



METRO NEW YORK WORLD MINISTRY
ADULT SABBATH SCHOOL CONTRIBUTING NOTES
For the week of Mar 12 – Mar 18, 2016
Lesson #12: **Rebellion and Redemption**

The Church Militant

Sabbath Afternoon

“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

Jesus stands at the door of your heart and will remain there. He will not force His way to your heart. He knocks and continues to knock. He never stops knocking. He knocks at the door of our mind. He appeals to our conscience.

He will “sup with” us not because He is physically hungry, but because He wants to be with us. He desires our fellowship.

Sunday’s Lesson

Title: The Church at Ephesus

Scripture: Revelation 2:1-7

Ephesus represents the time of the early church from AD 31–100. The individuals credited with starting the church in Ephesus were Aquila and Priscilla, a dedicated lay couple; Apollos, an eloquent evangelist; and the apostle Paul, who spent three years in Ephesus. See Acts 18–20.

As with each of the seven churches, Jesus begins with a description of Himself. Jesus describes Himself as the One who holds the seven stars in His right hand, indicating His ability to protect and strengthen His saints. He is seen walking in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks, indicating His very presence with them. Revelation 2:1

Jesus begins by commending them for their works, toil, and patient endurance. He commends them for testing others who call themselves apostles but are not. Revelation 2:2, 3

After Jesus commended them He expressed this concern, saying, “I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.” The Ephesian Christians were religious, conservative, active saints. They had all the right doctrines. However, they had left behind those original deep affections they had for Jesus. Were they now practicing all these Christian virtues out of a sense of duty instead of love? That was the danger.

After the rebuke, Jesus then told them another thing that He appreciated about them. He commended them for hating, not the Nicolaitans, but the works of the Nicolaitans. Jesus hated their works as well. Revelation 2:6



Who were the Nicolaitans? Irenaeus, a second-century minister who grew up near Ephesus, referred to them as professed Christians who taught that it was okay to break the Ten Commandments as long as you still believed in Jesus. The Nicolaitans did not see a problem with being a Christian and committing adultery or eating flesh offered to idols. However, the beloved John wrote in his first epistle, “He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.” 1 John 2:4.

After the first commendation, His rebuke, and a second commendation, He then shared with them the reward for overcoming their lovelessness. Jesus told them, “I will grant to eat of the Tree of Life, which is in the paradise of God.” Obviously, this promise was not for the Ephesian Christians alone, but for all who manifest their love relationship with Jesus by being obedient to His Word. Revelation 2:7

Application

What do you say to someone that has left their first love for Jesus? Do you just rebuke them? Do you overlook the issue? I had an employee who was very religious. She was a hard worker, very conservative in her views, but obviously left her first love for Jesus by the way she was treating others roughly. I decided to follow the Ephesus plan to help her shine brighter for Jesus.

I began by commending her for things that I appreciated about her work and about herself. Then I shared with her what I was concerned about. I followed that up with another commendation, and then shared with her what I thought the blessings would be if she overcame her harshness with others. As she cooperating with the Holy Spirit, she became more tolerant of others, and had even apologized for her harshness at times. She was definitely shining brighter.

Monday's Lesson

Title: Smyrna and Pergamum

Scriptures: Revelation 2:8-17

Smyrna was the church under many trials and persecutions, and represents the Christian era from AD 100-313.

We are not sure who started the Smyrna church, but Paul had been working in nearby Ephesus for three years. See Acts 20:31. As in most cases, the raising up of a church is the work of many people with varying talents. The church in Smyrna was a persecuted church. It was slandered by false Jews, and it was slated to be tormented by Satan and to receive “tribulation” for “ten days.” Some of its members were to be imprisoned, and some would be put to death.

Jesus identifies with these persecuted saints by introducing Himself as He “which was dead, and is alive.” This, of course, would encourage the Smyrna believers to maintain their fidelity to God no matter the trying circumstances. They knew that the future eternal life was one without pain, suffering, and death.

In His commendation to the Smyrna Christians, Jesus says, “I know thy works, and tribulations, and poverty.” Jesus knew what it was like to work under hostile conditions. These Smyrna Christians themselves continued in good works while they were being persecuted. They could only do this by focusing on the needs of others, rather



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than themselves. Perhaps Jesus is telling us that the best way to overcome adversity is to meet the needs of those around us. Revelation 2:9

Appropriate to their trying circumstances, Jesus provided them with a twofold promise of eternal life. “Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.” “He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.” Revelation 2:10, 11

Of course, this promise is offered to all who are “faithful unto death.” There is a crown waiting for all who triumph over their sinful nature. For all who would rather endure persecution than to disobey God, there is no second death.

What is the second death? We know that everybody dies once, for the wages of sin is death. See Romans 6:23. Ever since sin entered our world there has been death for all living things. But not everybody has to die twice. If you are born twice, you will only die once. Everybody is born once, but not everybody is born again. If you are born again, and remain faithful unto death, you will not face the second death. The Bible says, “And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.” Revelation 20:14. The second death is the lake of fire. Those who were only born once will die the second death in the lake of fire.

Application

There was no rebuke for those in Smyrna. We could assume that there was no need of any rebuke. They were a very healthy church with no real problems. Even so, there is a very important lesson for us in helping others shine brighter for Jesus

What do you say to a faithful fellow believer who is under a lot of persecution from others? Do you go to them and tell them what you do not like about them? I believe that Jesus is telling us to commend and encourage them. There is a time and a place for rebuking, but it is not when an individual is faithfully ministering to others while they themselves are being persecuted. Remember, we are trying to cooperate with divine agencies to help others shine brighter for Jesus.

Pergamos 2:12–17

Pergamos represent the Christian era from AD 313–538. Jesus said to the congregation of Pergamos, “I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan’s seat is.” Revelation 2:12. Pergamos was the site where the first temple was dedicated to worship of the emperor of Rome. This occurred in 29 BC, in honor of Caesar Augustus. At the very time John wrote these words, Christians were being persecuted for refusing to worship the emperor Domitian (AD 81–96), who insisted on being worshiped as lord and god.

During this prophetic time of the Pergamos Christian era, we find emperor Constantine in the fourth century meshing Christianity and paganism together. He lavished the Church of Rome, giving her gifts both financial and political. It was during this time that the Papacy was developing and Satan was establishing his seat within the church structure.

Description of Jesus

Jesus is described as He “which hath the sharp sword with two edges.” Paul wrote:

“For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” Hebrews 4:12, 13.



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The power of God's Word is described here because apostasy from the truth is creeping into the church. No matter the sincerity of those who bring in error to the church, the Word is powerful and will cut like a two-edged sword. It is not wise to mesh truth and error, for such is the work of Satan.

Commendation 2:13

Christ is pleased with some in Pergamos, for in spite of so wicked an environment, some have not denied the faith, "even in those days wherein Antipas who was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth."

This faithful Antipas represents thousands who refused to either worship the emperor or to participate in the paganizing of the church. *Anti* means *opposed to* or *to be against*. *Pas* or *Papas* means *father* or *pope* or *one who takes precedence*. In other words, God had a faithful group of men, women, and children who were against the one trying to take precedence over all others. They were against the development of the *pas* or *papas* or *papacy*.

Remember, it took centuries for the Papacy to develop and take hold of the reigns of the Roman Empire. It was especially during these years of 313–538 that the Papacy really took form in preparation to control the empire both religiously and politically by AD 538.

While God could commend Antipas and other faithful saints that spoke out against the development of the Papacy, Jesus could not commend those who did just the opposite. Instead of taking a stand for truth they accepted the "doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication." Jesus added, "So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate."

We had learned earlier that the Nicolaitans taught that faith in Christ released them from keeping God's commandments, particularly the commandments dealing with adultery and idol worship. Obviously, certain ones during the Pergamos Christian era were committing spiritual adultery by meshing the church and state together. They also tampered with God's Ten Commandments by doing away with the commandment to forbid the worship of idols, and changing the Sabbath from the seventh day to the first day of the week. All this was done to make the church popular before the masses of pagans within the empire.

Jesus also rebuked them for accepting the teaching of Balaam. The historical Balaam was an Old Testament prophet turned bad. See Numbers 25:1–9; 31:16. After serving God for many years, Balaam accepted the offer of a bribe from Balak, King of the Moabites, who wanted him to curse the Israelites so that Israel would be unable to defeat the Moabites in battle.

God worked a miracle to keep Balaam from cursing Israel, but Balaam was so determined to get the bribe that he advised King Balak to invite the Israelites to a pagan festival, supplied with women and wine. Apparently Balaam reasoned that if he could get the Israelites to sin seriously, God Himself would curse them.

King Balak followed Balaam's devilish plan, and many Israelites succumbed to the temptation of alcohol and illicit sex. God did not curse all of Israel, but He did order that those who had cooperated with Balaam should be hanged. In all, 24,000 Israelites perished. In like manner, it makes you wonder how many millions will perish because of the apostasy developing during the third, fourth, and fifth centuries of the Christian era.



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Out of love Jesus warns these apostates to repent. See Revelation 2:16. Otherwise, Jesus said solemnly, “I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.” The sword represents the punishment that will result if they do not repent.

Reward 2:17

“To him who conquers I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, with a new name written on the stone which no one knows except him who receives it.”

Jesus is the Bread of life. He is the hidden manna that came down from heaven. Only by turning back from following the Nicolaitans and Balaam can we receive Jesus as our nourishment. Church leaders that continue to lead church members into idolatry and commandment-breaking cannot receive this reward or promise. To him that overcomes these pagan ways Jesus will give a new name corresponding to his new character.

Application:

There was no rebuke for those who were fighting against apostasy in the church. These faithful individuals encourage us to stand for truth though her champions are few.

To those who are compromising the faith and getting too close to Satan, we need to take them to the Word of God and encourage them to repent. We are not to try to persuade them with our opinions. There is no power in our opinions. However, there is power in God’s Word. But it is not enough just to open the Word, we should encourage people to make a commitment to the truth. After all, how can people shine for Jesus while they are espousing falsehoods?

Tuesday’s Lesson

Title: Thyatira and Sardis

Scripture: Revelation 2:18-3:6

Thyatira represents the Christian era from AD 538-1798. This is the Dark Ages of Papal control.

Description of Jesus 2:18

Jesus is described as “the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet are like fine brass.” The emphasis of Jesus as the Son of God is due to the Papacy’s high claims as God on earth. But it is Jesus’ eyes that can see all things and judge aright. It is His feet of fine brass that point to His authority over the church. It is Jesus that is the only Mediator between God and man. See 1 Timothy 2:5. He alone is the High Priest of the Christian faith. See Hebrews 2:14–18; 4:14–16; 8:1, 2.

Commendation 2:19

Christ complimented those Christians in Thyatira, who lived a life of “charity, and service, and faith, and ... patience, and ... works” during the time when the structure was in deep apostasy. Jesus noted that their good works grew even better as time progressed, saying, “and the last to be more than the first.”



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Rebuke 2:20

Whereas the Ephesians had rejected the Nicolaitans, and only some of those in Pergamos had accepted the Balaamites, the vast majority of the Thyatira church actually tolerated Jezebel—a woman who claimed to be a prophetess but taught and seduced God’s people “to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols.”

Like Balaam, the real Jezebel was an infamous person in the Old Testament. She was a false prophetess married to Ahab, king of Israel. Daughter of the pagan king of Tyre, Jezebel brought pagan priests with her to Israel and soon converted most of the Israelites to the immoral worship of Baal. Many Israelites who refused to give up the worship of God were martyred. See 1 Kings 16–21.

Ahab’s marriage to Jezebel represents the adulterous union of church and state. The result of such an unholy wedlock is the martyrdom of the righteous. The toleration of pagan Jezebel represents that period of church history when the Papacy ruled the state and had brought into the Christian community pagan worship under the guise of Christianity.

Like everyone in need of repentance, God gave the Church of Rome time to repent. He tried to reach them through churches that had remained faithful to God’s Word. Later, He tried to reach them through the reformed churches. But Jesus tragically predicted, “she repented not.” Any church that refuses to repent of her errant ways is an apostate church. Revelation 2:21

Verses 22, 23: God’s Judgment on the Church of Rome

As a result, she was to suffer from a dread disease. “Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds. And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts.” This verse makes evident that all professed Christians are judged. As Paul himself noted, “We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive good or evil, according to what he has done in the body.” 2 Corinthians 5:10.

Verses 24, 25: God Still had a Faithful Remnant

Faithful companies did exist at this time who were not associated with Rome and her apostasy. They were to hold fast to the light that they had received. This, of course, implies that more light from God’s Word was coming. As the Bible says, “But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.” Proverbs 4:18. The Dark Ages of Papal rule was definitely not the perfect day. But light is progressive. Others would come along and build upon the faithfulness of those before them.

Those faithful ones during the Thyatira era were to hold fast until Jesus comes. This does not mean that Christ was coming before the close of the Thyatira era, but that signs of His return would begin to become manifest, such as the fulfillment of the 1260-year prophecy ending in 1798, and the unsealing of the Book of Daniel. See Daniel 7:25; 12:4.

Reward 2:26–28

To him that overcomes the temptation to forsake truth for political, economic, and social gain, Jesus promises power over the nations and a rod of iron. In ancient times, a rod of iron was used by the shepherds. See Psalm 23:4. Its function was to protect the flock from danger. Those who protect others from error will see the destruction of the wicked and will no longer suffer at their hands.



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The “morning star” that Jesus promises to give us is Himself. See Revelation 22:16. While the world seeks an alliance with the man of sin who exalts himself above all others, God’s faithful seek a full union with Jesus, the Light of the world.

Application:

What do you say to someone who refuses to repent? What do you say to church leaders who act like they are God? What else can we do but point them to the Son of God and His authority over all things. If they do not recognize the authority of Christ, they do not belong to Christ.

What do we do when calls are made to unite the church and the power of the state? We are to speak out against it. The results of the union of church and state were demonstrated for over twelve centuries, from 538 to 1798. What was the result? Apostasy and murder.

We are ourselves to live a life of charity, service, and faith. Seldom do we convince others of the truth simply by our words. There must be a demonstration of the power of God in our lives. We are to love our enemies, live a life of service to others, live by the faith of Jesus, be patient and kind, and do the works that Christ has for us to do. Then we can bid others to repent.

Sardis: Revelation 3:1–5

Sardis represents the time of the Reformers, AD 1517–1798. While the Reformers themselves were vibrant, alive, and students of God’s Word, future generations were not. They instead rested upon the reputation of their founders. Jesus said, “I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead.” You think that you are alive because you are a member of a Protestant church, but in reality you are dead spiritually.

Description of Jesus

Jesus is described as He that “hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars.” This stagnant church needs the “seven Spirits” or the Holy Spirit to bring them back to life. They will receive the Holy Spirit in proportion to how much they feel their need for Christ. They will also receive the Spirit proportional to their desire and faith exercised to share Jesus with others.

Rebuke 3:1–3

Jesus begins by saying “I know thy works.” Jesus knows us all perfectly. He knows our spiritual condition. He knows what we need. And He knows how to lead us in our spiritual growth. The question is, Are we listening to the Spirit, or are we falling asleep? Unfortunately, the Christians of Sardis did not know their real needs. You might say, they fell asleep spiritually. But Jesus said, “Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God.”

3:4 The Faithful

Not all of the Sardis Christians were sleeping spiritually. Jesus said, “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.” It takes cooperation with divine agencies to remain undefiled by the world. It also takes a watchful eye. You must be aware of your surroundings. What kind of things draw you closer to Christ? And what sort of things lead you away from Christ? Jesus says, “Be watchful!”



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We must also strengthen the things that we have. Through disuse, muscles tend to get weaker. So it is in the spiritual realm. If you have studied and prayed faithfully in the past, keep it up. If you have shared your faith in the past, continue to do so. If you decline to do so, you will get weaker and weaker spiritually.

Reward 3:5

“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.”

Jesus made it evident that a Christian who keeps on sleeping spiritually will have his name erased from the book of life. Here again, Jesus is speaking about a judgment that pertains to believers. This day of judgment did not begin in the Thyatira or Sardis time periods, but it was coming soon. In vision, Daniel was shown the judgment and wrote, “I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit, ... the judgment was set, and the books were opened.” Daniel 7:9, 10.

So far we have reason to believe that Nicolaitan and Balaamite Christians will have their names blotted out of the book of life. Those who tolerate Jezebel will also be lost, as well as Christians who refuse to wake up to their spiritual needs. The subject of the judgment is of a most serious nature. Are you ready?

Application

What can we do to help stagnant Christians shine brighter? We can speak to them about the work of the Holy Spirit, who alone can regenerate a stagnant life. We should teach them that the empowerment of the Holy Spirit is based upon two things. First, we will receive the Holy Spirit based upon our daily need of Christ. In other words, when you wake up in the morning, do you make the firm decision to be like Jesus? Do you express your need and desire for Him? If we have no desire or need for Jesus, then why be empowered by the Holy Spirit? The power of the Holy Spirit is for those who choose to follow in the footsteps of Jesus.

Second, we will be empowered by the Holy Spirit when we freely give to others what we have freely received. In other words, am I willing to be used in God’s service today? If you are planning to hide your light under a bushel, why be empowered by the Holy Spirit? But if you choose to be used in God’s service, then you will receive a fresh supply of the Holy Spirit for that day.

We can also make stagnant Christians aware of the judgment. In preparation for the judgment, we need to make sure that we are right with God and our fellow man. In addition, we should make sure that we are earnest seekers for truth. Most people will be lost because they didn’t take the time to discover what is truth.

Wednesday’s Lesson

Title: The Church of Philadelphia

Scriptures: Revelation 3:7–13

Time Period

Philadelphia represents the church of the open door, the Great Advent Movement from AD 1798–1844.

The name *Philadelphia* means “brotherly love.” Jesus commends these Philadelphian Christians, saying, “for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept My word, and hast not denied My name.” During this time a great revival took



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place. Followers of Christ chose true godliness over religious forms. Excitement over the soon return of Christ was the catalyst of this revival. Truths that had been lost during the Dark Ages of Papal supremacy now came streaming forth.

Description of Jesus

Jesus is described as 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.”

Christ the Holy One inspired these Philadelphian Christians to strive for holiness in their own lives. Christ the True One inspired these saints to go by the Bible and the Bible only. The door that would be opened was none other than the door that led from the Holy Place to the Most Holy Place in the heavenly Sanctuary. On October 22, 1844, Christ entered the Most Holy Place in heaven. This was the fulfillment of the prophecy found in Daniel 8:14. As these saints by faith followed Jesus into the Holy of Holies, they discover the high priestly work of Jesus in the heavenly Sanctuary above. They learned that Jesus was beginning His work of judgment, which was preparatory for His soon return.

Commendation 3:8

The “little strength” of Philadelphia certainly surpassed the stagnation and sleepiness of Sardis. Yet this mention of a “little strength” implies the promise of greater strength. That greater strength would come to those who would by faith follow Jesus into the Most Holy Place in the heavenly Sanctuary.

Reward 3:9–12

Jesus said that the “synagogue of Satan” would bow at their feet. The time will come that those who teach error will acknowledge the truth discovered by these saints of God.

Jesus promises, “I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem.... I will write upon him My new name.” Our new names represent the new characters we develop in cooperation with heavenly agencies. With the name of the city of God, we become citizens of that glorious New Jerusalem.

Jesus will make the overcomers “pillars in the temple” of God. This means that they will hold important and permanent positions in the very presence of God.

Jesus also promises to keep them “from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.” It would seem evident that these nineteenth-century Philadelphia Christians were tested on some special portion of Scripture that those living in the end of time will likewise face. It is also evident that an hour of temptation will come upon the whole world. So what was the test that these faithful Christians in the nineteenth century had to face? As we will see later, it will concern the law of God, especially the Sabbath commandment.

Description of Jesus 3:7, 8

We are introduced to the church of Philadelphia as the church of the open door. Christ presents Himself as “he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth; I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it.”

Jesus has the “key of David” and has full authority to carry the plan of salvation forward. The “key of David” comes from Isaiah’s prophecy concerning Eliakim. Eliakim was appointed to have supervision over the household



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of David, as signified by the fact that he was to be given the key of the house of David. See Isaiah 22:20–22; 2 Kings 18:18. Christ's possession of the "key" represents His jurisdiction over the church and all spiritual outcomes. The Papacy doesn't have the keys; Jesus has the keys. He is the only One qualified to possess the keys.

Christ now opens before the Philadelphians a "door" of unlimited power that surpasses their "little strength." This open door presents to man unlimited opportunity to live a victorious Christian life. A "door" is often used in the Bible as a symbol of opportunity. See Acts 14:27; 1 Corinthians 16:9; 2 Corinthians 2:12; Colossians 4:3.

The close of the Philadelphian period marks the opening of this door. The truth would be discovered that Jesus is our High Priest in the heavenly Sanctuary above, "the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man." Hebrews 8:2, 6. The "shut door" would be the door to the Holy Place, and the "open door" would refer to the Most Holy Place where Christ would perform His final work in saving man. In other words, the "shut door" indicates the closing of the first phase of Christ's work as our High Priest, and the "open door" represents the beginning of Christ's second and final phase.

No man can shut the door to the Most Holy Place in heaven, nor can they open the door Christ shut in the Holy Place. Christ's work moves forward and no man can hinder Christ's priestly ministry. The Most Holy Place represents the day of judgment. In the earthly temple, which was but a copy of the one in heaven, the Most Holy Place was entered into on but one day of the year. This was the last day of the religious year, representing the day of judgment for Israel. Only the high priest could enter the Most Holy Place on that solemn day. On this day, the people of Israel needed to make themselves right with God and their fellow man. If they failed, they were cast out of Israel. This solemn day, known as the Day of Atonement, or Yom Kippur, was but a type or shadow of the day of judgment in the heavenly Sanctuary. On this day the people were judged, and the Sanctuary was cleansed of all the sins that had accumulated there throughout the religious year. Daniel 8:14 provides for us a time prophecy that points to the year when Christ would begin to cleanse the heavenly Sanctuary. The 2300 days represent 2300 years, a day representing a year in Bible prophecy. See Numbers 14:33, 34; Ezekiel 4:5, 6. This time prophecy ended in 1844. Hence, the Philadelphian time takes us from one fulfilled time prophecy ending in 1798, the 1260-year prophecy, to the great 2300-year time prophecy ending in 1844. During this span of nearly 50 years there was a revival of primitive godliness that, sad to say, we have not seen since.

Application

How do you help people who already shine brightly for Jesus shine even brighter? We should continue to focus on the holiness of Christ. It is as we behold Christ, who is altogether lovely, that we continue to be transformed into His image. The Bible says, "For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he." Proverbs 23:7. The mind of the man is the man. What we think about is what we begin to love and cherish.

We should spend at least a thoughtful hour each day contemplating the life of Christ, especially the closing scenes. As we do, our love for Jesus will grow and we will become more like Him in thoughts and feelings. The devil will try to get you to behold the world, the faults of others, our own faults, and all our sorrows and perplexities in life.

The devil knows that if you dwell upon worldly things that you will become worldly. If you dwell upon the faults of others you will become a faultfinder. If you dwell upon your own faults you will not grow spiritually. Why? Because you cannot rise any higher than your highest thought. This is why our highest thoughts should be of Christ and His perfection. If you dwell upon all your sorrows and perplexities in life, then you will only become depressed and never choose to do great things for God. Therefore, be vigilant, watchful, and prayerful. Choose to dwell upon those things that are lovely, honest, good, and kind.



Thursday's Lesson

Title: The Church of Laodicea

Scripture: Revelation 3:14-22

Laodicea 3:14–22

Laodicea presents God's last day church, the church of the judgment hour from 1844 to the Second Coming.

Laodicea, the seventh church, is the last church of the Christian era. Laodicea means *a people judged*. This period represents the time when the books are opened for judgment and Jesus enters His last phase of ministry prior to His second coming.

Rebuke 3:15–17

Tragically, to this last-day church Jesus had no commendation to give, but only a stinging rebuke, saying, "I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot...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."

Jesus was telling the Laodiceans that they were self-deceived. They were lukewarm. In other words, they were not very bad, yet not very good; not outright hostile to Christ, yet not vitally committed to Him; not absolutely selfish, yet not enthusiastically generous; not opposed to helping others, but not doing all they could do. What made their condition disgusting was the fact that they had more light than other Christians. To these Laodiceans, Christ says, "I will spue thee out of My mouth." However, He adds, "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent." Revelation 3:19.

Remedy 3:18

Christ states His prescription for this lukewarm illness, saying, "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 eyeslave, that thou mayest see."

The "white garment" is identified in Revelation 19:7, 8 as "the righteousness of the saints." But where did the saints obtain this righteousness? The Bible says that Christ is "THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS." Jeremiah 23:6. As Paul wrote, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me." Galatians 2:20. Through Christ we become a new creature and a new creation. Through His shed blood we are justified. Through His applied blood we are sanctified.

The heavenly "eyesalve" is the work of the Holy Spirit to help us see ourselves as we really are. With the Holy Spirit, we will have greater discernment between right and wrong. We will have a keener sense of the times in which we live. We will be better able to see opportunities for ministry. In other words, we will not be as blind as we are right now. We should all hunger and thirst to have better spiritual eyesight.

"Gold tried in the fire" represents faith and love that purifies the soul. We know that gold represents wealth and riches in this world. So what constitutes spiritual riches? James wrote, "Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not



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God chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which He hath promised to them that love Him.” James 2:5.

Our faith in God makes us rich. Yet what is faith in God without love for God? In fact, Paul teaches us that faith works by love. See Galatians 5:6. Our faith is motivated to serve God and our fellow man by the love of Christ for us. In the love chapter, 1 Corinthians 13, we find that there is faith, hope, and love, yet the greatest of these is love. It is our faith in God’s love for us and our love for God and one another that makes us rich indeed.

Reward 3:20, 21

Jesus said, “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. 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.”

Evidently it is not enough to *want* to be a Christian. We must *choose* to be Christians and open the door of our heart for Jesus to abide. Christ will not force Himself in, but He continues to knock at our heart’s door. Will we let Him come in?

Application:

How do you help a lukewarm Christian who is a nice person but not a sanctified person? How do you help someone who gives a little, but does not sacrifice all? How do you help someone who likes to hear mission stories but is not actively involved in outreach? How do you help a church organization that is proud of their little progress? How do you help someone that is self-sufficient?

These Laodicean Christians followed the Philadelphian era of the open door. Vast opportunities were before them. New light had come to them. They had found Jesus as the High Priest in the heavenly Sanctuary; they rediscovered the truth about the Sabbath; they made great strides in health reform, educational reform, and dress reform; they gained tremendous insights into Bible prophecy. Simply said, they had it all. What they lacked wasn’t information, but experience.

They became proud of their spiritual knowledge and possessions, but they lacked a true understanding of their own spiritual condition. So Jesus told them exactly what they needed. First, they are to receive the righteousness of Christ—the white raiment. There is only one place to get righteousness. You cannot get it from yourself, because you have none. While the law defines righteousness, you cannot get righteousness from the law. Righteousness must come from the Lord.

Jesus came to our world to live a righteous life for us. He did that which we were unable to do ourselves. By the power of the Holy Spirit, Christ lived a perfect and obedient life in our fallen flesh. He conquered sin in our flesh that we might now live godly in Him.

When we accept Jesus as our Savior, His perfect life is credited to our account in heaven. His perfect life covers all our sins. But Christ does more than credit to us His righteousness, He imparts His righteousness to us through the work of the Holy Spirit. The impartation of the life of Christ is the impartation of the Spirit. Christ now lives in us. His righteousness becomes ours. We now live His life.

When we receive the eyesalve of the Holy Spirit we will have greater discernment between truth and error, right and wrong. We will have greater discernment concerning opportunities to minister to the needs of others. And we will have greater discernment concerning the times in which we live.



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When we have that faith tried in the fire, we will endure trials as Jesus endured trials. We will do what Jesus did. We will find new ways of reaching perishing souls.