

Bible Prophecy and the book of Revelation, Lesson 6

7 Letters to the 7 Churches, The Churches at Sardis & Philadelphia

- ↪ Numerous Catholic leaders began to protest the corruption of Rome, but Rome's response to all these protests was not reform, but a new order of priests called the Jesuits, hired killers, and a new form of investigation called the inquisition.
 - ↪ Millions were killed by the Church during this time. Many denominations began to spring up: Luther = Lutherans; John Calvin = Reformed and Congregational churches; John Knox = Presbyterian churches; Church of England under Henry the VIII; John Wesley = Methodist churches.
 - ↪ In most cases, these churches did not really reform any of the practices of the Roman church; they instead kept the practices and beliefs and only came out from under Rome's rule.
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Revelation 3:1-6

1. Sardis is reputed to be one of the oldest cities in Asia Minor established around 2000 B.C. or before.

Lydian Staters were the first known coins of the ancient world and they were manufactured in Sardis. It was situated on a 1000-foot plateau which gave the city the appearance of being impregnable. Only one side of the city was accessible; presumably, all you had to do was guard that one side and you'd be safe.

The character of the inhabitants of Sardis throughout history was that of over confidence. Appearance without reality, and their outer appearance of strength was betrayed by a lack of watchfulness. The city was attacked by the Persians in 549 B.C. They left the cliff sides of the city undefended, and that is where the Persians invaded.

<<History teaches us that man learns nothing from history>>

- ✓ 335 years later in 214 B.C., Antiochus, the Greek, took the city again by climbing the cliffs. Their defenses were characterized by giving an appearance without reality. **This is the exact character of this church as well!!!**
 - ✓ **Verse 1** Seven-fold Spirit is the O.T. way of alluding to the Holy Spirit. "a name that you are alive, but you are dead" **There is no good news or commendation for this church!**
 - ✓ "name" = onoma in the Greek, which is the Greek term for labeling something. This refers to being covered by a name or hiding behind a name. Our denominational names mean nothing to Him at all. The only name to hide behind and take refuge in is **Jesus**.
 - ✓ **The Protestant movement.** They returned to the Bible as the only guide and to faith alone as the only means of salvation. They came a long way, but fell into formalism, ceremonialism, and fell back into many of the doctrines and practices that they had protested against.
 - ✓ Religious freedom was unheard of, and dissenters were put to death. Our ancestors were not fleeing the Catholic church, but a Protestant church in England when they came to North America. We fought Protestants here, not Catholics, for the right to freedom of religion and separation of church and state here in the U.S.A.
 - ✓ **Verse 2** "Many will come on that day and say 'Lord, Lord' did we do all these things in your name? Then Jesus will say to them, "Depart from Me you workers of iniquity; I never knew you." This church was not attacked from the outside or the inside, **JUST DEAD!!**
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- ✓ **Verse 3** Protestants have a grand tradition of salvation by faith and the Bible as the sole authority. We have Bibles in every home, but they get overlooked for the sake of our opinions. Our theologians sit around and vote about which parts of the Bible are truly reliable and inspired; Catholics never did this. We've become nothing more than clubs or civic organizations whose ministry meets only peoples' physical needs. Our schools have become cesspools for liberalism and atheism.
 - ✓ "therefore, if you will not watch;" this is Sardis' history and the problem with the church. "I will come upon you as a thief" **1st Thessalonians 5:1-9** The true believer will not be caught off guard and has nothing to worry about. What is Jesus saying here? The same thing as He did to Thyatira; a lot of the people here were not saved!! **Verse 4** Remnant only was saved, **verse 5** Garments is the righteousness of Jesus. Name is **not removed**; this is not at all an indication that we can lose our salvation, **verse 6**.
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Church at Philadelphia

Only two letters have no bad news, and this is one of them.

1. Revelation 3:7-13, The youngest of the Seven cities; it was built in 189 B.C.

- ✓ Name is from the Greek root for brotherly love. King of Pergamum had a younger brother who eventually became his Successor, and he named this city because of his affection for his brother. This city is situated as a virtual gateway to the central plateau of Asia Minor.
 - ✓ This city became a missionary center for the Greek culture; they believed that in order to be civilized, people had to adopt the Greek language and Greek culture. This city was a staging area for the spread of the Greek culture to the east. The missionary/outreach character of this city seems to be the character of the Church.
 - ✓ What sends us out on missions besides Jesus' command is brotherly love! The Church represents mission minded people, churches, and the missionary age of the Church. There were missions going on in all ages, but nothing like the age that we have been in since the turn of the 18th century.
 - ✓ **Verse 7** "holy and true;" that's bad if you are not yourself holy and true! But they are!! "Key of David;" represents authority, **Isiah 22:19-24**, a person with this authority wore a symbolic key tied to a ribbon of material, and it was carried draped over the shoulder. It didn't unlock anything probably but was just a symbol of access to the king.
 - ✓ **Verse 8** If he has the key to the door of the King, then he can open any other door!! It is the Door of Opportunity which is an idiom used in several places in the N.T. to refer to opportunities for missions: **1st Corinthians 16:9, Colossians 4:3, 2nd Corinthians 2:12**. Many have tried to shut this door, but as time goes by it gets wider.
 - ✓ "kept My Word" is an immediate casualty of denying His Word is missions and outreach. This was a defining mark of this church and this church age and of any church that falls under this heading. "not denied my Name" = these two phrases are synonymous.
 - ✓ **Verse 9** Who are these people? In that day it was a local group of Jews. Today there is still some persecution from the Jews, but it's minimal. Who is opposing our mission's efforts today?
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- ✓ Three possibilities: There was a heresy started in the 3rd century that is still in force today; that the Church has replaced Israel and is now the recipient of all her promises. This was the primary cause of the crusades of the Middle Ages; they figured they had inherited the Promised Land from Israel. The Crusaders killed Jews as well as Muslims. But many of Israel's promises that are yet to be fulfilled including the Land are unconditional promises.
 - ✓ The second possibility is that the majority of persecutions and resistance that the missionary movement receives throughout the world is from Catholic and Protestant churches; in some respects, they think they are Jews!
 - ✓ The third possibility is the Muslim world who see themselves as God's People in place of the Jews.
 - ✓ **Verse 10** One of the more controversial verses of the N.T. What did Jesus say to the majorities of both Thyatira and Sardis? "You are going into the Tribulation"
 - ✓ **1st Thess. 3:5** They waited for His coming which is characteristic of all true believers. Thyatira wasn't waiting; they already had a kingdom. Sardis wasn't waiting; they were asleep.
 - ✓ "hour of trial;" hour which is "hora" in Greek referring to a time period of trial or tribulation
 - ✓ **Not protected during but removed before the tribulation.**
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Rapture as illustrated in other places in Scripture:

1. There were 8 people in the Ark who were not delivered from the flood but were protected in it. Enoch, on the other hand, was removed before the flood and named his son Methuselah, meaning: "his death shall bring"
2. Daniel's three friends went into the fiery furnace; they were not delivered from the fire but were protected in it. Where was Daniel? Symbolically, he was removed before the fire.
3. Likewise, in the Revelation, you have a group that go through the Tribulation, but are protected, all Jewish, and you have group that is removed out before the tribulation comes, the Church.

Revelation 6:17 as compared to **1st Thessalonians 1:10, 5:1-9**

Verse 11 "quickly" = suddenly referring to speed at the time it takes place. Reference to Jesus' immanent return for His Church.

If Jesus raptured the Church at the end of the Seven-year Tribulation, would you know when He's coming? How could He come as a surprise if you knew of 7 years of specific events that were to take place before hand?

Immanence is null and void if certain events precede the event. There are multiple passages that clearly indicate that we should expect Jesus' return as being immanent, at any moment!!!

"take your crown" = rewards you can lose!! **Verses 12-13.**
