentions *going, preaching the gospel* (which consists of three facts—the death, burial and resurrection of Christ I Cor. 15:1-4, *believing, being baptized and salvation.*

Luke mentions the facts of the gospel *repentance and remission of sins, or salvation.*

Putting all these elements together we have: *Going, teaching* or

preaching, believing, repentance, salvation or remission of sins and continuing.

Having now ascertained the elements of the commission we are ready to consider the combination or order of these elements.

Naturally, the matter of "going" comes *first*. *Second*, the object of going is to *teach*, so teaching is the next in order. *Third*, hearing would be the next in order because the object of teaching is to get men to hear. *Fourth*, the result of hearing is *faith*, because Paul said, "How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? . . . So then faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God." (Rom. 10:14-17) So the fourth in order is faith. The next or fifth would be *repentance*, because until we believe we will not obey Christ's command to repent. The *sixth* in order is *Baptism*, because all repentant believers were commanded to be baptized. This is not only the scriptural order, but, likewise the logical order. Faith changes our mind: repentance changes our will and baptism changes our state, translating us from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear Son.

Baptism is for the remission of sins because Peter so declared in Acts 2:38 "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ for the remission of sins."

Our sins are remitted in baptism because Paul declares that in being baptized we are baptized into the death of Christ. It was in Christ's death that the only blood which could remit sins was shed. Baptism puts us into the death of Christ, or under the atoning blood.

Now shall we hear Paul on this:

"How shall we that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were *baptized into His death*? Therefore, we are buried with Him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. (Rom. 6:2-4)

Therefore, since remission of sins is the result of the repentant believer being baptized into the death of Christ, it naturally is the *seventh* in divine order.

But while baptism remits or blots out our past "just as if I'd" never sinned, the sinner must continue to the end to be saved, or

to obtain salvation. Jesus said, "And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved." (Matt. 10:22)

He repeated the promise of salvation to the enduring or continuing one. In Matthew 24:13, we read:

"But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be *saved*." So salvation is the eighth and final element in the order of the key combination of the commission. Briefly stated they are:

- | | |
|--------------|-------------------|
| 1. Going | 5. Repenting |
| 2. Teaching | 6. Being baptized |
| 3. Hearing | 7. Continuing |
| 4. Believing | 8. Salvation |

The order as Practiced by the New Testament Churches.

To Peter as well as to all the apostles was given the keys to the opening of the kingdom on Pentecost, the birthday of the church.

"And I say also unto thee that thou art Peter, and I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Matt. 16:18, 19).

This same power was given to the other apostles also. In John 20:23 we read, "Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained."

As the spokesman on the Day of Pentecost Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, using the divine combination, opened the door and all the divine elements are then either mentioned or implied.

1. There was a going—to the one place (Acts 2:1)
2. There was preaching—"But Peter standing up with the eleven, *lifted up his voice* and said unto them" (Acts 2:14)
3. There was a hearing, for we read, "Now when they *heard* this, they were pricked in their hearts. (Acts 2:37)
4. While faith is not mentioned, the very fact that they were pricked in their hearts and said, "men and brethren what shall we do?" And that they gladly received his word shows they believed. (Acts 2:37)
5. They were told to repent. (Acts 2:38)
6. They were baptized. (Acts 2:41)

7. They continued steadfast. (Acts 2:42)
8. They were recipients of salvation because "The Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved." (Acts 2:47)

This, then is the combination of the Key, and the order of that combination as used by the first church of Christ of the New Testament pattern.

The Changing of the Combination

But what a change the centuries have brought. When through a gradual apostacy the Roman Catholic church came into being they changed the order.

Instead of going, they brought little babies and performed upon them what they called baptism for their salvation. Then, when the child reached the age of twelve put him in a confirmation class and taught him.

Their order is a departure from the New Testament order and runs as follows:

Teaching, hearing, believing, repenting, continuing.

The denominational churches that spring from the Catholic church, called Pedo-Baptists, because they practice the baptism of infants, also follow the same order, perverting the combination by bringing babies to be baptized for their salvation and later teaching them.

It can not be said too forcibly that never was a person ever baptized by the New Testament church who did not first hear by being taught or being preached to. Jesus said, "Go teach, preach, he that *believeth* and is baptized *shall be saved*."

The Baptists have restored the order of going, teaching and hearing, but have also changed the order by putting repentance before faith. They base their action on Mark 1:15, which reads:

"And saying, the time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and *believe* the gospel."

At first reading this would seem to substantiate their practice, but further and more careful consideration does not. Rather it reveals their order to be unscriptural.

Paul commanded us to: "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of truth." (2 Timothy 2:15)

"But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection; lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway." (1 Cor. 9:27)

Again Paul said: "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. (Phil. 2:12)

Peter said: "If ye do these things, ye shall never *fall*." (2 Peter 1:10)

The escape from falling is conditioned on the principle "If" ye do these things.

There remains a brief consideration of the Church of Christ. In 1809 there began a movement to restore the Church of the first century by discarding human creeds, confessions of faith, books of discipline, and decrees of church councils, synods, presbyteries and religious conferences.

This came to be known as the Restoration movement. Among the many things restored after the New Testament pattern was the return to the divine order and scriptural combination of the use of the Key of the Kingdom. A study of the accompanying chart will give a graphic presentation of the restored order.

The Economy of the Gospel

Note:

On the chart on page 59A are listed the eight conversions recorded in the book of Acts. Under each conversion is listed only the numbers of the acts of obedience actually mentioned in each case. It will be seen that only number six, or baptism is mentioned in all eight records of conversion.

However, all were taught or preached to, even though, in some cases such teaching or preaching was not specifically mentioned. Since all were taught, it naturally and logically follows that all heard, although hearing is only actually mentioned in the cases of the Pentecostians, Cornelius, Lydia and the Corinthians. And so the other items not mentioned might be so considered.

Does this mean that each one was saved in a different manner? Positively not. God is not the author of confusion. There is being demonstrated to us here the Economy of the Gospel.

Each hearer was only told to do, that which he had not already done. What he had done, in complying with the whole range of required obedience, was not mentioned. All compiled with the same

requirements to be saved. There was a uniform pattern of obedience.

The same law of obedience is still binding on us today. Christ has neither changed the items, nor the order of scriptural obedience to the gospel.

The chart presents the principle departures from the divine order of obedience as practiced by certain groups in Christendom and the restoration of that divine order by the church of the Philadelphia, or Restoration Period.

vs. 8 "I know thy works." Their works were so pleasing to Christ that, even though they had a little strength, he had set before the church an open door that no man could shut.

The Restoration movement has not had the wealth and strength of ecclesiastical power that the denominational world, but because they have kept his words they have an open door.

"Thou hast kept my word." The Restoration movement has stressed as its motto, "Where the Bible speaks, we speak, and where the Bible is silent, we are silent." They have discarded all human creeds and books of discipline and taken the Bible as the only rule of faith and practice.

"Thou hast not denied my name." The Restoration movement threw away all denominational names and called the church, "The Church of Christ" and the individual followers of Christ "Christian," because that was speaking according to God's Word.

This church and the church of Smyrna are the only churches for which there is no reproof.

vs. 3:9 Then follows a word of encouragement and exhortation.

"Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie, behold, I will make them to come and worship at thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee."

The Restoration movement has constantly faced the claim of the denominational world that they, too, are Jews." Note the word "Jew" refers to those who are the elect of God.

Like the other church without reproof, the church of Smyrna, we find two conditions that are repeated in Philadelphia.

First, they in Smyrna were opposed and persecuted by false brethren, who said they were "Jews," but in reality were "the synagogue of Satan."

Second, they were about to have great tribulation (tribulation ten days). This second condition is found in Philadelphia also,

<i>Scriptural Record</i>	<i>The Gospel—God's Power unto Salvation (Rom. 1:16)</i>	<i>Effect on Hearer</i>	<i>Conditions Met by Man</i>	<i>God's Offer of Grace</i>
Acts 2, The Jews on Pentecost	Peter preached Christ 1. God approved (22) 2. Crucified (23) 3. Raised (32)	Many "pricked in their heart" asked, "What shall we do?" (37)	Must "Repent and be baptized" (38)	1. Remission of sins (38) 2. Gift of the Holy Spirit (38)
Acts 3, Other Jews in Jerusalem	Peter preached Christ 1. Rejected of men (13, 14) 2. Raised (15) 3. Prophecy fulfilled (18)	Recognition of guilt implied by response	Must "Repent and turn" or "be converted" (19)	1. Blot out sins (19) 2. Seasons of refreshing (19)
Acts 8, the Samaritans	Philip preached Christ (5) and "Things concerning the kingdom of "God" (12)	"	1. They believed (12) 2. They were baptized (12)	The blessings extended to all penitent, baptized believers (Cf. Acts 2: 38)
Acts 8, The Ethiopian	Philip preached Jesus (35)	"	1. Confessed his faith (37) 2. Was baptized (38)	1. Blessings of Acts 2: 38 or 3: 19 2. Joy (8: 39)
Acts 9, 22 and 24, Saul of Tarsus	Christ gave proof of his deity (4, 5)	Recognition of guilt demonstrated by response (22: 10)	1. Confessed Jesus (22: 10) 2. Fasted and prayed 3. Repented (22: 10) 4. Was baptized (22:16)	1. Blessings of Acts 2: 38 2. Peace (9: 19; Rom. 5: 1)
Acts 10 and 11, Cornelius	Peter preached "Peace by Jesus Christ" (10: 31ff.)	Recognition of guilt implied by response	"Baptized in the name of Jesus Christ" (10:48)	Blessings of Acts 2: 38 or 3: 19
Acts 16, Lydia	Paul preached Christ to her (14) (Cf. 1 Cor. 2: 2)	Recognition of guilt implied by response	1. Attended to things heard (14) 2. Was baptized (15)	Blessings of Acts 2: 38 or 3: 19
Acts 16, The Jailer of Philippi	Paul preached the word of the Lord (31, 32)	Recognized guilt by washing stripes of Paul and Silas and in obedience to the word (33)	Was baptized (33)	Blessings of Acts 2: 38 or 3: 19

for verse 10 reads, "Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth."

But there is the great difference. Those in Smyrna were to suffer "unto death," therefore the promise to the overcomers was that they "should not be hurt of the second death." There was no open door of escape for them.

But the church in Philadelphia, was to be kept from the impending trial, whatever the nature of it.

vs. 11 "Behold I come quickly." This great announcement explains how this church will enjoy exemption from the coming tribulation.

Since there is only one more church period to come, He directs this church's attention to his second advent. This solemn call prepares the church for the final call, "Behold I stand at the door and knock," the benediction given the church of Laodicea.

"Hold fast that which thou hast that no man take thy crown."

This again takes us back to (Isaiah 22:22). There Shebna and Eliakim are the characters. Shebna had the "crown," he was "over the House," and wore the "robe" and "girdle" of office; but God said "I will clothe Eliakim with thy robe, and strengthen him with thy girdle, and I will commit the government into his hands (Isa. 22:15, 20-22). Thus Shebna's crown was taken by another. So the Philadelphia church is warned lest some one take her crown. This crown was not the crown of royalty (Diadema in the Greek), but the garland crown (Stephanos) given as a reward. In Greek, a garland or crown was a wreath or chaplet. It formed the prize at the Greek games. Hence it became a symbol of victory. This reminds us of Paul's exhortation: "Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receive the prize? So run that ye may obtain. And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible," etc. (I Cor. 9:24-27).

vs. 12 "Becoming a pillar" is a term implying strength, permanence and honor. This speaks of finality, as the Bible does not speak of men as being pillars in His temple while on earth.

"He shall go no more out; and I will write upon him the

name of My God, and the name of the city of my God, which is New Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from My God, and I will write upon him my new name."

These promises are great beyond the power of words to express.

Since the key of David and David, himself, comes into prominence in this church period, we are reminded of his longing for the House of God. (Psa. 23:6) and the one thing he desired and sought after was that he might "Dwell" in the house of the Lord all the days of his life. (Psa. 27:4)

The promise to become a pillar in the temple, refers not to any material temple, but in heaven. The New Jerusalem has no temple in it, because it is all temple.

The promise "I will write upon him" is interesting when we remember that as one enters the church the spiritual temple below, three names are recorded in the baptismal formula—the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. When he enters the kingdom above, three names are again written upon him, the name of God, of the heavenly city, and Christ's heavenly name.

The promise of the new name is again connected with that city in the last chapter of Revelation "The throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and His servants shall serve Him; and they shall see His face; and His name shall be on their foreheads." (Rev. 22:3-4)

vs. 13 Again he uncovers to us the fact that He is not addressing just one local congregation, but taking the church at Philadelphia as a symbol of an entire period of church history, which we have found corresponds to the restoration period that followed immediately after the denominational epoch called Sardis.

The Laodicean Church *Text (3:14-22)*

14 And to the angel of the church in Laodicea write: These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God: **15** I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. **16** So because thou art lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spew thee out of my mouth. **17** Because thou sayest, I am rich, and have gotten riches, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art the wretched one and miserable and poor and blind and naked: **18** I counsel thee to buy of me gold refined by fire, that thou mayest become rich; and white garments, that thou mayest clothe thyself, and that the shame of thy nakedness be not made manifest; and eye-salve to anoint thine eyes, that thou mayest see. **19** As many as I love, I reprove and chasten:

be zealous therefore, and repent. 20 Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me. 21 He that overcometh, I will give to him to sit down with me in my throne, as I also overcame, and sat down with my Father in his throne. 22 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches.

INTRODUCTION

While in the first four churches, we are given to see the development of a positive evil within the church, ranging from the "deeds of the Nicolaitanes" in Ephesus, "the synagogue of Satan" in Smyrna, "the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes" and "the doctrine of Baalam" in Pergamos, the "depths of Satan" in Thyatira; so with the Sardis church we have revealed to us the development of a state of decline, beginning with Sardis, "having a name and are dead," and reaching the final state in Laodicea in which the church is so lukewarm that "it is wretched and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked."

vs. 14, 15 The Lord here presents Himself as "The Amen, the Faithful and true Witness, the Beginning of the Creation of God."

These characters are not taken from the seven-fold description of Chapter 1:13-16, but they are taken from other revelations of the Lord Jesus Christ found in that chapter. There He is presented as the "Alpha and Omega," the "Beginning and the ending" (vs. 8), and also as "The faithful Witness." (vs. 5)

Here Christ calls himself by one of the names of God. It is a remarkable name. It is found in Isaiah 65:16. It is found in the midst of a prophecy of the overwhelming judgments that are to fall upon apostate Israel.

So here in the last church period, Christ uses the name of God when judgment is to be meted out. In Isaiah 65:17, he says, "For behold, I create a new heaven and a new earth." So following the Laodecean there is to be a new creation.

Again this title "The Amen," describes God as the One who accomplishes all His purposes and all His promises. The Lord is this God, the Amen. "For all the promises of God in Him are yea, and in Him Amen!" (II Cor. 1:20) And most appropriately he presents Himself as "The Amen" in the closing period of church history. The very use of this title, gives us the cue of this being

the seventh and final stage of the history of the church in the closing days of the gospel age. God is about to ring down the curtain in the history of the church.

He presents Himself as the "Faithful and True Witness." The witness of the church had been dimmed by her departure into compromise, paganism, division of denominationalism and, after a brief return to adherence to His Word and name in the Restoration period, gone into total eclipse in the lukewarmness of the final epoch.

Therefore He wants the church to know He is keeping the witness clear, by introducing Himself as the "Faithful and true Witness."

"The beginning of the Creation of God." Here He presents Himself, not as a part of the creation, but the uncreated principle of creation from whom it (creation) took form.

Nay there is also here the added and deeper thought, that He is the beginning of the new creation in His redemptive work of bringing many sons into glory. (Heb. 2:10) He is the first born among many brethren. (Romans 8:29)

"*I know thy works.*" In every letter we have, without exception, this soul-searching declaration. Christ not only knows the works of each individual congregation, but here he is declaring he knows the works of the last church period. This is because He knows all things from the beginning. He looked down the ages and saw this last age of the gospel dispensation and saw the paralyzing effects of lukewarmness.

The loss of first love, of the Ephesian period, reaches its ultimate end in the awful lukewarmness of the last and final age of this dispensation.

vs. 16, 17 The Sharp word of reproof. Usually, in the other letters, the third division of the seven-fold division of the letters, is a word of commendation, followed by the word of reproof. But in this letter the reproof comes before the commendation. It would seem that Christ is so displeased with the final stage of the church that he hastens to the reproof.

Thou art neither hot nor cold; I would thou were cold or hot, so because thou art lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spew thee out of my mouth.

Tepid religion is nauseating to Christ. He looked with loathing on the Pharisees of the days of His flesh, who looked upon themselves as religious paragons while their hearts were not right with God, either spiritually or doctrinally.

The Laodiceans were not warm in their affection for Christ, they were not burning with zeal in His cause; nor yet were they cold and altogether heartless. If they had been outright cold, it would have been easier for Him to deal with them, and there would have been a greater likelihood of their discovering their condition.

Ignorance of its true condition was to be a characteristic of the last church period. How true this has become in our day and how completely fulfilled. The mass of people today do not realize their lost condition. They live in the midst of delusion about their lost estate. Thinking itself rich when in reality it was poor; thinking itself well supplied with all that a church of Christ should have, when in reality it was destitute of the most essential things.

This church is just the opposite of that in Smyrna, which was seemingly in poverty and tribulation, but in reality was rich. There was no tribulation in Laodicea, no persecution, no synagogue of Satan to molest them. They were having a very easy and comfortable time.

How true of this age. The church has fine buildings, up-to-date facilities, the services are carried out in the best approved form. But it is hard to get this kind of church today to realize their low estate, spiritually speaking.

vs. 18 But Christ does not abandon them, but says, "I counsel thee." He calls them to repent, coupling that call with a most tender word of exhortation. He had declared them "poor, blind and naked," but immediately offers to supply them with "gold" that they might be rich and white raiment that they might be suitably clad, and with eye salve, that they might see. He offers them:

"Gold tried in the fire" In Psa. 19:7-11, David declares the value of the Word of God—"More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold." But the church today is generally uninterested in the gold of God's word. Modernist preachers stand in the pulpit preaching platitudes and the hearers take dress for gold, and pewter for silver. Hence the appalling spiritual poverty.

"White raiment that thou mayest be clothed." Rev. 19:8 explains that the fine linen, clean and white, represents the righteousness of saints. In the last age when so many are rejecting blood atonement, no wonder he speaks of them as being naked.

"Eye-salve, that thou mayest see." The advice to "anoint thine eyes with eye-salve" suggests that the church of the last period is destitute of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, for John speaks of the

Holy Spirit as the Unction (or anointing) from Christ, the Holy One. (I John 2:20)

vs. 19 Sharp as had been His rebuke to this lukewarm church, his rebuke was a proof of his unflinching love.

He calls them to be zealous, instead of lukewarm. He calls them to repent. He adds a final word. (Rev. 3:20)

vs. 20 This marvelous invitation needs consideration. First, it is not that Christ is outside that chiefly impresses us, but that He is so near, even at the very door, and not only so, but is ready to enter instantly it is opened. "Just outside the door," but the lukewarmness of the church fails to invite Him in. This is the only church of the seven that keeps Christ outside. The self-satisfied church is "inside," the door is closed, and Christ is knocking for admission.

The second thing that impresses us is that this invitation indicates this is the last church period and Christ is about to return and he "stands at the door and knocks." He is about to come in his second advent. Note: He wants to come in and sup with the saints. When Christ returns we are to sup with him at the wedding feast. (Luke 12:35-40) (Rev. 19:7-9)

There is no real commendation in this letter. There was nothing to commend a lukewarm church.

Next comes a word of encouragement. The message is that it has a special word to the individual—"If any man."

In Thyatira the Lord recognizes a remnant of faithful ones, "the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine;" and in Sardis, "there are a few names which have not defiled their garments," but in Laodicea there is a word of strong encouragement to the individual who, amidst general indifference to the things of God, longs for personal fellowship with the Lord.

It would seem that the indifference of lukewarmness of this last period would be so widespread that his encouragement would have to be given to the individual instead to the entire church.

vs. 21 *Next comes the greatest of all the promises to any church.*

To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame and am set down with my Father in His Throne." How significant this statement becomes since it is the closing promise!

Since He is about to return—stands even at the door and knocks—He promises them who overcome to sit down and reign with Him, since at His return the kingdoms of this world become the kingdom of our Lord and His Christ.

The devil had promised Him the kingdoms of this world in the temptation, but Christ rejected it, for the price of that glory was the worship of the devil.

Christ refused the offer from the devil, that He might wait for this glorious hour when He, as an overcomer, with all the overcomers, should have earned the right to reign.

Paul said, "If we suffer with Him, we shall also reign with Him." (II Tim. 2:12)

Lastly, we hear the final urgent call. "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit," etc. Like the declaration, "I know thy works," this call is found in all the seven letters. It is a stirring call to the churches of this Laodicean period. Seven times He repeats this injunction, lest we lose sight of the history of the whole church throughout the seven periods of her life from Pentecost to the end.

Thus we have seen that these letters foretold the main developments and principle eras of the church down through the gospel age.

Also they were written to admonish, encourage, warn, guide, reprove, and call us to heed, to the end that we may pass the time of our sojourn here working out our salvation with fear and trembling, having respect to the "recompense of the reward."

As each of Jacob's sons had different personalities and these personalities pictured the characteristics of the tribes descending from them, so do these seven churches, through their local conditions, symbolize the conditions in each of the seven great church periods.

PART II

CHAPTER IV

THE VISION OF THE THRONE

Text (4:1-11)

1 After these things I saw, and behold, a door opened in heaven, and the first voice that I heard, a voice as of a trumpet speaking