

We're going to begin a new series of sermons where the subject matter is going to be directly tied into the foundational truths that God has given His Church through time. And the last time we looked in depth into many of these truths was back in early 2006, and since that time there have been many more truths that God has added to the Church. We're going to begin focusing on some of the Church history, and things associated with that, especially the one known as Sardis; that's where we're going to start today. We're going to build upon some of that understanding and the truths that God has given as this series will be presented in a different manner than what was presented back in 2006 and you'll see that as we go along.

It's amazing to me how since we've gone through those things, that God has given a deeper understanding, and some of the things we'll talk about from time to time, some of the scriptures, there's always something new that God gives to us. Just like in the last series we went through as far as, for me, being very inspiring because of the book of John and especially 1 John and the things that God gave to us at this end-time concerning what 1 John is all about when it talks about antichrist. In Philadelphia, the period of Philadelphia, the era of Philadelphia, what God brought us to, what we did not go beyond, in other words He didn't reveal the truth about all the truths that are contained there in 1 John, so the farthest that could be received out of some of that understanding about antichrist was about a man that was going to come at the end-time, who is going to be a great religious leader on the earth and be one that would be recognized in a more powerful way than they have been through time. I think all the scattered groups still believe that antichrist is about that one individual.

But as we talked about antichrist – it is a definition given to people who have the opportunity, receiving the impregnation of God's spirit *in God's Church* who turn against Christ, who work against what He's doing, the purpose of His death.

The purpose of His death was, indeed, so that we could be forgiven of our sins but it doesn't stop there, it goes way beyond that, it goes into then a making possible that He and the Father can dwell in us. And so until we're forgiven of sin God can't dwell in sin! It's very basic! And so 1 John is very much about that, that if we don't yield ourselves to the process and indeed be repenting and indeed being at one, just like that one word... That's why I say it means far more to me probably than most, in one respect, because of what God has given to me about this subject matter, and I find it then very inspiring when I come across a word like 'confess'; and knowing where it comes from – 'homologeō' – Logos, the Word of God that is used over and over again, concerning the Word of God. And that particular word has much more meaning than what's translated into English. It's not about confessing with your mouth that Jesus is the Christ.

There are many in the world who acknowledge that but that doesn't show that someone's a part of God's Church in any fashion or form. What reveals if you're in God's Church is if you have God's spirit working in you, and if you don't have, when you have that ability or that opportunity, then you're working against Christ, working against God. So to me it's an awesome thing to understand here's a word that pictures being 'at one – of the same Word'; the same Word, the same Logos. To me that's an inspiring thing, but I'd never seen it all the years before that. God continually reveals to us a little bit more, and as long as you're in God's Church, every Feast, every Holy Day, every time you go through something, because of the process of growth, God is going to show you a little bit more. And we all

digest different things according to where we are in our calling. It's an awesome thing. We're all at different levels and stages of development and we all hear the same sermons by the ear, but not in the mind, not in the spirit; and where we are determines on what we hear. That's why sometimes (I have this repeated to me over and over again) I use the analogy of it being like construction work, God is building a building, a spiritual one, a temple, and as you build you can't get up to a certain level, just like when putting up brick or stone, masonry of any kind, you can't get up to the fourth row until you've done the first, second and third, and that's the way it works. And so sometimes people will go back and listen to a sermon a week, a month, a year later and say, "Why didn't I hear that before?" Well, you couldn't. And so we're able to digest what we have from where we are, and it's an awesome thing with God's spirit in how this works. It's a very inspiring process indeed.

If you like sermon titles, today's sermon is entitled *The Death of Sardis*, and we're going to go back and review the warning that Jesus Christ gave concerning this era of time in the Church. One thing about these eras that started out with Ephesus which was the first era that involved the disciples of Jesus Christ, those who became apostles and they went on to teach, that era, the beginning of the Church, through John, was that particular period. Sardis is the 5<sup>th</sup> era. It's talking about seven church regions in the area of modern Turkey. We've had the opportunity of visiting a couple of these areas in times past.

The one that's most notable is Ephesus, amazing just to have that experience on a physical plane to tie in with what you read in scripture. And so it's literally talking about some of those areas, but they're also prophetic because it was about the Church for later on, to cover periods of time; and then it's about a spirit. There are seven different attitudes, if you will, and they can exist, all of those attitudes can exist in the Church at the same time, but there's one that's predominant always in times past – because we're past all seven eras now. I hope you all understand that, as we've taught, as we've been showing, that once things began, once the sealing had already taken place, after that period of time in God's Church then from that period on we were no longer in Laodicea, we're beyond that, we're in a unique time, the time of the end, literally, and the seven eras are past.

Let's start today where God began to speak and began to reveal these things through Jesus Christ and those things that lead up to what the messages given contained to the seven Church eras, and specifically as we begin to focus later on Sardis and the death of Sardis.

Let's start in **Revelation 1:1 - The revelation of Jesus Christ**, it's not the revelation of John, it's the revelation of Jesus Christ *given* to John. That's why if in your Bible, in my Bible, it says, 'the Revelation of Saint John the Divine', then it is not correct. Well, a little bit of Protestantism in there obviously, but we don't go by the titles of saint, although all whom God works with are saints, all in God's Church are in the definition that's used in the Greek but it's not a title. But again, it's not the revelation of John, it's the Revelation of Jesus Christ to give to the Church. He is the Head of the Church, and so this is given to Him very early on and He gave it to John and John was given to record it. So let's read it.

**The revelation of Jesus Christ which God gave unto Him**, it's amazing to me how even in Philadelphia and even into Laodicea within the Church we did not grasp some things because God didn't allow us to. I don't care what the truths are, to truly understand them in spirit and in truth, just like the Sabbath, there are people in the world who keep the Sabbath, there are *millions of people* who keep the seventh day but *they do not understand the Sabbath and the purpose of it in any measure or means*. They don't understand the *functioning* of it spiritually, they don't *grasp it* because that hasn't been given to them. They're not a part of the Church! God's spirit is not giving them that. And so there are people that become convicted on a physical plane by things that are plainly in scripture, and that's why there are so

many beliefs anyway in churches out there, because people have taken different things from different areas. Just like the Baptists, their big whoop-tee-doo was coming to understand what baptism means. They knew it wasn't about sprinkling water on the head like the Catholic church did and like so many Protestants do... to babies... sprinkle them on the head and say these nice little words and all of a sudden somehow you're taken care of for the rest of your life, and it's a bunch of bull! Nothing spiritual in that whatsoever! And so the Baptists came to understand it's a matter, it means, "Oh, it means immersion – wow!" And so they named the whole church after that, the Immersion Church of God.

Different ones have come along because of different doctrines and so forth, and they name their church after it, whatever it might be. Pentecostal – the big thing is speaking in tongues – Pentecost, Pentecostal; not understanding that it quit being practiced in the time of Paul because of people misusing and abusing what God had given, and there was a purpose God used it in the beginning anyway to begin the gospel going into different parts of the world at that time.

We didn't understand that God Almighty was by Himself, that there wasn't another being with Him. We still had some of that Protestant belief; got rid of the trinity immediately. God gave Mr. Armstrong the understanding that the trinity is not three people in one and one in three; like the three musketeers somehow on a spiritual plane. God gave him that very early on, to realize that the trinity is a powerful false doctrine, it's a lie! The holy spirit is the power of God, there is no will of its own, it's God, it's Gods, it's God's being and God's power. And so we got rid of that one but we didn't understand that Jesus Christ wasn't with Him either. See, because that's a part of the trinity. We got rid of 1/3 of the trinity but we kept a part of it. And yet over and over again.... that's one reason why there's some difficulty in Judaism and anyone who is Jewish in being able to come to see some of the truth, and part of that, and a stumbling block for them was, obviously, was that particular doctrine, because they are taught in a very powerful way that there is *one God*, and that's all there is, one Almighty Eternal Self-Existing God. Some incredible truth that God gave which we'll talk about later.

**The revelation of Jesus Christ which God gave unto Him**, those of you who are new, this is clear, you didn't have any of that that you had to get rid of because of the past. It's one thing about the Church coming out of Sardis, coming out of darkness, coming away from death, God revealed a little at a time to the Church according to His purpose and His plan, and that's God's job. It's God's job. Wasn't Mr. Armstrong's fault that he didn't grasp Pentecost and the day it should be kept, back in 1974 and before that, it wasn't Mr. Armstrong's fault, it was God's purpose and God's responsibility, and it was saved for a particular point in time; and the major part of it was to test and try the Church. God gives things through time and has given things through time to try His people, who are His and who are not, to make a separation, to make a division, and God did that even with ancient Israel, things He's allowed to happen to try them, to test them, to reveal things about the heart, the mind, and the spirit of man. And especially when man in the modern time has the impregnation of God's spirit, even more so there are greater lessons to learn from that.

**The revelation of Jesus Christ which God gave unto Him**, everything comes from God Almighty first and foremost. *Everything! Everything* has to become at one with God. Jesus Christ was from the beginning, truly was, and especially in the God Family, fully at one with God, but the source and where everything still comes from *is from God Almighty!* So it says God *gave* this to Him. **...which God gave unto Him to show unto His servants things which must shortly come to pass;** We read a work like 'shortly' in that sentence... it's been nearly 2,000 years; 1,900 - in that range by the time John wrote this. '...shortly come to pass'? Well, there were things that shortly came to pass when you talk about that which was given to each Church era. For them, that was for them; the rest of it, wasn't until the end-time, until

now. But even for God it's a short time. 6,000 years? That's a long time, but in the scheme of things with God Almighty it's not all that long. It's a long time - it's your perspective - and yet it's not a long time.

**...which must shortly come to pass; and He sent and signified it by His angel unto His servant John:** And so from God the Father to Jesus Christ now to the apostle John, John who was the apostle. **Who bare record of the Word of God,** and so again, those things that were given to him, testimony about Jesus Christ, the truths that are recorded here... it goes on to say **and of the testimony of Jesus Christ...** He was there. He was there from the beginning. He was with Jesus Christ. He went through all the things, saw the things that happened through that period of time. John was living on into the latter period of time here where all the other disciples had died, been killed as a whole, martyred, if you will, for what they believed, and he's continuing on, and so this is given to him toward the end of his ministry. **...and so he bear record of God/the Logos of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw.** So a lot contained here, in the truth of God, the way of God, things that he saw, things that he lived, everything that's contained here by His life.

**Blessed is he who reads, and they who hear the words of this prophecy,** and so indeed, it's not a matter of just anybody who reads this, that they're blessed. A lot of people have read these and they haven't been blessed. There are those who can read and hear and see what it's about, and so God has given certain portions of this through time to His people, but not all by any measure, and we still don't have it *all* by any measure. There are still things we don't grasp and fully understand until God gives it. That's why I continue to go back to things like the Seven Trumpets, that after the First one, from then on we don't know when they're going to happen until they happen – then we'll know. But as far as knowing when, we don't know when. When they happen we'll know. And so those things are in God's control and the control of His Son Jesus Christ that God has given to Him.

And so it says, **Blessed are they who hear the words of this prophecy... that read/who read and hear the words of this prophecy and keep those things which are written therein:** so it's a matter of what you live too, because God gives us the ability... it doesn't matter what era it was in even, whatever you were given at that time in the Church of God, whatever you were able to see, whatever God gave you spiritually to grasp and understand, to hear spiritually, to see spiritually, then He says to keep it, to live according to that. And therein lies an incredible key to understanding, an ability that God gives us to believe His word, whatever He gives us to believe and see. Now it doesn't mean you see everything, but what you do see, and what you are given to see He says you better live by it because it affects your life and what you'll live by. Even like this end-time...there are a lot of things affecting our lives now that we live by and believe with all of our being, where we are and what's taking place and what all these things are about. But at other times there wasn't as much given, but they were still told and charged to live by what they had at that time, because these things affect your life, just like the message to Sardis.

And then it goes on to say in **verse 4 - John to the seven Churches which are in Asia:** and so again here, those seven Churches scattered throughout the area today of present day Turkey, and this route, if you will, of where Paul worked, and now this message from John that God has given to him, literally messages to those Churches and each one had a type of spirit or attitude, and not by chance or coincidence. Again, the power of God is an awesome thing, brethren, things that are so incredible; the more that God gives to us the more we learn. But again here, there were warnings to them of things that applied to them, but more so God used this to project something forward that's prophetic because it's going to affect specific eras of time, one following another. After Ephesus was over another period of times was going to come that would have a different predominant spirit, predominant warnings, and

also encouragement for the right things they were doing. And so those are the messages contained in there from Ephesus to Laodicea. Powerful!

**John to the seven Churches which are in Asia:** again, a message that's prophetic and also to actual Churches: **Grace unto you**, they're blessed because they're God's Church. Grace! The blessing we have of grace, if we understand what that means. Not like the world believes, not like the Protestant's believe – they don't grasp it. They don't understand what God gives to His people, what God gives to the Church, the incredible favour that we have. And the ability to grow and continue on...not because of how good we are, not because of how we're better than others in the world around us. On the contrary! He didn't call the great and the mighty of the world who have *far more ability*, if you want to look at the world, than what we have. He says that He has called the weak of the world, not the mighty. We used to sing that song, 'Not Many Wise Men Now Are Called'. Those of you who go back in time who used to sing those songs, we know it!

Not many wise men now are called, but it's because of some of the scriptures, especially Corinthians there that talk about this process, not many great, not many mighty, not many noble are called – and primarily because they can't be worked with! Those who are mighty, who see themselves as great and mighty in the world, the leaders, the people of education and so forth, they would *laugh and scorn* at the truths of God, they do! And it's a much *harder* thing to teach them! They have to be humbled first! And the biggest thing that's going to humble them is going to be when they're dead and resurrected and come to have to admit, "Oh, you mean evolution's not true? Hmmm... wow!"

And so again, God is working with us in an awesome way, the truths He gives to us, the mercy, the blessings, not because of how great we are...but we're not to stay the same, we're to change, because God says we're to confound the world. If we stay the same we're not going to confound the world. And so God works a work in us where we change, our minds change, our thinking changes, we change in a very powerful way and we receive the greatest of treasures that the earth could ever have, that mankind could ever have – God, the way of God, the mind of God, the Logos of God, and we begin to live it! It's an awesome thing!

**Grace unto you, and peace**, because that's what follows grace when we live by it as well. We don't just receive it, we learn to extend it to others. **...and peace, from He who is, and who was, and who is to come;** poor, sick translation because the world doesn't understand. When so much of the Bible has been translated, especially that which has to do about God or prophecy, they don't.... you know, when you translate something, if you do it word by word especially, you try to find a word... you can't do things like that in languages! It's the *intent* of what's being given; it's the *truth* of what's being given. In other words, to convey a thought might be possible in one language through a single word but in another language, to explain it you might have to use a whole sentence or a couple of sentences to explain it so that someone can receive the same message. And then, of course, that doesn't do any good without God's spirit, let alone in just basic communication. So this happens here because people translated the Bible, they got a hold of Hebrew and they got a hold of Greek and they tried to do it. In the 1500's they tried to do it according to their own ideas, the 1600's they tried to do it by the understanding they had at that time, and they weren't a part of God's Church. We'll come back to this.

**...and from the seven spirits which are before His throne;** we'll come back to this later, but there have been times when the seven spirits were thought to be seven specific angels mentioned later, but they're not the same. There's a difference here in what's being spoken of and we'll come back to that a little bit

later here, but it all has meaning, it all has purpose in what God is revealing here, what Jesus Christ is giving through John.

So the expression here, **from He who is, and who was, and who is to come again**, is very poorly translated. **From He who is**, in this particular case where 'is' if you look at the word 'is' here just from the Greek, has to do with 'to be, or being – as in existence'; and that's a definition they give - 'as in existence'. It's more in reference to God who reveals Himself in the Old Testament as the Eternal Self-Existing One; just like when He said, "I am." He is, being, His existence. It has nothing to do with the beginning. They also point that out in the Greek, that it has nothing to do with the beginning, it has to do with existence, being. And so that's how He's described here.

And in the expression, **who was**, follows the fact that He is described as 'continually existing and therefore was or was always and has always been'.

And so again here, the final expression then of **who is to come** I found incredibly interesting. Again, it's amazing! The more you learn, the more you build... but you can't get to here until other things have been built. Here's another one that just falls into place all of a sudden, can build a little bit more upon. Interestingly enough, started looking at this and right away I started going into looking at some of this and what was written in the Greek language here and some of the books with it and it was starting to show something here, and knew right away, yep, it's got to be that, one of those same uses of speech in the Greek language that's used, that John uses elsewhere when He talks about Jesus Christ is coming in the flesh. Sure enough, same type of tense and so forth here.

So this phrase here, **who is to come**, is not a future tense word at all, has nothing to do with future tense, and it should come as no surprise that this part of the Greek speech is what it is. Like I said many times before, it is present passive middle participle and it means that this expresses *continuous* or *repeated* action and represents contemporaneous action as opposed to action in the past or the future.

So again, it's about God, and it's about God coming, and it's about God coming on a continual basis. He is, He exists, He always has. To me it's inspiring because this means more, because it's about Him living in us. And to the Church this is a great message! ...That God can dwell in mankind! That's the great message that Jesus Christ gave to the Church before He died on that day. On Passover night when He talked to His disciples, like I've talked about so many times before, that John wrote about in John 14 and talked about Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ was talking about these things and revealed these things at that time. And this is the same kind of word. And so it shows then God's purpose to the Church, His desire to the Church. He's always existed, always has been, is, continues to be, and the sum of it all...to come in us, to live in us, to dwell in His Family for eternity. It's an awesome thing, it truly is, and it *begins in the Church*.

This one here is the same as 2 John verse 7. Let's go back there. It's the *exact* same word here that's used as in **2 John verse 7**, and I thought this would be good too because it follows up what we've just gone through in the series. We didn't go to this particular verse in that series, but again, it talks about antichrist in 2 John. It says - **For many deceivers have entered into the world**, and as we talked about, the way it talks about it in 1 John is the same thing here. He's talking about the Church and those who have come out of the world into the Church. That's more having to do with the intent of the translation. It's not about that these deceivers are now in the world, but rather how did they get there? It's because of the Church and because they've come into the Church *out* of the world. And so now people who've had the opportunity to receive of God's spirit have now changed, something has happened in their life

that they begin to resist Jesus Christ and the flow of God's spirit into their life and the purpose of Jesus Christ dying for them (is what this is all about) is gone.

It says, **For many deceivers have entered into the world who do not confess**, are not homologeo, that same word again. In other words their life is not revealing, and so they use the expression 'confess', their life does not reveal the reality that God is in them! See, our life is to reflect that, and the only way we can be at one within the Church of God is if we have the same oneness in mind with what is given.

A big struggle that I witnessed over and over again throughout the years, that got worse and worse in Worldwide in Philadelphia, during the time of Philadelphia, was this very thing happening in the Church of God, where in time people came up with different ideas or had different agendas or different purposes and became lifted up with pride and began to lead people astray. Whatever took place was this thing taking place here; their lives came to a point where they didn't reflect they were of the same Word, *primarily* with Mr. Armstrong, God's apostle! People say, "Well, that's worshipping a man." Oh *bull!* Big, big bull! Big pile of bull, just to be real blunt about it. It's not about that! It's about how God works...which is another truth we'll get to later on. But it's about a truth, and the reality is he's the primary one whom God was working with to teach the Church! He was *the apostle* to God's Church at the end-time; not now at this end-time, but in the end-time because God called him in the end-time to go a great work! Incredible, powerful! And for the gospel to go out into all the world to the degree, to the measure, to the *purpose* that God intended it should, to be a witness at the end-time, especially when the end-time came on the scene before the apostasy could occur, and this era, which is not an era of the seven, but to this time, could be here today.

And so again, **do not confess that Jesus Christ is coming**... it's a continuous repeated action and in English it's like present progressive; it's happening and it's continuing. As long as we yield to God, as long as we repent of sin, God's spirit just keeps flowing in us. It's like the umbilical cord to a baby. That's *exactly* what it's like on a spiritual plane. We'll continually be fed, are able to be fed, but the moment we sin we cut off the umbilical cord. *God will not dwell in sin!* ...the message over and over again, so we have to repent of it. That's part of the grace God has given to us under the New Testament, the new covenant, is that when we repent God will forgive us and that flow, His life, will continue to remain in us, that of Him and His son. It's an awesome thing! And so this is what John is talking about here, the ability to love others...we can't love others if we don't have God's spirit, because that love is Logos – because philia love isn't enough. That's all man is capable of, philia, when it comes to how people are treated, how we treat one another even in family. The closest of relationships in life are still philia and it is still motivated by human selfishness! And yet it's a good thing to a lot of others, even in philia obviously, that's where it begins. But to be motivated by, to be helped by, to be able to be changed by, to where the mind becomes like God has to have God's spirit to have agape. *Now* it's a sacrificing kind of love, it's a whole different plane.

And so people came along through time, and this is what John is addressing, that antichrist spirit was already in the Church and He was trying to understand it, "How could this be happening..." God gave this to him, to understand this is why these things have to happen in God's Church, it's a part of a process, and so he said that there are people in the Church, in essence paraphrasing it, who do not reflect that Jesus Christ is coming in their life. Because why? Because of what comes out of their mouth most of all, not in what they confess, that they agree that Jesus is the Christ, it's by what they say that shows, that reveals whether they *believe* the same thing as what they're being taught. Because if they're in conflict with any of that they're resisting God. No one is greater than - you want to talk about Philadelphia in the sense of what God is giving in knowledge and understanding - than what Mr.

Armstrong was at that time, God's apostle. He was the primary one that God revealed all truth through. He then gave it to the Church! It's the process: God the Father to Jesus Christ to a human instrument and then to the Church. It's a powerful thing; it's the way it's always been.

**This is a deceiver and an antichrist.** So this particular word here 'is come' is the *exact* same one as what we just read about God and what's described as God here in this expression, 'who was', exact same one, same usage in the Greek.

**Revelation 1:5 – And from Jesus Christ,** it's already been stated before who this is coming from, now it's repeating it in a different way, in a different style, in a different manner for a different purpose to reveal more things to us. **And from Jesus Christ,** because it comes through Him then to John and to the Church, **who is the faithful witness,** and even after John is gone, you know what? It still comes through Jesus Christ because the ability to understand through the different eras... if you lived in a specific era, Jesus Christ had to give it, He had to give it to His teachers, to His apostles, to those He had on the earth, to the different ones that He had to teach others, and that's the way it's been.

And so He still has to reveal it, He still has to give it, because time is going to go on. 'Blessed is he who reads', basically understands what's written in the book, or hears what's there - that's Jesus Christ's job, He continually gives that through 2,000 years of time through different eras, as He's doing right now today and continually giving to us the ability to see and understand.

**And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first born of the dead,** makes it very clear, first one to be born from the dead, the first of the firstfruits as it talks about in all the scriptures that are used about Jesus Christ. The first one into the God Family – never had existence before His human birth, and now He's died, He's the first one of human life – His Father God Almighty, but still of human life ...**born from the dead,** born, changed from mortal to immortal, from physical to spirit, **and the prince of the kings of the earth.** In other words, showing ruler ship over all; over all times, because everyone who's ever lived and had power on this physical earth has to come up in a physical resurrection later on and He's over all.

**Unto Him who loved us,** speaking of Jesus Christ, **and washed us from our sins in His own blood,** again, loved us, it's always good to point it out, because it was God's love, it wasn't human love. It was God's love, a sacrificing love, a willingness to sacrifice self for the benefit of others, to give to others, to go so far as to sacrifice self, self's own desires and wants. When He cried out to His Father, "Father, if there is any other way..." this is written for us, but He felt it because He saw things, grasped thing, lived things that were far more a matter of reality in ways we can't because of that power that was in Him, that life that was in Him for so long. And then when He came to baptism and that life began to grow and thrust forward in such a powerful way, we can't grasp that because we've never had that. We only are called later on in life and begin to drink in of God's spirit and are able to be impregnated with God's spirit, but with Jesus Christ, a very, very powerful thing that happened when He cried out, "Father, if there's any other way take this cup from Me, but not My will but Yours be done." That part in Him that knew, so much so that when He prayed it was so real in His mind that He perspired with droplets of blood in His perspiration. No human being has ever done that, for that cause, because of what He knew was coming, because of what was taking place. It isn't that things haven't happened to human beings, it's that when you know by the mind something that is so real before you ever experience it, that it's so real that you experience that then. And that's what He did, He experienced that. That's what it describes Him as, so real in His mind...

I'll just throw out something else that some have brought up in recent time here because they have concern and they've made comments about it and they talk about two witnesses and what's going to happen to them at the end-time and do the two people think about it and whatever... The reality is no, because I can't see it like this, so it just is what it is. It is what it is and when that time comes it'll just be something that's there and it'll happen and it's just a part of God's plan. You just live what God has given to you, because I can't see it like Christ did, thankfully, and in detail like He did. He had to go through a whole lot more and that's why He's our Passover, our Saviour, and everything else that's there. But we all do whatever God gives to us. All the early disciples were killed for what they believed. It's happened to many through time, and the reality is that's what we live, our life is God's, and if there's a purpose in it... Whoever it is through time, that's what we do at baptism, we say our life is yours God, whatever purpose, whatever it can do, to help someone else, so be it; if that's what it's about, so be it, and we're happier for it. That's the richness of life!

**And has made us kings and priests unto God and His Father;** that's what Jesus Christ has worked to accomplish with the firstfruits. It's talking about a process here, it's not something that has ended at this point in time when it's said, its showing what His work is, and a continuing work because it's to all the Churches mentioned and so forth. And that's what He does, He works with the Church. He's not working with the world. He hasn't been working with the world. God has done certain things through time, still doing things with the world and with the rest of mankind but for the vast majority, they are going to be resurrected in the Great White Throne and allowed certain things to obviously continue on in the world, but Jesus Christ's work is through the Church.

He is the head of the Church, His hands are full! He's got a big job! I know He's got a big job with me, and I'm sure He's got a big job with you! ☺ But to do this for the last 2,000 years and working with the people in the Church to mould and fashion, and the things He's done... for what purpose? Well, for God's purpose! And God's purpose for the firstfruits? To be kings and priests, and so that's what His work has been. And so the first resurrection of firstfruits is for the purpose of rulership under Jesus Christ for the next 1,100 years, that's what it's about. It's about that which God is going to use in a very powerful way as far as His governments concerned; an organization to bring millions and billions into His Family in a far greater scale. That's what the Church was all about, to begin to work with mankind on a *greater scale*, but not on the scale of what's going to take place in the Millennium, *not* what's going to take place when it's even more massive, when there are millions, perhaps billions, I don't know, in the God Family at the beginning of the Great White Throne. And people wonder, well how are they going to be worked with? Hmm, millions, billions in the God Family at that time? I think it can be done. Big job ahead. God's very organized, very orderly, *perfect* in all He does. We're not perfect, human beings aren't always in their response, obviously, and that's up to our choices, but God's perfect.

**And has made us kings and priests unto God and His Father; to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.** So be it! Whenever you say 'amen' you agree to something; it's what you agree to, so be it, you're in agreement.

**Behold, He comes with clouds; and every eye shall see Him,** now, it doesn't mean that every eye is going to see Him when He comes in the clouds. We know when He comes back literally not too long from now... it's incredible where we live in time. We live this as much as Noah did what he did when he was putting on the finishing pitch on the boat, the big ship, whatever you want to call it, big boat, big ship, and the animals hadn't even come yet and he's still doing what he's doing; being laughed at for decades. We haven't had to go through that. I've only been in the Church for... well 1969, a few decades. He built that ship for more than double that, being laughed at, ridiculed, mocked – "You're

building something big out here in the middle of nowhere. Least if it was close to the water you could get some use out of it Noah!" You know, people said things like that. It was a massive structure, people came from all over to see it, it was a great highlight to see something like that. *He lived by faith till the day he went on it, until the day the rains came.* Powerful! *Powerful!* How long are you going to be waiting? ...and how strong is your confidence and boldness before God?

**Behold, He comes with clouds; and every eye shall see Him,** in time everyone shall see Him, even as it mentions in the next part of the verse... **and they also who pierced Him:** obviously they're dead and they're not going to be able to see Him until they're resurrected; those who were a part of that event, who killed Him, the very soldier who rammed the spear in His side, those who were guarding Him, those who were there, those who were a part of that in that particular area. It's who he's referring to, those who were there, those soldiers, they're going to see Him. Not when He returns, not in the clouds, but when He returns for them, which is when they come back in a great resurrection.

**...and all peoples of the earth shall mourn because of Him. Even so, Amen.** In other words when it talks about that it's really not as much about what people have to go through. It talks about what people come to when they come to repentance, when they realize what they did, they killed the Christ. That's what it's talking about in context here, and it's referring to the point that all of us go through when you come to realize the things that you did, your sins is what killed the Christ, what killed the Passover. You should mourn inside for what you did, for what you're guilty of. It's a matter of when you come to repentance and change.

He goes on to say, **I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, says the LORD, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.** It goes back and forth a little bit. It talks about God the Father in the beginning and then talks about what is given to Jesus Christ and the things that He has done, is doing and so forth, and then it comes back, God Almighty still addressing things here, and He addresses this about Himself. **I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, says the LORD, which is, which was, and which is to come,** some of those same words again, not very well translated, **the Almighty.**

And then he goes on to say, John is speaking here now. He says, and **I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation,** we've talked about tribulation in scripture. The tribulation wasn't just for the Laodicean period, that all of a sudden they would be cast into 'great tribulation' that would be different from any tribulation any others have gone into. We've come to better understanding of how words are used and what God's intent was by those things and Him making it very clear that everyone has to go through great tribulation in the last 6,000 years to become a part of God's Family, the Family of God. It doesn't mean a period of time that was going to last for 3½ years like I had thought for so many years, which I had been taught for so many years. That's not what it was about. And so he says, **I...am your companion in tribulation;** so when you come into God's Church *things don't get easier.* The struggle begins and increases because you're fighting against your human nature, because God reveals things to you about yourself, you begin to see things in yourself that you couldn't see before.

I just had one young person talking to me about this very thing, talking about how when they got baptized that's when things started getting hard. And there's a lot of truth to that because they do, because God's spirit is dwelling in you now and He lets you see things in your mind about yourself that you couldn't see before, and you see the need to change. That's the only thing that motivates you and drives you to repentance in continual change and yielding yourself to God.

**...and your companion**, so John knows! John went through this! Oftentimes I talk about how I understand, I know where you are, I know what you're going through. Why? Because I've been down, spiritually, some of the same kinds of roads. We go through similar different patterns of things that mould and fashion us at different places along the way. **...and your companion in tribulation and in the Kingdom**, that's what God has called us to. We're (which I love the way Mr. Armstrong described this – awesome) the Kingdom of God in embryo. What an awesome way to describe the Church – the Kingdom of God in embryo – not yet born, not yet having come out of the womb, but in a begettal stage, begotten of God and growing in the womb of the mother, the Church. That's where God moulds and fashions us, in the Church, until we're finally born then into His Family, into the Kingdom. That's what the Kingdom is referring to, the Kingdom of God, into the Family of God.

**...in the Kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ**, Jesus Christ is patient in working with all of us, we learn that through time. And we learn then (if we're learning), to be patient with others. That's the biggie, because so often the human mind sees things in others and wants to change that which is in others and sometimes we may have opportunity to be a part of that process. But again, we have to have patience, patience in the process that God works through us, patience with how God works things out. I've gone through things, I know others have gone through things where at times you want to get on with it but you realize hey, that's not so good, maybe the longer... maybe there's some, yeah, a lot of good in that, in what God works out, and if we don't have to suffer as long.... And so again, a lot of things we learn through time about God and the mercy of God and the patience of God and the patience of Jesus Christ. And that's the important thing, that we learn it so we can be patient toward others. Some of us are very impatient. Well, let's just put it another way: we're *all*, when we're called, impatient in life. There are things we want, things we desire, and especially in others around us, and sometimes when we come into God's Church we want that in others around us. It's a process we all have to go through; receiving it from God, being moved by it, drawn closer to God, loving God more because of it, and that's a part of grace – then living it toward others. Because if you don't live patience toward others then we're selfish indeed, beyond measure, and just *getting* from God.

**...in the Kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was on the Isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God...** I'm really thankful - there are people sometimes who can find fault, especially in the world or from our past - in things that God leads His people to do. And one thing He led us to do was to take a cruise... "*...oh you get to take a cruise...wish I could take a cruise...*" in the Mediterranean, and went to the Isle of Patmos. And there are things that God leads us in. Just like in going from area to area, I have a process I try to go through at times, but as a whole indeed, in every fibre of my being, I strive to yield myself to God, that He inspire me to know where to go and when to go. Because God works with us all, and there are times that we're brought together that we can benefit from and sometimes in one area we're benefitted more from a certain time in a certain moulding and fashioning that God does and that's a part of God's work, and it's an awesome thing because I have witnessed that over and over again.

But when we took this cruise this was a moving part in my life very powerfully so. We were on the Isle of Patmos on the Sabbath where John was, and that was very moving to me because I have realized and didn't understand to the degree at that point in time, as I was writing in the book and I talked about it in the book as well, about the impact that it was having upon me to be able to ... I don't know how to describe it... to know, to see, to be there, to have some of that history of something that spiritually was very moving too, and as the ship was pulling away at the end of that Sabbath day there was a prayer I had before God that was very moving and important to me and my future and where God was leading me that I didn't even know at that point in time, asking certain things of God which He then began to reveal from that point forward: because the time was right. God leads us even to the time to be able to

express things in our prayers, where we come to learn and understand, because it's the spirit. God knows! God knows what we're going through, He knows the mind, He knows where we are in our growth. He knows how to mould and fashion that in our minds and our thinking and our response to Him. It's so awesome and we can't even begin to grasp that!

The Great God who put the universe out here, who commanded certain things to come into being and they're there... we can't grasp that, let alone how God moulds and fashions individual minds of so many people *at the same time*! We communicate with one person at a time, and if it's more than that and you get too many people talking at the same time, you say, "Whoa, whoa, whoa!! One at a time please!" Because that's all we can drink in, that's all we can grasp. And so because of that, sometimes as human beings, we don't receive things from God because how could God do that if we can't? We're so limited in our thinking.

And yet I marvel the more I grow to understand how God moulds and fashions our minds, things happening in our life, just like this situation here. See, I know that I was there at the time I needed to be there, at the place I needed to be, moved to be there and was there as God moved different.... You can read that in scriptures, about Paul – Paul talks about some of those things – that he was moved by the spirit to be in a certain place at a *certain* time! That's exactly what we're talking about, things that happen in our life if we yield ourselves to God, because God's moulding and fashioning us.

We go through different things. We went through an *apostasy* for a purpose! We're having things moulded and fashioned in us for coming out of an apostasy that could happen in absolutely *no other way*! Thank God if you're a part that came through that and are where you are now! And what God has moulded and fashioned and is moulding and fashioning in your being that if you hadn't gone through that you wouldn't have the opportunities and ability that you're going to have in the future. It's a part of your mind! And to be at this end-time, for those of you who are called, to be the beginning of the Church in the Millennium? You don't *grasp* yet what God has granted you! You *don't grasp yet the magnitude* of the opportunities you have in a new age! They are *awesome beyond your understanding* at this point! ...that God will give you later on. Because if you had all that there would be things of pride you'd have to battle. And so we grow at a pace and a rate to where God helps us to deal with those things and grow in humility as time goes on. It's a beautiful thing, the power of Almighty God and how He loves us and how He moulds and fashions us.

And so again, as I think back at that moment in time I can see myself standing on the side of that ship praying, seeing the waters churned up and the ship pulling away and seeing the Isle of Patmos. And I think of all that God's given me since that time and since that prayer and it's very moving right now thinking about it.

**...who is on the Isle that is called Patmos for the word of God and for the testimony/witness of Jesus Christ.** So he suffered, he was in prison. It wasn't a prison-prison, but it was a place of a prison and confinement. Got in trouble with the king because of what he believed, because of what he was living, and so they put him over there for punishment for a year and he didn't have the freedom of travel he otherwise had, but it wasn't like being behind bars and so forth and so he lived in a specific area there of that particular island.

**...which is on the Isle called Patmos,** and by this time... I don't remember his age now that they guesstimate... end of the 80's? ...it might have been early 90's, but, I don't know why memory serves me... but I think around 86? I can't remember exactly. Anyway at this point in time, I'd have to go back

and refresh myself on that. You see, I don't know everything and there are some things I've been taught that I do forget, I am a human being, I am far from perfect. I like to remind people of that. But the power of God, and the power of God's spirit works in me mightily, as Paul talked about, and I do know that.

**...who was on the Isle that was called Patmos for the word of God and for the testimony/the witness of Jesus Christ. I was in the spirit on the LORD'S day...** so whatever that means; it was though he was able to see. He was right there! We know he was on the Isle of Patmos, physically he was there on the Isle of Patmos, but spiritually, whatever God gave to him in his mind, of something he was able to see, of things he was able to experience we can't fully grasp because we've never experienced anything like that. The closest we can get to maybe is seeing something like a Hologram, be able to see something like that, but to see everything in that way in your mind really goes beyond what man can do because it was real to him. How do you explain something like that you've never seen or experienced? And so it shows a period of time that he was able to see and go into and things that he was able to witness of and write down and record, and this is basically some of the things he's talking about, things that would lead up to the end of time.

**I was in the spirit on the LORD'S day and heard behind me a great voice as of a trumpet, saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last; what you see write in a book and send it unto the seven Churches which are in Asia, unto Ephesus, unto Smyrna, to Pergamus, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea;** so those are the seven Churches in that particular region of the world. So He says, **write these in a book and send them** to those Churches. **And I turned to see the voice that spoke to me. And being turned I saw seven gold lamp stands;** so he was seeing different things as he's going along here. Again, we can only try to imagine to a point what he was seeing, in his mind, turning and viewing something.

**And in the midst of the seven lamp stands one like unto the Son of man,** so it's talking about Christ. When it goes back and talks about 'Alpha and Omega', when you even look at the word in the terms and how it's used here, again, specific things that are being given that I want to come back to in a moment. But again, it talks about a beginning and it talks about an end. He is the beginning of God's plan for His Family. That's what it's about. It's not talking about how He has eternally existed; it has *nothing* to do with that. He's talking about His role, His purpose, His function, and He's the end of that plan for God's Family until it's accomplished. And that's why it even talks about at the end of that plan He turns everything back to God the Father, those scriptures we have read about in times past, "It's complete." When the Kingdom of God is a reality and everything has been accomplished at the end of the hundred years.

**Verse 12 – And I turned and saw...** talks about these seven golden lamp stands, **and in the midst of the seven golden lamp stands,** again, **one like unto the Son of man,** speaking of Christ, **clothed with a long robe with a gold sash across His chest. And His head and His hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and His eyes were like a flame of fire;** describing something that God let him see on a spiritual type of plane, something, again, we don't fully grasp nor comprehend because we've never seen it. And so he's trying to describe these things in a physical way of what he sees.

**And His feet were like fine brass as if they were burning in a furnace; and His voice was as the sound of many waters.** This is not a physical type of picture of when Jesus Christ walked on the earth, but a spiritual one, as in the spirit world of things he could see in a physical manifestation, the best representation of something on a physical plane.

**And He had in His right hand seven stars:** seven stars - should know what stars are. Traditional Christianity talks about stars used in one place with the world... you think, how? Use just a little bit of thinking... but anyway, people don't do those things. Like this star that was supposed to have been over Bethlehem, and you look up in the sky and how can one have this little pointed light that just goes down on a little town. It's really quite ridiculous because they think it's talking about a literal physical star. And how do you get a big star, a sun, to come down so close above the earth? The earth would burn up! But anyway, there's this idea of this little star in the sky and these wise men are able to go there because they come to the town of Bethlehem because this is where this light is coming down. It's not about that at all, it's talking about an angel that told them, that revealed to them that that's where the location was and showed the way, revealed to them the way. And so again here, stars are used to sometimes, in that which is prophetic especially, show that which is an angelic being.

In this case here John says, **in His right hand**, in His power, **seven stars**, and **out of His mouth went a sharp two edged sword**: not a physical sword, not a literal sword; talking about the Word of God, the power that's given to Him, all the truth, all the Word, the Logos made flesh, and then becoming spirit, eternal, in God's Family. ...and **His countenance was as the sun shining in its strength**. And **when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as lifeless**. And **He laid His right hand upon me**, all of his strength, when he saw this it was as though his strength went out of his body and he just collapsed, **saying to me....**

So **He laid His right hand upon me saying to me, Do not fear; for I am the first/the foremost**, in other words the word here is 'chief', first in other words of God's plan in Elohim, **and the last**, again here, a different expression here, as of 'the final or end' of the plan, 'the completion' of the plan. Just like how the expression 'Alpha and Omega' talks about a beginning and an end. There are titles that God has given to Jesus Christ, but they're not always exactly the same, obviously, 'King'; God is described as the King throughout the Old Testament, and yet He gives that title to His Son to be King of kings. Yahweh is described as LORD in the Old Testament over and over again and yet He gives that title to His Son, Lord of lords, because of everything He gives to Jesus Christ – all power, *all* to accomplish His plan in mankind until everyone becomes that is going to become, a part of God's Family. And so again, especially these verses here, this verse very much focusing in on Jesus Christ.

**I am He who lives, and was dead; and, behold**, in other words was alive, better expressed in tense here, **and was dead; and behold I am alive for evermore**, We understand the process. **Amen; and I have the keys of hell and of death**. Meaning the grave. **I have the keys of the grave and of the death**. So what is this talking about? What does it mean 'the keys'? What keys are you talking about? 'I have the keys', the way to unlock, the way to open something? Very simple. In Matthew 16:19 Christ said to His disciples, referring to the Church that would follow, that He would give unto them the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven. Same thing, both are basically saying the same thing – the keys to the Kingdom of Heaven. What is the Kingdom of Heaven? The Kingdom is always referring to that, when it comes to God's plan and purpose, the Kingdom of God, the Kingdom of Heaven shows the source of it, where it's coming from, it comes from God Almighty. It is the Kingdom of God, it's God's Kingdom. What is His Kingdom? All of His people and His Family! It's His Kingdom! Jesus Christ is King of kings; it's God's Kingdom and we're able to become a part of that. It is basic understanding that in time God gave to Mr. Armstrong to give to the Church. Has to do with the truths that God gave to the Church. And so again, both are saying the same thing; as Christ has revealed 'the way' if you will, beyond just living in a physical life, in human life once, or even a second time, but talking about the ability to become a part of God's Family. Jesus Christ is the key, has the key, if you will, because it's through Him, He's our Passover, He's our High Priest, He's our Saviour, and so He has to give to us, if we will receive them, everything that's needed to become a part of God's Kingdom, a part of God's Family.

So again, very basic things here. And so what does that mean? The way into God's Family, into eternal life? The keys to prevent what otherwise you would have in life, death – hell as it talks about here, the grave and eternal death unless Jesus Christ is in your life, or a part of your life.

**Verse 19 - Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be after this;** He's going to be writing things that he sees, the things which, as it says here, **the things which are**, the things which are already happening – because he's going to be writing things to the Church of Ephesus to start with. It's already been there for several decades already and he's going to write a message to them, to what's continuing on, because by this time the Church had gone through a lot and by this time the world was in, beyond this even, great turmoil in what was taking place, a great deal of turmoil that was happening in the Roman Empire, a great deal of turmoil that had been happening for some time, persecution and so forth for the Church and why the Church was being scattered and moved in so many areas even at that time.

**Verse 20 - The mystery of the seven stars which you saw in My right hand, and the seven golden lamp stands is that the seven stars are the angels of the seven Churches:** and we understand and have taught in times past, understanding that angels can mean literally an angel of God, a spirit being, or it can be a word that means 'messenger' as well that's used sometimes in translation. But the point being in this case here in how it's used, literally the angels are messengers. They are ones who are given charge to do certain things at certain times. They have a work to do at a specific period of time that they have been moulded and fashioned and trained for, and God gives them a responsibility. And so there are things within that which we don't grasp, we don't know, God hasn't told us how those things are done, but again, a part of what's given then is part of a process here that works in and through Jesus Christ, even within the angelic realm that is in Jesus Christ's control. It says He has this power, it's in His hands. The seven stars are in His hands, meaning power, He has the control and they do what He tells them, what He gives to them.

Again here **...the seven stars which you saw in My right hand, and the seven golden lamp stands is that the seven stars are the angels of the seven Churches; and the seven lamp stands which you saw are the seven Churches.** So again here, that which He was able to see and showing what it represents, of things that were to follow here.

**Revelation 2:1** – Let's just read this verse, this is the beginning of the message for the first period of time for the Church - **Unto the angel of the Church of Ephesus write;** so in other words this is the era of Ephesus, the period of time of however long that would last, **These things says He who holds the seven stars in His right hand,** Jesus Christ, He holds them. Again, a word that depicts He has them in His hand, it's a matter of power, it's a matter of authority. **...who walks in the midst of the seven golden lamp stands;** Through time He walks in their midst, He's going to lead and guide the Church through the next period of time until all the eras are over with and He continues to walk in the midst of the Church because that's where He is, that's where His work is, in the Church, the Body of Christ, *the* Church of God.

Let's move forward now to the fifth era, the era of Sardis. The sermon today is entitled *The Death of Sardis*, to understand something that took place here, not all of which we fully know because of so much that's lost in time, so much that's been lost in history, so much that candidly even the Catholic church has destroyed. So much that it has today they will not let anyone go into and even read certain things that they have and so forth. They don't want man to learn too much.

**Revelation 3:1 - And unto the angel of the Church in Sardis write;** so this was to the Sardis Church. Everyone had a message but this is prophetic for a period of time, an era of time. **These things says He who has**, again that Greek word that has a strong meaning here of power, **He has/He holds**, that's what it means, it's a word that means 'that holds', having to do with power to reveal, in this case, to reveal and warn the seven Churches. He holds this power. **These things says He who has the seven spirits of God**, God *gave* to Him the message, the power that's contained in seven specific messages, if you will, spirit of knowledge, of understanding, of revelation. And that's what it's referring to here, not about beings but about this power that He holds, that He knows what's going to take place in these eras. He's going to be working with these eras. He knows what they need. God is giving Him, equipped Him with everything He needs to work with every age, knowing full well what every age is going to go through well ahead of time. God gave that prophecy through Him and so He holds those within His power, will be working with those eras in what they go through, leading and guiding and directing those who will respond and yield to Him through that period of time. And so that's what it's referring to.

...**and the seven stars**; makes a distinction here, they are different, the angelic beings. So there's seven spirits, in essence, and there are seven specific angels here that are going to be assigned things as well under Jesus Christ.

Here is the message specifically to Sardis: **I know your works**, *long* before it ever came to pass Jesus Christ knew, because God gave it, God gave what would happen in time to different eras, knowing full well what they would go through because of conditions in the world, knowing full well what would happen because of even the power and governments and other things that God was going to work out in time to *bring about* governments on the earth. As a whole, Satan is the god of this world, but God has moulded and fashioned certain things through time to bring about certain kingdoms and bring them down at certain times and allow them to rise up at certain times in order to accomplish His will for mankind, for mankind to learn through those things.

Again, the power of God to bring about, to prepare, to mould and fashion; He has moulded and fashioned long before His creation started, 7100 years of history, of time for man to live through, knowing full well what He was going to allow upon the earth. Because God knows what happens in the mind of man under every condition, under every circumstance of life. Awesome! And there are those things for the future, and yet God gives to each individual human being free moral agency through all this process. It's more complicated because we're so puny. It's difficult for us to grasp the magnitude of how grand, how great, how mighty it truly is, the process whereby God works with us. There's so much for us that we will learn through time, and God continues to give to us more and more and He will continue to do so through time.

**I know your works.** So Jesus Christ *knew*, powerfully so, and this is the message now being given; **I know your works**, before it was ever happening, and so when they came on the scene finally... God knew when certain technology came along, when God allowed... God has *held back* and has not just held back but man couldn't have it anyway. There are certain things about even technology that man can't have until God allows it, just as much as man having access to His spirit. There are things of understanding, of knowledge, of abilities that man can only go so far. *Why* did it take 5,800 years, 5,900 years to get to where we are today? *Why* did it take 5,980-90 – whatever it is today... because we don't know the exact timing and the exact years and how God fills it all in within a full 7,100 years.

My point being, what took us so long to get to the point today where I could have a little device here and there's a tower out here and today I can get on a 4G network? Terminology and language that's

unique to us that 2 years ago was not common... there were some who knew it was coming, there were some who were working on it. Let's go back 5 years – What's a 3G network? What's a 4G network? I'm not even sure I'm expressing it right. But again here, why did it take so long? God has allowed man to have what he's been given in stages of time, allowed people to come along with minds given the capacity to learn things, to know things, to develop things.

Why didn't Einstein pop up 400 years ago? Why didn't that mind pop up 4,000 years ago? Do you think it's possible that God Almighty *gave him the ability and the mind that he had? Absolutely! It didn't come from Einstein!* Why would it have taken *so long* in time for someone to finally pop up to do what he did? Because *God has granted mankind the ability to have an age that he has at the last hundred years, to see more things take place.* Mr. Armstrong lived in a time when he would talk about that because it so moved him, of things he saw. By the time the thirties came along he was able to start heading across the country with his family in a vehicle, having the ability to change his own tires and patch his own tires, because you know they just didn't have a Shell™ or a BP™ at every corner in every town along the way. And so He began to trek across the country doing things that he had to do and saw this technology of jets come along and transportation and communication and all these things that benefitted God's plan and purpose because of the work the Church was going to do as well. And on and on it went through time.

That's why if Mr. Armstrong were living today, was resurrected today, and I was to show him some of the things I'm doing he would be moved...to think he could write a book on a computer? To think that he could set it up to be printed on the computer? Send it to a printing house and the next day the presses would be going with his book and not have to have a huge staff, a huge department at headquarters to do all this for him? ...that he could do that all by himself? And then I know there'd be more following. He'd probably say, "And why aren't you doing more?" Because he would have been doing more than what I'm doing, because of him, because of who he was, because of how God moulded and fashioned him. But God prepared him for his time and He prepared me for this time. So it's how God works with us. It's different because we have a different job to do. God didn't want more out there at this time, He wanted what's currently out there to be available. He works with us in powerful ways.

We're going to learn through time that which God has granted mankind when He opens up doors of technology, when He's opened up those doors as well, that the timing of certain things be revealed. A formula... a mathematical formula! A mathematician going back 400 years, 500 years, and all of a sudden through time certain things began to develop at certain times because other things began to be unlocked, that God began to grant mankind. And all of a sudden we're living in a different world because of what God allowed, knowing how long it would take man when things began to be given to develop and get into another stage. We're *exactly* where God intended us to be with technology. We're exactly where God intended we'd be able to be. Not a hundred years before this, not a thousand years before this – God moulds and fashions everything perfectly. That ought to dumbfound you! We aren't out here doing everything on our own, man isn't, not by any stretch of the imagination.

Just like this country, we have our greatness because God gave it to us on a silver platter, this nation. *He* made it what it is; we didn't make it what it is. God opened up the door to fulfil prophecy given to a tribe of Israel at the final time, Manasseh. Awesome the power of God, the might of God to mould and fashion the minds of human beings to one day be a part of His eternal Family. That's why it's so foolish to resist Him, to be antichrist, to fight against God, to fight against the purpose of God, what God wants to give to us. And yet mankind will; 'the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life' will resist God's spirit. We have to choose to enter into that battle and stay in that battle and recognize

where the greater value is. And that's a part of growing. It's a beautiful, beautiful process that I can't even begin to describe in words. It has to be experienced.

**I know your works that you have a name that you live**, in other words that reflects that you're alive. That's what He's talking about here. ...**but you are dead**. So again, the name that they had reflected that they were alive because it was God's name. It's one of the three truths that Sardis had by the end of Sardis, not at the beginning. It doesn't say that Sardis only had three truths from the beginning to the end. That's why God had to bring along an individual to give life to the Church again through truth being revealed, through truth being restored to the Church once again, by calling Mr. Armstrong. Because by the time Mr. Armstrong was called on the scene the existence now of Sardis and what it was at this point in time was indeed spiritually dead and had only three basic truths remaining; and that's why we zero in on the three truths. That's why God used Mr. Armstrong then to begin restoring truth to the Church. But when Sardis began we don't know how much truth they had, but they had more than this. You have to be careful of your thinking sometimes. How long did the period last? We really don't know.

Thyatira was the longest period of time, went beyond a thousand years. It was the longest era, Laodicea one of the shortest. I *think* Pergamus was the shortest if my memory serves me correct. I wasn't planning on this today. We know how long Philadelphia lasted, as long as Mr. Armstrong did. When Mr. Armstrong died it was over with, so it was a little bit shorter than Ephesus. In time Laodicea came along, a relatively short period of time, perhaps the second shortest in span. But again here, at what point did Sardis start? We don't know, but looking at what God says here it may well have been at a particular time period when the printing press began to roll and when things began to change in Europe, when Luther began to speak up and things began to happen at that time with the Bible, when other religions besides one main one began to come on the scene. That did cause a huge struggle within God's Church, and a big problem within God's Church, and I believe with all my being that's exactly when it was. But on what exact date? I don't know but somewhere in that time period when that change began to take place. When you have Luther, Calvin and others come along that had teachings that began to go against the Catholic church. They began to teach something different here. And after a while there was this independence from the Catholic church and it began to spread like wildfire and it was a *big problem* for God's Church, when people could begin having greater access to different ideas; something that wasn't out there before and something that opposed the Catholic church. And it began to pull at people in God's Church. It was just a natural sequence.

That's why when you begin to see what God has done through seven eras, or through time with God's people, with His people, knowing the condition of the world at that time, there are things that man responds to in a certain way, there are ways that people react in a certain way. It's just like what would happen to Laodicea when they came to a point when they were rich and increased with goods physically and spiritually in the world. God knew what would happen in Laodicea to people when so much truth was already restored in the Church, in a world that had technology booming and the things that Mr. Armstrong already accomplished in Worldwide. God knew what man would do. And so it's their natural response to conditions that are around them that God gave these things, and gave these warnings of things they would have to guard against. And that's exactly what He says, let's notice.

So with Sardis, a name; Church of God. That was a big truth that they had at that particular time. God's people have to carry His name, the Church, the Ecclesia (it's the Greek word). It sometimes is translated as 'assembly', sometimes it's 'church or congregation', but it's actually a compound word from words that have to do with being called, or the word 'called' and 'out from'. Called out from; we know that! God calls us out of the world, there's a calling He gives to us. Sometimes it's translated in some Bibles as

an invitation. That's what God *calls* us into, the Church; until He begins to call us and draw us by the power of His spirit we can't know the truth, because it takes His spirit. And so He begins to call us, open up our minds to certain truths, and eventually His plan is then when He's drawing us He takes us to His Church where we're given to Jesus Christ. That's why Jesus Christ said, "No man can come to Me except God the Father draw him." And so then we're given to Jesus Christ, the Church of God, the Body of Christ. But God's Church, God's people have always carried His name, the Church of God, the Called out of God. God does the calling!

Hold your place here in Revelation, but let's just notice this here in John 17, because on the day of His death He spoke of this very thing. This is on that Passover night as He was teaching His disciples. I thought it'd be good to read some of this in context.

**John 17:11 – And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I will come to You,** this is to the Father, **I will come to You**, so He was going to God the Father, He wasn't there yet. He knew the day that He was going to die and the events that would take place. **Holy Father, keep through Your own name** - What is that? God, Church of God, Called out of God. That's what He was talking about here. It's referring to what God has done through time with His own people. The congregation of Israel was the Church of God in one respect; the congregation of God in the wilderness. They weren't a spiritual congregation, they were a physical carnal congregation, but they were God's because they were God's people, God worked with them, so they were referred to as those, in essence if you had it in the Greek language there, the Called out of God, the Congregation, the Assembly of God in the Wilderness. That's what they're referred to throughout the Old Testament and referred to in the New Testament when it refers back to them in that language. It uses the same word.

Now it's a spiritual thing because it has to do with the Church but back then, with those in the wilderness, they also carried God's name, in that respect, they were His people. The rest of the world wasn't called to be His nation of people to be worked with and so forth. But now here is the spiritual Church or Body of people, a congregation that He was working with, called out. They were also called out, made separate from the rest of the tribes of the world, Israel was.

Christ is speaking in a very spiritual manner now when it's talking about this, and so He says, **keep through Your own name**, so we still bear God's name but now it's a spiritual one, but it's still the Called out of God, the Congregation of God. **...keep through Your own name those whom You have given Me, that they may be one, as we are.** Of the same Logos, to be one. That's how you become one with the Word, the truth, the way of God. **While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Your name: those whom You gave Me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled.**

**Verse 14 – notice – I have given them Your Word, and the world has failed to love them**, in other words they've hated them, as it says there. That's how far man goes, to where it really is a deep rooted hatred and bitterness and anger and disgust and disdain that the world has. But it just talks about how the world is not able to love that which comes from God and it didn't love them, **because they are not of the world even as I am not of the world. I do not pray for them that You would take them out of the world, but that you would keep them from the evil**, in context here in part, **from the evil one....**but from evil.

**They are not of the world even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them**, powerful, talking about keeping them in God's name through time, the Church of God, the Body of Christ. That's why every

apostle in scripture referred to the *Church of God*, God's Church, the Congregation, the Assembly, the Called Out Ones of God. We bear God's name from the very beginning; a very basic truth isn't it?

**Sanctify them through Your truth;** that's what separates God's people from the world, sanctification. And that means so much more because it means 'set apart for holy use and purpose', that's what sanctify does, sanctify them for God, set them apart for God's use and purpose. And that's what we are, we're set apart from the world for holy use and purpose. That's what we're in the Church for, we're being moulded and fashioned into the God Family. And so He says, **Sanctify them through Your truth, Your Word is truth,** and so it begins in a very powerful way, the name of the Church. You know, I think about that and I think about the rest of the world. I consider people who resist that simple truth; Baptists, Seventh Day Adventist, Pentecostals of any kind, Methodists, Lutheran, doesn't matter who it is, Catholic, none of them. Doesn't say, The Presbyterian Church of God, they're just Presbyterians. They don't have God's name in it. Now a few have God's name, but not that many, and that's another matter as just having the name does not mean it is God's true Church.

And so one of the big things that separates us from the world is that we bear God's name. We don't bear the name of some individual. We're not Luther-ans. We don't belong to *Luther*, he's dead, he didn't have the truth. We don't belong to some methodology of religion, you start talking about the Catholic church and some of the stuff they go through and their catechisms and everything else, so I'm glad they don't bear God's name.

But you think, if you start looking for God's Church, just in a carnal, human way, and you read some scriptures in the Bible, you read the book of Acts... why did it stop bearing God's name? At what point? And so sadly there is a group that does call themselves 'Church of God', a big organization that's Pentecostal in much of their practice and so forth, and they observe Sunday. So this is only one of many truths to show where God's Church is, that sets us apart from others in the world. But I think of all these others....

I think of people listening to me today that still belong to another church. Why? What is it? Because we hear things once in a while, we know of things once in a while, sometimes you let us know out there where you are and what you're doing. I think – Why? Why do you hold back? Why do you resist God? That's a part of coming to understand your human nature. Is it because of your husband? Is it because of your wife? Is it because of your children? Is it because of your parents? Why do you continue to resist God and not accept where God must be working? ...in *His* Church. One of the first things you have to come to admit and acknowledge is it has to carry His name. It has to be one of them!

**Revelation 3:2 - Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die:** so here is Sardis, it comes on the scene following after Thyatira, it has truths that they have been given. They've come through a period of time from Thyatira but they're being thrust into a new age, the beginning of a new age, and they have a big warning up front. See, I know when this began! Again, it begins when this freedom of religion began in the world, because that of God's Church at *that* time in *that* environment, coming out of the environment they were in before, through all the hundreds of years in Thyatira, all of a sudden to be thrust into an age of 'freedom of religion' different from the Catholic church. All the problems they've had in fighting and resisting... it's one thing to fight against a big body like that and be persecuted by it and flee to where you have to go, or whatever you have to do through time for people to continue in this way of life, but all of a sudden for these things to begin influencing you? It's easier to gravitate toward that.

I understand that now because of what we went through in Laodicea with the apostasy; and that's exactly what took place in time. And after a while, more and more, the truth began to wane, the truth began to go by the wayside, the truth began to be *lost*, see, because people took upon themselves in God's Church something they shouldn't have taken upon themselves – pride – 'teacher-itis' – beginning to think *they* knew something beyond what God had given to them. And that is the *exact warning* given to Sardis.

Now you see, when I mentioned that all seven attitudes have existed in God's Church through all the past 2,000 years in God's Church...I have seen this. I have seen that spirit and attitude, but it's not the predominant attitude that has existed at different times. That wasn't the predominant attitude by any measure during Philadelphia, but it existed in part in times because of human nature. And so did it exist during Laodicea, and at one point Laodicea became rampant and is in large part a part of the incredible scattering, of the mindset that's there, because of this kind of mentality in thinking, that kind of a spirit that can work. But the predominant spirit was still one of Laodicea during our past.

He says, **be watchful**; that means to be spiritually alert and on guard. We've talked about that many times and we'll go back to these scriptures in Matthew 24 in a moment. So again, He says, **be watchful**; so right at the very beginning here the message to Sardis is "Be careful! Be careful of what you're now going into! There's a period of time you're entering into that's different from the past, that's different from other admonitions that have been given to different times and different Church eras; a message for you that you need to be careful of!" **and strengthen the things which remain**; whenever you're called, because this is a long period of time, Sardis lasted for a few hundred years at least, and the farther they go along the *worse it became*. The worse it became by the time that Europe began to come to the United States, *freedom of religion*, that was a large part of the thrust of some people leaving Europe, to come to the United States where different religious groups could take their freedom and get away from the Catholic church, get away from the Church of England, who got away from the Catholic church because a king couldn't have his way when it came to adultery and killing off his wives and different things like that. The things that have happened through time; absolutely incredible!

And so He's warning them, **be watchful, be spiritually alert, be spiritually on guard**; that means to be close to God, that means to watch closely what He's getting ready to tell you. That means stay close to God, be repentant, strive to change, strive to learn what you can, and *hold onto*, **strengthen the things that remain that are ready to die**. He's giving a powerful warning here! Strengthen them! Don't just hold on to them, build upon them, make them strong in your life, whatever truth you have!

**...that are ready to die, for I have not found your works perfect before God**. We just talked about that, works, perfection, growing in perfection of what you have, of what you must live, of what you must apply to your life. You have to live it, and there are certain things here that the vast majority began to quit living as a part of their practice. And that becomes more a part of the warning here as we go along, of what God told them. It's really powerful what He told them. So what they were living and doing was far from the process of perfection working in them; on the contrary, they didn't listen, they were not watchful as a whole. Some were, they began to let down overall because the message is an overall spirit and attitude of the entire Church, but not everyone did through this period of time. Some did strive to hold fast, primarily those whom God was working with to teach the others, but I'll come back to that later here.

Let's turn over to Matthew 24 because there's a powerful message contained here. We've gone through these things, talked about these things, but each time God gives us a little bit more, to grasp a

little bit more, to see a little bit more. Just by coming to understand Sardis you can grow in understanding of human nature, you can grow in understanding about certain attitudes and spirits that *you* have to watch. Again, *all seven spirits* existed, because they're human tendencies, and there are warnings along that line and there are right things to do that God commends, that Jesus Christ commended to John for the Church that are good, that are right. There are others that are warnings, because God loves the Church, He wants to protect it and help people, and help them to understand what your battles are. The more you come to understand what your battles are the more equipped you are to fight them, or can be more fully equipped to fight the dangers that exist.

And look at what we did in Laodicea...boy, what an incredible example of the eras. We were warned, we were told, we didn't get it, still happened; still happened because God allowed it to happen for a purpose in a very powerful way. An apostasy that affected every person in God's Church; something that's hard sometimes for people who are scattered, for every person to come to understand they were spewed out...every person, not just a few, everyone was spewed out of God's mouth. That means removed from the Body of Christ, and why? Sin cuts you off from the holy spirit, and it came to a point where God just uses the word, it's vomit, spewed out, just couldn't have it in Him anymore. He couldn't be in it and He wouldn't let it be in Him anymore, and He brought some people to repentance through that process.

I'm thankful for that, that God did that, otherwise I wouldn't be here. He helped me to see a part of what we were going through or otherwise I wouldn't be able to see it. Only because He had a purpose in what He was going to do, not because I was better than anyone else. On the contrary, I wasn't, and neither was anyone else who came through that.

**Matthew 24:36** – warning after warning after warning...and here's one of the primary warnings that Jesus Christ gave to *everyone* in the Church, but now in Sardis it's even focused upon more, that this is what you need to do! This is a major problem with you and this is what's going to happen because of what you're living through. **But of that day and hour knows no man, no, not the angels in heaven, but My Father only.** Now, we've gone through this recently, and because of that you can grasp more now of what's being said here than you could have before. We can understand things here in Matthew in a way that we couldn't before, because as I was talking, how do you tell someone in a radio interview when they say, talking about Jesus Christ's coming, and they say, "Yes, but the Bible says 'no man knows the day or the hour'." I can't say, "That's just a Protestant teaching, they don't understand what they're talking about." And it would take me too long to explain it because I used a sermon to explain that to the Church, so I don't have that long in an interview to tell them what it means. So the best thing I can do is tell them the next thing, "Yes, but...." which is true, "God reveals His truth through His prophets, and it's time so He's revealing it through His prophets before a thing is done." And it's true. But that's not what this is about, but they ask that in a physical plane so I answer it in a term that only they can understand in that manner, if they could understand it.

And so this here, again, is not talking about a future time of Jesus Christ's return when He's going to come as a thief in the night at some eventual time at the very end. That's not what it's talking about, like we talked about in that sermon. And so this is the context here of what's being discussed, because it happens to Sardis. It's the warning for Sardis! It's a big warning for Sardis!

Dropping on down to **verse 42 - Watch therefore:** so if it was about the end of the age why would Jesus Christ tell His people through time to *watch*? **Watch therefore: for you don't know what hour your Lord does come.** Well, what does that mean for Ephesus? What does that mean for Thyatira over a

thousand years ago? What does that mean for the different ages and time for God's people? Why warn them? Why not just say, "This is for the end-time and the end-time only." Because it is a part of the prophecy here that talks about the end-time, so people think and take it into consideration and then think that this is just talking about the end-time; but that's not what it's saying here.

**Watch therefore: for you don't know what hour your Lord does come. But know this, that if the good man of the house had known in what watch...** see, the term 'watch' was used like hours of the night, you know, from 6:00 on until 6:00 in the morning. It was a watch because they had to have sentries or guards in the gates of cities, or whatever, sometimes literally to watch for enemies, other things that took place, and so the term watch came along. But it had to do with the night watches one hour at a time.

So He says, **if you'd known at what hour/what watch of the night a thief would have come**, is going to break into your house, that's what He's saying here, paraphrasing, if you know what time he was going to come you would have watched, you'd have been alert to it, **and would not have suffered or allowed the house to be broken into**, and things be stolen and taken out of it. **Therefore be you also ready**, you don't know the hour so you have to watch through the night. And God's people are called in the night; we're not called in the day. We're called in the night in this world as far as this world is concerned. That's the kind of world we live in, in darkness; God brings us to the light. He begins to reveal the light to us.

And so again here, things that we go through and learn that have to do with that which is given physically, as a physical example, an analogy here of something we're to learn spiritually. **Therefore be you also ready for in such an hour as you think not the Son of Man comes.** The point being is when you get to that point in your mind and your thinking, that's when He's coming – if you understand what it means.

**Who then is a faithful and wise servant;** See, that's what it takes to be watchful, to be faithful. That means God gives you things to believe and you live by faith then, you incorporate it into your life. It's not enough just to believe the truth, it's not enough that God open up your mind to let you believe the truth about the Sabbath, the Holy Days, tithing, all the laws, all the things that go along with that, and then that's where it ends. No, because you've got to live it then. That's where faith comes in. Faith is living by what you believe, given to believe, the works, that's what the work is.

The world says that they're not saved by works and yet what they believe is going to a church service on Sunday. Well, not too many go anymore, but they believe that's the day you should go if you decide to go and listen for 10 or 15 minutes, if you put yourself through that horrible length of time. And so people in the world and in society, when they go to a church building, this is a part of their mind and they believe that it should be Sunday. That's their works; their works show that's what faith is. They don't even understand that. Their works reveal what they believe. They keep Christmas because... it's works! They say, "We don't live by works." Yes you do you, liars! Lying, lying, lying through your teeth, stained teeth from the inside out with lies because that's exactly what you do! Double-speak. Why judge me, why judge us as a Church? We keep the Sabbath. "Oh that was done away with, that was nailed to the cross. You can't be saved by works." Then why do you do works? Well, you get to the point where you don't, I know, you don't have to go to church on Sunday. Why do you keep Christmas? Why do you keep Easter? Liars! But they don't understand that in themselves.

Their works reflect, their doing reflects what they believe. So do ours, our works, what we do, that's what determines whether or not we're living by faith, by what God has given us to believe. So, **Who then is a faithful and wise servant**, faithful; when it comes to using the word faith that means you're living, you're working, you're applying what you have been given to believe. You're living it, that's what makes you faithful! If you're not, you begin with certain things to believe and you stop doing them then you're not faithful any longer, you're not living by the belief, the truth that God has given you to see and understand, and you become antichrist then.

**...faithful and wise servant**, God attributes this as a matter of wisdom, wise, **whom his lord has made him ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season? Blessed is that servant whom his Lord, when He comes, shall find so doing**. It's a word that means 'practicing' – living. That's what it's about. So whatever we've been given to believe we practice it, we live it and He says blessed are those whom He finds are doing it.

And so God's giving a warning here of things that Sardis should do, and if they don't do it, if they don't respond to it, then Jesus Christ is going to come in an hour that they think not. They become weak. For them, it's what we've talked about in times past. It's talking about when you come to that point in your life where for you - it doesn't matter when you lived in the past 2,000 years - if you come to a point where, because of not being a faithful and wise servant and because of not living this way of life, and not changing and growing in what God has given to you, Jesus Christ has come for you at that time. You are no longer a part of the Body, your time has come, your day has come. That's what it talks about when it talks about Him coming as a thief in the night – everything you have will be taken from you. I have seen it over and over and over again in God's Church. *Thankfully*, for the vast majority they haven't committed the unpardonable sin, they're just asleep...thankfully. But it's a very dangerous state because it can lead to the other state as well.

So again here, a horrible state to be in when you begin to be spiritually sluggish, begin to fall asleep, and what can happen to the mind; and thankfully it's not for that long a period of time, so that they can remain in sleep and not get to the point where it goes beyond that to that which can't be repented of in a resurrection, in the Great White Throne, because that's where the vast majority of those who've been a part of Worldwide are going to be, at the Great White Throne. They're going to be resurrected, and at that time they're going to be awakened back to a physical life, but also to a spiritual awakening. That's when their shock comes, like my shock came after the apostasy and God woke me up at that time. It's a spiritual matter for God to wake you up; because if you fall asleep spiritually God has to wake you up as much as He did when He first called you to draw you into the Church. To wake you up from the spiritual sleep, only God can do it, you can't because you're asleep.

And so it's an incredible process here of what's being revealed because the one is: 'I will come upon you as a thief in the night' and He says you don't know the day or the hour that's going to happen. The warning: it's not about a future return, it's about how you live your life in the Church. You don't want Him to come as a thief in the night; you don't want to have everything taken from you.

When the apostasy occurred – dumbfounding – our phone bill at that time, we didn't have flat rates you could go by for a month or whatever, at that time you were charged so much per minute you were on the telephone, and we had phone bills into the hundreds of dollars at that period of time. \$500 one month just being on the phone with other ministers trying to work out things, trying to discuss things with other brethren and so forth, trying to reason with different ones in things that were taking place and not knowing what was happening, why it was happening after Mr. Tkach did what he did. Trying to

understand there's got to be an organization that comes out of this that's different, something has to be done, someone has to move, do something. All that we were going through in trying to work with people – what was amazing was one of the truths of God – Ezekiel 5, Ezekiel 20 - that's been fulfilled in the Church at the end-time, the scattering that took place. Almost immediately one third of the Church was gone. They believed the lies and deceit! If they came out of that, they went back to Protestantism in thinking.

A thief came in the night, no longer did God grant them His spirit, no longer did God grant them the ability to hold onto what they had, and so everything they had was taken from them. Some went back to Christmas so easily, went back to eating pork so easily; things that most of the time when people left the Church at least they took some pride, they'd say, "Yeah, but..." children that would leave when they got older, "Yeah, but I've never eaten pork." Oooo - whoop-tee-doo! Don't keep God's Sabbath anymore "...but I *never* ate pork." Because it's a very physical thing to them. And there are people in the scattered group that started eating pork right away, starting going out and eating shrimp..."Oh, free at last! Don't have to have these harsh laws on us now! I can go back and eat shrimp, I've longed for that..." longed to have those pots back there in Egypt when we could smell the stew from so far away and the meat roasting there in the pots... just loved that. Same sort of attitude that the Israelites had when they left Egypt. *Longed* for the past; now we don't have this harsh freedom of God over us anymore.

The human mind is an amazing thing, isn't it? It's an amazing process of what we go through, what we learn and I'll try to get back to talking about some of this apostasy thing, what took place, learn more from that.

We're going to continue next Sabbath with this series entitled *The Death of Sardis*.

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