

## CHAPTERS TWO AND THREE – SEVEN LETTERS TO SEVEN CHURCHES

### THE LETTER TO THE CHURCH OF SARDIS – REVELATION 3:1-6

The passage here in Revelation 3:1-6 is the \_\_\_\_\_ of seven letters written to the key churches of Asia Minor. This particular epistle is to the church of Sardis (signified by their appearance before God in heaven – *the angel*). Its scriptural value is threefold:

- 1) Historical – Written to the actual church in Sardis around 91-96 AD...
- 2) Doctrinal – Details the events and circumstances taking place during the church age around 1000 AD thru 1500 AD... (Including those living during the tribulation period as seen in verses 3-5)
- 3) Devotional – Contains commendations, condemnations, and a judgment and promise to \_\_\_\_\_ churches at \_\_\_\_\_ times throughout history...

The name Sardis means: \_\_\_\_\_ ones

#### The commendation – Revelation 3:4

- A \_\_\_\_\_ remnant – *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.*

#### The condemnation – Revelation 3:1-2

- It was a deceived church; it thought it was alive but it was actually \_\_\_\_\_ – *... I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead. Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God.*

#### The judgment – Revelation 3:3

- One day the Lord will \_\_\_\_\_ things right – *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.*

#### The promise – Revelation 3:5

- Public recognition by Jesus Christ before God the Father and His angels, white clothes, and your name in the \_\_\_\_\_ of life – *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.*

## Historically – 91 AD – 96 AD

- Sardis was the capital of the great kingdom of Lydia.
- Sardis was the center for the textile and carpet industry for the Roman Empire.
- It was one of the oldest and most important cities in Asia Minor due to its consistently growing commerce. Some of the richest men in the empire lived in Sardis; its last Prince Croesus was the wealthiest man in the world.
- It was the first city to mint coins. Many coins of that era and later carried the inscription of the mother goddess, the Queen of Heaven.
- The city was located on an elevated plateau with three sides of smooth, sheer rock face. It was absolutely unscalable.
- The pagans of the area built a temple to the mother goddess Cybele – who was worshipped in Ephesus as Diana. She was the goddess of the moon. It was the home of many other cults and pagan religious circles.
- Sardis, along with other cities of that era, listed the names of its citizens in a publicly displayed record – when an individual would die or relocate their name was blotted out and erased.
- Archeological excavations have unearthed inscriptions that barred pagan temple worshippers from entering with soiled clothes lest the particular deity be offended.
- The church in Sardis was polluted with unbelievers who made false professions of faith (receiving Christ along with all the other pagan deities of the area). It was a church that thought it was godly, but in reality was devilish. Sources of spiritual authority rested upon the traditions and doctrines of men rather than the written Word of God. Those who stood on the scriptures as their final authority were persecuted and killed.
- The “few” faithful believers present who were genuinely saved were constantly at odds with the unfaithful and unbelieving churchgoers; for hazard of death they boldly challenged them to repent.
- Sardis was the home of a dead church that had no record of propagating the gospel or sending out missionaries.

Walk Thru the Bible Series, pages 912-913 – by J. Vernon McGee; IVP Bible Background Commentary – by Craig S. Keener; Unger's Bible Handbook

## Doctrinally – 1000 AD – 1500 AD

- The Sardis period of church history begins in the middle of the \_\_\_\_\_ Ages and continues until the time period often referred to as the \_\_\_\_\_. The Sardis period begins during a time referred to by some historians as ***The Midnight of the Dark Ages***.
- It is a time when we are introduced to the \_\_\_\_\_, the Spanish \_\_\_\_\_, the invasions of Saladin, and Genghis Khan. An influx of Asiatic culture, Hinduism, and Moslem philosophy begin to creep into Europe by way of the Crusades. We also see the start of the Renaissance period sweeping through Europe at this time. The Bubonic Plague reaches epic proportions and takes the lives of millions.
- This time was horrific and gruesome as Bible believers were \_\_\_\_\_ and murdered by the millions under the encouragement of Roman Catholic Priests and Popes during the Crusades and Inquisitions. The Roman religion of this period is at its peak. During Sardis, the counterfeit church is in the “*Golden Age of Papal Power*”...

We shall give an ample description of the severe torments occasioned by the torture, from the account of one who suffered it the three respective times, but happily survived the cruelties he underwent.

At the first time of torturing, six executioners entered, stripped him naked to his drawers, and laid him upon his back on a kind of stand, elevated a few feet from the floor. The operation commenced by putting an iron collar round his neck, and a ring to each foot, which fastened him to the stand. His limbs being thus stretched out, they wound two ropes round each thigh; which ropes being passed under the scaffold, through holes made for that purpose, were all drawn tight at the same instant of time, by four of the men, on a given signal.

It is easy to conceive that the pains which immediately succeeded were intolerable; the ropes, which were of a small size, cut through the prisoner's flesh to the bone, making the blood to gush out at eight different places thus bound at a time. As the prisoner persisted in not making any confession of what the inquisitors required, the ropes were drawn in this manner four times successively.

Two months after the second torture, the prisoner being a little recovered, was again ordered to the torture room, and there for the last time, made to undergo another kind of punishment, which was inflicted twice without any intermission. The executioners fastened a thick iron chain round his body, which crossed at the breast, terminated at the wrists. Then they placed him with his back against a thick board, at each extremity whereof was a pulley, which there ran a rope that caught the end of the chain at his wrists. The executioner then, stretching the end of his rope by means of a roller, placed at a distance behind him, pressed or bruised his stomach in proportion as the ends of the chains were drawn tighter. They tortured him in this manner to such a degree, that his wrists, as well as his shoulders, were quite dislocated. They were, however, soon set by the surgeons; but the barbarians, not yet satisfied with this species of cruelty, made him immediately undergo the like torture a second time, which he sustained (though, if possible, attended with keener pains,) with equal constancy and resolution. After this, he was again remanded to the dungeon, attended by the surgeon to dress his bruises and adjust the part dislocated, and here he continued until their *auto di fe*, or jail delivery, when he was discharged, crippled and diseased for life.

Miles L. Stanford, *Fox's Book of Martyrs* (Zondervan, 1967), 63, 64

- A synopsis of the \_\_\_\_\_ of this time period is seen in Revelation 17:6
  - Who is this woman? Rev. 2:20 calls her Jezebel. She is a false Baalite religious system that has black robed priests called "father" who use idols as aids in worship – Judges 17-18; 1 Kings 16-18; they worship in pagan temples renamed "churches" – Acts 19:37. She believes herself to be the one true church – Rev. 17-18... the Lord commands her to repent from her works – Rev. 3:2-3.
  
- The Crusades
  - Throughout the Crusades \_\_\_\_\_ of Bible believers along with Muslims, and non-conformists, lost their lives from the heavy hand of Rome. Roman Catholic Crusaders were also killed as a result of fighting other armed peoples. These were bloody, ruthless times, and all perpetrated in the name of God!
  - There were basically \_\_\_\_\_ Crusades designed to take the Holy land from Muslims:
 

First Crusade	-	1095-1099 AD - <i>Captured Jerusalem</i>
Second Crusade	-	1147-1149 AD - <i>Postponed the fall of Jerusalem</i>
Third Crusade	-	1189-1191 AD - <i>Army failed to reach Jerusalem</i>
Fourth Crusade	-	1201-1204 AD - <i>Captured and plundered Constantinople</i>
Fifth Crusade	-	1228-1229 AD - <i>Took Jerusalem, but soon lost it</i>
Sixth Crusade	-	1248-1254 AD - <i>A complete failure</i>
Seventh Crusade	-	1270 -1272 AD- <i>Came to naught</i>
  - Rome claimed to have \_\_\_\_\_ basic reasons for the Crusades:
    - 1) *To conquer and assume the Holy Land*
    - 2) *To \_\_\_\_\_ the spread of the Islamic religion*
    - 3) *To unite the East and West branches of Catholicism*

However, from a scriptural standpoint the purpose of the Crusades were for Satan to gain control of \_\_\_\_\_...all the while wiping out any adversaries under the guise of his counterfeit religious system, in an effort to establish a throne for the false Christ (*antichrist*).
  
- The Inquisitions
  - The Inquisitions of the Roman Catholic Church are perhaps the most horrific and \_\_\_\_\_ events in the history of mankind.
  - No one was free from her grasp:      The Story of Galileo:
 

The most eminent men of science and philosophy of the day did not escape the watchful eye of this cruel despotism. Galileo, the chief astronomer and mathematician of his age, was the first who used the telescope successfully in solving the movements of the heavenly bodies. He discovered that the sun is the center of motion around which the earth and various planets revolve. For making this great discover Galileo was brought before the Inquisition, and for a while was in great danger of being put to death.

After a long and bitter review of Galileo's writings, in which many of his most important discoveries were condemned as errors, the charge of the inquisitors went on to declare, *That you, Galileo, have upon account of those things which you have written and confessed, subjected yourself to a strong suspicion of heresy in this Holy Office, by believing, and holding to be true, a doctrine which is false, and contrary to the sacred and divine Scripture--viz., that the sun is the center of the orb of the earth, and does not move from the east to the west; and that the earth moves, and is not the center of the world.*

In order to save his life, Galileo admitted that he was wrong in thinking that he earth revolved around the sun, and swore that--*For the future, I will never more say, or assert, either by word or writing, anything that shall give occasion for a like suspicion. But immediately after taking this forced oath he is said to have whispered to a friend standing near, The earth moves, for all that.*

- A Summary of the Inquisition:

Such was the Inquisition, declared by the Spirit of God to be at once the offspring and the *image* of the popedom. To feel the force of the parentage, we must look to the time. In the thirteenth century, the popedom was at the summit of mortal dominion; it was independent of all kingdoms; it ruled with a rank of influence never before or since possessed by a human scepter; it was the acknowledged sovereign of body and soul; to all earthly intents its power was immeasurable for good or evil. It might have spread literature, peace, freedom, and Christianity to the ends of Europe, or the world. But its nature was hostile; its fuller triumph only disclosed its fuller evil; and, to the shame of human reason, and the terror and suffering of human virtue, Rome, in the hour of its consummate grandeur, teemed with the monstrous and horrid birth of the Inquisition!

Miles L. Stanford, Fox's Book of Martyrs (Zondervan, 1967), 87

- In the Old Testament, no matter how apostate the Nation of Israel became, God always had a \_\_\_\_\_ of true followers. During the Church Age, no matter how dark it got, no matter how ruthless the Roman Catholic Church became, God always had a remnant of faithful followers who would not defile themselves with the Harlot known as Jezebel.
- During the Sardis period there were those faithful saints who were \_\_\_\_\_ part of the Roman religious system...people who stood for the truth of God's Holy Word, who were against Rome before the reformers came along. As a matter of fact, it was the street preachers of this period that motivated much of the reformation. These preachers did not try to reform Rome, they preached its destruction and urged Catholics to repent and get saved!
- The "few" who believed during the Sardis period were called: Albigenses, Bulgarians, Waldenses, Cathari, Petrobusians, Arnoldists, Hussites, Henricians, New Manichaeans, Lollards, and Anabaptists. These groups were branded as "\_\_\_\_\_" by the Roman Catholic Church. (See Fox's Book of Martyrs or Martyr's Mirror).
- Some of the more famous preachers of this time who stood against Rome were: John Wycliffe, John Huss, Peter Waldo, Tyndale, John Tauler, John Colet, Vincent Ferrer, Andrew of Perugia, Conradt, and Giralamo Savonarola to name a few. These men were despised \_\_\_\_\_ of Rome and \_\_\_\_\_ by the official Roman Church.

**Devotionally** – Present time 2007 AD

- The groups that did not come out of Rome would not defile themselves by receiving any false doctrines taught by Jezebel. There were at least five major points of theology that they all had in common and are still present today:
  - The Bible alone was the \_\_\_\_\_ authority for all matters of faith and practice.
  - Baptism was \_\_\_\_\_ connected with salvation in any way, shape, or form, was for believers only, and was to be done by immersion.
  - Separation of Church and State.
  - They would never pray to or for any person that was dead and did not give any credence to the mythological place called \_\_\_\_\_ invented by the Harlot Church.
  - Complete \_\_\_\_\_ of the Roman Catholic Mass and anything connected to it such as transubstantiation, a myriad of Baalite rituals, and any form of idolatry.