

**Outline of
the Messages for the Full-time Training
in the Fall Term of 2016**

**GENERAL SUBJECT:
THE FAILURES IN THE CHURCHES,
THE DEGRADATION OF THE CHURCH, THE OVERCOMERS IN THE CHURCH,
THE RECOVERY OF THE CHURCH, AND THE STAGES OF THE CHURCH**

Message Fourteen

**The Stages of the Church
(3)**

The Church in Thyatira and the Church in Sardis

Scripture Reading: Rev. 2:18—3:6

- I. As a sign, the church in Thyatira prefigures the Roman Catholic Church, which was fully formed as the apostate church by the establishment of the universal papal system in the latter part of the sixth century—Rev. 2:18:**
- A. Jezebel, the pagan wife of Ahab, is a type of the apostate church; the Roman Catholic Church became the same as this woman, bringing many heathen practices into the church—1 Kings 16:31; 19:1-2; 21:23, 25-26; 2 Kings 9:7.
 - B. The three women in Matthew 13, Revelation 2, and Revelation 17 are the same person:
 - 1. In Matthew 13:33 a woman takes leaven (signifying evil, heretical, and pagan things) and hides it in three measures of meal (signifying Christ as the meal offering for the satisfaction of God and man).
 - 2. This woman is the great harlot of Revelation 17, who mixes abominations with the divine things; in 2:20-23 the same woman is called Jezebel.
 - 3. These three women all refer to the Roman Catholic Church, which adds leaven to the fine flour, which is the harlot riding on the beast, and which is Jezebel corrupting Christianity.
 - C. In Revelation 2:20 the Lord indicates the apostate church is a self-appointed prophetess and teaches and leads the Lord's slaves astray:
 - 1. The apostate church presumes to be authorized to speak for God; she demands that people listen to her rather than to God—1 Tim. 2:12.
 - 2. The Roman Catholic Church is a teaching woman, causing her people to listen to her rather than to the holy Word of God, and her adherents are drugged by her heretical, religious teaching.
 - D. According to Revelation 2:24, the apostate church teaches "the deep things of Satan":
 - 1. Christ indwells the church, but Satan indwells the apostate church in a subtle way through the teaching of the deep things of Satan.
 - 2. The apostate church teaches mysteries but not the mysteries revealed in the New Testament concerning God's economy—Col. 2:2; Eph. 3:3-5, 9; 5:32.
 - 3. In contrast to the deep things of Satan, the things which God has prepared for those who love Him are Christ as the depths of God, the deep things of God—1 Cor. 2:9-10:
 - a. To realize and participate in the deep and hidden things God has ordained and prepared for us requires us to love Him; to love God means to set our entire being—spirit, soul, and body, with the heart, soul, mind, and strength (Mark 12:30)—

absolutely on Him, that is, to let our entire being be occupied by Him and lost in Him, so that He becomes everything to us and we are one with Him practically in our daily life.

- b. In this way we have the closest and most intimate fellowship with God, and we are able to enter into His heart and apprehend all its secrets (Psa. 73:25; 25:14) and fully participate in these deep and hidden things of God.
- E. The Lord's promises to the overcomers in Thyatira are that they will reign with Christ over the nations and that He will give them the morning star—Rev. 2:26-28; 22:16; Matt. 25:21; Luke 19:17:
1. "A Star out of Jacob" (Num. 24:17) and the star appearing at the Lord's birth (Matt. 2:7, 9-10) consummate in the morning star in Revelation 2:28; the morning star appears in the darkest hour, after midnight and prior to dawn.
 2. In the principle of the morning star, a Christian should rise up early because the early morning is the best time to meet the Lord (to fellowship with God, to praise and sing, to pray-read the Bible with the ministry, and to pray to the Lord)—S. S. 7:12; Psa. 5:1-3; 57:8-9; 59:16-17; 63:1-8; 90:14; 92:1-2; 108:2-3; 143:8; Exo. 16:21.
 3. He will secretly give Himself as the morning star to those who love Him and who watch and wait for Him so that they may taste the freshness of His presence at His coming back after a long absence.
 4. We need to have the living vision and the living guidance from Him as the heavenly star—Matt. 2:1-12; Num. 24:17; cf. Micah 5:2:
 - a. Even if we have the knowledge of the Scriptures, we still need the instant, up-to-date, living star with the living guidance to lead us to the very place where Jesus is—John 5:39-40.
 - b. If we want such indispensable, living guidance, we must have an intimate relationship with the Lord; we must be one with Him—2 Cor. 2:10-14.
 - c. After they worshipped Jesus in the house, the magi were divinely instructed in a dream not to return to Herod, so they departed "by another way" to their country; after we have seen the living Christ, we will never take the same way but always take another way—Matt. 2:12.
 - d. The Scriptures are God's holy writings, but we still need God's holy presence; we need to be in the presence of God all the time; the New Testament way to find and follow the Lord is to continually keep and stay in His hidden presence—2 Cor. 2:10; 1 John 2:27; cf. Isa. 45:15; Exo. 33:11, 14.
 5. Christ's faithful followers and messengers become living and shining stars (Rev. 1:20; Dan. 12:3; cf. Jude 13) by the shining prophetic word of the Scriptures (2 Pet. 1:19) and by the sevenfold intensified Spirit (Rev. 3:1; 4:5; 5:6).
 6. According to 2 Peter 1:19, if we take heed to the word of prophecy, the day will dawn within us, and the morning star will rise in our hearts:
 - a. To take heed to the prophetic word is to pay attention to the living Word and enter into the Word until the morning star rises within us and something from the heavens shines over us.
 - b. We need to come to the sure Word and open up our whole being to the Word until Christ as the morning star rises up in us and shines over us.

II. As a sign, the church in Sardis prefigures the Protestant church, from the time of the Reformation to the second coming of Christ—Rev. 3:1:

- A. "I know your works, that you have a name that you are living, and yet you are dead" (v. 1); we surely do not want to be in the condition of the church in Sardis; we want to be

- living and active in gospel preaching, in nourishing the new ones, in perfecting the saints through small group meetings, and in prophesying to build up the Body of Christ—John 15:16; Matt. 24:45; Eph. 4:12; 1 Cor. 12:31—13:1; 8:1; 14:1, 3-5, 12, 31.
- B. “If therefore you will not watch, I will come as a thief, and you shall by no means know at what hour I will come upon you” (Rev. 3:3); this verse indicates that Christ will come as a thief to steal away His treasures, His precious seekers (Dan. 9:23; 10:11, 19):
1. Only those who are mature in life and transformed in their soul will be precious enough for the Lord to steal—Rev. 3:3; Heb. 6:1a.
 2. We must be thoroughly prepared for the Lord’s secret coming; therefore, we must be ready and watchful—Luke 21:36; Matt. 24:42-44.
- C. Christ is the white garments to clothe the overcomers—Rev. 3:4-5:
1. Psalm 45 shows that every Christian needs two garments.
 2. This psalm presents a complete view, a full picture, of Christ’s beauty, which is in Christ Himself (vv. 1-8), as unveiled in the four Gospels; in the church, His overcoming queen-wife (vv. 9-15), as revealed in the Epistles; and in all His sons, the overcomers as the princes (vv. 16-17), as seen in Revelation.
 3. The king desires the queen’s beauty; the queen’s beauty signifies the virtues of Christ expressed through the church—Psa. 45:10-11; S. S. 4:7, 9-10:
 - a. The beauty of the bride comes from the Christ who is wrought into the church and who is then expressed through the church—Eph. 1:19-23; 3:16-21; 5:25-27.
 - b. Our only beauty is the shining out of Christ from within us; what Christ appreciates in us is the expression of Himself—Phil. 1:20; 2:15-16; cf. Exo. 28:2.
 4. In Psalm 45 the queen has two garments:
 - a. The first garment is the gold of Ophir, the woven work inwrought with gold—vv. 9b, 13b:
 - (1) This garment corresponds to Christ as our objective righteousness, which is for our salvation—Luke 15:22; 1 Cor. 1:30; Isa. 61:10.
 - (2) The queen’s being covered with gold signifies the church’s appearing in the divine nature—Psa. 45:9b.
 - (3) The garment of woven work inwrought with gold signifies that the Christ who has been dealt with through death and resurrection is the righteousness of the church to meet the righteous requirement of God for her to be justified before God—Gal. 2:16; Rom. 3:26.
 - b. The second garment is the embroidered clothing:
 - (1) This garment corresponds to Christ lived out of us as our subjective righteousnesses, which are for our victory—Psa. 45:14a; Rev. 19:8; Rom. 13:11-14; cf. 1 Thes. 5:4-6.
 - (2) As our subjective righteousnesses, Christ is the One dwelling in us to live for us a life that is always acceptable to God—Phil. 3:9; Matt. 5:6, 20; Rom. 8:4; cf. Psa. 23:3.
 - (3) The garment of embroidered clothing signifies that the church will be led to Christ at their marriage clothed with the righteousnesses of the saints (fine linen, bright and clean) to meet the requirement of Christ for their marriage—Rev. 19:8; Eph. 5:27; cf. Gen. 2:22.
- D. The white garments in Revelation 3:5 refer to the second garment, which is needed for us to receive the reward, remain in the book of life, and enter into the kingdom to walk with the Lord, that is, to reign with Him—2 Tim. 2:11-12; Rom. 5:17, 21.
- E. We should overcome the dead situation in religion, conquer all kinds of death, and wear the white garments—Rev. 3:4-5a; Num. 6:6-8; cf. Lev. 5:2.