

Church of the Living God

In The Grand Scheme Of Things

The Pillar and Ground of the Truth

Israel was to be the witness for God in the OT times

The Church is to be the witness of Christ's glory in the present

To appreciate the Church's unique blessing and responsibility it is helpful to recognize its unique place in God's overall plan – from eternity

“Before the world’s foundation” (Eph 1:4)

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ; according as he has chosen us in him before the world's foundation, that we should be holy and blameless before him in love; [Eph 1:3,4]

and gave him to be head over all things to the assembly, which is his body, the fulness of him who fills all in all: [Eph 1:22b,23]

In The Context of God's Eternal Purposes

Isa 46:9,10 (ESV)

**Remember the former things of old;
for I am God, and there is no other;
I am God, and there is none like me,
declaring the end from the beginning
and from ancient times things not yet done,
saying, 'My counsel shall stand,
and I will accomplish all my purpose,'**

THE RAPTURE

I Thess. 4:13-18

THYATIRA

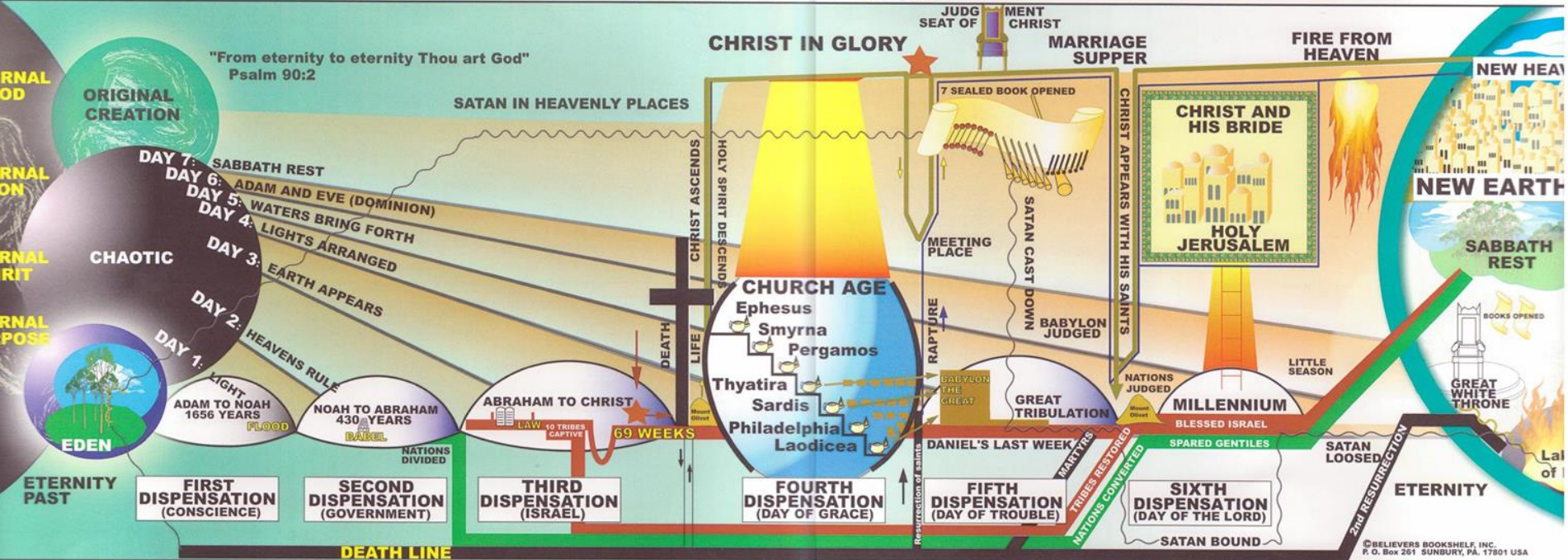
SARDIS

PHILADELPHIA

LAODICEA

4TH DISPENSATION

A CHART OF THE AGES



Day 4: Lights Arranged

It is assuredly not the creation of the sun, etc. This the inspired historian does not say, but only that God now constituted the heavenly luminaries, after the plants and before the animals for the Adamic earth. Light had shone otherwise since the first day of the great week. Now He set the light-bearers of the heavens to do their assigned work, but it is for the earth, and indeed for man. Their creation was implied in ver. 1; for God did not create either empty; and what would heaven be without its host?

[William Kelly, *In The Beginning.*]

Key Features of the Fourth Day

14 And God said, Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens, to divide between the day and the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days and years;

15 and let them be for lights in the expanse of the heavens, to give light on the earth. And it was so.

16 And God made the two great lights, the great light to rule the day, and the small light to rule the night, --and the stars.

17 And God set them in the expanse of the heavens, to give light on the earth,

18 and to rule during the day and during the night, and to divide between the light and the darkness. And God saw that it was good.

19 And there was evening, and there was morning--a fourth day.

The Sun: The Lord Jesus Christ

And he is as a bridegroom going forth from his chamber; he rejoiceth as a strong man to run the race. [Ps 19:5]

In him was life, and the life was the light of men. [John 1:4]

- a. Most prominent Light in the sky**
- b. Necessary for life on earth**
- c. Governor of times and seasons**
- d. Outshines all stars; Only the moon can be seen with the Sun in the blue (!) daytime sky**

The Moon: The Church (Bride)

And Paul and Barnabas spoke boldly and said, It was necessary that the word of God should be first spoken to you; but, since ye thrust it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, lo, we turn to the nations; for thus has the Lord enjoined us: I have set thee for a light of the nations, that thou shouldest be for salvation to the end of the earth. [Acts 13:46,47]

- a. The subordinate light (reflected)**
- b. Various in brightness and prominent (phases)**
- c. Of special importance in the night**

Stars: Individual Witness

that ye may be harmless and simple, irreproachable children of God in the midst of a crooked and perverted generation; among whom ye appear as lights in the world, [Phil 2:15]

Again therefore Jesus spoke to them, saying, I am the light of the world; he that follows me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life. [John 8:12]

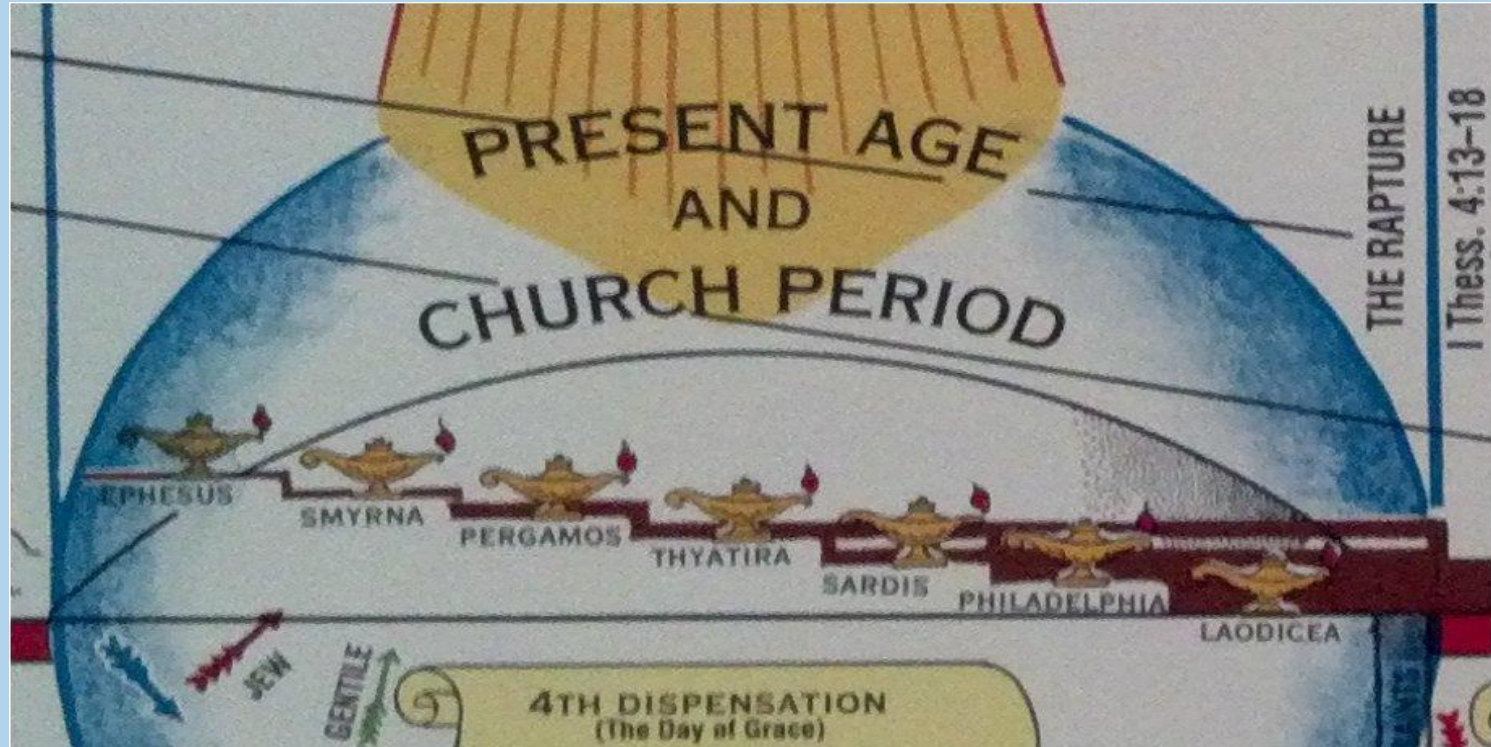
a. Individual Lights

b. Various in “glory” (1 Cor 15:41); in magnitude and color

Dispensation 4: Day of Grace

1. Heavenly Hope
2. Heavenly People
3. Heavenly Resource
4. Eternal Life Manifested
5. New Creation Revealed
6. Heavenly Bride
7. Measure of Blessing now according to Christ
8. Scriptures Opened

Prophetic History: Declension from the beginning

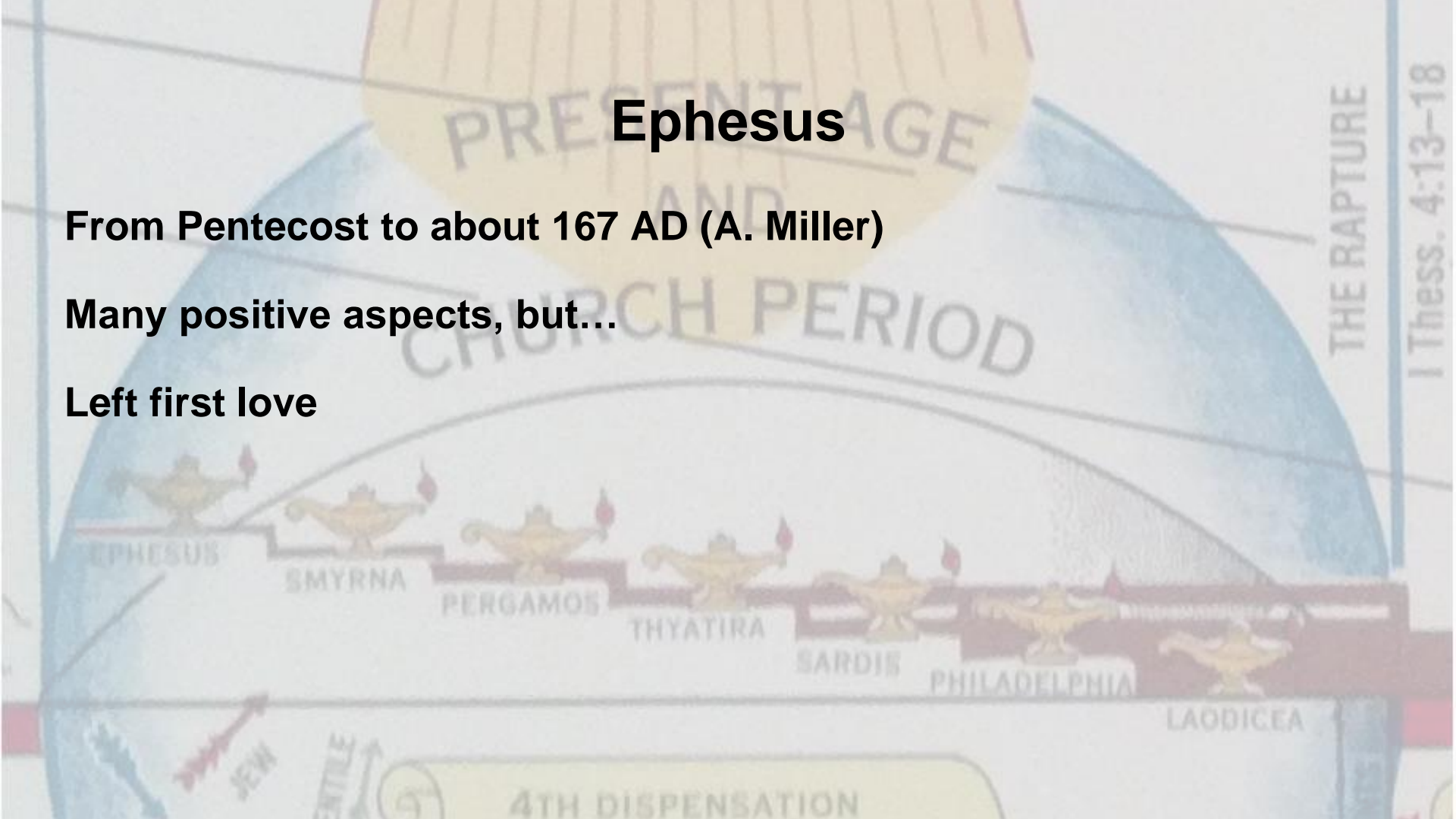


Ephesus

From Pentecost to about 167 AD (A. Miller)

Many positive aspects, but...

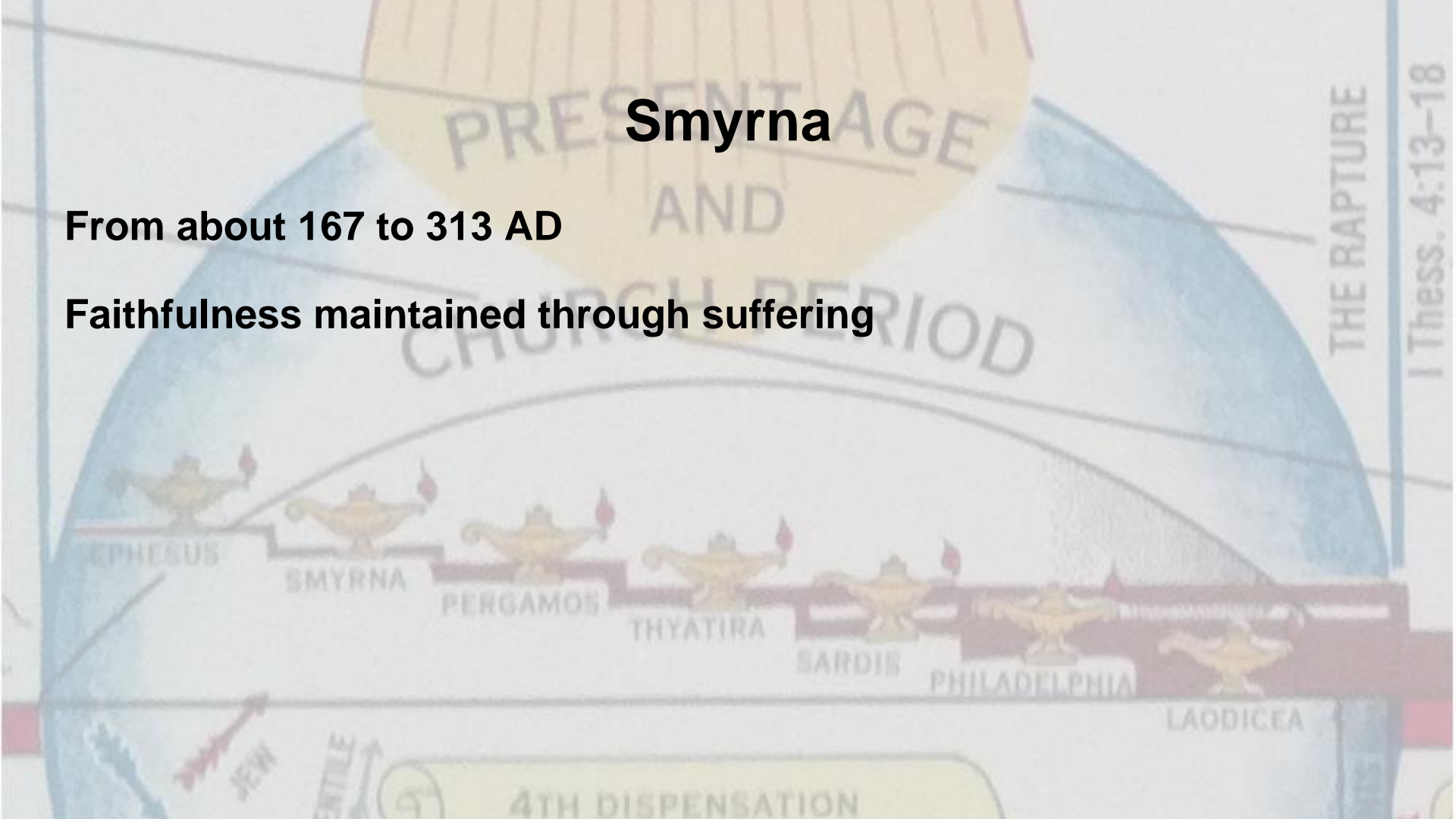
Left first love



Smyrna

From about 167 to 313 AD

Faithfulness maintained through suffering



I Thess. 4:13-18

Pergamos

From about 313 to 606 AD (Constantine)

Maintained “my faith”, but...

Settling down in the world

Accepting a formal mercenary system (“doctrine of Balaam” and the “doctrine of Nicolaitanes”)

THE RAPTURE

I Thess. 4:13-18

SMYRNA

PERGAMOS

THYATIRA

SARDIS

PHILADELPHIA

LAODICEA

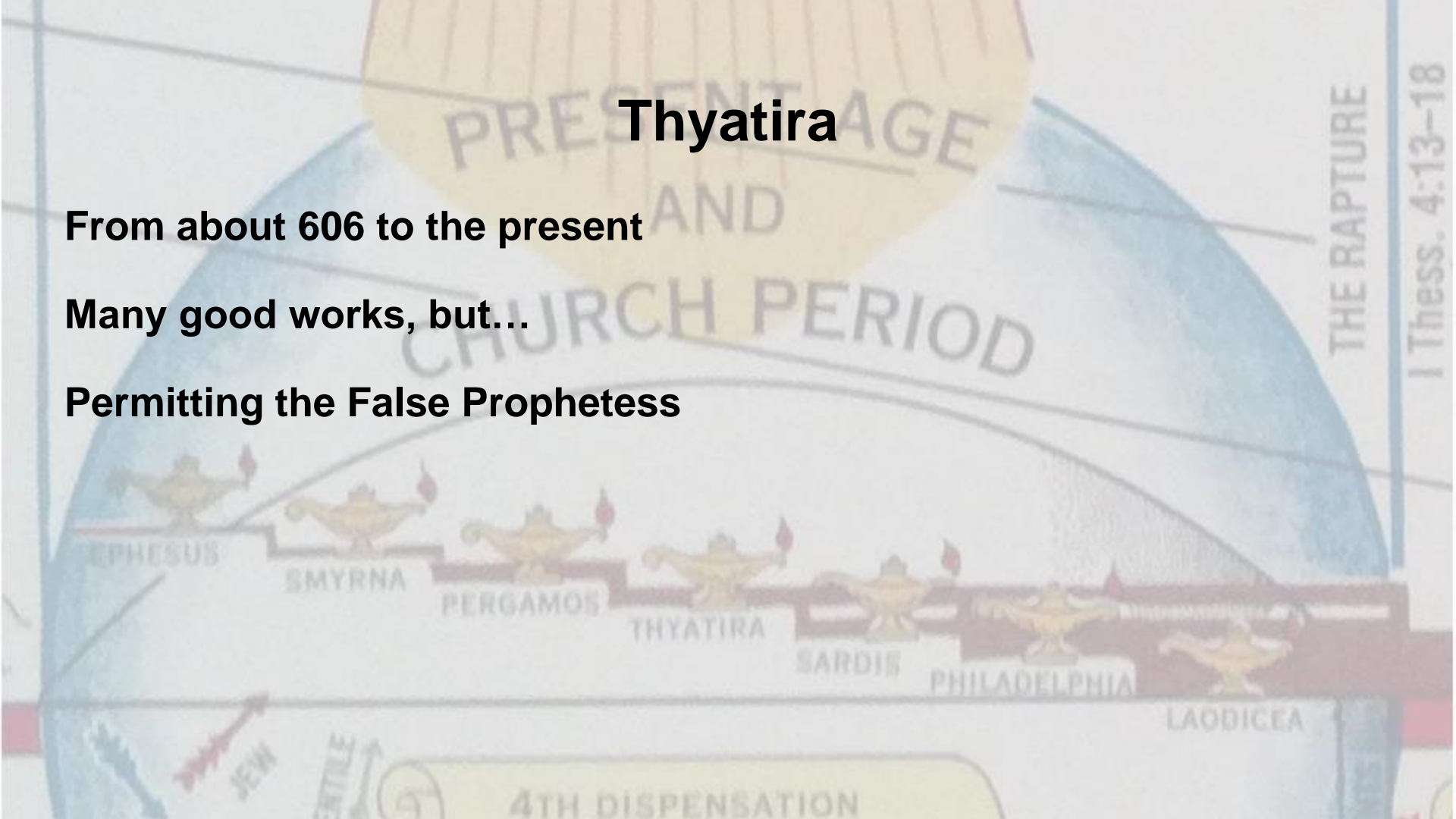
4TH DISPENSATION

Thyatira

From about 606 to the present

Many good works, but...

Permitting the False Prophetess



Sardis

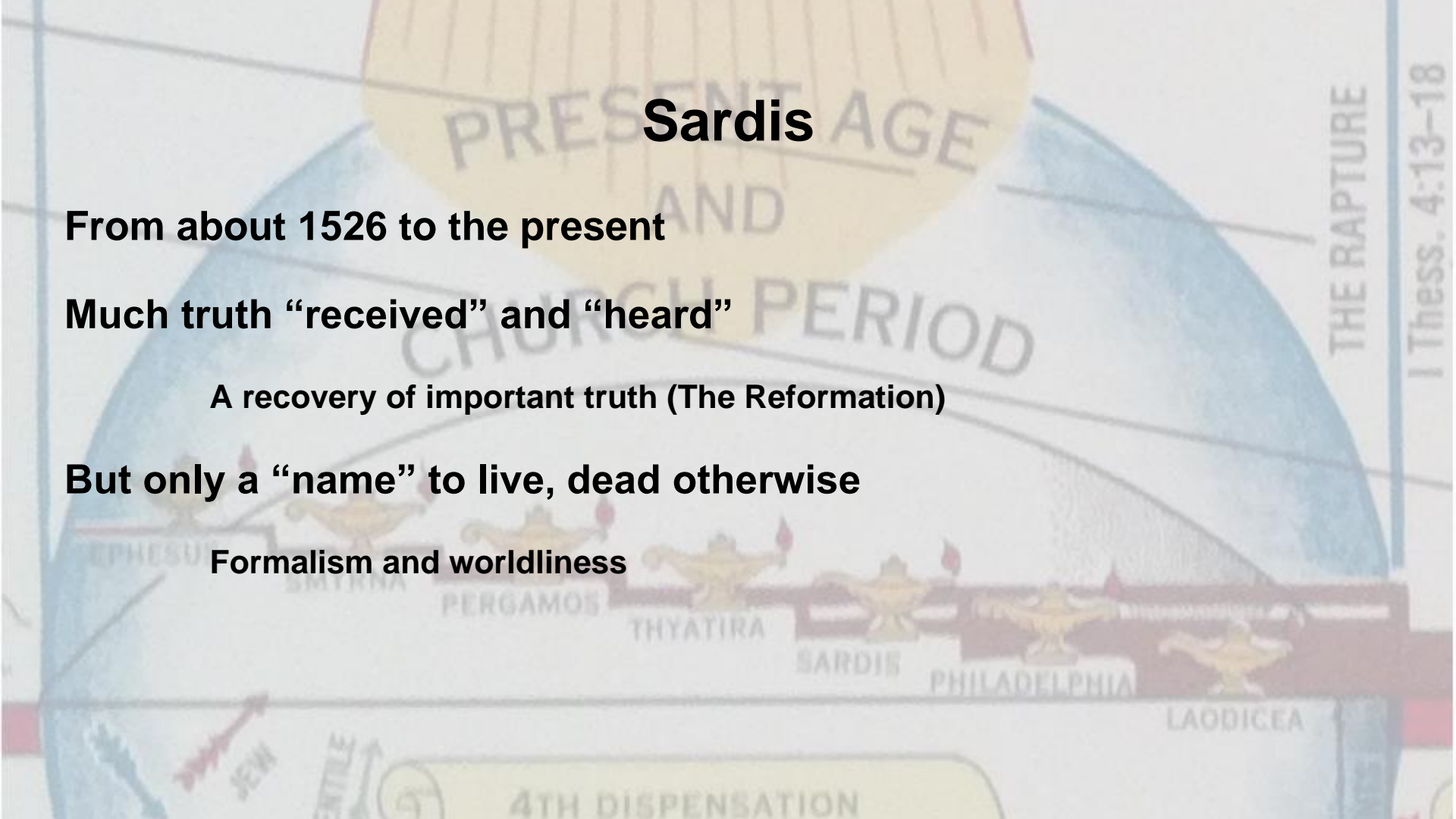
From about 1526 to the present

Much truth “received” and “heard”

A recovery of important truth (The Reformation)

But only a “name” to live, dead otherwise

Formalism and worldliness



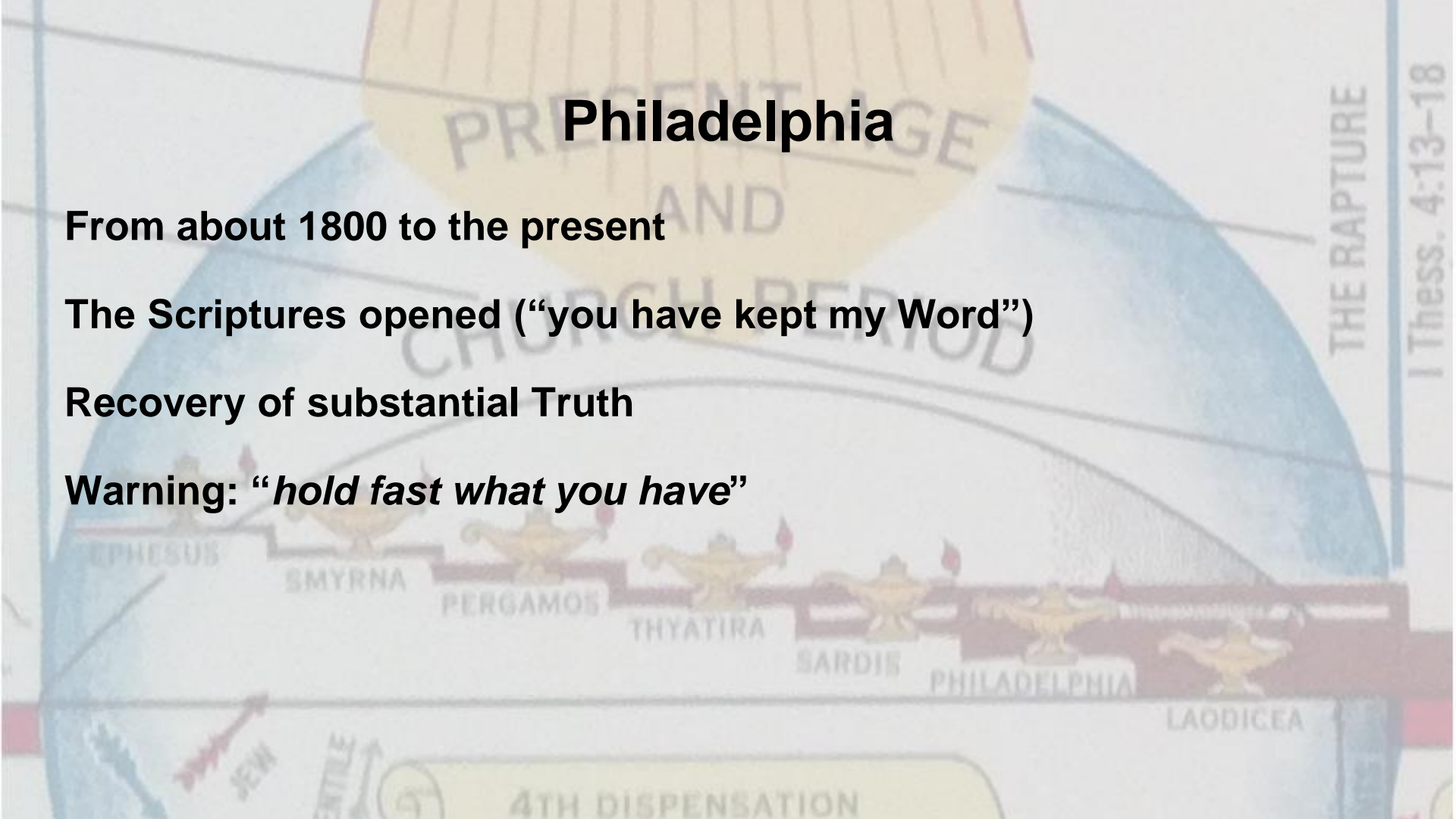
Philadelphia

From about 1800 to the present

The Scriptures opened (“you have kept my Word”)

Recovery of substantial Truth

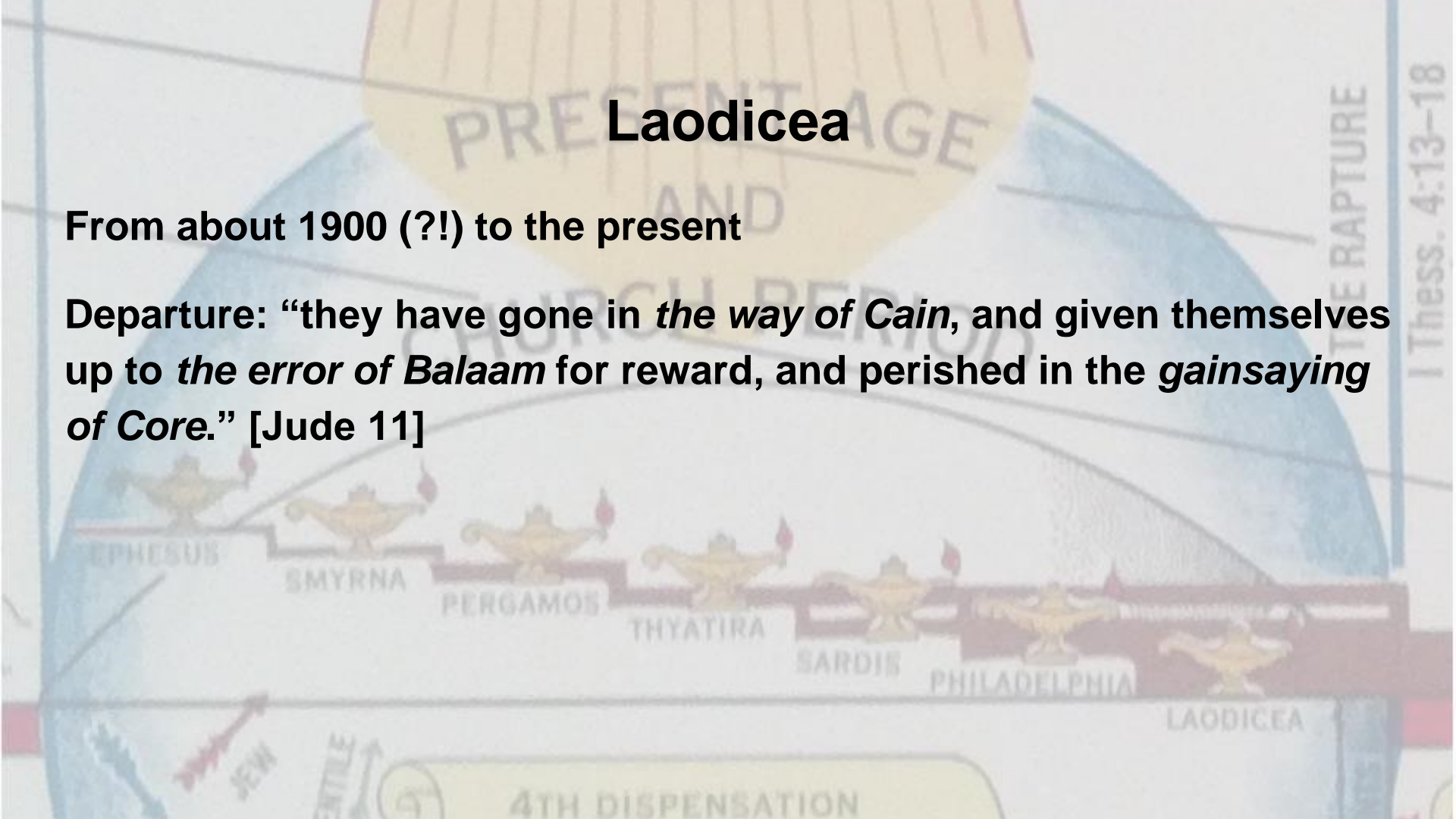
Warning: “*hold fast what you have*”



Laodicea

From about 1900 (?!) to the present

Departure: “they have gone in *the way of Cain*, and given themselves up to *the error of Balaam* for reward, and perished in the *gainsaying of Core*.” [Jude 11]



The Challenge for the Present Day

2 Tim 3:1 – “But this know, that in the last days difficult times shall be there;”

Jude 3 -- “contend earnestly for the faith *once delivered* to the saints.”

Rev 3:11 -- “I am coming soon. *Hold fast what you have*, so that no one may seize your crown.”

THE RAPTURE

1 Thess. 4:13-18

PERGAMOS

THYATIRA

SARDIS

PHILADELPHIA

LAODICEA

4TH DISPENSATION

A Very Brief History of “Plymouth Brethren”

The early 1800s saw increasing interest in the future of Israel

18-teens and 1820s the form and character of the assembly began to be realized

Winter 1827-1828 JN Darby, E Cronin, JG Bellett, and F Hutchinson began breaking bread together.

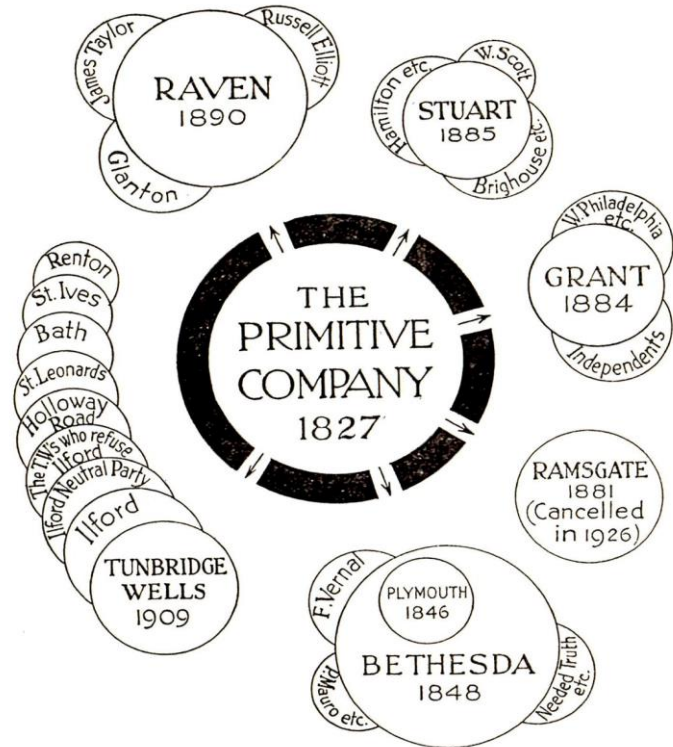
1828 first pamphlet published

1831 named “Plymouth Brethren” assigned

1848 First division

Breakup of the Original Company of “Brethren”

1. In 1827, JN Darby, E Cronin, JG Bellet, and F Hutchinson began to break bread together.
2. In 1848, the first division occurred.
3. Many divisions followed thereafter, fragmenting the original company.



Final Thoughts: Why this failure?

For whereas there are among you emulation and strife, are ye not carnal, and walk according to man? For when one says, *I* am of Paul, and another, *I* of Apollos, are ye not men? [1 Cor 3:3b,4]

But concerning things sacrificed to idols, we know, (for we all have knowledge: knowledge puffs up, but love edifies. If any one think he knows anything, he knows nothing yet as he ought to know it . But if any one love God, *he* is known of him): [1 Cor 8:1-3]

But you trusted in your beauty... [Ezek 16:15a]

Final Thoughts: Our Resource

But to him that is able to keep you without stumbling, and to set you with exultation blameless before his glory, to the only God our Saviour, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, might, and authority, from before the whole age, and now, and to all the ages. Amen. [Jude 24,25]

And now I commit you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and give to you an inheritance among all the sanctified. [Acts 20:32]

I come quickly: hold fast what thou hast, that no one take thy crown. [Rev 3:8,11]