

We are in the third letter to the seven churches; we've seen the letters to Ephesus and Smyrna; this is now the letter to Pergamos: Jesus commended them for holding fast to His Name and not denying the Faith, even in the midst of persecution when Antipas was martyred.

We said, at the beginning, that, not only were these seven letters to seven specific churches of John's time but that they also represent a panoramic view of all of Church history from her beginning, at Pentecost, until her removal, from the Earth, in the Rapture.

The letter to Ephesus corresponds to the period of the Church from about AD 70 until about 170. The Church had left her first love and God was going to chasten her. The church in Smyrna corresponds prophetically from about 170 until 312 with the coming to power of the Emperor Constantine who sought to consolidate his power over the empire by combining true Christianity with Paganism.

Verse 14: (to Pergamos) *'But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication. So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes, which thing I hate. Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.'*

The Church was already falling away; she had left her first love and now Jesus brings up fornication. This brings us to the pernicious 'tradition' of priestly celibacy: The largest empirical research to date by Richard Sipe studied 1,500 Catholic priests over the period of 25 years and concluded that fewer than 50 percent of Roman Catholic priests in the United States even attempt celibacy, while only 2 percent achieve total celibate chastity. Only 2% of Catholic priests are really celibate. <https://elrenosacredheart.com/>

Think: use your imagination: what does a young Catholic homosexual do with his life... instead of shaming his family, he makes them all so proud: 'My son is a priest... the whole family is DEFINITELY saved! Why can't you be more like your brother!?' The priesthood, the church, the catholic school, the altar boys... all becomes the hunting grounds for homosexuals and pedophiles. We've seen it in the news over and over again. It's Catholic tradition without any basis in Scripture at all. Then... 'Well, if the priest can do it and go to Heaven... so can I. Now... the truth is... there is ministerial fornication in many dark corners of the Church but the light of truth has shown, especially, on Catholicism.

It may seem that I am constantly attacking Catholicism; I'm not. I am simply pointing out that this is 'who' the Church was for so many dark Centuries. You can't light the Church without seeing the shadow of Catholicism.

This letter prophetically points to the period of the Church from the beginning of the Emperor Constantine's rule in AD 312 to 606 when Boniface III became *'Universal Bishop.'* Satan persecuted the Church for 250 years but changed his tactics when Constantine became Emperor in 312; through Constantine, Satan began to exalt the Church. Constantine sought to cement and fortify his hold on the Empire by uniting the Church and State, together, by welding his Pagan subjects and Christian subjects into one people. He declared Christianity to be the state religion and then began to highly exalt the 'clergy.' He poured out money and property to the Church and provided rich robes and furnishings to induce pagans to come into the Church. This was the beginning of Roman Catholicism, a melding of trappings of the Old Testament priesthood with Paganism to consolidate his hold on power. This enabled the 'Doctrine of the Nicolaitanes,' the establishment of a priestly cast lording over the laity and also the Doctrine of Balaam.

When the Israelites came out of Egypt, in Numbers 22-25, Balak, king of Moab sent for Balaam, a prophet, to curse them. God wouldn't allow him to curse them, so he advised Balak to invite the Israelites to the sensual feasts of Baal-Peor and so draw them into sin so that God would destroy them. Balak did so... the Israelites joined in... and God did destroy 42,000 of them. How Constantine used this method was to offer money, great

buildings (basilicas), costly robes, etc. to the priesthood. Soon the priest, the bishop, the archbishop, the pope were all dressed like kings and princes, sitting on thrones high above the people in a palace-like building overlooking a great ornate altar of gold and marble, surrounded by silver, gold and precious jewels. The peasantry could come into a great, ornate cathedral and be surrounded by riches like royalty. A worldly form of worship was introduced; preaching of the gospel was replaced by thoughtless recitation of liturgy like Pagan priests and the major Pagan festivals were adopted into the Church and given Christian sounding names... all to bring in more Pagans... a glaring example being moving Jesus' birthday from the Spring, probably April, to Dec 25, the time of the Pagan high festival celebrating the birth of the Sun God... 3 days after the winter solstice, the shortest and darkest day of the year when the Sun would begin its Northward journey once again toward Spring and Summer. So the birth of the Son of God was declared the same as the birthday of the Pagan Sun-God... mixing together the World and Paganism into the Church. One of the more pernicious aspects of this paganization of the Church was the introduction of postmillennial teaching or, rather, the destruction of the scripturally based pre-millennial belief system... the Church was now rich and glorious, one with the State. Surely this would cause the world to become better and better and so usher in the return of Christ, and since Scripture was needed to support this new heresy it was decided that Israel had been permanently cast off by God and that now, all of the future glory and blessings promised to Israel were to be fulfilled in the Church. Instead of an all important book of prophecy and insight from the Lord Jesus Christ, The Revelation was taught to be a spiritual allegory filled with unintelligible nonsense... better left on dusty shelves than studied and understood.² These same lies have continued on, growing ever stronger, to our own time and these are the lies that will cause the fallen away, apostate Church of today to actually receive the Antichrist after the Rapture, believing his lies that he is, in fact, Jesus Christ returned, the christ for the New Age.

As we look at what Jesus Christ has to say to each individual church and also to the overview of Church history, it's important to remember that our dates and timeframes are not exact but only that, these two chapters represent a picture of the time of the Church, on the Earth, and that there is a definite delineation between when the Church is still on the Earth and the moment, in the twinkling of an eye, when she is removed, in the Rapture, exactly at the moment chapter 4 begins with John seeing an open door in Heaven and hearing a voice say, 'Come up here and I will show you what **must take place hereafter**.' All of the 'hereafter' is the time following the Church's removal.

Verse 18: *'And unto the angel of the church in Thyatira write; These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet are like fine brass; ¹⁹ I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last to be more than the first. ²⁰ Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols. ²¹ And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not. ²² Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds. ²³ And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works. ²⁴ But unto you I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak; I will put upon you none other burden. ²⁵ But that which ye have already hold fast till I come. ²⁶ And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: ²⁷ And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father. ²⁸ And I will give him the morning star. ²⁹ He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.'*

Jezebel was the pagan wife of King Ahab. She furthered paganism and idolatry into Israel and sought to kill the prophets. She caused all Israel and Judah to sin. She is representative of the Papal Church of Roman Catholicism. When the Papal Church introduced statues and icons before which the people would bow down, they were led into true idolatry. When Church tradition and Papal pronouncement became superior to God's written Word, she became an idolatrous prophetess like Jezebel. The Church of this period, from 606 until the

Reformation in the early 1500's was both idolatrous and wicked in its persecution of Jews and true believers as evidenced by the Crusades and the Inquisitions. It was only by God's grace and keeping power that the true Church didn't continue on this way and die out completely... certainly that was Satan's hope and plan. These first 4 letters give a prophetic picture of the Church roughly spanning the time from the fall of Jerusalem in AD 70 as it gradually fell deeper and deeper into apostasy, until God began to wake the Church up at the time of the Reformation at about AD 1520.

To underscore the fact that the papal church introduced idols before which the people bowed and brought sacrificial offerings, look at the 10 Commandments: they are, briefly: 1. No other gods, 2. make no graven image or bow down, 3. God's Name in vain, 4. Sabbath, 5. Honor parents, 6. Murder, 7. Adultery, 8. Steal, 9. False Witness, 10. Don't covet anything.

#2 is the longest and most detailed; God knew this is where Israel would fail the most: *'Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. ⁵Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; ⁶And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.'* Ex 20:4

How do you suppose Catholics can read that Commandment and still feel ok about the myriad statues and icons throughout their homes and cathedrals? We'll see...

#10 covers all coveting: *'Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's.'* Ex. 20:17

Now, look at the 'Catholic 10 Commandments:' from Catholic.com or any other of the huge number of Catholic sites:

'Whereas the **Catechism's traditional presentation of the commandments for memorization are:**'

1. I am the Lord your God: You shall not have strange Gods before me.
2. You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.
3. Remember to keep holy the Lord's Day.
4. Honor your father and mother.
5. You shall not kill.
6. You shall not commit adultery.
7. You shall not steal.
8. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.
9. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife.
10. You shall not covet your neighbor's goods.

Look at 2, 9 & 10 again: the genuine Second Commandment has been erased. It is no longer against God's will to make graven images and bow down to them. But, in order to have 10, they simply split the genuine Tenth into two: 9 and 10. To be sure, in the Douay Version, the Catholic Bible, the 10 are accurately written but Catholics are never encouraged to study the Bible for themselves; they are taught to memorize the catechism.

Here's what beginningcatholic.com says: 'The Catholic tradition uses **the division of the Commandments established by St. Augustine**. (The Lutheran confessions also use this numbering, while some other confessions & traditions use slightly different numberings.)'

Yes, Christians use slightly different numberings; they don't remove one and split another to make up 10.

Notice, too, in this 4th letter to Thyatira, representing papal Catholicism, God refers to Jezebel and her children. Later, in The Revelation, we'll see the Worldwide religion of the Antichrist called Mystery Babylon, the mother of harlots. Catholicism, itself, is not Mystery Babylon but what we see, today, is a push to combine all religions into a *One-World Religion* and the current pope is one of the strongest proponents of this drive.

The final 3 letters to Churches will prophetically look forward from the Reformation until the soon coming Rapture and removal of the Church which will then take our study into the 7 year Tribulation... the 70th Week of Daniel.

Chapter 3: *'And unto 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 art dead. ² Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God. ³ Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee. ⁴ Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy. ⁵ He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but 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 unto the churches.'*

Sardis represents the church of the Reformation. In the early 16th Century, God began to awaken certain men concerning the truth of the Gospel of God's Grace; we are saved by Grace, through Faith and not as the result of any works, whatsoever.

Obviously, when the Church in Sardis was begun, it was a good and genuine part of the true Church. When the Reformation began, it had some very good points; of the greatest import was the drive to produce the Bible into various languages, facilitated by Johann Gutenberg's printing press in AD 1440

English was not, yet, the main language of the World but one of the most crucial aspects of the Reformation was the creation of the English Bible, most notably, the King James Version in 1611.

The heart of the Reformation was the belief that God's Word was meant for everyone, not just the priesthood, and that every person, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit could interpret and understand God's Word for themselves.

When Jesus says, 'strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God,' in hindsight, we can see, clearly... Catholicism had the name of being alive but, was, dying. The Church of the Reformation was injected with new life from God's Word being in many more hands and homes and great awakenings happened through the evangelism of many great men of God. This Nation was founded and established out of the Reformation; our first universities were established for the preparation of ministers, pastors and evangelists: Yale, Harvard, Andover and Princeton among others. But the Reformation did not bring the Church all the way out of its darkness of the previous millennium. It wasn't until the 'church at Philadelphia,' the highest point of the Church's history, which really began in the 1800's and continued on for most of the next two centuries, that the Church was, once again, enlightened to the full understanding of God's Word, much of which had been lost for 1400 years.

But the Church of the Reformation also had aspects which were 'ready to die:' they held on to many false teachings of the previous 1000 years. They continued to hold that Israel had been rejected and the Church had taken her place, that all of God's promises to Israel were actually for the Church.

It wasn't until the dawning of the 'End Times,' May 14, 1948, with the rebirth of Israel, that the true Church really was awakened. What we see, today, are the churches born out of the Reformation which are clearly dying: the Lutherans, the Methodists, the Presbyterians, the Episcopalians and some others... basically, much of the 'Protestant Church,' the name, Protestant, coming from those '*protesting*' against the ills of Catholicism.

Next time we will finish the seven letters, with Philadelphia and Laodicea, Philadelphia being the most commendable era of the Church with Laodicea being the falling away, apostatizing church which has been growing alongside the vibrant church, Philadelphia, in these last days.

His commendation of the Church of Philadelphia includes this promise: *'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. Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.'* Rev. 3:10 Clearly, this is a reference to the Rapture and His promise that the true Church will be removed before He unleashes the World's Evil and His Righteous Judgments upon that Evil.

Then, after His letter to the Church of Laodicea, the very next thing we will see is: *'After this I looked, and, behold, a **door was opened in heaven:** and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a **trumpet** talking with me; which said, **Come up hither,** and I will shew thee **things which must be hereafter.**'*

And there it is: remember in the first chapter Jesus told John to record 3 specific things: 'Write 1. the things which thou hast seen, and 2. the things which are, and 3. the things which shall be hereafter;' the exact words repeated, telling us that the things which shall be 'hereafter' means all of the 7-year Tribulation, Daniel's 70th Week, everything that happens after the time of the Church's removal from the Earth.