

Creation Revelation



God is in the details

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Thy word is true from the beginning: and every one
of thy righteous judgments endureth forever.

Psalm 119:160

Letters to Seven Churches - Part 2

Early Church Service

In its earliest form, church service proceeded in a manner similar to many home fellowships. On the first day of the week, Sunday, believers met in homes for the reading of Scripture (Colossians 3:16), listening to preaching by elders, together with prayers and singing (Ephesians 5:19) during the morning service. This was followed by a love feast (1 Corinthians 11:20-22) and Communion during the evening service. At the close of the first century, the love feast was dropped and the Communion moved to the morning service. By the middle of the second century a collection was taken to aid orphans, widows, the sick, prisoners, and strangers (1 Corinthians 16:1-2). Baptism was by immersion, but baptism by pouring water on the head was permitted when a large amount of water was unavailable.¹

Early Church Problems – Persecution

The early church was beset with two major problems, persecution and heresy. The Roman state looked upon Christianity with suspicion, and considered it a form of a secret society which threatened the allegiance of the citizens to the state. Rome believed that Christianity was attempting to set up a state within the state. When

Christians were forced to choose between Caesar and Christ, they chose Christ. They refused to offer incense on pagan altars. Christianity was therefore banned, and Christians were severely persecuted for several centuries.²

Christians worshipped before no visible idol. They held meetings in secret, which prompted false accusations of incest, cannibalism, and unnatural practices. Christians were seen as challenging the Roman social class structure of the aristocracy and lower class. Christians believed in the equality of all men. The lower class readily accepted Christianity, but, the aristocracy was conformed to the pagan customs and submitted to the peer pressures of the day. The lower class was feared as being a threat to their form of society if they should ever gain sufficient power.³

Economic considerations also played against early Christianity. Threats were seen to the livelihood of the pagan priesthood, idol makers (Acts 19:27), fortune tellers, painters, architects, and sculptors.⁴

The blood of the martyrs proved to be the seed of the church. The church grew rapidly in spite of the severe persecution; so much so that

the church could be found in all parts of the empire by the year 200 A.D.⁵

Early Church Problems – Heresy

Early converts were either Jews, whose experience was salvation by works, or, those steeped in Greek philosophy. They tended to adhere to their old ideas until they were properly instructed. Thus, there was a real threat of theological perversions mixing with the pure Gospel message. The Jews tended to be legalistic, believing that it was necessary to adhere to the Jewish religious laws, including circumcision, as necessary for salvation. This was an early problem facing the young church that can be seen in the book of Acts and the Epistles.⁶

Gnosticism was the greatest of the heresies facing the early church. In fact, it has plagued the church in various forms to the present day. Gnosticism is the basis for the latest literary and cinema craze, The Da Vinci Code. In its earliest form, Gnosticism desired to explain the origin of evil. Gnostics believed in dualism, that matter was evil and spiritual was good. Therefore, they attempted to devise a system to free man's spirit from evil matter, and thus be more closely associated with deity. To do so, they attempted to synthesize Christianity with Greek philosophy. They thought that man could understand the ways of God by human wisdom, avoiding the stigma of the cross.⁷

To the Gnostic, the evil god Jehovah created matter. The good god was the redeemer. They believed that Christ could not be associated with a human body (Docetism). Either Jesus was a phantom, or Christ entered the body of the man Jesus for only a short time, leaving the man Jesus to die alone on the cross. To the Gnostic, Christ's purpose was to teach special knowledge (gnosis) that would save man by an intellectual process. Gnostics were numerous, and their beliefs were varied. It was heresies such as this that plagued the early church, and continues to this day.⁸

To the Church in Sardis – Dead Orthodoxy

**And unto the angel of the church in
Sardis write; These things saith he that hath**

**the seven Spirits of God, and the seven
stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a
name that thou livest, and art dead. Revelation
3:1 KJV**

In Daniel 7:5, Daniel described a beast with three ribs in its mouth. This beast represented the Persian Empire that conquered the three great kingdoms of Babylon, Lydia, and Egypt. Sardis was the old capital of the Lydian empire (ca. 680-547 BC). It was a leading city of the Roman province of Asia.⁹ It is now a ruin near the tiny Turkish village called Sart (Sert-Kalessi).¹⁰

The art of dying wool was invented here.¹¹ It became famous for its red dye and woven goods, especially carpets.¹²

The prophetic age represented by Sardis was the Reformation, 1517-1750 AD. Sardis means, "escaping ones" or those who "come out." This name describes the Reformation churches that left the works system and some of the paganism of the Roman Catholic Church and returned to the biblical premise, "the just shall live by faith." The church of Sardis had a reputation that it was alive, but in fact it was dead.¹³ According to John Phillips, "this church was great for starting things, but not for completing them.... The church of Sardis was dabbling instead of doing." The tragedy of the Reformation churches being "dead" was that they became state churches. They had a form of religion – they dabbled. Luther and others sought approval of the political leaders. This established the church as the entire population rather than the intended personal acceptance and relationship with Jesus Christ. The Reformation churches retained many customs and rituals of the Roman Catholic Church. Some paganism remained. Ritual and formality are characteristic of pagan worship. Ritual and ceremony often crowd out true life underneath making it ineffectual, impotent, or dead. The Reformation leaders stopped short of total reform based on Scriptural standards. Ironside says that, "they trust in forms and ceremonies," and he refers to it as "birthright membership," rather than in new birth through the Word and Spirit of God."¹⁴ Jesus spoke of this with the scribes and Pharisees of His day:

Then came to Jesus scribes and Pharisees, which were of Jerusalem, saying, Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread. But he answered and said unto them, **Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?** For God commanded, saying, Honour thy father and mother: and, He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death. But ye say, Whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, It is a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; And honour not his father or his mother, he shall be free. Thus have **ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition.** Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. **But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.**

Matthew 15:1-9 KJV

The Reformation church was reformed, but not revived. Some essential doctrines were reclaimed, such as justification by faith, but the church retained its rituals and human traditions. Complacency and a new legalism set in. Few knew the power of the Holy Spirit.¹⁵ Christ was concerned for this church as He continued in the letter:

Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God. Revelation 3:2 KJV

Reformation churches, like today, were not grounded in Bible prophecy, and therefore were not watchful. Prophetically instructed Christians are more likely to be focused on spiritual rather than worldly matters, living their lives based on the imminent return of Jesus Christ. Christians need to “strengthen” sound doctrinal teaching –

salvation by faith, the total depravity of man, and the authority of the Word of God.¹⁶ Those who avoid the study of biblical prophecy are not watching! The Bible contains one-third prophecy, but many Christians seldom go there. Christ says that we must watch.

Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.

Revelation 3:3 KJV

Christians are to study the Scriptures and “hold fast” to its sound doctrinal teachings. We are to repent and turn away from false teachers and doctrines. If we are willing to forsake false teaching and repent, the Holy Spirit will show us the truth. Jesus promised this to His followers as recorded by John.

But the Comforter, which is **the Holy Ghost**, whom the Father will send in my name, **he shall teach you all things**, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you. John 14:26 KJV

But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even **the Spirit of truth**, which proceedeth from the Father, **he shall testify of me:** John 15:26 KJV

Howbeit when he, **the Spirit of truth**, is come, **he will guide you into all truth:** for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and **he will shew you things to come.** John 16:13 KJV

Notice that not only will he guide us into truth, he will show us “things to come.” Now look as Paul speaks of the difference between those

that watch and those that do not watch. Notice the contrast of the pronouns in these verses.

But of the times and the seasons, brethren, **ye** have no need that I write unto **you**. For **yourselves** know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when **they** shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon **them**, as travail upon a woman with child; and **they** shall not escape. But **ye**, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake **you** as a thief. **Ye** are all the children of light, and the children of the day: **we** are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore let **us** not sleep, as do **others**; but let **us** watch and be sober. For **they** that sleep sleep in the night; and **they** that be drunken are drunken in the night. But let **us**, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation. For God hath not appointed **us** to wrath, but to obtain salvation by **our** Lord Jesus Christ, Who died for **us**, that, whether **we** wake or sleep, **we** should live together with him. 1 Thessalonians 5:1-10 KJV

In order to watch Christians need to be grounded in prophecy and aware of the events of the world around us. Look with skepticism upon those that cry "peace and safety." Do not be deceived by propaganda and agendas for world oneness, ecumenism, and peace. We want to be found "worthy" when Christ comes.

Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy. Revelation 3:4 KJV

All churches have those that remained faithful regardless of the circumstances.

Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, **and keepeth his**

garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame. Revelation 16:15 KJV

Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and **his wife** hath made herself ready. **And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.** And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God. Revelation 19:7-9 KJV

Notice that the "fine linen" garments "clean and white" represents the righteousness of the saints. Defiled garments would be the opposite. The overcomers will wear those clean garments.

He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches. Revelation 3:5-6 KJV

Christians must be "born again" in order to overcome; it's not an option.

Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, **Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.** John 3:3 KJV

Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that **is begotten of him.** By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous. **For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this**

is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. 1 John 5:1-4 KJV

It is only through Christ that we are justified.

For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

2 Corinthians 5:21 KJV

Jesus Christ is our advocate, our defense attorney, and He never loses a case.

For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time. 1 Timothy 2:5-6 KJV

To the Church in Philadelphia – Revival and Evangelism

And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write; These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth; Revelation 3:7 KJV

The name “Philadelphia” means “brotherly Love.” This church was located in the center of Greek civilization. The city was founded only 189 years before Christ. It was built by Attalus Philadelphus, king of Pergamus. Philadelphia remained an independent Christian city until the close of the 14th century when the Turks conquered it.¹⁷ The city survives today as Alasehir, Turkey.

The prophetic church of Philadelphia represented the period from 1750 to 1925 AD. This was a period of vitality and life marked by revivals in Europe and the British Isles, which would spread to America. These revivals sparked the modern missionary movement. Thousands of missionaries went to remote places such as Africa, India, China, Japan, Korea, South America, and the Pacific Islands.¹⁸

Those who translated the Bible into the language of the common people understood the natural tendency of the ordinary individual to take the Bible literally. This spurred the missionary movement and resulted in the mass fulfillment of the Great Commission.¹⁹

And he said unto them, **Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.** Revelation 16:15 KJV

About the year 1800 AD, another factor that spurred this missionary fervor was the revival of the doctrine of the pre-millennial return of Christ. This doctrine had been cast in the shadows since the end of the third century. This newfound fervor contributed to a consecrated and separated church willing to do whatever the Lord commanded in preparation for his imminent return. It wasn't until after World War I that missionary zeal began to wane.²⁰

In Revelation 3:7 we see four aspects of Christ's nature revealed, two of which are not previously mentioned in Revelation chapter 1.

Christ's Nature and the Philadelphia Church²¹

1. He is Holy.

Because it is written, **Be ye holy; for I am holy.** 1 Peter 1:16 KJV

The Philadelphia church was separated from the world unto holiness.

2. He is True.

Jesus saith unto him, **I am the way, the truth, and the life:** no man cometh unto the Father, but by me. John 14:6 KJV

Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, **Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth**

life unto the world. Then said they unto him, Lord, evermore give us this bread. And **Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life:** he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst. John 6:32-35 KJV

Christ is not only truth, but He is the ultimate truth. This part of His nature alludes to the movement toward doctrinal separation that characterized the Philadelphia age.

3. He that hath the key of David.

This relates to Christ's authority and His eventual rulership of the world.

And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, **All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.** Matthew 28:18 KJV

4. He that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth.

"The doors of opportunity for preaching the Gospel are controlled by the Lord Jesus Christ."

This is true of the missionary movement and also of the individual witness.

"There is a tendency to compromise in order to gain opportunities, whereas in truth it is our responsibility to do right and God's responsibility to open the doors of opportunity."

It is only up to Christians to obey the Great Commission.

Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: **Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.** Amen. Matthew 28:19-20 KJV

The doors are Christ's responsibility.

I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name.

Revelation 3:8 KJV

Christ set the door open for Philadelphia that "no man can shut." In this verse, Christ has four things about which to commend this church.

Four Commendations of Philadelphia²²

1. I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it:

The open door represents the opportunity for Christian service and for the proclamation of the Gospel. To take advantage of the opportunities is faithful service. The Philadelphia church took advantage of these opportunities.

For a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries. 1 Corinthians 16:9 KJV

2. for thou hast a little strength,

They were a minority group. Small, but faithful, numbers characterizes the Philadelphia church age.

3. and hast kept my word,

In contrast to the Reformation churches, they not only believed the Word of God, but obeyed it.

4. and hast not denied my name.

In 1 Corinthians 16:9, Paul faced many adversaries at the open door. The interesting thing with the Philadelphia age is that at the time of the greatest missionary zeal, the adversaries were legion. Many false Christs and false religions began to come on the scene at this time of history. The Philadelphia church refused to cave in to the denial of Christ's

name and true Gospel. As we approach the end of this age we are faced with the same challenges of false Christs and false religions. The tendency today is to worship the creature (environment) rather than the Creator. Christ had harsh words for those that did not live up to the standard set by this church.

Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee. Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth. Revelation 3:9-10 KJV

Christ makes two promises to His true followers.

Two Promises to Philadelphia²³

1. Vindication

Those false religionists, who persecute the true believers, will someday be subdued before them.

Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world?.... 1 Corinthians 6:2 KJV

2. Preservation

The world has never known a time of universal tribulation. Revelation 3:10 obviously refers to that future time of universal tribulation known as the Great Tribulation. God has promised that the true believers will be preserved from that.

For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, 1 Thessalonians 5:9 KJV

Next we see Christ's promise to come quickly.

Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.

Revelation 3:11 KJV

“Behold, I come quickly”: The Philadelphia church is to be based on the faith in the imminent return of Jesus Christ. We are to “hold fast” to our missionary zeal until He returns. The formula for spiritual growth of the church is biblical teaching, practice, and missions.²⁴

Finally, promises are made to those that overcome.

Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches. Revelation 3:12-13 KJV

Those that are overcomers (born again) will be pillars, or have stability, in their life in Christ. They shall not be outsiders in the life to come, even though they are rejected in this world. Believers will not only have the name of God that entitles them entrance into the City of God, but also they will have the name of Christ, which entitles them to be His servants.²⁵

And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife. And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me **that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God....** And the twelve gates were twelve pearls: every several gate was of one pearl: and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass. And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light

thereof. **And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it:** and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it. And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there. And they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations into it. **And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life.** Revelation 21:9-10; 21-27 KJV

And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him: **And they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads.** Revelation 22:3-4 KJV

The overcomers shall see His face!

To the Church in Laodicea – Compromise and Apostasy

And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God; Revelation 3:14 KJV

The Seleucid king, Antiochus II, sometime between 261 and 253 BC, named the city of Laodicea in honor of his wife Laodice. Previously its names were Diospolis and later Rhoas. The name Diospolis means “City of Zeus,” Zeus being the chief deity of Diospolis as well as of Laodicea.²⁶

Laodicea was located about forty miles east of Ephesus. It had a huge racetrack and three theaters, one the size of a football field.²⁷

Laodicea was a wealthy city, a center of industry and steeped in Greek culture and learning.²⁸ Laodicea produced black wool clothing and carpets. It was home to a famous medical school renowned for ear and eye ointments. According to William Barclay, “Laodicea was so conscious of its medical skill in the care of the

eyes that it never realized that it was spiritually blind.” It was also a banking center.²⁹ There are ruins of three churches located there dating to the earliest days of Christianity.³⁰

The prophetic period of this church is 1925, or possibly as early as 1900, to the Tribulation. We are now in the Laodicean age.³¹ The word Laodicea means “rights of the people” and is appropriate for an age where the people’s voice is like the voice of God, usurping God, making demands of their governments, and are seemingly on the verge of anarchy.³²

Before the close of the Philadelphia church age, beginning in the latter part of the nineteenth and before the turn of the twentieth century, we see that many theological seminary scholars, particularly European, began to introduce what is known as “Higher Criticism” of the Bible. “Higher Criticism” began calling into question the authorship, construction, historicity, and truth of the Scriptures. Skepticism began to deny the supernatural and demoted Jesus to just a good man. The church got sucked into scientific and philosophical rationalism.³³

Rationalism is a product of Darwin’s Theory of Evolution, which cast doubt on the biblical view of origins of the universe and mankind. We began to see ourselves, not as created in God’s image, but as something that crawled forth from primordial soup. Theologians caught up in Darwin’s theory, convinced that “science” overruled the Bible, began attempting to rationalize the creation narrative of Genesis chapter 1 to force fit into the “assured fact” of evolution.

This rationalization produced various schemes to fit the “assured facts.” The “Gap Theory” was produced to account for the existence of unaccounted fossils. It said that there was a gap between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2 in which the original world was destroyed and the present one reformed. Scofield and the notes in his Bible popularized it. Barnes, Bullinger, and others were also proponents of this theory. This theory, despite its defects, persists in some well-known fundamentalist circles to this day.

“Theistic evolution” said that the “days” of Genesis were long time periods, and that God used

evolution to create man and the animals that we see today. This seems to be the position of the Roman Catholic Church. These and other theories were panic attempts by theologians to rationalize evolution with the Scriptural account. This has produced much confusion and the acceptance of evolution by many today. The problem today is essentially that the only alternative to "God created" (supernatural) is some form of evolution. Since science cannot investigate the supernatural, scientists **choose** to ignore God as the "First Cause." As a result then, evolution becomes the only possibility acceptable. Anything else must be a myth. Any line of scientific research that does not support evolution is quickly abandoned, or unfunded. These scientists have not allowed for even the remote possibility that God exists and that He created.

Many cults teach that the words "the beginning of the creation of God" indicate that Jesus was the first of God's creation. In light of parallel passages, this could be translated "the beginner of the creation of God." This indicates that all things were created through Him.³⁴

Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: For **by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.** Colossians 1:15-17 KJV

All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. John 1:3 KJV

Midway through the Philadelphia age the stage was being set for the Laodicean age as two cults sprang on the scene that would have great impact in leading many astray. In 1820, Joseph Smith was supposedly visited by God the Father and the Son, who revealed that all churches were abominations, and that he was charged with restoring the true gospel to the world. Joseph

Smith then claimed an encounter with the angel Moroni in 1823 who described certain golden plates. He also claimed to have discovered the golden plates that he then translated into the Book of Mormon by means of magical spectacles called the "Urim and Thummin." The Mormons would eventually settle in Utah to practice their new religion. Their bizarre religion is based on the belief that God was once an exalted man, and that all good Mormon men can become god's of other planets. Jesus Christ is said to be the spirit brother of Lucifer.³⁵

The Jehovah Witnesses were founded in 1884 by Charles Taze Russell from Bible classes based on Seventh-Day Adventism. He called the organization Zion's Watchtower Tract Society. At first he had a strong fear of hell, but later abandoned the idea of eternal punishment. Joseph Rutherford succeeded Russell and named the organization Jehovah's Witnesses, in 1931, in an attempt to eliminate any connection to Russell. Under Rutherford, Jehovah's Witnesses became hostile to all Christian churches and organized religions. In spite of the clear teaching of Scripture, and the continuous testimony, beginning in the first century, of the Apostolic and Anti-Nicene Church Fathers attesting to the virgin birth, Jesus' Deity, and the doctrine of the Trinity, Jehovah's Witnesses reject these doctrines, instead teaching that Jesus Christ is Michael the Archangel.³⁶

Jesus Speaks to the Church of Laodicea

I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine

eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see.

Revelation 3:15-18 KJV

The city's water supply originated from hot springs located six miles away at Denizli. Water was routed to Laodicea by aqueduct, and as a consequence became, "neither cold nor hot."³⁷ The Laodicean church had become like its water supply, lukewarm. Ironside writes of this time, "There is neither burning zeal for His Word, nor yet absolute repudiation of Christ and the Bible. Instead there is a nauseating, lukewarm condition that is abhorrent to the Spirit of God."³⁸

Because of its prosperity, the church became self-satisfied and complacent. Its comfort and prosperity led to a diminished zeal for the things of God.³⁹ Prosperity in our modern society has caused the same diminished zeal today. People don't need God because they can provide for themselves. People return to God only when they can't help themselves and have exhausted all other avenues. In times of personal persecution and tribulation the church is full.

With the advent of insurance, retirement benefits, welfare, and Social Security, the corporation and the government (Caesar) have replaced dependence on God and His providence.

Today we cannot speak about religion or politics for fear of offending the listeners. We are told not to impose our beliefs on others. How can we fulfill the Great Commission of "going into all the world to preach the Gospel," or learn about the attributes and positions of political candidates, proposed laws, or issues if we cannot have an open forum among ourselves and acquaintances? The church has entered into contract with the government for their tax exemption status (501C3). In return the pastor is not free to speak his mind on political issues. We may not all agree with one another's positions, but we should all have the right to express those opinions without fear of offence or reprisals. Why does the government use the tax code to muzzle the church? Could it be that the government fears the power that resides in the collective body of Christ?

It's sad, but the complacency and prosperity of today's organized Christian churches have

acquiesced with their silence. Caesar has silenced the Church, not by throwing them to the lions, but by threatening their prosperity. The organized Church today, by their silence, has chosen to serve mammon rather than God. We are without excuse. We have allowed it through our laziness and apathy, which has produced our ignorance of the operation of our government and the ideology of our leaders. We are also responsible for the condition of the church today. We have allowed the perversion of the Gospel through that same laziness and apathy. Only a handful of people, dedicated to getting prayer out of the schools, succeeded without a whimper from the church. If we truly serve Jesus Christ, we should have joined together and raised such a cry, that the Judges would have feared to oppose us. Our children suffer because of it.

Where is the Christian ethic when we elect ungodly pro-choice candidates to public office? Does it matter whether our candidate supports traditional Christian values, or do we vote the way we do because we are supporting the "party." Christian apathy elected President Bill Clinton in two elections. We simply didn't show up.

There are more than 300 million Christians suffering today for the Gospel of Christ. While we today complain about our petty inconveniences, Christians are being sold into slavery, persecuted, forced into underground churches, and martyred for their faith. Our faith, by the grace of God, has never truly been tried. That situation may soon change.

They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, **the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service.** John 16:2 KJV

In the mean time, when there were gathered together an innumerable multitude of people, insomuch that they trode one upon another, he began to say unto his disciples first of all, **Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.** For there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known. Luke 12:1-2 KJV

And he charged them, saying, **Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, and of the leaven of Herod.** Mark 8:15 KJV

We are to take heed of the evil of the religious and political leaders.

Prosperity does not in and of itself produce happiness. The people of the Laodicean church were unhappy, and through their riches were poor, blind, and naked. What Jesus was saying to them was that they needed persecution to refine them as “gold tried in the fire.” Eternal riches have been purchased by the blood of Christ, and are available by faith. Man needs spiritual illumination to see clearly.⁴⁰

But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. 1 Corinthians 2:14 KJV

As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent. Revelation 3:19 KJV

Jesus loved them and because of that He rebuked and chastened them. He pleaded with them that they repent. Like the emperor’s new clothes, the Laodicean church was clothed with transparent religious robes. She was not clothed by solid faith with garments of righteousness.⁴¹

Today we say that education will solve the world’s problems. Men can get better and better if only we provide more money for education. Education without Christ only produces more spiritual blindness. Man’s nature must be changed internally, not externally.⁴² The quality of man’s surroundings has nothing to do with his spiritual wellbeing.

Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me. Revelation 3:20 KJV

The message to this church is that at the end of this age we can expect that apostasy, deadness, and indifference will increase.⁴³ Rebuke and chastening are a wake up call, like a knock on the door. Christ has taken the first step. The rest is up to us. If we respond He will “sup” with us.⁴⁴

And he saith unto me, Write, **Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb.** And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God. Revelation 19:9 KJV

So likewise ye, **when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors.** Matthew 24:33 KJV

To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne. Revelation 3:21 KJV

This is a promise that “born again” believers will rule and reign with Christ.⁴⁵

He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches. Revelation 3:22 KJV

Summary

All of these churches represent churches today even though they are also represented and continue to represent specific periods of the Church Age. The following is quoted from John Walvoord in summary of the lessons of the seven churches:

Dangers

The churches represented the following dangers that face Christians down through the ages:⁴⁶

Ephesus - The danger of forsaking the love that characterized believers when they first trusted Christ.

Smyrna - The danger of fear though otherwise they were faithful to God.

Pergamum - The danger of doctrinal compromise.

Thyatira - The danger of moral compromise.

Sardis - The danger of spiritual deadness.

Philadelphia - The danger of not holding fast to the things they believed.

Laodicea - The danger of lukewarmness, of outer religion without inner zeal and reality. "Having a form of Godliness, but denying the power thereof..."⁴⁷

Lets now see what John Walvoord has to say about the Book of Revelation:

Though the Book of Revelation deals primarily with prophecy concerning the future, it was written to help the churches of the present age understand the purposes of God and the great events that will characterize the end of the age.⁴⁸

The study of prophecy is essential to maintaining urgency in expecting the soon return of Jesus Christ. Without this urgency, many Christians become complacent, negligent in their faith, and lose hope - becoming apostate. Keep looking up, expecting the soon return of our Lord. ΑΩ

(Endnotes)

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 E-Mail: CreatRev@hawaii.rr.com; Mail: Robert & Mary Tozier, 92-222 Hoalii Place, Kapolei, HI 96707. Tel: 808-672-7229 - ALOHA! ΑΩ