

II. The Things Present - Church Age

(Contd.)

5. Sardis - The Church of Reformation. A.D.1520 to 1750.

This period is the prophetic view of the condition of Christendom during the Reformation and post- Reformation periods. The word Sardis means "Those escaping" and it stands for the believing remnant in Thyatira who did not become defiled with the depths of satan and who escaped the abominations of the idolatrous, semi- pagan worldly church. The reformation was the first step in returning to the pure undefiled religion of the first century Apostolic Church.

Martin Luther began the fight alone in Germany, but his protest triggered off a cyclonic revolution all across Europe. By the time of Luther there was corruption in every sphere of the Church. It is said that Luther was taken aback by what he saw in Vatican at his visit. The corruption was so much that everyone felt the need of a correction in Doctrine and Practice. But few had the guts to defy the Church practices and papacy. Thanks to Martin Luther and many other reformers who boldly took the stand against the wrong practices that prevailed in the Church. In 1555 Luther nailed the 95 theses on the door of Wittenberg Cathedral in protest to the sale of indulgences. Luther's stand was of God and was perhaps the greatest work of the Holy Spirit since the days of the Apostles. Luther and his followers who protested against the Roman Church came to be known as Protestants.

In the message to this Church, Christ holds many things against it. "I know your deeds; you have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead,for I have not found your deeds complete in the sight of my God.Repent" (Rev. 3:1-3)

6. Philadelphia :- The Church in Revival. A.D.1750-1900

Philadelphia was the youngest of all the seven cities. The word

Philadelphos in Greek means "One who loves his brother." Philadelphia in English means "Brotherly love".

During the Philadelphia period , the Church began its return to the Apostolic purity and power. Much of that which was lost was restored. The Wesley brothers preached in England and the mighty power of God brought great conviction of sin and repentance on the people. The fire of revival continued under the ministries of Charles Finney, D.L.Moody and others. William Booth lit the fire of the Gospel in the darkest regions of London. The Church moved back to Pentecost.

18th and 19th centuries were periods of Evangelistic explosion. William Carey , known as the father of the modern missionary movement, sailed to India and landed in Calcutta in 1793. Later Alexander Duff from Scotland reached India and propagated through educational means. Moffat and David Livingstone were missionaries in the dark corner of Africa. Robert Morrison, Hudson Taylor, David Hill and many others sailed to Mainland China and the far east. Adoniram Judson went to Burma. David Brainerd went to Latin America.

The period of Philadelphia had what is called The Latter rain- in the form of The Pentecostal Revival. During the turn of the 20th century outpouring of the Holy Spirit occurred all over the world, which still continues with extra-ordinary manifestations in healing the sick, miracles, in salvation of thousands of souls and baptism of the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in tongues "as at the beginning". The phenomenon has been spreading all over the world ever since.

In this message to Philadelphia, a warning from the risen Christ is given to the Church, " I am coming soon, hold on to what you have so that no one will take your crown" (Rev.3:11) God may take its crown and give it to another, because the Church was not worthy to wear it. Watch out, some one else may be doing better in his Christian life, when you lag behind! He may snatch your crown. Reward for the overcomer : "Him who overcomes, I will make a pillar in the temple of my God... I will write on him the name of my God and the name of the city...the New Jerusalem....and I will also write on him my new name".(Rev.3:12-13).

7. Laodicea : The rejected Church. A.D. 1900 to Rapture.

The city of Laodicea was founded by Antiochus of Syria and was named after his wife Laodicea.

This is the only Church of which Christ has nothing good to say. Of all the seven Churches it is the most condemned . Christ did not spare it, because they are neither cold nor hot, but lukewarm. The message to this Church shows the Christendom of today. It is the fallen self satisfied church of the last days. It has rejected the power of the cross, and is satisfied with the appearance of godliness. The Church of the last day has a cross but no message of the cross. Notice the voice of the Lord from outside the Church "Here I am! I stand at the door and knock" (3:20). What a pitiful scene. Notice the position of Christ, at the closing period of the age of grace! Once He was in their midst, now He is outside. The Lord rebukes the Laodicean Church for her fancied state of richness whereas in actuality she is worse than poor. " You say, I am rich, I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing. But you do not realise that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked. I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; white cloths to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness and salve to put on your eyes so you can see"(Rev.3:17-18)

To the overcomer Christ has promised the right to sit with Him on His throne.(3;21). What a glorious offer !

Exercise

1. Name the agent of the greatest work of the Holy spirit ? Give an account of His achievements.
2. Describe the features and messages of the Church of Philadelphia ?
3. Bring out the features of the Church found by Antiochus of Syria ?
What has Christ to say about it ?
4. When and what is called the Later Rain in form of the Pentecostal Revival ?

M.V.: Rev. 2:4-5