

Chapter 3 – The other 3 Churches

Local Group:

1 And to the angel of the church in Sardis write,

Authority Reference:

‘These things says He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars:

Reproof:

“I know your works, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead.

Warning:

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.

Blessing:

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. 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.” ’

Local Group:

Sardis was the capital of the Kingdom of Lydia which existed from about 1200 BC to 546 BC when it became a province of the Achaemenid Persian Empire, and then the Roman empire in 133BC. Alexander the Great conquered it entirely in 334 and it then passed to the Seleucid empire. Most of the fighting during the Diadochi wars was in Macedonia, although Lydia did see some consolidation of its borders. After the Seleucid Empire dissolved, Lydia became a part of the Pergamum Empire and was transferred to Rome in 133BC when Attalus III bequeathed his empire on his death. It was so rich and strategically placed that Rome deemed it worthy of a governor with the high rank of proconsul.

Because of this flourishing place in the politics of the area, there was a natural connection to the politics of the church in the area. As we’ve already discussed, Ephesus was the centre of the Christian world, but this was the political centre of Christianity. Major court cases would

have taken place in Sardis so any discussion of persecution from the previous chapter would have been centred in this city.

The majority of the commentary to this church is rather unspecific and bland, and really could apply to any church at any time that was just plodding along. The Church experienced some periodic persecution, as stated, but as it would have been more interested in political matters than theological, there would have been little fear of heresy creeping in. Therefore, this message could apply to this local group, or any other of the early church.

It's also noteworthy that Melito of Sardis was first to define the Christian list of the canon in the Old Testament (a phrase he coined) around 170AD. In his canon he excludes the book of Esther and the Apocrypha.

Authority Reference:

The authority Christ is here referencing is simply that of him being God. There is no fluff, but there is an element of fatherly warmth. I'm the one who is God and is guiding you.

Commendation and Reproof:

Interestingly for this church, there is no commendation. Their works are seen as being good, but also dead. This is a church that is simply marking time; plodding along until something happens. They are, however, moving forward. Jesus says he "[know\(s\) your works](#)" indicating that they are doing good things but they are a dead mind.

Warning:

Although the church is working, it's not perfect. The warning here is for those who have devoted themselves to Jesus work to remain on their guard and be vigilant so that they might be able to partake in the rewards. Jesus clearly says that his judgement and his blessings will come at a time and from a direction nobody is expecting.

Blessing:

In addition to the eternal life blessing is promised white robes – pure robes – that will allow the people to exemplify and demonstrate that they are followers of Jesus to all. Jesus promises that the world will know who they are and that they are his people. This is an earthly promise with a heavenly overtone.

Time Period: 1563 (Council of Trent) – 1798 (Defeat of the Papacy)

The Council of Trent, held between 1545 and 1563 in Trento, northern Italy, was the 19th ecumenical council of the Catholic Church. The Protestant Reformation, which burst its banks in 1517 with Martin Luther's publishing of the 95 Thesis, had been building for some time and the English reformation from 1529 forced a crisis that the Church needed to deal with. Although the Fifth Lateran Council had closed a few months before Luther nailed his statement to the Cathedral in Wittenberg, it was more of a peace treaty between Rome and Venice and did little to impact Roman theology. The support for these "protesting" groups - from where the name 'protest'ant takes its rise - was seen as a legitimate counter to Rome and, like was seen with the Arian heresy, persecution was rife on both sides. Edward VI of

England followed his father, Henry VIII's break with Rome by introducing a new prayer book, outlawing the mass and clerical celibacy and persecuting Catholics, although only executing 81. His sister, Mary - known to history as Bloody Mary thanks to Foxe's book of Martyrs - burned 300 Protestant heretics and was ramping up her efforts before her death in 1588. Elizabeth I, although openly favouring Protestants, sought something of a tolerate middle-way but still saw large numbers of Catholics put to death. Her statistics are, however, more complex due to catholic rebellions that developed during her reign.

Pope Clement VII and his successor, Pope Paul III saw the need for a council to present a united counter to the growing number of opponents, but due to political conflict - the HRE and France were at war and Rome itself was sacked in 1527 - the ability to actually call a council was lacking. Luther himself, despite modern portrayals that emphasise his 'Sola Scriptura' doctrine choosing to ignore it, encouraged a council to be called so that all these matters could be dealt with. Things were complicated with Charles V of the HRE needing to ally himself with his Protestant Princes due to tensions and then war with Islamic Turkey.

The council convened on 13 December 1545 and finally closed on 4 December 1563. 3 of the 5 popes during this time (Paul III (1534 - 1549), Julius III (1550 - 1555) and Pius IV (1559 - 1565)) managed but were not present at the Council - the organisation of which prevented them from attending. Of the other 2, Pope Marcellus II (1555) was only pope for 22 days before dying of a stroke and Paul IV (1555 - 1559) was fiercely anti-protestant and would not permit the council to proceed while he was on the throne. The Protestants were originally invited to speak but not vote and the Peace of Passau in 1552 secured Protestants and their princes a place at the German diplomatic table. They no longer saw their need to put themselves at risk and attend the conference, and made no further effort to attend, as a Crusade would be needed to get them out of Germany. Its also noteworthy that the French boycotted almost the entire council until a delegation arrived in 1562, owing to the French Wars of Religion reinvigorating theological discourse in that country.

Primary amongst the discussion at this council were the Church's doctrine and teachings, including scripture, the Biblical canon, sacred tradition, original sin, justification, salvation, the sacraments, the Mass, and the veneration of saints. The fundamental conclusions of Trent reaffirmed the Catholic Doctrine and the only ground given to the Protestants was administrative. The reaffirmation of doctrine was, in fact, slightly extended from the 4th Laterna Council inasmuch as the Church stipulated itself as the ultimate interpreter of Scripture. It also defined that the Bible and Church Tradition (the tradition that composed part of the Catholic faith) were equally and independently authoritative. The Church, therefore, defined that they alone could choose how scripture was to be interpreted.

Fundamentally, this was the last shot fired in the theological war. Church doctrine and Protestant counter-doctrine has moved little in the succeeding few centuries and indeed there would not be another council until the First Vatican Council 1869-70 at which a definition of papal infallibility was debated and formalised; only really enacting what had been established doctrine. This council ceased to exist after French Troops were recalled from the Vatican to fight the War of 1870 and was technically closed in 1960 shortly before the convening of Vatican II. That council made substantial organisational changes to the

Roman Church in the light of the 1798 defeat and the subsequent 'imprisonment in Rome' but made no serious advances to Roman Theology.

After the Council of Trent, both sides had to decide how to move forward. The Protestants had to decide if they wished to formalise some collective opposition to the Roman Church and what support they could muster for that opposition. The Roman Church had to consider if they had the strength or authority to launch a Crusade against a growing list of opponent ideologies. This was then confounded by the 30 Years War, with Religion being a central part. The Peace of Westphalia, an extremely complicated pair of treaties, released state leaders to make their own choices when it came to the religion of their subjects; freeing the Holy Roman Empire from its Catholic overlordship and granting Protestants a measure of toleration.

The Peace of Westphalia is widely seen as the last step in the Reformation as efforts from that point forward ceased to attempt to 'reform' the church and instead setup counter movements. The theology of the Roman Church was clearly established by this point and, other than clarifying minutiae, little has changed. Furthermore, from the Peace of Westphalia little formal Protestant/Catholic conflict happened on as wide a scale. Although it was certainly feared for centuries, the results of the 1798 decapitation of the Vatican locked out the papacy from politics on a wider scale until the development of the modern world; certainly until Vatican II.

In this way we see that from Trent to the present day, the 'Jezebel heresy' was simply the order of the day. The Protestants, on the other hand, quickly fell to infighting and descended into internal strife, preventing any formal evolution of anti-Roman theology. Neither side, therefore, has actually shown any real development in the other's direction. The Catholic Church simply considers all Protestants outside of communion with the Holy Mother Church and the Protestants simply reject Church authority and refuse to engage.

The development of Protestantism as an alternative to Rome would spark a political decline that Rome would not recover from until the modern world. Political leaders could choose to align themselves with a particular movement for a political purpose or, as would be revealed later, with nobody for a purpose of remaining outside the political spectrum. This was most exemplified during the French Revolution, when the French simply abolished Christianity.

This came to a head in 1798 when Pope Pius VI was taken captive by Napoleon's General Berthier, and Napoleon himself invaded and conquered the Knights Hospitaller in Malta. At the outbreak of the French Revolution in 1789, Pope Pius VI feebly protested against the suppression of the Gallican Church as well as the confiscation of pontifical and ecclesiastical possessions in France. France's fractured state but strong military made anything except impotent protests impossible for the Papal states to consider. Papal influence was at a comparatively low point but the majority of European Monarchies were against the destruction of the Social Order that should have united the Pope with the European kings. Instead, he issued two briefs in 1791 - *Quod aliquantum* and *Caritas* - to condemn the ecclesiastical reforms that were proposed and condemned both the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen and the Civil Constitution of the Clergy. He acted as an

aggrieved foreign leader rather than the leader of a Church and, again in 1791 he ended diplomatic relations with France and recalled the papal nuncio, Antonio Dugnani when the revolutionaries of the Comtat Venaissin, ending 516 years of Papal rule in Avignon.

When King Louis XVI was executed via guillotine on 21 January 1793, his daughter Marie Thérèse petitioned Rome for the canonization of her father. Pius VI hailed the late king as a martyr on 17 June 1793 in a meeting with cardinals, giving hope to a potential possibility of sainthood but alienating those Protestant allies that a temporal monarch could have used. He also wrote that the French revolutionaries abolished "the monarchy, the best of all governments", alienating the Italian Republics in the north.

In 1796 French Republican troops under the command of Napoleon Bonaparte (Then a General) invaded Italy and defeated the papal troops. The French occupied Ancona and Loreto. Pius VI sued for peace which was granted at Tolentino on 19 February 1797; but on 28 December 1797, in a riot blamed by papal forces on some Italian and French revolutionists, the popular brigadier-general Mathurin-Léonard Duphot, who had gone to Rome with Joseph Bonaparte as part of the French embassy, was killed and a new pretext was furnished for invasion.

General Berthier marched to Rome, entered it unopposed on 10 February 1798, and, proclaiming a Roman Republic, demanded of the pope the renunciation of his temporal authority. He refused and Pius was taken prisoner. 10 days later he was escorted from the Vatican to Siena, then to the Certosa near Florence. The French declaration of war against Tuscany led to his removal (he was escorted by the Spaniard Pedro Gómez Labrador, Marquis of Labrador) by way of Parma, Piacenza, Turin and Grenoble to the citadel of Valence, the chief town of Drôme where he died six weeks after his arrival, on 29 August 1799, having the longest reigning pope to that date.

Napoleon himself bypassed Rome and sailed from Toulon toward Malta on 19 May 1798 arriving on 9 June and formally invading on the 11 June. It quickly fell and the last military force that answered to the Papal states was dissolved. This mirrors the Deadly Would we discussed in Daniel.

Local Group:

7 “And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write,

Authority Reference:

‘These things says He who is holy, He who is true, “He who has the key of David, He who opens and no one shuts, and shuts and no one opens”:

Commendation:

8 “I know your works. See, I have set before you an open door, and no one can shut it; for you have a little strength, have kept My word, and have not denied My name. 9 Indeed I will make those of the synagogue of Satan, who say they are Jews and are not, but lie—indeed I

will make them come and worship before your feet, and to know that I have loved you.
10 Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth. 11 Behold, I am coming quickly!

Warning:

Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown.

Blessing:

12 He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more. I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God. And I will write on him My new name.

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

Local Group:

The word Philadelphia literally means brotherly-love and the city is today called Alaşehir. In AD 17, the city suffered badly in an earthquake, and the Roman emperor Tiberius relieved it of having to pay taxes. By the 3rd Century, under Emperor Caracalla, Philadelphia housed an imperial cult and its coins bore the word Neokoron (literally, "temple-sweeper" — caretaker of the temple).

Because an imperial cult grew in a place when Christianity was supposed to be strong, we can deduce that the group there was either very small or was not influential - something unusual for a place where Jesus says their time is about to come.

When things moved West, Philadelphia was a prosperous Byzantine city, called the "little Athens" in the 6th century AD because of its festivals and temples. Presumably this indicates that the city wasn't entirely converted to Christianity. In about the year 600 the domed Basilica of St. John was built, remains of which are the main archaeological attraction in the modern city. The city was taken by the Seljuk Turks in 1074 and 1093–94. In 1098, during the First Crusade, it was recovered by Byzantine Emperor Alexios I (Komnenos) - the same Alexios who sparked the First Crusade.

Authority Reference:

The reference here is something different, outside of the introduction of Chapter 1. None of the elements here are recorded in the First Chapter, although they are all known qualities for Christ. This Church is something special if it is addressed to them from outside of the rest of the book.

“These things says He who is holy, He who is true”

While we have seen qualities of Holiness, and Jesus is claiming authority and authorship of all these messages indicating he is the author of their truth, these two qualities were not, explicitly, mentioned in Chapter 1. This is the first time when Jesus is, explicitly, connected to both Holiness and Truth, indicating that these qualities also apply to that church.

The church, at this time, is both Holy and holds Truth.

“He who has the key of David”

Considering the timeframe we are both writing and discussing here, there are several interpretations to a reference to David.

David was, of course, was the 2nd King of Israel; taking his rise when a fallen king was abandoned by God. He became the darling of Israel and, despite his later indiscretions. He has always represented everything good about the Jewish nation and people and is still today held up as the exemplar of Judaism and Israel.

David conquered Jerusalem and Jerusalem was and is known as the ‘City of David’. The Keys are most likely a reference to Jesus holding the Keys to the New Jerusalem, the city of the new David under the new covenant he is administering.

Jesus was a descendant of David, and this can also make a reference to Jesus holding the keys to Royalty. The nobility he promises to those who are faithful are within his power to give as Kings have the authority to give whatever noble titles they choose at their discretion.

“He who opens and no one shuts, and shuts and no one opens”

This is an extremely curious phrase. What is being opened and shut? Jesus is claiming a very interesting authority here; the authority to open opportunities and close others, the authority over both time and the dynamics of human interaction. Jesus is saying that when some opportunity opens its on him, but also when an opportunity goes away, that’s also him.

That’s a lot more control than Jesus is normally given credit for.

But let us also add in the keys of David’. Jesus is obviously using those keys to open and close. When we add this in, all 3 options remain valid.

Jesus has the Keys to Israel and is the true exemplar of Israel and who we all should look up to.

Jesus holds the keys to the New Jerusalem. He administers the new covenant, so he is the one who decides who enters and who does not.

Owing to their deeds, Jesus rewards and punishes as he decides necessary. He can reward with noble titles and special privileges as He deems necessary. As a king, he can make client kings or Nobles from whomever He deems worthy.

Commendation:

This church is full of opportunities. Clearly, as one looks at the different challenges that the Church faced in the area, the correlating opportunities are clear too.

An imperial cult? Turn it to a Christian leader.

This is a centre of coinage and minting? Mint coins about Jesus

Unfortunately, as is clear from the history, these opportunities were lost, but the commendation from Jesus was that they were on the right path, doing the right thing.

Reproof:

One of only 2 Churches, there is no reproof for this group.

Warning:

This church is clearly a prosperous group, however there is a risk that they could loose what they hold onto. They clearly have a crown but there is a fear that it might be lost if they are not careful.

When we consider the local church group, they are obviously a small group but one that is faithful, but also one that is surrounded by high temptations. A small group like that is at high risk to fall to temptations but, clearly, they are under no risk of that in Jesus' eyes. What is also interesting is that, seeing as the Greek theology had revived strongly by the 6th Century, the Church obviously did little proselytising and yet Jesus does not call them out for this. He seems strangely content with them staying small and unimportant.

When we evaluate the time period, it's extremely easy to recognise how quickly protestant reformers could slip back into old, 'Roman' ways, or how the appeal of the establishment; be it Roman or Protestant, could be appealing to reformers and Romans alike.

Blessing:

The blessing is a strong one and one that, again unusually, stretches clearly into the next Church too. "12 He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more." This is a curious, multi-layered use of a phrase.

There are still things to overcome; temptation, fear, Satan's peril, but those who are able to remain steadfast are promised the rewards.

"I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God" This is an extremely curious phrase to use here. Firstly, Jesus is still presenting himself as high priest; he's talking about it being 'His' God. The invocation of the Temple here reminds the reader of the place and duty Jesus has in the functioning of the Temple which – as we will see in later chapters – becomes important during this time.

Furthermore, this is a new temple. The Jerusalem temple was destroyed along with the majority of the Jews 40 years before these words were written. Jesus is talking about establishing an entirely new set of theological structures and it was during the time period of this Church that the majority of modern doctrines were established. The characters during this time became the pillars of the modern Church and, while we have certainly developed and learned from them, the theologians of this time like William Miller, Charles Spurgeon and William Booth changed the entire dynamic of Christianity and their messages will last until the 2nd Coming.

“and he shall go out no more.”

These people will spend all of eternity in the presence of God, but Jesus is also saying that they are living like they are already living in His presence. Jesus is stipulating that these are individuals that have no fear of eternity, and also no real fear of temporal punishment. They have no worry about death; they are the pillars of the new Church. They are secured!

“I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God. And I will write on him My new name.”

This ends with a reasonably common promise of the surety of Salvation and a place in the new Jerusalem, but Jesus also stipulates that he, himself, will get a new name. We need to remember that names were added to during this time, not just replaced and Jesus is probably referring here to His adding a post-salvation name to himself. Jesus, today, is known as the Saviour of Mankind in a future tense; “one who will save us”. After the 2nd and 3rd Coming, Jesus will be able to change that to “the one who did save Humanity” or some other stylism, that relates to the saving work, then, having been accomplished.

While this does indicate that the ‘keys of David’ are most likely the keys to the New Jerusalem, it also does not discount the other presented alternatives.

Time Period: 1798 – 1844

The defeat of the Roman states and the Papacy itself in 1798 was as much an “open door” as any has ever been for protestants to push home their debate against Papal Authority. The decapitation of the Papal States left the pope homeless and penniless, the French troops looting all the treasures including all but 1 of the Papal Tiaras. When Pope Pius VII was elected in 1800 and coronated in exile in Venice, only 1 of the Papal tiaras was left for him to use; and that was out of reach in Rome. The Venetians constructed a Paper Mache tiara and decorated it with jewels donated by local families, making the best of a humiliating situation.

Further humiliations from the Napoleonic Government came when the Pope was invited Bonaparte’s coronation. First, Napoleon gifted the Pope an elaborate tiara, lavishly decorated with 3,345 precious stones and 2,990 pearls.



Designed to look like a traditional papal tiara, the central structure is made of white velvet and there are three crowns of gold, each consisting of a large hoop surmounted with flower-work of wrought leaves, enriched with rubies, emeralds, and sapphires and surrounded with brilliants on a setting of matched and chosen pearls. In its monde (The green orb at the top of the crown) is the great emerald that Pope Pius VI had removed from his tiara to pay the war reparations required by the Treaty of Tolentino in 1797. This emerald (404.5 carats) was originally part of a tiara worn by Pope Gregory XIII and displays his name and coat of arms. The middle of the hoop of each crown contained a bas-relief glorifying Napoleon; and additional plaques bore the names of Napoleon's military victories.

In addition to glorifying a human ruler and including objects taken from the defeated, the dimensions of the crown were also designed to insult. It was much too small to be worn and far too heavy. The Queen's crown – the Imperial State Crown – weighs a little over 1kg, while Papal tiaras traditionally weighted between 800grams and 2.5 kilos. Napoleon's tiara weighed 8.2 kg, making it extremely heavy and almost impossible to wear, even if it did fit. By comparison, St Edward's Crown weighs about 2.23Kg and gave King George V tremendous headaches after the coronation. Although this gift was extremely elaborate and lavish, its use as an insult is similarly clear; a crown that can't be worn is useless. The images of Napoleon have since been replaced and the crown extended so it can be worn, although the last time this happened was during Vatican I in 1870.

Napoleon added insult to insult during his coronation on December 2, 1804. To distinguish his imperium from that of previous monarchs, Napoleon moved the ceremony from Reims Cathedral to the great cathedral of Notre Dame in Paris.

Pope Pius VII agreed to officiate at Napoleon's coronation and it was initially established that it would follow the normal coronation liturgy in the Roman Pontifical. However, quickly after the Pope's arrival, Napoleon persuaded the delegation to allow the introduction of several French elements in the rite. These included:

- the use of Chrism (Myrrh) instead of the Oil of Catechumens for the anointing
- placing the sacred oil on the head and hands rather than the right arm and back of the neck
- and the inclusion of several prayers and formulas from the coronations of French kings, to bless the regalia as it was delivered.

Napoleon remained mostly seated and not kneeling during the delivery of the regalia and during several other ceremonies, and reduced his acceptance of the oath demanded by the Church in the beginning of the liturgy to one word only.

Not wanting to be an Old Regime monarch, Napoleon explained: "To be a king is to inherit old ideas and genealogy. I don't want to descend from anyone."

During the Coronation itself, while Pius VII was reciting both the Roman *Accipe coronam regni* and the Anglo-French *Coronet te Deus*, Napoleon turned and removed his laurel wreath and crowned himself and then crowned the kneeling Joséphine with a small crown surmounted by a cross, which he had first placed on his own head. Despite modern myths, Napoleon did not snatch the crown from the Pope and Pius must have known this was going to happen as he omitted the Roman formula *Accipe coronam* from his litany. This part of the ritual depicts the monarch as receiving his crown from the Church, which is contrary to Napoleon's entire dynamic at this ceremony. That does not detract from the insult to the papacy, however, as Napoleon was symbolizing that he was becoming emperor based on his own merits and the will of the people, and not in the name of a religious consecration.

At Napoleon's enthronement the Pope still intoned, "May God confirm you on this throne and may Christ give you to rule with him in his eternal kingdom". Limited in his actions, Pius VII proclaimed further the Latin formula *Vivat imperator in aeternum!* ("May the Emperor live forever!"), echoed by all those present. However, after the Mass was finished, the Pope retired to the Sacristy, as he objected to presiding over or witnessing the civil oath that followed, due to its contents, despite Napoleon taking it with hands on the Bible.

Although Pius took all this in his stride and didn't seem to take offense, relations declined and on 3 February, 1808 General Miollis occupied Rome while Napoleon himself moved to Vienna.

17 May 1809, Napoleon issued two decrees in which he reproached the popes for the ill use they had made of the donation of Charlemagne, his "august predecessor", and declared those territories which were still under the direct control of the Papal State were to be annexed to the French empire. The territories were to be organized under Miollis with a council to administer them. As compensation the Pope would receive a stipend of 2,000,000 francs per annum. Pius VII subsequently excommunicated Napoleon and Napoleon captured Castel Sant'Angelo and intimidated the Pope by pointing cannons at his papal bedroom. Pius VII was again a prisoner and was moved throughout Napoleon's territories, in great sickness at times, though most of his confinement took place at Savona.

The Pope remained in confinement for over six years, and did not return to Rome until 24 May 1814, when the Hungarian 5th Radetzky Hussars freed him during a pursuit of Napoleonic forces. They escorted the pope back to Rome through the Alps. The cold weather wore Pius VII out but an officer gave him his own coat for the journey. In a final remark on the situation, the pope had his secretary compose a letter to the British government asking for better treatment of the exiled emperor at Saint Helena. One of the final lines of the note stated, "He can no longer be a danger to anybody. We would not wish him to become a cause for remorse."

At the Congress of Vienna (1814–1815) the Papal States were largely restored but the damage to papal influence was done. Pius spending most of his papacy focused on France caused him to neglect the rest of the world to a large extent and it was difficult for the Papacy to be seen as more than a temporal ruler from many quarters. Although the Papal States were restored, the Pope had few troops and less money to use to defend them.

by 1861, much of the Papal States' territory had been conquered by the Kingdom of Italy. Only Lazio, including Rome, remained under the pope's temporal control. In 1870, the pope lost this and had no physical territory at all, except the Basilica of St Peter and the papal residence and related buildings around the Vatican quarter of Rome. From 20 September 1870 until the Lateran Treaty of 11 February 1929, the pope considered himself a 'Prisoner in the Vatican' despite numerous offers to make the Vatican a city-state and establish some form of diplomatic and civil relations. In 1929, the Lateran Treaty formalised this arrangement and the modern nation of Vatican City was created.

This makes the Pope the last, elected, absolute monarch on earth and the Vatican has diplomatic relations with 183 other sovereign states.

The corollary here is between this church facing an “[open door \(that\) no one can shut](#)” and the ‘deadly wound’ being inflicted on the papacy. The door open before this group was clearly the absence of Papal Power, an absence of major opposition for both Protestants and Sabbath-Keepers alike. For Sabbath and Law keepers, Jesus congratulates them by saying “[you have kept My command to persevere](#)” and are in turn promise that “[\(He\) also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth](#)”. Jesus’ promise here is important to the next Church.

What is clear is that the door for the message of Jesus and the law has been given and can spread openly around the world because the door has been opened by Christ. The door, explored in Daniel 7,9 and 11 clearly establishes the time and chance for the Roman Church to take a back seat in affairs. The Papal crushing inflicted by France was clear and devastating, and the results were that protestant and Catholic today enjoy similar levels of respect amongst all frames of society. Jesus told the church clearly that he would “[make those of the synagogue of Satan, who say they are Jews and are not, but lie... come and worship before your feet... and to know that I have loved you](#)”. Although France was an atheistic country when it destroyed Papal Power; and did it in the name of promoting atheism, the only religious war fought between then and now was the Crimean War (1854-1856) and even then only over which government would protect Christian Minorities, not over religion itself. The following American Civil War (1860-64), German Wars of Unification (1866-1871), the Franco-Prussian War (1870-1871), World War I (1914-1918), World War II (1939-1945) and the Cold War (1945-1989) have all used religious language in their propaganda but were all wars that existed outside of Religion.

Papal threats of excommunication and condemnation are, today, almost meaningless but it is important to realise that Catholic Theology has changed little in this time.

Much more difficult to fix is the end to this Church’s time period. In fact, it’s almost impossible to fix an end time as, unlike the previous Churches, the given end time for this

church is the final Judgement. If we read the texts plainly, Jesus is clearly saying that, when the final Judgement comes, the Church of this time will be protected from the trials that the world will endure.

“Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.”

This would indicate that the movement established at this point is the way that things will be until the Judgement time, and that the people living through this time that are loyal to Jesus are, theologically, as established as those who are living in the last days. The message of the Sabbath and the Jewish way of doing things being the important factors and the distinguishing markers of the ‘true’ church are, clearly, those that separate new Rome from new Israel.

Local Group:

14 “And to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write,

Authority Reference:

‘These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God:

Reproof:

15 “I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. 16 So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth. 17 Because you say, ‘I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing’—and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked—

Warning:

18 I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see. 19 As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent.

Blessing:

20 Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me. 21 To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.

22 “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.” ’ ’ ”

Local Group:

Laodicea was founded in 260 B.C. along the Lykos (Curuksu) River which is why its often called 'Laodicea on the Lycus'. Although not the capitol, it was the 'primary' city in Anatolia, in the same way that Sydney is the primary city of Australia while Canberra is the capital.

The city was founded by Antiochus II Theos, king of Syria, and named in honour of his wife, Laodicem but was originally called Diospolis, "City of Zeus". Laodicea was a great centre for the manufacturing of clothing – the sheep that grazed around Laodicea were famous for the soft, black wool they produced. Laodicea was also well known for its school of medicine. Specialities were their eye salve and is probably why it is referenced in the message to this Church. Two of the doctors from Laodicea were so famous that their names appear on the coins of the city (Zeuxis and Alexander Philaethes).

The city was also a crossroads of north-south traffic between Sardis and Perga and east-west from the Euphrates to Ephesus. This made trade easy and expanded its riches by several orders of magnitude.

When Laodicea was destroyed by an earthquake in 60 A.D., they refused aid from the Roman empire and rebuilt the city from their own wealth. Tacitus reported that "One of the most famous cities of Asia, Laodicea, was in the same year overthrown by an earthquake and without any relief from us recovered itself by its own resources" (Tacitus, Annals, 14:27).

Interestingly, the city was entirely dependant on external water supplies; mostly coming from the hot springs at Hierapolis, just six miles across the Lycus River but also piped in cold water through an aqueduct from Colossae. The mixture of these hot and cold springs meant that the putrid, 'lukewarmness' of Laodicea's water was already widely known before getting to Johns time. The hot springs would have carried the good bacteria that thrived in the hot spring but died as it cooled, allowing bad bacteria to grow and eat it.

"Water piped into Laodicea by aqueduct from the south was so concentrated with minerals that the Roman engineers designed vents, capped by removable stones, so the aqueduct pipes could periodically be cleared of deposits." (John McRay, Archaeology And The New Testament, p. 248).

The Christian community in Laodicea seems to have been closely connected with that of nearby Colossae. Laodicea is mentioned four times in the Paul's letter to the Colossians (Col. 2:1; 4:13,15,16). Paul sends greetings to them through a Laodicean named Nymphas and the church at their house (Col 4:15), and he instructs the Colossians to exchange his letter with one he has written to the Laodiceans (4:16). If the Colossian epistle is genuinely by Paul, then this would indicate a Christian presence in Laodicea as early as the 50s CE. It would also indicate that Laodicea (like Colossae) was not evangelized by Paul, but possibly by his disciple Epaphras (Col 4:12–13).

This reference to a letter which the Colossians were to obtain "from Laodicea" has created a puzzle which has not yet received a generally accepted solution. This is not recorded in the bible and it is broadly accepted that the epistle to the Laodiceans has been lost, however the wording of Col 4:16 may indicate that the letter was not written to but from Laodicea.

An apocryphal Epistle to the Laodiceans has had some supporters at times, but modern scholars now regard it as a forgery, but it has also been theorised that one of the other canonical letters written to an individual like Philemon, or more broadly like Hebrews was actually written to Laodicea but this has less support owing to the nature of those writings. Even less likely is Tertullian's suggestion that Marcionite heretics changed the title of the letter and the Laodicean letter is the modern book of Ephesians.

The Church, nevertheless, did remain steadfast in the area and there was a Council in Laodicea, around 363-64AD. The Council of Chalcedon in 451 approved the canon of this council. The city remains a titular see of the Roman Catholic Church. Several of the Disciples and Apostles spent time in the church evidenced through writings like some manuscripts of 1 Timothy ending with the words: "Written at Laodicea, metropolis of Phrygia Pacatiana".

Authority Reference:

Coming at the end of the list of Churches, Jesus presents himself as "[the Amen](#)", the conclusion and certainty of all things. As we said in Chapter 1, the word 'amen' is the certainty of faith in the thing being prayed for.

Jesus also calls himself "[the Faithful and True Witness](#)" and his reproof of this Church indicates that he is the witness to the truth of what he condemns them for. He is clearly setting himself up as one who is able to be both certain and fixed in what this church wants to believe in.

But he also includes that he is "[the Beginning of the creation of God](#)". This does not mean God was created, but he, at the end of these messages, is reminding the group all that he is the one who initiated and performed creation. He is the one who set all things in motion and the one who established the system.

Commendation:

No commendation is recorded for this church. There is, evidently, little good about them.

Reproof:

The reproof here is strong. They are wastrels. Jesus describes them as "[wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked](#)". These are harsher words than used against Thyatira where everyone was committing fornication because they were at least deliberate with their choices. This church is described as "[lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot](#)". They cannot make decisions and, indeed, cannot accomplish anything. Jesus says their works are "[neither cold nor hot](#)". These arrogant people want for nothing, instead they "[say, 'I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing'](#) ", which disgusts the Jesus that gives them everything.

The desire for change here is so balanced that Jesus stipulates that he “[wish\(es\) \(they\) were cold or hot](#)” so he knew how to properly reproach them. This church had people on fire for him, spreading the word and openly preaching mixed with other codfish, content to wait for Jesus to return and just exist. Both these are negatives and positives; the cold, unmoving stubborn portion of the church are also the heart of the group; unyielding and unshakable while those on fire are also discussing and debating; absorbing new doctrines and risking spreading false teachings to their congregation. Jesus cannot chide them for either because of the balance of the Church, and instead says he wants to “[vomit you out of My mouth](#)”... the mouth that houses that two-edged sword. He wishes to make it clear that both sides are right and both sides wrong.

Warning:

The warning from Jesus is that the Gold they can buy on the open market is dangerous and not worth anything – rather they should buy their wisdom from him. They should be careful that they are able to do his work while they are able to and that they are able to hide their shame with his blessings.

Jesus includes a rather parental and fatherly comment; “[As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten](#).” Jesus is not trying to be hard on this church, he is saying that he wants them to get better no matter what their faults are – as he has wanted for all of the churches. He is acting like a father or mentor who wants the group to become a better group; and like a Goldsmith who knows where his materiel comes from or a parent knows what is best for their Children, Jesus simply wants to strengthen and encourage this group that has gone through so much already.



Blessing:

Arguably the most powerful scriptural promise is included in the blessing of this Church – and one very different to the others. “Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.” This promise expands on the ever-present one about Salvation and the Second Coming, but stipulates that, at this time, there is a necessary choice made by the Church and the Churchman. Indeed, this is to be expected if the Church is so lukewarm. One must choose if they are going to be on fire for Jesus or pathetic and cold; so that he knows what to discuss and debate with them over dinner. While Jesus is the one that gives Salvation, a clear choice must be made – much clearer now than at any previous time.

It is an interesting note that, although the text does not require it, when depicted this scene generally has Jesus standing at a door with no external door handle. The most famous of these, by William Hunt and hanging in St Pauls Cathedral, London, also has weeds growing in front of the door, indicating that it has been closed for a long time but is still able to be opened – if the choice is made.

Time Period: 1844 – Close of Probation/2nd Coming (Future):

The time period for this church is much more complicated as there is little clear-cut about when it begins. Its end date is easy to pin down; it ends whenever salvation is no longer extended to humanity, either by the conclusion of the need for it through the Second Coming or by the conclusion for the opportunity for it at the Close of Probation just prior to the Second Coming. As will be discussed shortly, either works and which is, frankly, irrelevant.

That this churches experience reflects both the modern world as a whole and the experience of the modern world church is undeniable. Since WW1, God has become less and less important to people. Where he once was the centre of life for the individual, God has now become a weekend companion to most people; someone we only think about when life goes wrong. The abundance and complexity of life have replaced the yearning and complexity for Salvation, and even the smartest amongst us have come to fixed positions on how God and his plans work and find them often difficult to remain excited about.

The Churches, for the most part, around the world fall into either of these two categories too. The Salvation Army and Samaritans, for example, does incredible charitable work but rarely proselytises, while the Assemblies of God and Baptists do nothing but spread God's word but rarely debate in depth, leaving most things to the phrase 'God moves in mysterious ways'. The Church of England is constantly debating internally how close to Rome it wants to be, while Lutherans and Methodists have moved little from their origins.

While the Adventist Church holds itself as the only church that has remained true to Word of God and the Jewish Law, it is certainly not immune to this Laodicean attitude. Our ministers that were once fierce evangelists are now businessmen and politicians; our church members have become sabbath-to-sabbath Christians and attendance at church is a mark of status rather than faith. Those of us who study the gospels are at greatest risk of being proven 'human', and any small fault is hammered by any and all that can make a political point about it.

Central to all of this – both inside and outside the Adventist Faith – is the idea of humanism.

"Humanism is a progressive philosophy of life that, without theism or other supernatural beliefs, affirms our ability and responsibility to lead ethical lives of personal fulfillment that aspire to the greater good. It is not theistic, and it does not accept supernatural views of reality."

- <https://americanhumanist.org/what-is-humanism/definition-of-humanism/>

At its core, Humanism replaces reliance on God with reliance on the self – the idea that a man is able to achieve or accomplish all the things ourselves without the need for a supernatural authority. To be clear, Humanism preaches no salvation as no salvation is needed in its view; there is no God and therefore no Satan.

This idea of humanistic self-reliance is key to understanding the Church of Laodicea as it is the infection that drives those either toward or against God. Those who put spreading God's word at their highest become overly zealous for him and forget – or disregard – the wisdom of those that came before them; the learned wisdom of the ages. Like John Tetzl mentioned above, they forget what they are trying to sell and simply sell whatever they can; inventing law and scriptural interpretation to suit their purpose.

On the other hand, because of the wild increase in knowledge, those who put studying God's word at their highest quickly realise how easy and efficient it is to cut oneself off from the rest of the world and ignore its promises. By placing their expectation in the shortly-arriving Jesus, they become monks, forgetting that not all things in this world are evil.

Again, the Laodicean imbalance between these proselytizing fanatics and monkish scholars causes divisions within Churches, that compound and multiply problems. Jesus can do nothing with either group, which is why it is so difficult to go into a world that, similarly, thinks it wants for nothing. A mixture of political correctness and a lack of recognition for the need for God due to an abundance of wealth makes reaching out to this world beyond difficult, and it's very easy for churches to put evangelism in the 'too hard' basket.

Transition between Philadelphia and Laodicea

What makes this church so difficult to analyse is there is no clear starting point owing to the 'deadly wound' inflicted in 1798 leading into the rise of the Protestant liberation from Rome.

The Churches we have studied all focussed on the primary Christian movement of the time;

- Ephesus (33 – 100AD) represented the early Church 'innocent' enough to be trusting but prudent enough to not trust everyone.
- Smyrna (100 – Edict of Milan in 313AD) the church that evolved from the innocence of the early church into a group large enough to be a threat to society in general.
- Pergamon (313 – Papal Independence in 538AD) the Church that betrayed its message. This is the church that adopted and established most of the theological positions that would be held by the Church for the remainder of time.
- Thyatira (538 – The Council of Trent 1536) the universal Church that plodded along with slow evolution, obsessed with timely politics.
- Sardis (1536 – The destruction of the Papal Influence 1798) the downfall and near-destruction of Papal influence across the world and the rise of the protestant movement.

During the first 2 churches, the majority of Jewish law was maintained and matters like Sabbath were not in question. During the 3rd Church – Pergamon – however, the entire value structure of the Church changed although there were breakaway groups that kept faith in the Jewish traditions and laws. The most famous of these; and the most discussed in Adventist circles, are the Waldensies, a collection of movements that were formalised together by Peter Waldo around 1173. Their claims to have existed for hundreds of years before this are difficult to verify as the Roman church destroyed all their documents after the crusades of 1215. The temptation to join the broader Protestant Reformation was irresistible and, with the Resolutions of Chanforan on 12 September 1532, they formally became a part of the Calvinist tradition sacrificing their Sabbath Truth along with their sovereignty.

They were not the only Sabbatarian movement, however, and collections like Truth Triumphant by B. G. Wilkinson go into great detail about just how many and how widespread the Sabbath Truth truly was. Much more recent research has similarly been done on Sabbath-movements around the world, especially in India.

The near extermination of the Waldenses, the highly scattered nature of other movements and the absolute dominance of the Roman Church makes defining these 5 Churches the Roman Christian Church undeniable. The problem arises when Rome falls.

The rise of the Protestant Reformation certainly brought the church back toward its Jewish roots although few movements went as far as the Seventh-Day Methodists that evolved into the Seventh-Day Adventists. This means establishing a clear answer as to which movement is the church of Philadelphia is almost impossible considering the multitude and complexity of movements during that time. That, further, makes determining Laodicea similarly impossible, and therefore moving between them is also impossible.

To decide where this church starts, therefore, we need to move back to the Daniel roots that we have already seen John draw upon. The date, 1844, has been previously established and is the best date that sits between these two as a marker. Interestingly, this matches how we interpreted Daniel chapter 8.

“9 And out of one of them came a little horn which grew exceedingly great toward the south, toward the east, and toward the Glorious Land.

10 And it grew up to the host of heaven; and it cast down some of the host and some of the stars to the ground, and trampled them.

11 He even exalted himself as high as the Prince of the host; and by him the daily sacrifices were taken away, and the place of His sanctuary was cast down.

12 Because of transgression, an army was given over to the horn to oppose the daily sacrifices; and he cast truth down to the ground. He did all this and prospered.

13 Then I heard a holy one speaking; and another holy one said to that certain one who was speaking, “How long will the vision be, concerning the daily sacrifices and the transgression of desolation, the giving of both the sanctuary and the host to be trampled underfoot?”

14 And he said to me, “For two thousand three hundred days; then the sanctuary shall be cleansed.” ”

We previously established that these references are multi-layered, and that the language here in Daniel 8 refers to the false teachings and practises that invaded first the Jewish Nation and then the Christian Church, and that these teachings would prosper until 1844. What we can now start to add to this is the statement we have not yet investigated in verse 13. The 2300 days is how long a few different things are to be dominated by the Roman Church and we can analyse how they were liberated during the Protestant Reformation.

	Rome	Protestants
oppose the daily sacrifices	Priestly and Saintly intercession preventing the individual from approaching the Cross or Throne	Returned Jesus to the only necessary intercessor
cast truth down to the ground	Overruled practically all Jewish law and custom, demonising it and actively persecuting Jews through the Inquisition	Re-examination of Jewish Law to explore its validity and the place of Jewish history in the culture of Christianity - with mixed results.
place of His sanctuary was cast down	The Veneration of Mary	Although Saints are generally seen as worthy of respect, Mary is practically unseen outside the Roman Church
and the host	Absolute domination of life across the civilised world and extermination to all opponents	Free thought and steadily reducing fear of persecution

The last of these Jewish laws that were destroyed by Rome to be revived – and the one that has seemed to always be the one most ignored despite its place in the 10 commandments – is the Sabbath Truth. This became an important discussion amongst those who remained

faithful following William Miller's movement leading to the Great Disappointment. The evolution from that experience resulted in the Saturday-Sabbath being debated as an issue to complete the revival of Jewish Law.

The Sabbath is, or can be seen to be, the final piece in the cleansing of the earthly sanctuary. Although it was an article of faith for many before, its place in the 10 commandments should have given it much more weight. The movement from Philadelphia to Laodicea aligns itself with the idea of the Church being Holy when Christ returns which we will see play out in the book of Revelation. The restoration of God's Moral Law is the distinguishing aspect of those who are living at the time of Christ's return.

Sabbath and Laodicea

Interestingly, this also matches the experience of the broad protestant movement during the last 2 centuries. All historians will stipulate that the Jewish Sabbath was on Saturday and most protestant theologians will agree that the Sunday Sabbath was an invention of the Church but the number of movements that are willing to actually move their worship from Sunday back to Saturday are miniscule. The Laodicean Church is described as "[lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot](#)" and on a broader scale, this is clearly one of the issues the Protestant movement generally has not reconciled. Their theologians know that Saturday is the Sabbath yet there is no congregational will to change that and the theologians have no incentive – or have not recognised the importance – of making such a change.

The Sabbath Truth – so fiercely held by generations before Rome and that is today the last distinguishing separation between Protestant churches that recognise the importance of Jewish Law – is also the issue that made Jesus want to vomit. The churches that have this truth and do not make the change are knowingly acting against God's law.

Close of Probation/2nd Coming

The question of the end of this Church's time period has 2 answers, depending on your flavour. Either this church ends when Christ returns or when Probation ceases. Any debate between the two is pointless. The arguments go like this:

- The church ends when Jesus returns because there is no longer any faithful on Earth. Jesus takes those who are promised Salvation with him and those who remain are Satan's lot. After this, there are no longer any people for a Church on earth.
- Alternatively, when the probationary period to make a Choice for or against Jesus ends, the Church's mission; proselytising and spreading His word, ceases as it has been concluded.

Both of these have the same result; the Church's mission ends when Jesus ends it, so both are valid and its really pointless to debate between them.

Conclusion of the Churches.

By way of concluding the Churches, we can try to fix some misconceptions that are common amongst both Adventists and protestants alike. The Churches describe the overall experience of Christians throughout time and no one group can be said to be "the church of

x" at any particular time; rather the church can be seen to exemplify the qualities as described.

The reason this is important is the rather strange and sharp transition often seen between the Roman Churches to the Adventist Church to claim our movement as the true church because it exemplifies the Laodicean qualities. In Adventist circles, this is a common connection, but it also undermines the earlier interpretation of the Churches.

An article of faith amongst Adventists is that groups like the Waldenses held true to the Faith as best they could and that the Sabbath Truth was the major, distinguishing mark that separated them from the false Churches. If this or similar was the quality that distinguished the Church of God from the false church, one needs to find amongst those groups the Jezebel fornications and open doors that completely fall down when reality is applied. The nature of the Pergamos Jezebel heresy completely undermines any connection that could be drawn to the Waldensies or any other group because they did not fall. On the other hand, to say that the Papal forces that preached the Crusades was doing God's work is a similar insanity.

The Churches, therefore, are a demonstration of the extremely broad nature of Jesus' forgiving nature and how widely Salvation is extended. The Catholics who purchased indulgences knowing no better and then prayed to Mary for intercession during the 16th Century were not more lost or saved than those Adventists who spend Sabbath singing God's praises. Salvation is extended broadly to all who wish to follow Jesus and the commentaries for these Churches goes into that heavily. Jesus reminded us in the previous Chapter that ["I am He who searches the minds and hearts. And I will give to each one of you according to your works."](#) The writing of these letters to these Churches extends to all who are desirous to follow Jesus word to give them an opportunity to follow what Jesus guided them to specifically. Unfortunately, the Bible was unreachable for several centuries due to the ignorance of partitioners not being able to read and the restrictions of the Roman Church. Nevertheless, Jesus stipulates that he knows the hearts and minds of all those who claim to be his people; and he has final say. The membership of one group during these churches is meaningless; the heart and mind of the individual is the requirement to be a part of the new covenant.