

## 07. Seven Letters to the Churches Rev. ch 3:3- 6 Sardis part 2

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Last week we started **the Letter to Sardis**. **Part 2**

### **Brief Review**

**The Denominational Church** - The Church who escaped

The Reformation took place between **1520-1758**.

We looked at how and why the Reformation took place which means we can better understand that it was from the Reformation that all these Denominations sprang. They were all started by folk who were escaping (remnant) from Catholicism and forming their own groups where they could worship in freedom.

There are now hundreds of denominations, but in the early days it was simply groups of people who had broken off their ties with Rome and who wanted to meet in fellowship in a simple way.

The different churches developing during the Reformation had good creeds and solid biblical doctrine. Nevertheless, they were dead and there was no spiritual vitality. They became dead because they failed to rectify the basic problem which was the **unity of church and state**. After they broke away from the Roman Catholic church they too became State Churches. In Germany and Scandinavia the Lutheran church became **the state church**. In England it was the Anglican Church (or Church of England) In Scotland the Presbyterian Church, in one part of Switzerland the Calvinists or Reformed Church, in another part of Switzerland the Zwinglian Church. The Reformation failed to correct the problem of Church and State unity. Therefore, it eventually became a dead church. What corrupted Pergamos, also corrupted Sardis. Because of the existence of State churches, children who were born in a given locality, were simply baptised and by this means became members of the

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church. Personal faith had little or nothing to do with becoming a member of the church. So, in a matter of time the greater part of the church was composed of unbelievers. The churches all had good solid creeds and so it appeared that they were living churches. But they were dead. There was no spiritual life because of the lack of personal faith so a great part of each church was composed of unbelievers. Although a lot has changed since then there are huge numbers of churches in Europe even today which have good doctrinal creeds but they are composed of people who are spiritually dead.

One of the most significant events that occurred in the last five centuries according to many theologians, took place from 1994 to 2000. Pope John the 2<sup>nd</sup> began to do an apology tour. What's interesting about these apology tours is its **admittance** to all the atrocities that had taken place in the past. The violence that they did. In March 29<sup>th</sup> 1994 there was a joint declaration called

### **Evangelicals & Catholics Together**

March 29, 1994: A joint declaration was signed, called "Evangelicals and Catholics Together: The Christian Mission in the Third Millennium."

**The compromise of the Gospel lies at the heart of the agreement.** But the Gospel hasn't changed. This could be the most significant event in 500 years of church history.

. There were leaders of the protestants and of the Catholics got together with the Pope and they decided they weren't going to evangelise each other anymore. Basically the Protestants weren't going to try and get Catholics out of Catholicism and the Catholics weren't going to try and make Protestants become Catholics. So the Catholics were saying 'sorry' for all that went on, lets all be together and ignore all the deaths that we are responsible for. Considering all the millions and millions of people they killed, tortured, imprisoned and burnt at the stake, it seems that everyone is happy to forget it. Today people are still

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answering for war crimes and being punished for them but because it's in the name of Roman Catholicism it's ok.

On May 21<sup>st</sup> 1995 Pope John 2<sup>nd</sup> asked an audience of 100,000 in the Czech republic Quote " today, I the Pope of the church of Rome, in the name of all Catholics, ask forgiveness for the wrongs inflicted on non-Catholics during the turbulent history of these peoples." So he's acknowledging the millions of people that were slaughtered and says sorry. Then on March 13<sup>th</sup> 2000 Pope John again asks for pardon for past violence "We are asking pardon for the divisions among Christians for the use of violence that some have committed in the service of truth, and for attitudes of mistrust and hostility assumed toward followers of other religions.

**But is this heartfelt or is there another agenda here.?**

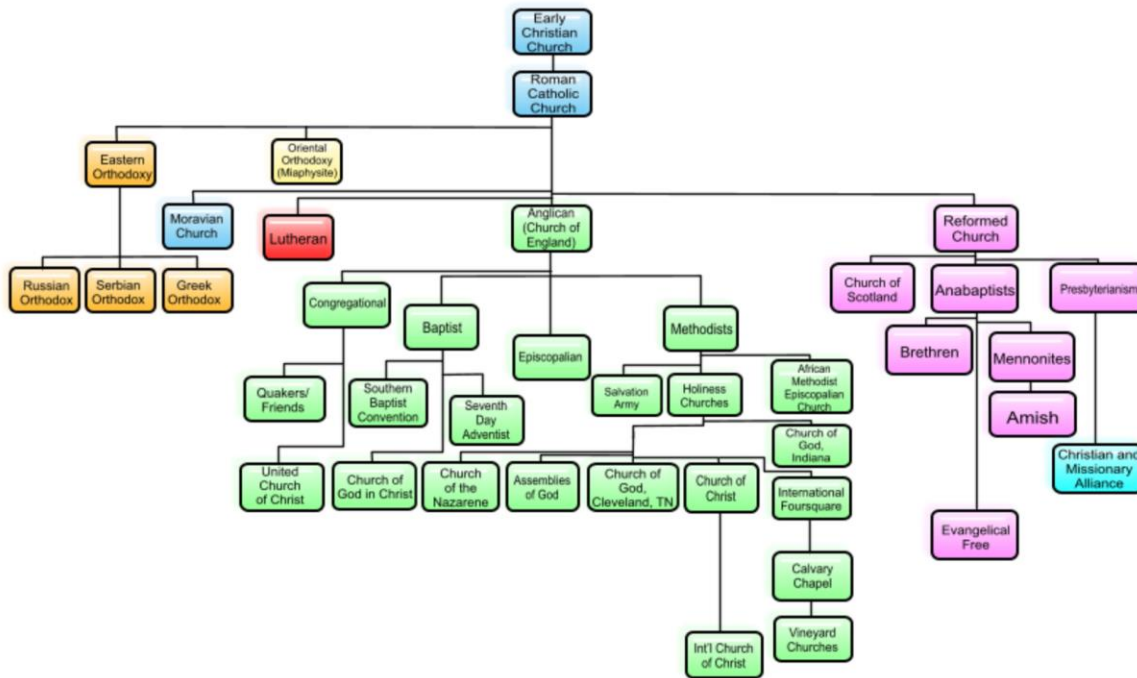
They still call themselves the Mother Church. The Mother of **all** churches. In **Revelation 16:5** we read of Mystery Babylon, The great, The Mother of Harlots and of the abominations of the earth. (responsible for the blood of the saints and atrocities)

The evidence shows us that the Catholic Church is already encouraging a unity of all faiths, a joining together of all into one. With the Pope being at the top. Jesus tells us to come out of anything that does not follow the New Testament Truths as in the Bible. Anything that is a mixture of the world and paganism is a complete no no.

Pope Francis is quite controversial and this is because he is the first Jesuit elected to that office on 13<sup>th</sup> March 2013. Many Catholic theologians believe he is the fulfilment of the Malachy prophecy which states that there would only be one more Pope after Benedict and during his reign comes the end of the world. Pope Benedict 16<sup>th</sup> 2005-2013 was the first Pope to resign.

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Quote :- "Luther reformed it; Free churches freed it; The Baptists baptized it; The Quakers dry cleaned it; The Salvation Army put it into uniform; The Pentecostals anointed it; The Charismatics renewed it...but "church" was still largely a spectator sport; adaptations of previous (traditional) synagogue rituals."

### A look at The Denominational Church

- **"Soft" hermeneutical traditions** - the belief that God's word was open to Man's interpretation - so you can take it allegorically or thematically saying this is sort of what it means etc. I believe that the Bible IS the Word of God, it's not a compilation of books that contains the Word of God but that it actually IS the Word of God. Big difference. Human editors don't decide what it means - God does and He knows it better than anyone. Therefore the Bible is the inerrant Word of God. The Denominational churches gradually became very soft on their Hermeneutics.

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- **Denial of the Millennial Reign** - many of them if not most of them deny the Millennial reign of Christ. Not just Rev 20 as most of what we know about the Millennium is found in Isaiah 65 and other Old Testament references. We are pre-millennialists believing it is coming soon when Jesus returns. Most don't even study prophecy and think it has little to do with us today.
- There are even those who believe that we are already in the Millennium (few now but a big belief in the 1800's) so things will keep getting better until we arrive at total peace. Most who believed that changed their minds after 2 world wars and found that things began to get worse. And then they allegorised it instead. People can believe in what they want but it is false labelling to call it Christian.
- **Denial of Israel's prophetic destiny** - most churches have no concept of Israel part in Gods plan. They do not look at Israel from a Biblical perspective. And this of course can lead to antisemitism.
- **Absence of Biblical devotional life** - in many churches there is no emphasis on the importance of each individual member having a quiet time with God, centring on the Bible and letting it speak to their hearts. A daily drawing apart from everything to concentrate on spending quality time with the Lord. Because many members of church do not have a personal relationship with Jesus. Knowledge of God comes from studying the word.  
Your fear of God comes from your devotional life.
- **De-emphasis of the Gospel of Christ** - this is incredibly important but not always preached in many churches.
- **Ordination of homosexuals** - this would have been unthinkable in Pauls day. It is an abomination to the Lord, and is a blatant flouting of God's Holy commands.

The Reformation was a heroic period in church history. "Salvation by faith, not works." But its failures persist to this day. The allegorisation of Scripture (especially those concerning Christ's rule in the Millennium) is at the top of the list. The Reformation did not go far enough.

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The 2 biggest teachings of the Bible are not widely taught. The Millennium and the Rapture of the Church are not accepted **literally** in most mainline denominational churches today.

### Exhortation

**2** *Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die, for I have not found your works perfect before God.*

**3** *Remember therefore how you have received and heard; hold fast and repent. Therefore if you will not watch, I will come upon you as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you.*

[Note: What's missing? **There is no "Commendation" in this letter!?**]

Just the concerns and the exhortation

So Jesus can't find anything good to say about these churches even though they started well and separated themselves from Rome.

**So what was wrong?**

**2** *Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die, for I have not found your works perfect before God.*

**3** *Remember therefore how you have received and heard; hold fast and repent. Therefore if you will not watch, I will come upon you as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you.*

**Verses 2 & 3** When read in the context of the history of Sardis it fits in a surprising way. We read here. Be watchful, pay attention. Do your homework. Why? To strengthen the things that remain. The implication is that what you had is eroding away. In their history the cliffs were eroding away, the cliffs they thought of as their fortress. Impenetrable were breached and they were taken by surprise.

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Just as the doctrines got softened and some were swept under the carpet. As good biblical teaching was taken over by 10 minute homilies. So here we read that the things that remain are ready to die.

Jesus could not commend them because He had not found their works perfect - so even the things they did were not pleasing to Him.

**Verses 2 & 3** sound like the later stages of the Reformation. It all started so well, there was the break away and a new fervour in the beginning but as the new churches got bigger and became less and less like the early New Testament Church and so much compromise came in and they hadn't truly broken away from Rome as a lot was carried over into the way they did things and worst of all it stayed married to the State.

Jesus Christ is the Head of the Church which is the body of Christ. Churches became full of non- Christians who brought in their paganism and it seemed as though it was all going full circle. Baptism of babies etc. And so **v3** is reminding them to remember the past. The former things when it all started so well. Remember the gospel, remember what Christianity is all about. REPENT.

The Reformation did a lot of things right but then they blew it in so many other ways. Since the Reformation all those Denominations have become rigid and fossilised.

**The main message to the Church at Sardis was HOLD FAST AND REPENT**

They are then exhorted to

**"Be Watchful"**

*Therefore if you will not watch, I will come upon you as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you.*

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The other side of that is saying :- If you DO remember to watch, and you DO hold fast and you Do repent, then you won't be caught by surprise. Apparently He will not come "as a thief" for those who are diligent...

"I will come on you as a thief..." is a very Sardis phrase.

"...as a thief in the night" was the proverbial downfall of Sardis! That's when they were taken short, the enemy came at night.

Be vigilant 10 virgins of **Matt 25**

Watchfulness **Rom 13:11; 1 Cor 16:13**

**What should we be watchful of:-**

- The wiles of the devil **1 Pet 5:8** Satan is out to have you destroyed. You avoid that by being watchful.
- Temptation **Matt 26:41** watch that you do not enter into temptation
- His Coming **Matt 24:42, 43; Mark 13:37; 1 Thess 5:6** one of the tragedies of the church today is they are not watching for the second coming of Christ.
- False Teachers **Acts 20:29-31** (Ephesus was watchful - the one thing they did right.) Paul's message to the Ephesian Elders was that there would rise up among them sheep in wolves clothing. They were forewarned.

"Strengthen Things which Remain" Great truths of the Bible are being lost today.

- Justification by faith alone; Justification has been turned into cheap grace.



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- The Inerrant Word of God; There are so many today that do not believe that the Bible is without error. They hold that the original language had errors in it yet we are told that the Word is God breathed. God does not make mistakes and He chose the scribes who wrote His Word very carefully. Moses was the first and Jesus quoted from Moses a lot. He wouldn't have done that if it could not be relied on to be absolutely accurate. We never see Him correcting it !!!
- The total depravity of man; This teaching going around that there is some good in everybody. If that's so why did Christ have to die for us. It's because of the awfulness of sin. Jesus died for us as it was the only way to bring us back to God. Sin was separating us from God. There is no place in the Bible that says we can repair ourselves and make ourselves better. Jesus replaces our old heart with a new heart. Jeremiah 17:9 says that man is incurably wicked.
- Redemption by His blood. Except in a few old-fashioned style churches you don't hear much about the precious Blood of Jesus. All those songs we used to sing. There's power in the Blood. ....
- The great truths of the Reformation are being lost... Christ is looking for something from us.

### "...Works Not Complete"

- Our love,
- Our fear (our devotional life), God is not our buddy or mate, He's the Almighty God, King of Kings and Lord of Lords before whom one day we will stand.
- Our loyalty (our ambassadorship- serving the King, taking His Name means representing Him faithfully being loyal to Him )
- Our service. Without Him, we can't do it. We have to be committed and fully submissive to His will so He can use us.

Watchful - strengthen - Remember - Hold fast and Repent

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Or else He will come upon us as a thief and we won't be ready.

End of the sermon on the mount

Not every one who says to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of my Father which is in heaven.

Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your Name? and in Your name have cast out devils? and in Your name done many wonderful works? And then I will profess to them, I never knew you: depart from me, you that work iniquity. **Matthew 7:21-23**

Someone who has lived a life of dissipation and wickedness would probably not be surprised to hear Jesus say as he stood before Him at the Throne, I never knew you, depart from Me you who work iniquity.

But Jesus is saying this here to those who are supposed to be saved and have been doing things in Jesus Name. Using the Name of Jesus and doing works that are amazing is not the criteria Jesus is looking for. !!

### Exhortation (Concluded)

**4** *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.*

Even the phrasing is an indictment. Well at least there are a few names I recognise amongst you.

So there is a remnant in Sardis.

"even in Sardis" =? The call to a faithful remnant!

## Promise to the Overcomer

**5** *He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels.*

**6** *"He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."*

Clothing depicts your spiritual condition. Is 64:6 all our unrighteousness are as filthy rags.

1. White raiment - Rev 19:8 Righteousness of saints 2 Cor 5:21 made sin so we could be righteous  
Matt 22:12 Parable of wedding and guests. Father provides the wedding garments. In v 12,13 Lord sees one with no garments, where is it?  
Banished from wedding. He hadn't bothered to dress properly in the clothes that had been provided. White raiment was his ticket to the wedding.
2. I will not blot your Name from the Book of Life. The Bible speaks of more than one Book. There is also the Lamb's Book of Life - different. In those days there was a registry like our registers Office where they kept scrolls and when a child was born they went there to have the name entered. When that person died the name was blotted out. Jesus was saying to Sardis, you're so dead that if you don't change I'm going to have to Blot your name out of the Book. So in this letter Jesus was saying to the remnant few that had stayed true, I will **not** blot you out.
3. I will confess his name before My Father And before the angels  
A Heavenly spoken confirmation of being alive. Jesus only speaks the names of the living.

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12 times Jesus declares Himself as the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Matt 22:33 we have Sadducees who don't believe in the resurrection asking Jesus about the resurrection. After He had answered the question He goes on and says in v 31 but concerning the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was spoken to you by God in heaven "I AM the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead but of the living."

He said this because Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were alive in Heaven now and He said I AM the God of Abraham Isaac and Jacob thus declaring that they were living and not dead.

So when Jesus said if you overcome this deadness I will confess your name before the Father, because Jesus will only confess alive people. Amazing answer.

The clothes are your ticket in.

Your name means you are alive in the book

His confession is His verbal declaration before God that you are alive.

Matt 10:32 Whosoever will confess Me before men, I will confess before My Father which is in Heaven

You declare Jesus is alive and Jesus will declare that you are alive.

Rom 6:11 dead to sin, alive in Christ

### Overcomer's Promises

- Ephesus Eat of Tree of Life
- Smyrna Not hurt of second death
- Pergamos Manna, Stone, Name
- Thyatira Power over nations
- Sardis Walk with Him in white; name not blotted out
- Philadelphia ...
- Laodicea ...

## Admonitory Level (to all churches)

- Ephesus Devotion, not just doctrine.
- Smyrna Endure persecution
- Pergamos Purify ambassadorship - stand fast against the world
- Thyatira Keep away from Pagan practices
- Sardis Watchfulness, diligence
- Philadelphia ...
- Laodicea

As we have travelled through 1,700 years of church history we can see something very interesting. What the future church is possibly going to gravitate to. A very dark day is coming but an intriguing situation arising out of it.

## The Once & Future Church: Home Fellowships

- Why is the divorce rate among Christians no better than among unbelievers? So something is not working.

What is really meant by "You shall not take the name of the Lord Your God in vain"?

## The Regeneration Gap

Over 2,000 churches planted per week: 150 million (1974) to 650 million

- (1998). Silent exodus of people slipping out the back doors almost unnoticed:
- attracted but not contained;
- interested but not inserted into fellowship;
- harvested but not gathered;
- touched but not transformed; they looked in briefly but were disappointed in what they saw...

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### Exits

There is an ongoing silent migration away from the church of an estimated 3,500 individuals each and every day. A 2014 study indicated that over 1.2 million people will leave the church in the next year. Several factors are contributing to this trend, but the majority of individuals who are leaving the church report that they no longer feel connected. Can this be reversed? Can the church connect with these people before it is too late?

### America

- **52,000 defections each week from churchdom: an astounding 94%**

**are leaders!**

- 63% believe the Bible: at a time when the public display and discourse about matters of faith have been under attack, a new poll indicates most Americans - 63 % - believe the Bible is literally true and the Word of God. [WorldNetDaily, 4/26/05]

### The Way It All Started

- A group of 12 alongside a seashore.
- The birth of the church at Pentecost was in a house (**Acts 2:2**).
- The early church met in houses (**Acts 2:46; 5:42; 8:3; 9:11; 12:12; 16:40; 18:7; 20:20; 21:8; Rom 16:5; 1 Cor 16:19; Col 4:15; 1 Tim 5:13-14; and Phile 1:2**).
- As a persecuted church, it was the only safe way to meet

## Personal Application (Homiletics)

- Ephesus Neglected Priorities
- Smyrna Satanic Opposition
- Pergamos Spiritual Compromise
- Thyatira Pagan Practices
- Sardis Watchfulness, Diligence
- Philadelphia ...
- Laodicea ...

## Prophetic Profile

- Sardis represents the **Denominational Church**.

## The True "Church"

- A Supernatural invention.
- Endowed with immortality.
- The means to disciple each other.
- Transfer of Jesus' life to each other.
- Turns atheists to apostles; terrorists into teachers; plumbers into pastors, and elders into evangelists.

## Advantages of Small Groups

- Disciplined multiplication (mitosis).
- Free of growth barriers.
- More are "involved" participants.
- Personal transformation & accountability.
- More effective for new Christians
- Solves the leadership crisis.

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- More Biblical.
- Persecution-proof structure.
- More efficient: lower cost.

### Storm Clouds on the Horizon

- The Biblical Christian is becoming increasingly "politically incorrect."
- The true church(es) will eventually be forced underground. "The attack against them will be led by the 'liberal' denominational churches"

— J. Vernon McGee

### Back to Basics

- The Church: the secret and powerful Society of the Redeemed: a place where people can literally see the Body of Christ, not simply briefly touched by an abbreviated gospel of an evangelistic 15 minute short duration
- A return to New Testament simplicity and authenticity
- No "models": let the Spirit lead as He wills...

End of 07. Letter to Sardis