

SPECIAL INTERLUDE

Revisiting Church History In Light Of The 500th Anniversary Of The Protestant Reformation V. Sardis: The Dead Post-Reformation Church - Vigilantly Applying The Reformers' Stands (Revelation 3:1-6)

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

Last Sunday in our fellowship hall, one of our members asked me about a recent report by Hal Lindsey, a Dallas Seminary grad and author of bestseller, The Late Great Planet Earth. On October 27, 2017, Mr. Lindsey had cited a 1999 Augsburg pact by Lutherans and Catholics who agreed: "By grace alone, in faith in Christ's saving work and not because of any merit on our part, we are accepted by God . . ." (The Hal Lindsey Report, 10/27/2017; hoaxandchange.com) and Mr. Lindsey had commented that "all true Christians can agree on this" statement, Ibid.

Significantly, the Catholic official most responsible for the signing of the agreement was Cardinal Ratzinger who later would become Pope Benedict XVI, and Mr. Lindsey noted this fact, implying he agreed with him! (Ibid.)

Need: *So, we ask, "Should we view TODAY'S Catholic leaders and/or Church as holding the TRUE gospel?!"*

- I. **Revelation 3:1-6 addresses the Sardis Church of the 17th and 18th century Post-Reformation Church, and Rev. 3:1a shows its need VIGILANTLY to COMPLETE the STANDS the Reformers BEGAN to take:**
 - A. Christ presented Himself as (1) having the seven "spirits," i. e., the Rev. 4:5 seven "lamps" and the Rev. 5:6-7 "seven eyes sent into all the earth," namely, the Zechariah 4:1-10 Holy Spirit Who enabled Zerubbabel and Joshua to finish rebuilding the destroyed temple after their work was halted by godless foes, Ezra 4:23-5:2. (2) Jesus also had the "seven stars," God's messengers to all the churches in Church History, Rev. 1:16a, 20b.
 - B. To clarify, the Reformers held to "*Five Solas*" -- *Scripture alone* as final authority, *faith alone* to be justified, *grace alone* for salvation, *Christ alone* as Mediator and *glory to God alone* and not Satan versus Semiramis's cult that affected their hierarchy, but the Reformers did not fully apply them, *hurting later Protestants*:
 1. Luther and Calvin taught that infant baptism saves (H. Bettenson, ed., Docs. of the Chr. Ch., 1966, p. 279; Insts. of the Chr. Rel., tr. H. Beveridge, 1972, v. II, p. 531), so Amer. colonists made a Half Way Covenant to let infants of the lost be baptized and join the church, A. S. Wood, The Inexting. Blaze, 1968, p. 55-56.
 2. Luther taught *consubstantiation*, Christ's presence "under" the communion elements (Ibid., Bettenson, p. 291) and Calvin taught *receptionism*, "Christ pours" (Ibid., p. 300) His "eternal life" into believers as they partake (Ibid., Beveridge, p. 571), so when Jonathan Edwards refused to serve communion to the lost in church, the congregation slandered and fired him, Wm. Sweet, The St. of Rel. in Am., 1973, p. 129, 135f.
 - C. Thus, "large numbers" ended up having "merely formal" relations with the Church (Ibid., p. 127), and "all vitality was taken from the Christian faith" (Ibid., Wood, p. 24), requiring God to send it Spirit-led preachers.
- II. **Christ critiqued this Church as having a reputation of being alive when it was in fact "dead," Rev. 3:1b.**
- III. **Jesus called it to "wake up" and strengthen what was about to die, for He had not found its works to be complete from what the Reformers had begun (Rev. 3:2-3a), and some men wonderfully heeded this call:**
 - A. The phrase "before My God" alludes to Matthew 10:5-33 where Christ promised to confess to His heavenly Father the names of those who fearlessly in faith (v. 28) preached in reliance on the Holy Spirit's power (v. 19-20) to evangelize the lost in Israel (v. 5-6), applied in Rev. 3:2 to the lost in the Post-Reformation churches.
 - B. This completion of work would occur in recalling the Reformers' "*Five Solas*" and applying them in God's power (Rev. 3:3a), what occurred when John Wesley was saved in reading *Luther's* preface to Romans, his brother Charles was saved in reading *Luther's* commentary on Galatians and both Wesley brothers then led George Whitfield to Christ in their "Holy Club" student ministry at Oxford University, Ibid., p. 81, 84, 111!
- IV. **Jesus warned that if the Church did not wake up, He would come as a thief when it did not expect it, threatening to take away its members, Rev. 3:3b. This prediction was fulfilled as many dead Protestant churches were depleted when their members left for the open fields to hear the Wesleys and Whitfield preach there, and many were saved in England and America, Ibid., Wood, p. 78-92; Ibid., Sweet, p. 172.**
- V. **Christ promised great rewards for overcomers, Revelation 3:4-6, and we explain (as follows):**
 - A. Since a few in Sardis had not "soiled their clothes" (Rev. 3:4a NIV), what Jude 24 with Rev. 19:8 reveals they had not polluted their ministries with sin as they relied on Christ, He would let them "walk with Me in white," influence future generations of believers as Christ walked from one candlestick to the next, from one era to the next, Rev. 3:4-5a; 1:1-13a. Preaching by the Wesleys, Whitfield and Edwards sparked the Great Awakening (Ibid., Wood, p. 53-61), and these men are still used as examples to men being trained for the ministry today!

- B. Christ in Rev. 3:5b also promised not to "wipe out" (*exaleipho* [in Greek], Arndt & Gingrich, A Heb.-Eng. Lex. of the N. T., 1967, p. 272) the overcomer's name from the "book of life," the verb "wipe out" recalling Moses' request that God would "wipe out" (Ex. 32:32 *mahah* [in Hebrew], B. D. B., A Heb. and Eng. Lex. of the O. T., p. 562) him, Moses, from God's register of **physically** living people (Ryrie St. Bib., KJV, 1978, fn. to Ex. 32:32). God refused to "wipe out" Moses since he had stood opposed to the golden calf idolatry of the people (Ex. 32:1-33). Since one's "**name**" in Rev. 3:5b replaces the *person* referenced in Ex. 32:32, Jesus in Rev. 3:5b promised to preserve the **name**, i. e., the *reputation* of him who opposed the "fornication" idolatry of the Lord's Table (as we learned in the "gold calf" worship by Ahab [in Thyatira] typified the "fornication" idolatry error of the Lord's Table). Christ fulfilled this promise for Jonathan Edwards: though slandered and fired from his pulpit for his stand against *consubstantiation* and *receptionism* [I, B, 2 above], God caused his writings to impact future generations (cf. *Ibid.*, Sweet, p. 172-173), including our generation even today.
- C. Jesus added He would confess the overcomer's name to His Father and the angels, Rev. 3:5c, pointing to Matt. 10:32 and Luke 12:8 where His confessions before these parties offset the shame His messengers faced in confessing Him before men. Applied esp. to Edwards, (1) God made him a **real** "father" of our *nation*: he was the key influence of the Great Awakening in America that unified the sectarian colonies to unite to form the **United States** (*Ibid.*; *Ibid.*, Wood, p. 66) (2) Since he *completed* the Reformation era stand against the "idolatry" and works-salvation of the Lord's Table, God used him to go **beyond opening America up** for religious liberty as with the Reformers to **COMPLETE** the reward of *preserving* liberty in *forming* the **United States** [with its *Bill of Rights*.] (3) Edwards' book on David Brainerd, missionary to the Indians, led many, including Wm. Carey, to be missionaries, so the Great Awakening so impacted by Edwards led to world missions, *Ibid.*, p. 238ff; *Ibid.*, Sweet, p. 172-173; J. Edwin Orr, The Light of the Nations, 1965, p.28.

Lesson: Christ called the spiritually dead Post-Reformation Church to rely on His Holy Spirit to complete the "Five Solas" application against Babylonian Semiramis satanic paganism, which work had been begun by the Reformers, and He promised to reward them greatly for doing so.

Application: (1) May we trust alone in Christ alone to be saved, Ephesians 2:8-9; 1 Timothy 2:5. (2) May we then rely on the Holy Spirit to APPLY FULLY the Biblical "Five Solas" of the Reformers to escape God's discipline for being spiritually negligent to counter the (ecumenical) Semiramis satanic cult in our era and gain His reward!

Conclusion: (To illustrate the message . . .)

We need to apply the lesson of this message to be *vigilant* on the subject mentioned in our introduction.

(1) We noted Hal Lindsey claims "all true Christians can agree on" the Lutheran-Catholic pact's statement: "By grace alone, in faith in Christ's saving work and not because of any merit on our part, we are accepted by God."

However, The Roman Catholic Church's *view* of the phrases "by grace alone" and "not because of any merit on our part" in the pact's statement *lets it keep its faith-plus-works gospel*: (a) The Catholic Encyclopedia, 1986, that carries the sanctioning Imprimatur of Archbishop Weakland of Milwaukee, p. 534, s. v. "Sacraments, Seven," claims "the sacraments produce grace," the sacraments of baptism, the Mass, penance, matrimony, last rites, confirmation and holy orders of the Roman Catholic Church. Also, the same work at page 384, s. v. "Merit," claims "our merits are 'the gift of God' as they proceed from His grace." (b) Thus, this Church teaches that doing the works of its sacraments produces grace from God which grace in turn provides merits from Him. As a result, the Roman Catholic Church can claim one is **not** saved by **his** merits, but by **God's** merits, and **solely** by **God's** grace, **yet at the same time hold that such grace and merits come from God as the result of one's works of the sacraments!** So, in agreeing to the 1999 Augsburg pact, the Roman Catholic Church did not have to budge from its initial faith-plus-works gospel!

(c) Besides, the **absence** of the word "*alone*" after the word "*faith*" in the pact's statement makes it deficient. Martin Luther's most famous "*Sola*" was **justification by faith alone**, and until the Roman Catholic Church confesses salvation is "**by faith alone**," meaning it is **WITHOUT WORKS**, it will fall short of the true gospel! (Ephesians 2:8-9)

(2) In heeding Christ's call to complete what the Reformers began, we will also keep stating in our communion services that salvation is not by ingesting the elements as in Catholicism's *transubstantiation* or in Luther's *consubstantiation* or that eternal life for believers is gained by ingesting the elements as in Calvin's *receptionism*, but that salvation is fully and forever received by faith alone in Christ alone when one initially believes the gospel!

May we trust alone in Christ alone to be saved, and VIGILANTLY COMPLETE the Reformers' work by APPLYING FULLY the "Five Solas" of the Reformers. We will thus serve God in overcoming the Semiramis satanic cult of the currently developing and future Revelation 17-18 "Babylon the Great" world church.