

The Spoken Word



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Resume Of Seven Church Ages

WILLIAM MARRION BRANHAM

and this is the age of restoration, it is the age of the finished cycle. With this, it is all over.

So we conclude the Seven Church Ages, saying only what the Spirit said to each age, "He that hath an ear let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches."

I sincerely believe that the Spirit of God has been speaking to us, not only teaching us the truths of the ages, but He has been faithfully dealing with hearts that they may turn to Him. That is the reason for all preaching and teaching, for it is in the preaching and teaching of the Word that the sheep hear the voice of God and follow Him.

Not for one moment do I bring a message to the people that they may follow me, or join my church, or start some fellowship and organization. I have never done that and will not do that now. I have no interest in those things, but I do have an interest in the things of God and people, and if I can accomplish just one thing I will be satisfied. That one thing is to see established a true spiritual relationship between God and men, wherein men become new creations in Christ, filled with His Spirit and live according to His Word. I would invite, plead and warn all to hear His voice at this time, and yield your lives completely to Him, even as I trust in my heart that I have given my all to Him. God bless you, and may His coming rejoice your heart.

(Excerpt from An Exposition Of The Seven Church Ages, page 366-381)

Resume Of Seven Church Ages

Due to the fact that our studies have been a verse by verse exposition of those Scriptures that deal with the seven ages, we have not set forth a continuous historical pattern of the church as much as we ought to have done. It is, therefore, our purpose now to take this chapter, and beginning with the Ephesian Age trace through all ages the church and her history as given to John by the Spirit of God. We will not be adding new material as much as correlating what we already have.

From our studies we have already learned that much of the Revelation is totally misunderstood because we have not formerly known that the 'church' spoken of and spoken to in this book does not refer to the pure 'ekklesia' the 'elect', the 'body of Christ', the 'bride', but it speaks to the entire body of people who are called Christians, whether they be true or merely nominal. As all Israel is NOT Israel, so all Christians are NOT Christians. Thus we learned that the church is made up of two vines, the true and the false. The two vines are motivated by two kinds of spirits; one has the Holy Spirit while the other is endowed with the spirit of antichrist. Both claim to know and be known of God. Both purport to speak for God. Both believe certain very basic truths and differ on others. But since both bear the name of the Lord, being called Christ-ians, and by such name-bearing obviously claim a relationship to Him (God calls it marriage), God now holds them both responsible to Him and therefore speaks to each.

We further learned that these two vines would grow side by side until the end of the ages when both would come to maturity and both be harvested. The false vine would not

overcome and destroy the true vine, but then, neither would the true vine be able to bring the false vine into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ.

We learned the most amazing truth that the Holy Spirit could and would fall upon the unregenerate false vine Christians and manifest powerfully in various signs and wonders, even as Judas had a definite ministry in the Holy Ghost though he, himself, was pronounced to be a devil.

With these principles in mind we start to trace the church through the various seven ages.

First Church Age

The birth of the church was at Pentecost. As the first Adam was given a bride fresh from the hand of God and was undefiled for a brief span, so was Christ, the last Adam, given a bride pure and fresh at Pentecost; and she remained separate and undefiled for some time. "And of the rest durst no man join himself to them" (Acts 5:13) and "The Lord added daily such as should be saved." Acts 2:47. How long this continued we do not know, but one day even as Eve was tempted and seduced by Satan, so the church was contaminated by the entrance of an antichrist spirit.

"And this is that spirit of antichrist whereof ye have heard that it should come and even now already is it in the world." 1 John 4:3.

And Jesus said concerning His bride in that first age,

"I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.

Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen and repent." Revelation 2:4-5.

Yet they preach salvation and deliverance through the power of God, just like Judas, with a ministry imparted by Christ. But because they are wrong seed, consequently they have a wrong spirit motivating them. Religious? Oh my! They outshine the elect in effort and zeal, but it is Laodicean, not of Christ, for it looks for big crowds, big programs and startling signs amongst them. They preach the second coming of Christ, but deny the advent of the prophet-messenger, though in power and signs and true revelation he eclipses them all. Ah yes, this false spirit that in the last day is so close to the real, can be distinguished only by its deviation from the Word, and whenever it is caught in being anti-Word, it falls back on the one argument we have already shown to be false: "We get results, don't we? We have to be of God."

Now before we close, I want to bring this thought. All along we have been talking about the Seed of Wheat being buried, then sending up two shoots, then the tassel, then the true ear. This might make some wonder if we said that the Lutherans didn't have the Holy Spirit just because they taught basically justification. It might make some wonder about the Methodists, etc. No sir, we are not saying that. We are not talking about the individuals or the people, but the AGE. Luther had the Spirit of God, but his age was not the age of full restoration by another outpouring like in the beginning. It was the same with Wesley, Booth, Knox, Whitefield, Brainard, Jonathan Edwards, Meuller, etc. Surely they were full of the Holy Ghost. Yes, they certainly were. But the age in which each lived was not the age of restoration, neither was any age but this last age, the age of complete black out in apostasy. This is the age of apostasy,

Now it says God is going to "restore". The Lutheran Age did not restore the church; it started a reformation. The Wesleyan Age did not restore. The Pentecostal Age did not restore. But God has to restore for He cannot deny His Word. This is not the resurrection of the Church; it is the "Restoration". God will take the Church right back to Pentecost of the beginning. Now notice in verse 25 it tells why we need restoration. The locust, cankerworm, caterpillar and palmerworm have eaten all but the root and a small bit of the stem. Now we are told that all these insects are all one and the same in different stages. That is right. They are the antichrist spirit manifested in organization, denomination and false doctrine through the ages. And that poor little root and stalk is going to be restored. God isn't going to plant a new Church, but is going to bring His original planting back to original seed. He is doing it as stated in verse 23, by the teaching, or "former" rain. Next will come the harvest rain or rapturing faith.

Thus at this very moment we are in the complete fulfillment of Matthew 24:24 "insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect." And who is it that shall attempt to deceive the very elect? Why, the spirit of antichrist in the "false anointed ones" of this last day. These false ones have already come in "Jesus' Name" claiming that they have been anointed of God for the last day. They are the false Messiahs (anointed ones). They claim that they are prophets. But are they one with the Word? Never. They have added to it or taken from it. No one denies that the Spirit of God manifesting in gifts is upon them. But like Balaam they all have their programs, make their appeal for money, exercise gifts, but deny the Word or by-pass it for fear that a controversy might diminish their chances for greater gain.

The church was in that first age already a 'fallen woman.' As Satan had gotten to Eve before Adam, even now had Satan seduced the church, the bride of Christ, before the 'marriage supper of the Lamb.' And what specifically was in her midst that caused the fall? What but Revelation 2:6, "THE DEEDS OF THE NICOLAITANES." Already that first age had turned from following the pure Word of God. They turned from God's demand of a church absolutely dependent upon Him (depending entirely upon God to fulfill His Word from start to finish apart from human government) to Nicolaitanism, which is organizing a human government within the church which as all governments do, legislate for the people. They did exactly what Israel did. They took the expediency of human government instead of the Word and the Spirit.

Death had entered. How do we know? Do we not hear the voice of the Spirit raised in that first age for all who will hear, as He is calling. "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the Tree of Life in the paradise of God." The church had already imbibed too deeply of the tree of death (or the denominational false vine) whose end is the lake of fire. But there are no cherubim with flaming swords to guard the Tree of Life now. God does not now depart from the midst of the church as He departed from Eden. Oh, no, He will ever be in the midst of His church until the final age. And until that time He calls to all to come.

Now please let us be careful here. This message to the angel of the church which is at Ephesus is not a message to the actual local Ephesian church. It is a message to the AGE. And that age had in it the seed of truth and the seed of error exactly as set forth according to the parable of the wheat and the tares. The church ages is the field, and in it are wheat and

tares. The false church organized, humanized the government and the Word, and fought the true Christian.

Tares always flourish mightier than wheat or any other cultivated plant. The tare church grew rapidly in this first age. But the wheat church was flourishing also. By the end of the first age the deeds of the Nicolaitanes were flourishing in the local false vine churches with increasing attempts to spread their influence further than their own body. Its influence was felt upon the true church for men like the venerable Polycarp were calling themselves bishops with a reference to that title which was not inherent in it according to the Word. Also in that age, the true church had lost its first love. That love was typified as the love of bride and groom at their marriage and early years of wedded life. There was a cooling of that complete love and abandonment to God.

But notice. Revelation 2:1 describes the Lord Jesus as in the midst of His church and holding the messengers in His right hand. Because this bride has fallen, because the church corporate is now an admixture of true and false, He does not leave it. It is His. And according to Romans 14:7-9 that is exactly right. "For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord; whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living." On the cross He bought the WHOLE world of people. They are His. He is the Lord of the living and dead. (As pertaining to ownership, NOT relationship.) And He walks in the midst of that body that has within it life and death.

who will head up the World Council of Churches, just as we have been saying. And by his gold (remember Judas held the bag) he will control the whole world, and that antichrist system will own everything and try to control everybody. But Jesus will come back and destroy them all with the brightness of His coming. And their end will be the lake of fire.

But what about the true seed? It will happen just as we have said. The people of God are being made ready by the Word of Truth from the messenger to this age. In her will be the fulness of Pentecost for the Spirit will bring the people right back to where they were at the beginning. That is "Thus saith the Lord."

It is "Thus saith the Lord" for that is what Joel 2:23-26 says,

"Be glad then, ye children of Zion, and rejoice in the Lord your God: for He hath given you the former rain moderately, and He will cause to come down for you the rain, the former rain and the latter rain in the first month.

And the floors shall be full of wheat, and the fats shall overflow with wine and oil.

And I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten, the cankerworm, and the caterpillar, and the palmerworm, My great army which I sent among you.

And ye shall eat in plenty, and be satisfied, and praise the Name of the Lord your God, That hath dealt wondrously with you: and My people shall never be ashamed."

And when he had opened the third seal, I heard the third beast say, Come and see. And I beheld, and lo a black horse; and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand.

And I heard a voice in the midst of the four beasts say, A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny; and see thou hurt not the oil and the wine.

And when he had opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth beast say, Come and see.

And I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him. And Power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with the sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth."

See how that Judas spirit came back as a rider on a white horse. It was white. So close to the real, just as Judas was so close to Jesus. A crown was given to him (white horse rider). How? That spirit was now in the leader of the Nicolaitane system and he was a triple crowned pope who sat as God in his temple, calling himself the vicar of Christ. If vicar of Christ means 'instead of Christ' or 'in place of' or 'on behalf of God' then the pope was calling himself the Holy Ghost, or deposing the Holy Ghost, acting for Him. That was the Judas spirit in him doing that. See how he conquered--going forth conquering and to conquer. Christ did not do that. The only ones that came to Him were already predestinated by the Father. And so on and on went that spirit and one day it will become truly incarnate in a man

Second Church Age

What was planted in the first age will develop in the second age and in all other ages until it comes to maturity and harvest. Thus in the Smyrnaean Age we expect an enlargement and enlightenment of the church corporate's history through a revelation of the Spirit.

In this age the hatred of the false vine increases. See, they have (Verse 9) separated themselves from the company of the true. They went out from them. They were liars. They called themselves what they are not. But did God destroy them? No. "Let them alone and both will go to the harvest." "But Lord they should be destroyed for they are destroying Thy people. They are killing them." "No, let them alone. But to My bride I say, 'Be thou faithful unto death. Love Me even more.'"

We learn in no uncertain terms that this false vine is the vine of Satan. Their gathering is of him (Satan). They meet in the Name of God and lie that they are Christ's. They preach, they teach, they baptize, they worship, they partake of various rites given by Christ to the church, yet they are not of God. But since they say they are, God will hold them responsible and in each age He speaks of them and to them. They remind us exactly of Balaam. He had the prophetic office. He knew the proper approach unto God as demonstrated in the sacrifice of the clean beasts. Yet he was not a true WORD PROPHET for when God told him not to go to honor Balak with his presence he sought to go anyway for he was motivated by his lust for gold and prestige. So God let him go. The perfect will of God gave way to the permissive will of God because of the "heart desire" of Balaam. God actually said, "Go ahead." Did God change His

mind? No sir. God had His way regardless of Balaam going. Balaam did not annul the will of God. God had His way regardless. It was Balaam who was the loser for he by-passed the Word. And today we have that very same thing. Women preachers, organization, false doctrine, etc., and people worshipping God, manifesting in the Spirit and going right on as did Balaam, claiming that God has spoken to them even when the commission received is opposite to the revealed Word. And I will not deny that God spoke to them. But it was just like when He spoke to Balaam that second time. As He knew that Balaam wanted his own heart desire above the Word and He gave it to him, yet all the while in the end having HIS OWN way; even so today God tells folks to go ahead in their own hearts' desires for they have already rejected the Word. BUT THE WILL OF GOD WILL BE DONE REGARDLESS. Amen. I hope you see this. It will not only clear up much of what is seen in all ages but it will especially help in this last age which has so much manifestation and external blessings when the whole period is so against the 'Word-Revealed-Will' of God.

If ever an age received a message loud and clear, this age did. It was, and is, that Old Testament truth, "The son of the bondwoman will distress the son of the free woman until the son of the bondwoman be cast out." That lets us know that the hatred and blasphemy of Satan against the true Christian will be vented through a group who are nominal, false Christians, and this will increase until God uproots that false vine at the end of the Laodicean Age.

rain. The latter rain, then, is the HARVEST rain. How could this be the real thing when the Teaching Rain had not come? The Prophet-Messenger who was to be sent to TEACH the people and turn the hearts of the children back to the Pentecostal fathers had not yet come. Thus what was thought to be the restoration and the final quickening unto the rapture had not come. In it was a mixture of the unrighteous partaking of Spiritual blessing and manifesting in the Holy Ghost as we have kept pointing out to you. In it also was devil power as men were under the control of devils, yet no one seemed to realize it. Then, to prove that it was not the REAL, these people (even before a second generation had appeared) organized, and wrote their unscriptural doctrines and built their own fences as every other group ahead of them did.

Remember, while Jesus was upon earth so was Judas. Each came from a different spirit, and upon death each went to his own place. The Spirit of Christ later came back upon the true church, and the spirit of Judas came back upon the false church. It is right there in Revelation 6:1-8,

"And I saw, and behold a white horse; and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering and to conquer.

And when he had opened the second seal, I heard the second beast say, Come and see.

And there went out another horse that was red: and power was given to him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another: and there was given unto him a great sword.

will be controlling, and this image (church system) will be obedient to Rome because Rome controls the gold of the world. Thus all the people have to belong to the world church system or be at the mercy of the elements for they cannot buy or sell without the mark of the beast in the hand or head. This mark in the head means that they will have to take the doctrine of the world church system which is trinitarianism, etc., and the mark in the hand which means to do the will of the world church. With this great power the church systems will persecute the true bride. This image will try to keep the bride from preaching and teaching, etc. Her ministers will be forbidden to give comfort and truth to the people who need it. But before the antichrist (in person) takes over this complete world system of churches the true church will be taken away from this world to be with the Lord. God will catch away His bride for the great Marriage Supper of the Lamb.

Now as this concluding chapter was given in order to trace the two churches and two spirits from Pentecost to their consummation, we will take this final time to show this in the Laodicean Age.

This age started just after the turn of the twentieth century. As it was to be the age in which the true church would return to being the bride she was at Pentecost, we know that there must of necessity be a return of dynamic power. The believers sensed this in their spirits and began crying to God for a new outpouring such as was in the first century. What seemed to be the answer came as many began to speak in tongues and manifest gifts of the Spirit. It was then believed that this was indeed the long awaited RESTORATION. It was not, for the latter rain can come only after the former rain which is the spring or TEACHING

Third Church Age

The third age revealed by the Spirit of prophecy that the worldly church would adopt Nicolaitanism as a doctrine. The separation of the clergy from the laity grew from the Biblical truth of the elders (shepherds of local flocks) ruling the flock by the Word, to the 'deeds of Nicolaitanes' wherein the clergy set themselves in ranks one over the other, which unscriptural formula then evolved into a priesthood that placed the clergy between man and God, giving the clergy certain rights all the while denying the laity their God-given rights. This was usurpation. In this age it became a doctrine. It was established in the church as the assured word of God, which indeed it was not. But the clergy called it the Word of God and therefore the doctrine was antichrist.

Because human government is politics pure and simple, the church became involved in politics. This involvement was welcomed by a dictator-emperor who joined church politics with state politics and by force established the false church (Satan's false religion) as the true religion. And through various edicts by various emperors we find the false church with state power destroying the true vine even more avidly.

Sad to say the true vine was not exactly immune to this doctrine. By that I do not mean that the true vine ever did establish the Nicolaitane ideas as a doctrine. Far from it. But that little worm of death kept sucking at the true vine hoping that it might fall. Even within the true church, men whom God had called as overseers were holding that title to mean a little more than just a local responsibility. It was not the clear understanding of Paul that existed in the church at this time. For Paul had said, "And they glorified God in me." No

matter what authority Paul had, he kept the people looking to God from Whom is all authority. But the clergy was always looking to Divine Leadership PLUS HUMAN, and thus in giving honor where honor was not due, we find that the true church was spotted with humanism. With Nicolaitanism established--apostolic succession--placed ministers--pastors voted in, etc., it was only one step for the false church to proceed to Balaamism. The second step to the 'depth of Satan' was now in full progress.

This second step was the doctrine of Balaam, (described in Revelation 2:14) wherein Balaam taught Balac to stumble the children of Israel by a 'united meeting.' There the guests would do two more things contrary to the Word of God. You will recall that Balac needed help to keep his kingdom. He called on the most dominant spiritual figure of his day, Balaam. Balaam gave the advice that trapped and destroyed Israel. It was, first of all, to suggest that they all get together and talk things over, and eat together and get things ironed out. After all, understanding each other goes a long way. Once you accomplish that you can go from there. The next step would be worshipping together, and of course, a little pressure from the host usually makes the guests go a lot further than they intended. Now that didn't only happen back there to God's church of the Old Testament but it happened to the church of the New Testament, for there was an emperor, who like Balac needed help to secure his kingdom. So Constantine invited the nominal Christian, First Christian Church of Rome, to help him get the Christians behind him, as they were a very large body. The outcome was the Nicene Council of 325. There the Christians, both true and nominal, came together at the invitation of Constantine. The true Christians had no business even going

And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed.

And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads:

And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.

Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is Six hundred three score and six."

Now remember, it was Imperial Pagan Rome that fell by the sword. But she was healed of her death stroke when she joined to the nominal Christian church of Rome and incorporated paganism and Christianity, and thereby became the Holy Roman Empire which was to endure until Jesus came and destroyed her. But Rome is not going it alone. Her daughters are right with her and she will take over absolute authority by the World Council of Churches. This may seem far fetched to some but actually it is very plain for all to see because right now the churches are controlling politics and at the opportune time will manifest exactly how great is that control. This ecumenical move will end up with Rome at the head even though the people did not envision it that way. This is so because in Revelation 17:3-6 it states that the whore, Mystery Babylon is seated on the beast. She is controlling the last, or fourth empire. This Roman Church is doing that. With the world church system under her Rome

but yet God tarried in judgment seven days? No one was literally turned to God in those silent days.

And yet it is the harvest time. There then must come upon the scene in this age those who will bring the wheat and tares to maturity. The tares are already maturing very fast under corrupt teachers who turn the people from the Word. But the wheat also must mature. And to her, God is sending the Prophet-Messenger with the vindicated ministry that he might be accepted by the elect. They will hear him as the first church heard Paul, and she will mature in the Word until becoming a Word Bride the mighty works will be found in her that are always attendant upon the pure Word and faith.

The false church groups will come together in a world council of churches. This world council of churches is the **IMAGE ERECTED TO THE BEAST**.

Revelation 13:11-18, *"And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon.*

And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed.

And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men,

And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live.

up to the meeting. In spite of all Constantine could do to unite them all, the real believers knew they were out of place and left. But to those who remained, Constantine gave of the state's treasury along with political and physical force. The people were introduced to idol worship and spiritism, for statues with names of saints were placed in the buildings and the people were taught to commune with the dead, or pray to saints which is nothing more nor less than spiritism. For the food that man truly needs, even the Word of God, they were given creeds, and dogmas and rituals which were also enforced by the state, and above all they were given three gods with the triple compound name of the One True God, and water baptism in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ gave way to the pagan baptism of three titles.

The real believers ought not to have gone there. They had already lost much truth, and now they, too, would lose the understanding of Godhead and forfeit names for titles in water baptism.

Now watch this doctrine of Balaam most carefully. Notice above all, that it is the deliberate maneuver of a corrupt clergy to bind the people to them, by leading the people deliberately into the sin of unbelief. The Nicolaitane doctrine was the corruption of the clergy as they sought political power amongst themselves, while Balaamism is the subjection of the people to their system of creed and worship in order to hold them. Now watch this carefully. What was it that bound the people to the nominal church and thereby destroyed them? It was the creeds and dogmas formed into church tenets. It was the doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church. They were not given the true food, the Word. They were given the food that came from idol worship, Babylonian paganism wrapped up in Christian terminology.

And that very same spirit and doctrine is right amongst all Protestants and it is called DENOMINATION. Nicolaitanism is organization, humanizing the leadership of the church, and thereby deposing the Spirit. Balaamism is denominationalism which takes the church manual instead of the Bible. And right to this hour, many of God's people are caught in the snare of denominationalism and God is crying to them, "Come out of her My people, lest ye be partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not her plagues." You see they are ignorant. But if the rapture should take place at this moment, ignorance would be no court of appeal from the judgment of God for being in the wrong ranks.

For the clergy to organize themselves with one rank over another until they are finally headed up by a president is a manifestation of the antichrist spirit, regardless of how wonderful and necessary it may seem. It is nothing but human reasoning taking the place of the Word. And any person who is in the organized denominations is right in the midst of an antichrist system. Now let me say this and make it very plain. I AM NOT AGAINST THE PEOPLE. I AM AGAINST THE SYSTEM.

Fourth Church Age

With a state and church union the stage has been set for the Dark Ages. And indeed for about 1000 years the church went into the depth of blackness, knowing the depths of Satan. When any religious people embrace both Nicolaitanism and Balaamism, and have the political, financial and physical power to back it up there is only one direction they can go. That direction is right into the Jezebel doctrine.

Christians though each group claimed with the very same assurance as the Roman Catholic Church that they were right and all others wrong. The stage was truly set for the daughters to go back home in the last age, back to Rome, under the mother hen.

Seventh Church Age

And so we come to the last age: the Laodicean Age. That is our age. We know it is the last age for the Jews are back in Palestine. No matter how they got there; they are there. And this is harvest time. But before there can be a harvest there has to be a ripening, a maturing of both the vines.

The Lutheran Age was the springtime. The Wesleyan Age was the summer of growth. The Laodicean Age is the harvest time of gathering the tares for binding and burning; and garnering the wheat for the Lord.

Harvest time. Have you noticed that in the harvest time, though there is a real acceleration in the ripening, there is consequently a slowing of growth until there is no growth? Is that not exactly what we are seeing now? The false vine is losing multitudes to the Communists and various other types of belief. Her numbers are not increasing as she would like us to think. Her hold on the people is not what it used to be, and in so many cases going to church is just a show. And the true vine? What about her? Is she growing? Where are those vast numbers that keep coming to revivals and answer altar calls? Are not most of them merely emotional in their approach, or desirous of something physical rather than desiring that which is truly Spiritual? Is this age not like the day in which Noah entered the ark, and the door was shut,

Sixth Church Age

Since the fifth age had brought a great dissemination of the Word through printing, the sixth age was quick to take advantage of it. This age was the second stage of the restoration and as we have stated previously was the tassel age. Education abounded. This was the age of intellectual men who loved God and served Him. Missionaries abounded and the Word spread over the world. It was an age of brotherly love. It was an age of the open door. It was the last age of long duration, and after it the Laodicean Age would come which would be a short one.

The true vine flourished in this age as in no other when one thinks of numbers at home and abroad. This age brought holy men to the forefront. The true vine spread and the false vine receded. Everywhere the true vine went God gave light and life and happiness. The false vine was shown up for what it was: darkness, misery, poverty, illiteracy and death. And as the false vine in its day of power could not kill the true vine, neither could the true vine now bring back the false vine to Jesus Christ. But the false vine entrenched itself, waiting for the last part of the last age when it would win all back to itself except that small flock that were the elect, true vine of God.

But how sad does this age make us feel as we realize that every great move of God (and there were many) neglected to throw off the Nicolaitane doctrine for they all organized and died. Then they moved into denominations to hold the spiritually dead in foodless pastures. Little did they know it, but each group was tainted with that same error, and when the revival fire burned low, organization took over and people became denominations. They were only nominal

Now why do we say this? Because as we pointed out in the study of the fourth age that Jezebel was a Sidonian, the daughter of Ethbaal who was king priest to Astarte. He was a murderer. This woman married Ahab (King of Israel) for political expediency. She then took over the religion of the people and murdered the Levites, and erected temples wherein she caused the people to worship Astarte (Venus) and Baal (Sun god). She formulated the teaching and made her priests teach it, and they in turn made the people accept it.

There you can see exactly what the nominal church was in the Dark Ages. They left the Word of God entirely except for names and titles of Godhead and a few Scriptural principles. They twisted what they did take out of the Bible by changing its meaning. Their college of bishops, etc., wrote vast treatises, their popes declared themselves infallible and said they received revelation from God and spoke as God to the people. All this was taught to the priests who through fear made the people believe it. To dissent was death or excommunication which might be worse than death. It was now the church with the assured voice that took over, and wild with power they drank the blood of the martyrs until the true Christians were all but exterminated and there was hardly any Word left, and little manifestation of the Holy Ghost. But the true vine struggled and survived. God was faithful to the little flock and in spite of what Rome might do to their bodies, Rome could not kill the Spirit within them, and the light of the Truth shone on, backed by the Holy Ghost and power.

This is a good place to make an illuminating observation. Look. The deeds and doctrines of the Nicolaitanes, the doctrine of Balaam, and the teaching of the

false prophetess, Jezebel, do not constitute three spirits or make three spiritual principles. These three are but the various manifestations of the same spirit as it goes from depth to depth. What it all is, is the antichrist spirit of organization in its three various stages. Once the clergy separated themselves and organized themselves they oppressed the people by leading them into, and binding them to organization also. This organization was based upon the creeds and dogma which they taught the people instead of the pure Word of God. Ritual and ceremony was given an increasing part in worship, and soon this whole system was a militant and diabolical power that did its best to control all through the persuasion of discourse or literal force. It received its energy from its own false prophecies and not the Word of God. It was now absolutely antichrist though it came in Christ's Name.

Fifth Church Age

After what seemed an interminable time wherein Truth must surely die, men began to protest the vileness of the Roman Catholic Church, because by no stretch of the imagination could God be in such teaching and such conduct. These protests were either disregarded and died from failure to arouse attention, or were quashed by Rome. But then, God in His sovereign grace sent a messenger by the name of Martin Luther to start a reformation. He worked in a climate where the Roman Catholic Church had been given so much rope that she was about to hang herself. So when Luther preached justification by faith the true vine for the first time in many centuries began to grow in a bountiful manner.

As the nominal church had used state power to back it up, now state power began to flow against it. And this is where Luther made his mistake, and the true believers made their mistake. They allowed the state to subsidize them. So this age did not launch out very far on the Word. Thank God that it did go as far as it did, but because it leaned on political power to a great extent, this age ended in organization, and this very group that in Luther's generation had broken from the false vine, now turned back to become a daughter of the harlot for she went right into Nicolaitanism and Balaamism. This era had scores of factions within it, and to prove how far they were from true seed is to merely read history and see how they persecuted each other, even unto death in some cases. But there were a few names amongst them, even as there always are in every age.

We rejoice in this age for this one thing. Reformation had started. It was not a resurrection but a reformation. Neither was it a restoration. But the corn of wheat that had died at Nicaea and had rotted in the Dark Ages, now sent up a shoot of truth signifying that at some future date, at the end of the Laodicean Age, just before Jesus came, the church would go back to being a Wheat Seed Bride again while the tares would be harvested and burned in the lake of fire.