



Mess. 8: The Return to the Church of the Apostolic Age

Scripture Reading: Rev 3:7

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Word taught by brother **Pedro Dong**, and broadcast by Instituto Vida para Todos, direct from Salvador-BA, on **06/23/2024**. Text not revised by the author.

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Rev 3:7; 1 Pet 2:9, Prov 29:18; Rom 3:10, 22-24; 5:12, 14, 19; 1Pet 1:16

1. The first part of Revelation 3:7 mentions the only One, holy, and true God. The apostle Peter says that we are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood and a **holy nation** (1 Peter 2:9). This is what God wants the church to return to, as He designed it for it.

2. The enemy of God perceived this original condition, that the work of God is accomplished by the word that operates in the church, when dispensed through His channel. Satan attacked the source of the word, distracting Christians from following it. In this way, degradation entered the church at the end of the first century, lasting for another 19 centuries of the church's history.

3. Satan's first shot to stop God's work: attacking the word of the apostles. This left God's people without direction, when the word of divine government stopped being spoken. Whoever does not accept the Lord's revelation is a nation without order, but he who obeys such revelation is happy (Prov 29:18). The brothers and sisters in the church life have experienced the happiness of receiving the revelation and light of the Word of God, and the opportunity to put it into practice.

4. Satan's second shot: introducing clericalism (hierarchy) into the church, with the work of the Nicolaitans – a group of specialists in matters of service to God (clerics) who considered themselves superior to others (laity), who knew nothing related to the Word of God. This destroyed the function of the members of the body of Christ.

5. Satan's third shot: Balaam's doctrine – hiring clerics, who were subject to whoever hired them to speak for convenience. This occurred due to man's lack of ability to handle money. **Satan uses this to dominate man, because of the need for sustenance. Covetousness is idolatry, due to the worship of the god of riches (Mammon). We must free ourselves from this to escape degradation.**

6. Through the disobedience of one man (Adam), we lost contact with the holy God. We stop being righteous and become sinners. Man separated himself from the only holy and true God, and death began to rule him through sin (Rom 5:12, 14, 19).

7. We had no way to return to the holy and true God, once we were trapped in sin, and we lacked divine justice (Rom. 3:22-23). We were doomed to eternal damnation: eternal death. But God

loved us and sent His Son Jesus Christ, who freely justified us by His grace, granting us redemption (Rom 3:24).

8. Having resolved the problem of righteousness, it was necessary to resolve that of holiness, because God is holy (1 Peter 1:16). The human spirit received the life and nature of God and was then justified. But the soul still needs to be sanctified.

9. Jesus shed His precious blood on the cross in our place, making us righteous before God. Our justification does not occur through the works we perform. The church in Thyatira, which adhered to the teachings of the prophetess Jezebel, decided that man would only be justified if he fulfilled rules and penances. This resulted in many deformations, such as the practice of papal indulgences (forgiveness and salvation from serious errors) granted by the church for payment.

10. The church in Sardis sought to rescue the church from the erroneous and perverse teachings of Thyatira, declaring that justification is not through works of the law, but through justification by faith in Christ Jesus. This was the fight of the Protestant Reformation.

11. After justification by faith, sanctification is the step to be taken by those who believed in Jesus. On the one hand, our spirits were sanctified when we believed in Jesus—being transformed from the world to the house of God (positional sanctification). **However, the soul (mind, will, and emotion) needs to be sanctified, and this occurs throughout the Christian life in our church life. Through the Word, God sanctifies our soul, which needs transformation (dispositional sanctification).**

Deut 6:1-9; Exo 19:4-8; John 8: 44; 14:6; 17:3, 17; 1Tim 3:15; 2 Tim 3:5; Eph 1:9-10; 22-23; 3:17-19; 5:18-19, 25-26; Col 3:16

12. **The way to know the only true and holy God is through the Word (John 17:3). God has placed us in the holy position to receive His Word that sanctifies us more and more.** God took us out of the world and brought us to the church to diligently listen to His voice and obey His covenant (Exo 19:4-5), that is, put it into practice. We receive from the word of God as a voice of command to execute it. Thus, we become God's special treasure, distinct from the other peoples of the earth (Exo 19:5).

13. By obeying the voice of the Lord and executing His word, we become a holy nation as God wants (Ex 19:6), that is, a people close to Him, who zealously listen to His voice.

14. How does God make us His holy nation if we still live in the world? Jesus did not ask the Father to take us out of the world, but to deliver us from evil and sanctify us in the truth, for we are not of the world, we are not common (John 17:15-17). **It is in the world that, as the church, we do God's will. He dispenses the Word to man, who receives it and allows it to sanctify him. God's holiness and truth are correlated in His Word.**

15. The purpose of Christ giving Himself for the church was to sanctify it. The sanctification process takes place inside the church, through the washing of water by the word. In the holy place that God has placed the church, it is washed by the dispensation of the word. On the one hand, the holy elements of God are introduced into our inner being, on the other, we are washed from the negative elements: death, sin, impurity, rebellion, ego, natural man, envy, etc. (Eph 5:25-26).

16. **The prophetic word circulates life in the body of Christ, bringing the holy nature of God to the members.** This process is analogous to the functioning of the bloodstream in the human body, which carries nutrients and oxygen to cells. The bloodstream also removes carbon dioxide (CO₂) and toxins from them, making it function healthy.

17. In 19 centuries of church degradation, God has failed to obtain His glorious church. But we have reached this moment, and we will give the Lord a church without spot, wrinkle, but holy and without blemish, which appreciates and practices His word (Eph 5:26).

18. God wants to fill the church with Christ through God's holy word, life and nature, truth, and reality itself (Eph 5:18-19; Col 3:16). By speaking the word among us, making it circulate, we are sanctified. This is why we have practiced immersion in the word, bringing life to all members of the body of Christ, building the church and eliminating what is not useful to God.

19. Since the Old Testament, God determined the circulation of His life in His people, to be blessed with life and possess the good land as an inheritance. He zealously published His statutes and ordinances so that the people could love Him with all their hearts (Deut. 6:1-5). **How can we do that? Deuteronomy 6:6 gives us the secret: keeping the word in our hearts, inculcating it in ourselves and our children, speaking about it at every moment of our lives and writing it down (Deut 6:6-9).** Today this refers to sleeping and waking up with God.

20. The Word is the truth that comes from the true God; disconnected from it, we are connected to nothing, to the father of lies (John 8:44). Although God gave Lucifer the opportunity to connect with the truth in the beginning, he never stuck to it.

21. Our soul life is still full of lies and falsehood. It can deceive us with a facade of spirituality, because we think we have a lot of biblical knowledge. This is a lie, the result of emptiness within us, things of the natural man, such as: envy, selfishness, covetousness, love for the world, etc. God wants to eliminate these things from us, His church, filling us with Christ (the truth) and, consequently, expelling all emptiness, everything that occupies us and is not reality.

22. During the 19 centuries of degradation of the church, God always wanted it to become genuine. Paul emphasized that the church of the living God is the pillar and foundation of the truth (1 Tim 3:15). The church is what upholds God's truth in the universe. If it is not constituted by the truth, what will it support: doctrine, theology? Let us flee from the appearance of the kingdom of heaven, from being fake Christians! Let us seek to enter the reality of the kingdom of heaven! The church in Philadelphia needs to reach this level.

23. Example: in a semester, in the churches in Lauro de Freitas-BA and Salvador-BA, we will have teenagers with spiritual consistency, as they have participated in the House of Teens in the last semester. They have practiced immersing themselves in the word, taking notes, listening to it more than once, not in a doctrinal way. Without realizing it, they have allowed the truth to be deposited in them. Do not despise their youth, as there are teenagers in our midst who live this reality, who dedicate constant reverent love to the word.

24. We need to escape the mere appearance of spirituality, due to the consistency that immersion in the word gives us. Teenagers know what God's will is: when we ask them about it, they readily answer that it is for Christ to head up all things, a revelation recorded in Ephesians 1:9-10.

25. The Father is the only true and holy God. No one will reach Him if it is not through Jesus, who is the way, the truth, and the life. The life of Jesus is holy, because the nature of God is contained in it (John 14:6). **When we are filled with Christ, we are filled with life and truth itself, reality, having a free path to reach the holy and true Father.**

26. Degradation separated the church from the true God, filling it with lies, falsehood, and vanities. The church in Sardis was not able to complete its work, and the church in Laodicea only has the appearance of godliness but no power (2 Tim. 3:5). We need the power that is in the Word of God.

27. Let us allow Christ to make His home in our heart (conscience, mind, emotion, and will), so God will plant roots of love in us, rooting us in His work. All of God's work is done based on love. Without it, God's work does not exist. **The dimensions of Christ are not physical, but of eternity, the dimension of God.** Alone, we cannot understand these dimensions; only when we are inserted into the body, together with the saints, inculcating the word together with them. **Living in the church**

makes us experience the divine dimension, the love of Christ, to fill us with the fullness of God (Eph 3:17-19).

28. The church will reach the level of being the fullness of Him who fills everything in all things, through the headship of Christ, which occurs through being filled by the Word (Eph 1:22-23). When the church reaches this level, it can be used to fill all things with Christ, both heaven and earth.

Rev 1:1, 3; 3:1; Matt 18:20; 23:8; John 16:7-14; Eph 4:3-4

29. In the last message I referred to the church in Sardis, a period in the history of the church in which there was no significant progress in relation to God's work. During this period, the Protestant Reformation took place (16th-19th century), which brought wonderful things to God's people, such as the open Bible and the restoration of justification by faith as a fundamental truth. However, the lack of significant progress occurred due to the great effort expended in the fight against papal teachings.

30. God's government in the church was a crucial item that needed to be restored at the time of the Reformation. For this to occur, it was necessary to restore the functioning of the members of the body of Christ as a living organism. The Protestant Reformation continued to be tied to many degraded church items in Thyatira, like the state churches in Germany, which resorted to political support from the state, making Protestantism the state religion.

31. Sardis had the name of one who lives, but was dead, because divine revelations stopped when it became involved with the State (Rev 3:1). In the century. XVIII, the church in Sardis tried to move towards the condition of the church in Philadelphia. Count Zinzendorf welcomed brothers from Bohemia, who fled the counter-reformation imposed by the Catholic church and formed an evangelical church known as the United Brethren (*Unitas Fratrum*). They finally saw that the hierarchy in the church was not biblical, and they started to just call themselves "Brethren."

32. Zinzendorf sought to revive church members through a small revival with Bible study meetings, prayer, the search for sanctification, missionary dedication, and the dismantling of the clerical system. But these meetings were driven by the search for blessing, not by the revelation of Christ and how He can be the head of the church.

33. In the XIX century, as the Reformation unfolded, there were no significant advances in the revelation of the Scriptures from God. Due to the influence of the State and its administration, the church in Sardis allowed itself to divide into several denominational groups because of doctrinal points and its own organization, despite having a confession of faith in common.

34. In the first decades of the XIX century, God worked in Christians when He revealed to them principles of the unity of the body of Christ, of which He Himself is the head. In this way, a movement of spiritual perception of the church as a living organism began. It was something new and initiated by the action and operation of the Spirit, which had not occurred since the time of the first apostles, the age of the early church. However, this was not enough to end the existing divisions among the body of Christ.

35. Still at the beginning of the XIX century, there was an awakening for missions in several countries (China, Japan, Africa/Uganda, New Zealand, Tasmania, Fiji Islands), as well as an awakening for the return of the Lord. **It is in the condition of the church in Philadelphia that love for the Lord's return occurs.**

36. At that time, a movement called "The Brethren" occurred, known in Brazil as "United Brethren." Since the reformers lived in a very fixed religious context imposed by the Thyatira church, they considered it sufficient to free themselves from this evil system and defend justification by faith.

37. Almost halfway through the XIX century, the Spirit of God awakened some in the British Isles to dedicate themselves to revelations from the Holy Scriptures, based on the "words of prophecy"

(Rev 1:3), seeking, albeit in an abstract way, to know the church as a body of Christ, the rule of the Holy Spirit, and the bride of Christ. Unfortunately, they did not pay attention to Revelation 1:1, which demonstrates the way in which God governs the church, so they remained without the light of this revelation.

38. With the beginning of the revelation of Revelation 1:3 and other revelations in the Bible, some of the “Brethren” and others who did not follow the clerical system in Ireland, gave rise to “prophetic meetings.” The light of God's Word was enough for them to leave the religious system and bear witness to the oneness and heavenly nature of the church. They were returning to church direction in Philadelphia.

39. In 1827, in Dublin (Ireland), there were breaking of bread meetings. Studying the Word of God made them begin to gather only in the name of the Lord Jesus, without any denomination and maintaining the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Matt 18:20; Eph 4:3-4).

40. John Nelson Darby wrote about the nature and unity of the church of Christ, a text that served as principles for the “United Brethren” to meet only as brethren (Matt 23:8), being used by some brothers and sisters to this day. However, other people were curious, amazed and began to attack these principles, especially those who lived in institutionalized ecclesiastical systems. They judged the brothers and sisters who met without denomination, because they did not have pastors and priests.

41. Those who gathered together as brothers and sisters believed that Christ died, rose again and sent the Spirit of truth, guiding them into all reality (John 16:7-14). However, they lacked the vision of the Word of God on the channel chosen by Him, which receives the revelation of the Word and transmits it as a voice of command.

42. From the point of view of Andrew Miller (*Miller's Church History* vol. 4, pg. 301), twenty years after these events (1845-1848) a division occurred in Plymouth (England), caused by BW Newton (Open Brethren), influential leader who undermined and neutralized the truths taught by the brethren. In Miller's view, there were disagreements between them on issues such as the acceptance into fellowship of the breaking of the bread of the body of Christ. Some also disagreed about the entry of heresies and the abandonment of the vision of church oneness.

43. Today, we still suffer from the same types of problems that surrounded them about fellowship at the Lord's table. At the time, there was division between them. Those who remained faithful to the original principle of the “Brethren” and persevered in giving honor to the Head and His table, and those who support and defend Newton's point of view (entry of clericalism), known as Neutral or Open Brethren.

44. In her book “The Orthodoxy of the Church,” Watchman Nee wrote that, for the United Brethren, the vision of the boundary of the locality (a church in a city) was lacking. The Closed (exclusive) Brethren formed a church that, in W. Nee's vision, was larger than a city. And the “Open Brethren” followed the path of independent congregations (congregationalism), claiming to be autonomous, with their own doctrinal line and preachers.

Rev 2:4; Acts 2:42; Matt 24:14

45. The church in Philadelphia must follow safe steps on the path of being the church of Christ and not fall into degradation, such as abandoning the first love, a fact that occurred in the church in Ephesus when it stopped reverently loving the Word (Rev 2:4). The reverence for the Word of God, shown by teenagers, generates in them their first love, the best love for the Lord, with demonstrations of simplicity and obedience.

46. At the time of the “United Brethren,” through the practice of biblical studies and prophetic meetings, the revelation about the teaching of the apostles began. It is necessary to restore the line

of the first love through the teaching of the apostles (Acts 2:42). However, the revelation of the word of the Lord cannot compete with biblical studies that do not have fellowship in the teaching of the apostles, as in a democracy, in which everyone can bring a line. It's not like this in the church, because there is a channel of God that speaks the word.

47. When there is the teaching of the apostles, if there are biblical teachings, they must converge towards fellowship, towards increasing belief in the prophetic word, encouraging the practice of inculcating it in the heart. It is like divine weaving: the love of God (warp) found in His Word produces brotherly love for brothers and sisters (weft). Thus, interwoven by divine love, we build the church.

48. It is necessary to reject the work of the Nicolaitans, eliminating clericalism and restoring the function of each member of the body of Christ, the priesthood. Today, in the church, everyone is useful and has the chance to exercise the priesthood of Christ, from children, pre-teens, teenagers, youth, adults, to the elderly, senior ones, and those with white heads like me. We are living the best moments of the church life.

49. I want to stick to the Waldenses to emphasize that Peter Waldo, in the 17th century arranged for his traders to go to the streets to carry out their duties as well as carry out colporting (distributing portions of the Word of God hidden in their tunic). They contacted those who thirsted for the Word and sought salvation. This resulted in suffering for them, being severely persecuted and martyred.

50. A determined pastor said that, when the Waldensians joined the Reformation movement (16th century), they lost their evangelistic vigor, ceasing to follow the path of God's grace. In order not to fall into the same situation, it is necessary to continue to believe in the revelations that the Lord gives according to His Word.

51. The revelation of the Word of God is what drives us to continue executing His voice of command until the Lord's return, when His will shall be fully fulfilled. The Lord took us from behind four walls and took us to the streets, in order to preach the gospel of the kingdom (Matt 24:14), maintaining evangelistic vigor, as our colporteurs have done.

52. In addition to the vision of church oneness, we need to move forward in understanding church government through the teaching of the apostles. The prophetic word is the commanding voice of Christ, the reality of the Holy Spirit's authority in the church. If we recognize it, we know what the authority of the Holy Spirit is in practice.

53. Why are we talking about church history? To have a GPS, to know the path to follow as the church: where we are and where we are going. We are not lost; we have a destiny.