

The Church, Past Present And Future

The Church Past.

We find in the first chapter of the Revelation that John is told by the Lord that he would show him the things that are, and that shall be, and the things which shall be after these. See Rev 1:19.

John saw the Lord walking among the lamp stands. That is the lamps of testimony on the earth. The second chapter takes up an address to the first three, Ephesus, Smyrna, and Pergamos. Briefly these first three each ended. Ephesus was the fresh new bride filled with love, but then cooling toward her bridegroom, having left her first love. Smyrna is the second phase of the church that went through great trials at the hand of ten Roman emperors. The Lord says thou shalt have tribulation ten days. And Pergamos means married. The church came into world favor with Constantine and became married to the world. All three of these churches (Assemblies) came to an end in order.

The Church Present.

The next assembly addressed is Thyatira. Here we have the introduction of idolatry into the church. Jezebel was the one who introduced the worship of Baal into Israel. Her death is terrible to contemplate. But there are those who truly accept the Lord Jesus and are kept by the power of God even in such a company. The Roman church today would answer to this character. Those in Thyatira are encouraged to hold fast unto the Lord's coming.

The next church is Sardis Rev 3:1. Sardis is typical of the protestant reformation, it is said to have many names. Although we tend to think of this phase of the church as having vibrant life, the Word says that thou hast a name to live and art dead. And so we see a great company of profession about us, but how much reality? We

can thank the Lord for any that there are. Sardis also is told to hold fast till He comes.

Next Philadelphia has the heart to hold fast the truth of the Word of God. It is here that we find the encouragement that we will be kept 'from' the hour of temptation which will come to try men (the great tribulation). Also in 2Thess 2:7 We find that the Spirit of God will restrain the forces of evil until he be gone. He can't go without taking us with him, John 14:17. Again Philadelphia is to hold fast till He comes.

So now we have three assemblies which go on to the end. The last is the church of the Laodiceans. In Rev .3:20 the Lord is seen as outside of this church knocking at the door of any who would receive Him. How descriptive that is of the profession about us today. There are so many that once proclaimed the Gospel of Jesus Christ, Repentance toward God and Faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. Last week the pastor of one that had the reputation of being sound in the gospel said that the purpose of the church was to be socially relevant. Where do we find this in the Word of God? Laodicea was lukewarm, don't stand for anything but be compatible with the World. It also continues to the Lord's coming.

So we have four of the church phases co-existing until the Lord comes.

The Church Future.

In Rev. 4:1 we hear the voice come up hither and I will show thee the things which must be after these. The scene changes from the earth to a view from heaven. First the Lord on the throne, He is in control of all things. This is similar to the view in Ezekiel chapter one where the Lord presides over the affairs of men in all their confusion. The church is here taken to heaven and the great tribulation begins on the earth. The church is not seen again until the 19th chapter where we find the marriage supper of the Lamb, and then his appearing with his saints in the 11th verse.