

The Catholic Church & Martin Luther



William Marrion Branham



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Introduction

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Revelation 3:1-6

"And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write; These things saith He That hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead.

Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die; for I have not found thy works perfect before God.

Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore, thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.

Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with Me in white; for they are worthy.

He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the Book of Life, but I will confess his name before My Father, and before His angels.

He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches."

Sardis

Sardis was the capital of ancient Lydia. It passed from the hands of Lydian monarchs to the Persians and thence to Alexander the Great. It was sacked by Antiochus the Great. The kings of Pergamos then succeeded to the dominion until the Romans took over. In the time of Tiberius it was desolated by earthquakes and plagues. Today it is a heap of

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ruins and uninhabited.

This city was at one time very important commercially. Pliny said that the art of dying wool was invented here. It was the center of wool-dying and carpet weaving. It had a goodly amount of silver and gold in the area and it is said that gold coins were first minted there. It also had a slave market.

The religion of this city was the impure worship of the goddess Cybele. The massive ruins of the temple may still be seen.

You will recall that in the Pergamean Age I mentioned that the Babylonish concept of "mother and son" known as Semiramis and Ninus became the Cybele and Deoius of Asia. The attributes attached to these two are most enlightening as we view them side by side.

He was the sun god; she the moon goddess.

He was the lord of heaven; she the queen of heaven.

He the revealer of goodness and truth; she of gentleness and mercy.

He the mediator; she the mediatrix.

He with the key that opens and shuts the gates of the invisible world; and she with an identical key doing likewise.

He as the judge of the dead; she as standing at his side.

He being killed, raised and ascended into heaven; she carried there bodily by the son.

Now in Rome this same god is given the title of our Lord: he is called the Son of God while she is called the mother of God.

Now that is what we found back there in the other two

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Abraham (he lied), He used a Moses (he rebelled), a Jonah (he disobeyed), a Samson (he sinned), a David (he murdered). He also used a Joshua, and a Joseph. And those with severe blemishes far outnumber those whose histories seem to be perfect. ALL WERE, AND ARE HIS. None dare deny that. He used them by and through the Holy Spirit that He put within them. To their own Master they stood or fell. And in them all was accomplished the sovereign will of God. Let external history attempt to refute this, it still stands. The Eternal God still walks amongst the golden lamp stands and sends His messengers by His Spirit with the Word to the people of every age.

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ages, where the 'mother and son' concept took on such tremendous proportions. But now notice that even as it was back in Babylon that the worship of the son began to lose out in favor of the worship of the mother, so, she literally began to take the place of the son. We see in this age that the pagan worship of Sardis was the worship of the woman. It is Cybele alone, not Cybele and Deoious. The mother has literally taken the place of the Son, endowed with the merits of Godhead. All one needs to do is go over her various titles and recall the lovely attributes accorded Mary by the Roman Church to understand where the religion of this age came from.

Two things really struck me with force as I looked into this worship of Cybele. One was the fact that she wore a key like Janus which gave her the same authority as Janus, (key to heaven and earth and the mysteries) and the fact that the worshipers whip themselves until blood spurts from their bodies, which thing is done right today by the Catholics who feel they are suffering like the Lord.

The fact that this is the age of the first real break with papal Rome that actually flourished, no doubt caused the Jezebel prophetess to consolidate and emphasize her doctrine of Maryolatry in decided opposition to the Protestants who denied her any part whatsoever in the plan of Salvation apart from her favor with God as the virgin chosen to bear the Babe. As Luther crystallized the doctrine of justification by faith they held to works, penance, prayers and other unscriptural means. And as the freed Christians glorified the Son, the Roman Catholics increased their deification of Mary until the twentieth century saw (in opposition to most high ranking Roman theologians) Pope Pius literally exalt Mary to glorification in a resurrected body. That doctrine is absolutely the Babylonish one of the son carrying the mother bodily into heaven.

No wonder this fifth age goes right along with the other

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ages and will do so until it ends in the lake of fire where the whore and her children are killed in the second death. There it is, Maryolatry, the worship of Cybele. By the way, did you know that Cybele was the Astarte that Jezebel was priestess to and caused Israel to stumble by the licentious rites that she conducted? Yes, that is who she was in the Bible.

Messenger Martin Luther

The Sardisean or fifth church age lasted from 1520 to 1750. It is usually called the Age of the Reformation.

The messenger to this age is the best known messenger of all the ages. He was Martin Luther. Martin Luther was a brilliant scholar of gentle disposition. He was studying to be a lawyer when the lingering illness and death of a near friend caused him to become serious concerning the spiritual condition of his life. He entered the Augustinian convent at Erfurt in 1505. There he studied philosophy and also the Word of God.

He lived the life of severest penance but all the outward acts could not banish his sense of sin. He said, "I tormented myself to death to make peace with God, but I was in darkness and found it not." The vicar-general of his order, Staupitz, helped him to gain the insight that his salvation would have to be the experience of an inner work rather than a ritual. With this encouragement, he further sought God. Later he became a priest. As yet he was not saved.

He became an avid and deep student of the Word and of the great theological works extant. He was sought out as a teacher and preacher for his depth of knowledge and great sincerity. To fulfill a vow he had made to himself he went to Rome. There he saw the futility of the church's imposed works that were to bring salvation, and the Word of God struck home to his heart, "The just shall live by faith."

On his return home the evangelical truth of this Scripture

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associated Himself with the whole church, which we saw when He was seen standing amongst the seven golden lamp-stands. Nor is it even enough that we see the five fold ministry of Ephesians 4 (apostles, prophets, teachers, evangelists, pastors). For in each age the church goes astray, and it is not just the laity but the clergy group—shepherds are wrong as well as sheep. Then God brings Himself on the scene as the Chief Shepherd in the ministries of these seven men to lead His people back to the truth and the abundant power of that truth.

God is in His people—all of His people, for if any man has not the Spirit of Christ he is none of His. And He is the Word. That would be the Word recognized in the people. But He has placed a special leadership in these men of His own choosing and through the determined counsel of His own will. They appear once in each age. It is the same Spirit in them. What a far cry is this from the heresy of Rome. They have a man of their own choosing—one after the other—none producing the power of God—none abiding in the Word of God—each one differing from the one before him and adding what he desires as though he were God. God is not in it. But He is in His messenger and he who would have the fullness of God would follow the messenger as the messenger is a follower of the Lord by His Word.

"He that hath the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars."

Revelation 3:1.

As this same Lord identified Himself with man in the incarnation, He is again identifying Himself with man by His Spirit within man. "These are mine," saith the Lord. The seven Spirit-filled messengers are the Lord's. They may be repudiated. They may be questioned. Indeed, to human minds they may not even seem to qualify—nevertheless, they are the messengers for their age. God used an

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God NOT by self or other men.

Now they had what the world could not have. Jesus said that when He went away He would send His Spirit Which the world could not receive. That is right. The world, or world systems could not receive Him. That is what organization is —it is world system. Show me a world system church that is full of the Holy Ghost. I want to see it. If you can show me such a church you are finding a mistake in the Word. No sir. Not one of these messengers was organized. Either they were put out or got out because they were convicted of the sin of organization. How can the Holy Spirit possibly be in organization when it is organization that takes the place of the Spirit and denominations take the place of the Word? Remember, "Organization" is "DEATH". It just can't be any other way. If the world takes over, the Spirit departs.

Yes, the Spirit is not seven Spirits but ONE. He will always be the same and act the same. And the seven messengers will have the same Spirit and teach the same Word and have the same power. And if the church is the true church it will have the very same Spirit and Word and acts of power that they had at Pentecost. By experience it will be a Pentecostal church; and there will be tongues, and interpretation and prophecy and healings. God will be in the midst of her and God will declare Himself in the midst of her as He always has. Hallelujah! And she will be UNorganized. Don't forget that.

Now we can see that Jesus Christ is revealing Himself through the ages by His Spirit in the messengers. They are as Moses was to the children of Israel. As he had the revelation for his day, so each messenger had God's revelation and ministry for that day.

Thus when we see that the messengers are in His hand, we see the Lord identifying Himself with these men and granting them His power. It is not enough that He has

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flooded his mind and he was set free from sin and born into the kingdom of God. Soon after this he was elevated to Doctor of Divinity and commissioned, "to devote his whole life to study and faithfully expound and defend the holy Scripture." This he did, and with such effect that his heart and the hearts of those around him were deeply fixed upon the truth of the Word. The Word soon came into open conflict with the abuses of church creeds and doctrines.

Thus when Leo X become pope, and John Tetzel came to sell indulgences for sin, Luther had no choice but to rise up against this anti-Scriptural teaching. First, he thundered from the pulpit against it and then wrote his famous 95 theses which on October 31, 1517 he nailed to the door of Castle Church.

In a short time Germany was ablaze and the reformation was on. Now let it be remembered that Martin Luther was not the only one who had protested the Roman Catholic Church. He was but one of many. Others had denied the popes their self-granted temporal and spiritual power, and even amongst the popes there were minor temporary reforms. Yes, there were many others who raised issues, but in the case of Luther, God's time was ripe for a definite move that would be the beginning of the restoration of the church to an outpouring of the Holy Ghost at a much later date.

Now Martin Luther, himself, was a sensitive Spirit-filled Christian. He was definitely a man of the Word for he not only had a profound passion to study it but to make it available to all in order that all might live by it. He translated the New Testament and gave it to the people. This laborious work he did himself, correcting a passage as much as twenty times. He gathered around him a group of Hebrew scholars amongst whom were Jews and translated the Old Testament.

This monumental work of Luther is still the work upon which all successive works of the Scripture in Germany have

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rested.

He was a mighty preacher and teacher of the Word, and insisted especially in his first years of public eminence, that the Word was the sole criterion. Thus he was against works as a means of salvation and baptism as a means of regeneration. He taught the mediation of Christ apart from man as was the original and Pentecostal concept. He was a man given to much prayer and had learned that the more work he had to do, and the more sorely he was pressed for time, the more of his time he gave to God in prayer in order to ensure satisfactory results. He knew what it was to battle with the devil and it is said that Satan one day visibly appeared to him, and he flung the ink well at him, bidding him go. Another time two fanatics came to him to induce him to join with them in banishing all priests and Bibles. He discerned the spirit within them and sent them off.

It is recorded of Dr. Martin Luther in Sauer's History Vol. 3, page 406 that he was, "a prophet, evangelist, speaker in tongues, interpreter, in one person, endowed with all nine gifts of the Spirit."

What stirred his heart by the Holy Ghost, and which was the little green shoot that signified that truth was coming back to the church as it was known at Pentecost, was the doctrine of justification: salvation by grace, apart from works. I recognize that Dr. Luther did not believe only, and preach only, justification, but that was his major theme as indeed it had to be for that is the basic doctrine of the truth of the Word. He will be forever known as the instrument in the hand of God who revived this truth. He was the fifth messenger and his message was, "THE JUST SHALL LIVE BY FAITH." Surely we admit that he knew and did teach that we are to go from faith to faith. His marvelous understanding of sovereignty, election, predestination and other truths show him to be a great man in the Word, yet I say again, as do historians, God used him to bring to the people God's

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So we see that the Seven Spirits actually refer to the One Spirit of God working out the will and Word of God in different generations. I would like to illustrate that from the Word. The Spirit of God was mightily upon Elijah. Then that same Spirit came upon Elisha in a twofold effect. Then centuries later, the same Spirit Which we call the Spirit of Elijah in order to describe Its ministry, came back upon John the Baptist. One day that same Spirit identified by the same manner of ministry will come upon a man for the end of the Gentile church age.

Again: the Scripture says that God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and power and He went about doing good, healing all that were oppressed of the devil. As Jesus went away He told His disciples to tarry until Pentecost at which time the very same Spirit that was upon Him would come back and fall upon them and fill them. Then that 'called out' body (the church) would be in His stead upon the earth, taking His place. And because that same Spirit That was in Him would be in them, they would do the very same works. And any people that is truly the Body of Jesus Christ (the true church) will manifest the same works as did Jesus and the Pentecostal church because the same Spirit will be in them. Any other church that does not have the Spirit and the manifestations is going to have to account to God.

It also says here that these seven stars, or seven messengers to the seven ages are in His hand. He is holding them. You know right away that if they are held in His hand they are associated with His power. That is what the hand signifies. It signifies the power of God! And authority of God. Not one of them came in his own power and authority. That is what Paul said. No man would dare to. It takes the authority of God and the power of the Holy Ghost. The Gospel is preached by the authority of God in the power of the Spirit. These men were all empowered by the Holy Ghost. They all stood up to the world. They could do that. They were full of God. They were SENT or authorized by

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See, the star was meant to reflect light at night, for the sun has gone. Just so the messenger (typified as a star) to each age was to reflect the light of the Son. They all did this by the Holy Spirit.

Paul was the first messenger and he said in Galatians 1:8 that if any angel, any messenger, any vicar, no matter who he was—if he preached any other gospel than what Paul preached, let him be accursed. Paul knew that after he was gone grievous wolves would come in. He knew that Satan, himself, could appear as an angel of light so how much more his ministers. So he warns that this Gospel would always be the same. Now Paul had baptized in Jesus Name and rebaptized where people had not been so immersed. He set the church in order and taught the proper use of the gifts of the Spirit and confirmed that they were to remain in the church till Jesus came. Thus the next messengers, all the remaining six, would by the same Holy Ghost, burn with the same fire and give the same light of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the signs would follow them. Did Irenaeus qualify? Yes. Did Martin? Yes. Did Columba? Yes. Did Martin Luther? Most assuredly. Did Wesley? Yes sir, he had a great ministry and even prayed for his horse to get well and it did. There you are. Seven church ages and seven messengers who were alike, and Paul pronounced a curse on anyone who said he was a messenger but had a different gospel and lived in a different light.

Now does that last statement of mine bear up with the rest of the Word? Yes. It says in the Word that if any man adds to this book or takes from it, he would be plagued and judged unto condemnation by God.

God said,

"I will add the plagues written in this book or I will take his part out of the Book of Life."

Revelation 22:18.

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standard against works—"The just shall live by faith."

Now as I mentioned already, this age has been called by the historians, the Period of Reformation. That is exactly right. That is what it was. It had to be that for Martin Luther was a reformer, not a prophet. Now I know the history book calls him a prophet, but it doesn't mean that the history book is right, for there is no record of Martin Luther qualifying as a true prophet of God in the grand Scriptural sense of that word. He was a fine teacher with some of the manifestations of the Spirit in his life and we praise God for that. So he was not able to lead the church back to the whole truth as would a man like the apostle Paul who was both apostle and prophet.

Now as time went on we find a great change in the way he conducted the affairs in which he was involved. At first he had been so gentle, so fearless, so patient and constantly waiting on God to work out the problems. But then vast numbers began to come to his banner. Their purpose was not a truly spiritual one. Rather they had political motivations. They wanted to break the yoke of the pope. They disliked sending money to Rome. Fanatics rose up. Soon he was dragged into political affairs and decisions that actually lay outside the realm of the church except that the church through prayer, preaching and conduct might set up a standard to be heeded. These problems of politics mounted until he was forced into an untenable position of mediating between lords and peasants. His decisions were so wrong that an uprising took place and thousands were killed. He meant well, but once he had let himself be entangled again in a Church-State Gospel he had to reap the whirlwind.

But for all that, God used Martin Luther. Let it not be said that his intentions were wrong. Let it only be said that his judgment failed. Truly if the Lutherans could get back to his teaching and serve God as this gracious brother served Him, then that people would surely be a credit and praise to the

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great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

The Seven Spirits Of God

Revelation 3:1,

"These things saith He That hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars."

Once again as in the previous four ages the Spirit is revealing our gracious Lord to us by setting forth His wonderful attributes. This time as He is standing in the midst of the church, we see Him as the One with the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars. We know who the seven stars are, but we will have to find what the seven Spirits refer to.

This same phrase is found four times in the Book of Revelation.

Revelation 1:4,

"From the seven Spirits Which are before His throne."

Revelation 3:1,

"These things saith He That hath the seven Spirits."

Revelation 4:5,

"And out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunderings and voices; and there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne which are the seven Spirits of God."

Revelation 5:6,

"And I beheld, and lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as It had been slain having seven horns and seven eyes, which are

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the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth."

To begin with, we know for a certainty that these verses are not teaching a new and contrary doctrine to John 4:24a "God is A (one) Spirit." But this is like I Corinthians 12:8-11 wherein we find ONE Spirit manifesting Himself in NINE ways. Thus we know that the seven Spirits of God mean it is the one and same Spirit coming forth in a sevenfold way. Now in Revelation 4:5 these same seven Spirits are called 'lamps of fire burning' before the Lord. Since John always used nothing but Old Testament symbols in the Revelation we go to the Old Testament and find from Proverbs 20:27 that *"the spirit of man is the lamp of the Lord."* These seven Spirits are found to be associated with man. John the Baptist in John 5:35 was called a 'burning light' which should actually be translated as 'burning lamp.' Again in Revelation 5:6 the seven Spirits are identified as seven eyes.

In Zechariah 4:10,

"For who hath despised the day of small things? for they shall rejoice, and shall see the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel with those seven, they are the eyes of the Lord."

It is very evident that the word, 'they' refers to men. Thus we see that the eyes of the Lord in this instance are men—of course they will be anointed men, full of the Holy Ghost, for God's ministries are not in the power of men but of the Holy Ghost. Putting our Scriptural discoveries together it is evident that the seven Spirits of God refer to the continuous ministry of the same Holy Spirit in the lives of seven men with whom God identifies Himself very closely. They are His eyes, and they are His lamps. Who these seven men are can easily be seen because the next phrase calls them the seven stars which are already known to us as the seven messengers to the seven ages. How beautiful that is.

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