

**'WHILE WE WAIT'**  
***(Ready or Not, Jesus is Coming Again!)***  
**Studies in 2 Thessalonians**

**'Till I Come'**

***“Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy and keep those things which are written in it; for the time is near.” Revelation 1:3***

It is amazing that some very foolish people assert that the **Book of Revelation** is not about future prophecy, despite the fact that it remains mostly unfulfilled to this day. Instead, they erroneously say it is about ancient history of the 1<sup>st</sup> century (the *'Preterist'* theory). Clearly John believed, wrote, and preached that those closing chapters of the New Testament Scripture are future to the time in which he lived. Although the case for future, end times prophecy which has not been fulfilled is easily proven, a good example of the predictive nature of Revelation can be observed in Chapters 2 & 3 regarding the seven churches. True, each of those 7 churches of Asia Minor were local congregations. Each church had individual virtues and vices that the Lord Jesus addresses in the letters of **Revelation**. It is easily seen on a map that the order in which they are addressed formed a circuit suggesting a route that the Church Age would take between Christ's comings. This is not an extreme view if **Revelation** is, as claimed in its introduction, primarily prophetic, not just historic. Things Jesus said to each church suggests spiritual stages or eras that Christianity should expect as church history progresses from Christ's first coming to His return:

<i>Ephesus</i>	=	<u>Apostle Era</u>	1 <sup>st</sup> century AD
<i>Smyrna</i>	=	<u>Persecution Era</u>	AD 200 – 300
<i>Pergamos</i>	=	<u>Compromise Era</u>	AD 300 – 600
<i>Thyatira</i>	=	<u>Corruption Era</u>	AD 600 – 1500
<i>Sardis</i>	=	<u>Reformation Era</u>	AD 1500 – 1800
<i>Philadelphia</i>	=	<u>Evangelical Era</u>	AD 1800 – 1900
<i>Laodicea</i>	=	<u>Apostate Era</u>	AD 1900's – now and <b><i>'til He comes'</i></b>

Another important factor in understanding that the 7 churches are not just churches at the time of John's composition is the phrase ***'til I come'***, which Jesus says to only 3 of the 7 churches (**2:25** to *corrupted* Romanism; **3:3** to *reformed liberal* Protestantism; and **3:11** to *evangelical* Christianity. So, why would Christ not tell some of 1<sup>st</sup> century believers to anticipate His return? Answer: Their era will die out before *'He comes,'* And why would He not say ***'til I come'*** in His letter to the last church on the list, Laodicea? The reason Jesus says no such thing to the last stage of Church history is because ***'He came'*** and they weren't ready. The rapture happened leaving all the *pretend Christians* behind! But what about the 3 church letters that Jesus does tell ***'til I come'*** advice? The implication is clear that spiritual ancestors of those 3 stages of Christianity remained and continue to exist ***'til He comes'***.

In recalling the chronology of the Church Age above, Thyatira with its unrepentant idolatry and immorality, pictures the ancient Roman Catholic Church as it has continued from AD 600 and isn't going away ***'til He comes'***. Sardis with its incomplete theological reformation, stuck in adoration of deceased theological heroes of the past, represents the Reformed Protestant churches which have continued from 1517 and will remain ***'til He comes'***. Philadelphia is told by Jesus: ***“Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial that shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth. Behold, I am coming quickly...” (Revelation 3:10-11).***

Thus, Philadelphia represents a Christian movement at the end of the age when many have come out of the corrupt RCC or liberal Protestant churches to join biblical, evangelical, NT churches like CBF. Laodicea, then, pictures the coming ecumenical caricature of Christianity formed by Romanism and Protestantism at the end of the age that will continue under the anti-Christ and false prophet during the Tribulation. (NOTE: *Jesus on the outside looking in at this freakish monstrosity of what God intended His Church to be - Revelation 3:20-21.*)

A final prophetic observation about the 7 churches and the 7 stages of Church History they portray is the small change in Jesus closing challenge to each church. In the first 3 churches the Lord calls for repentance of the church as a whole – ***“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes...”*** (2:7, 2:11, 2:17). There is a church-wide challenge for congregational repentance that will also bless individual believers.

But in the next 3 churches Christ calls for repentance of individuals in the organization, knowing the church denominations will just continue unrepentant to the end (***“He who overcomes and keeps my works until the end...”*** (2:26); ***“He who overcomes shall be clothed in white...”*** (3:5); ***“He who overcomes, I will make a pillar ...”*** (3:12). Then ***“hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”***

These 3 main branches of Christianity (*Roman Catholicism; Ecumenical, partially reformed Protestantism & Evangelicals*) are not expected to change, therefore the individuals in them are told that salvation isn't based on being a member of any particular group or denomination. People must come individually and personally to Jesus Christ with humble, repentant hearts for His forgiveness, salvation, and eternal life. ***‘Til He comes’*** there is still time to stop trusting religions, denominations, or good works to be saved. You must come personally to Him as Savior and Lord, not a church, religion, or denomination. Not sure? Open your heart to Jesus as Savior today (***Revelation 3:20-21***). ***‘Til He comes’***; Jesus is waiting for you to come to Him for His mercy and grace. **PtL**

## **Rapture or Wrath? It's Up to You!**

***(3 Signs That You Waited Too Long)***

**2 Thessalonians 2:3-12**

### **Christianity Without Christ**

***(The coming apostasy)***

***“Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing him-self that he is God. Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things?”*** **2:3-5**

### **Society Without Restraint**

***(The coming anarchy)***

***“And now you know what is restraining that he may be revealed in his own time. For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only He Who now restrains will do so, until He is taken out of the way. And then the lawless one will be revealed...”*** **2:6-8a**

### **Government Without God**

***(The coming anti-Christ)***

***“...the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming. The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth that they might be saved. And for this reason, God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, that they all may be condemned who didn't believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.”*** **2:8-12**