

WHICH CHURCH DO YOU BELONG TO?

As we lead our Christian lives, it is very necessary to pause at some intervals, as God's Holy Bible admonishes, and prayerfully consider the above question. The Seven Letters to the Seven Churches in Asia found in the last Book of the Bible, Revelation, are connected to our question, and each genuine believer must truthfully answer the question: "Which Church Do You Belong To?" as our eternal life depends on how serious we take God's warning.

The word *Revelation* is the Greek translation of *apokalupsis*, from which the English translates into *apocalypse* and *apocalyptic*, which is a special kind of prophecy from God. Therefore, when God announces an apocalyptic message, we must pay attention and obey.

Some ministers and church-goers ignore the reading of the Book of Revelation because of the supposedly "horrors" depicted there. But we strongly believe that they are missing the great benedictions that precede the apocalyptic warnings. Let us begin by reading Revelation 1:1-3:

"The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants—things which must shortly take place. And He sent and signified *it* by His angel to His servant John, ² who bore witness to the word of God, and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, to all things that he saw. ³ **Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; for the time is near.**" (NKJV Bible)

From the passages above we can see that God has set aside the following blessings:

- (1) God gives special blessings to those who read the Book of Revelation, in addition to studying the entire Books of the Bible;
- (2) God offers special blessings to those who hear the Words of the prophecy in the Book of Revelation; and
- (3) God awards special blessings to those who obey the straightforward warnings in this Apocalyptic Book, starting with the Letters to the Seven Churches

Why is our Gracious Savior offering us these special blessings? Because our Heavenly Father loves us so much that He does not want anyone to experience the great tribulation spoken of by the Prophet Daniel and our LORD Jesus Christ. God desires that each of us surrender our life to Christ, repent of our sins and gain eternal life.

The Seven Letters that the LORD Jesus Christ revealed to the Apostle John were meant to warn the First Century believers to examine their lives, repent of any sins, and return to worship God as they had previously done, and to pray and watch for the Second Return of Christ, as the end of time is near.

Let us prayerfully consider Prophet Isaiah's warning and ask the Holy Spirit to give us the strength to obey God:

⁶ Seek the LORD while He may be found, Call upon Him while He is near. ⁷ Let the wicked forsake his way, And the unrighteous man his thoughts; Let him return to the LORD, And He will have mercy on him; And to our God, For He will abundantly pardon (Isaiah 55:6,7)

Out of the seven churches that received report cards only two were commended for their complete obedience to God.

Why were five of the seven churches rebuked and warned to repent or face the wrath of God? They, like so many professed Christians of today, had veered off the path of Truth and become LOVELESS, COMPROMISING, CORRUPT, DEAD and LUKEWARM in their devotion toward the right ways of worshiping God. They needed to be reminded that sin will take them to the lake of fire if they did not repent.

The five churches had gradually become apathetic and allowed the world, the flesh and the devil to replace what the Apostles had preached to them. They were no longer "on fire for Christ."

When we look at First Century Gospel Churches and thousands of other Churches around the world that bear the name of the LORD Jesus Christ, could we confidently say that we have not fallen into the same trap as the 1st Century Churches in Asia found themselves? Churches that started out with vigor and prayerful diligence have fallen victim to the "evils of the day." They have reformed without conforming to Christ. Their Sunday services have been divided to keep up with children who have rejected the "old-time religion" of their parents. Some churches have traditional services starting at 9 or 10 am for the elderly members and contemporary worship with musical and lighting effects hours later so the "younger generation could be entertained."

The letters recorded in Revelation 2:1-29 and 3:1-22 to the seven Churches located in Asia (now Turkey) have seven different name tags. As you read each, consider the name that best describes your Church then make the necessary adjustments for your eternal soul. They are:

1. The LOVELESS Ephesus Church: Revelation 2:1-7.
2. The PERSECUTED Smyrna Church: Revelation 2:8-11.
3. The COMPROMISING Pergamos Church: Revelation 2:12-17.
4. The CORRUPT Thyatira Church: Revelation 2:18-29.
5. The DEAD Sardis Church: Revelation 3:1-6.
6. The FAITHFUL Philadelphia Church: Revelation 3:7-13.
7. The LUKEWARM Laodicean Church: Revelation 3:14-22

These letters and warnings are as relevant to the 21st Century believers today as they were to the 1st Century Christians. Let us remember that these warnings were directed by the LORD Jesus to Christians or believers who had started to feel comfortable in their sins. The letters were NOT addressed to unbelievers.

We need to compare the quality of the Church where we worship today and ask ourselves, "Which Church Do We Belong To?" All Churches may not be perfect, but believers that have been called out to Christ must obey GOD in order to enjoy the fullness of the Holy Spirit (Luke 10:27-29; John 4:24). Now let us examine each of the seven Churches.

Revelation 2:1-7 - The Loveless Church: ¹ "To the angel of the church of Ephesus write, 'These things says He who holds the seven stars in His right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands: ² "I know your works, your labor, your patience, and that you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars; ³ and you have persevered and have patience, and have labored for My name's sake and have not become weary. ⁴ Nevertheless I have *this* against you, that you have left your first love. ⁵ Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place—unless you repent. ⁶ But this you have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. ⁷ "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God.'"

Comments:

The LORD Jesus commended the Ephesian Church in five areas for: (1) working hard; (2) having patience; (3) resisting sin especially those of the Nicolaitans or Balaamites who encouraged immorality; (4) critically examining the claims of false prophets; and (5) enduring hardships without becoming weary. Also, the LORD praised them for steadfastly refusing to tolerate sin among its members.

During the Apostle Paul's ministry, he encouraged the Ephesians:

"That Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what *is* the width and length and depth and height—to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge...." (Ephesians 3:17-19).

Again in chapter 4:2, the Apostle Paul reminded the Ephesian church about

"...Bearing with one another in love,"

And later in the chapter, he warned them not to "grieve the Holy Spirit" through sin (Ephesians 4:30).

The Apostle Paul knew the weakness of the Church at Ephesus that they lacked love, and he reiterated his warning in the next chapter:

"Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us" (Ephesians 5:1,2).

But why were the Ephesians marked as a LOVELESS Church? It was because they initially received the Word of God with gladness, and expressed the love of God, but they soon lost the interest and the dedication to remain obedient. They had left their first love – God. They had become disappointed after failing to see immediate fruits of their labor or generosity to others. Their love for the brethren had waned although they continued to worship God and attend Church services. They thought they could claim to love God whom they could not see while they hated their brethren they saw everyday. The Ephesians had refused to forgive those who offended them, and yet were praying to God to forgive their sins.

Another reason the Ephesian Church was rebuked for being uninterested in the salvation of the souls of sinners going to hell. They did not care for the welfare of those who were not in their Church, and reacted with a cold heart, just as the priest and Levite did, who were not prepared to show love and sympathy to the stranger on the road to Jericho, in the Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37). The Bible is full of God's Commandments on how to express love to one another, but the loveless Ephesian Church had neglected this important Commandment. They were not ready to love their ungodly neighbors (Matthew 13:20-21; 1st John 2:9-11; 4:7-8; Galatians 5:19-21; James 1:22-27; 2:5; 1st Corinthians 13:1-13).

Which Church Do You Belong To? Are you guilty of being loveless at Church, at home, work or in your community? When God looks at your Church, does He see a loving Church? God says "...And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these *is* LOVE."

Although Christ accused the Ephesian Church of being loveless, the LORD praised them for hating the doctrine of the Nicolaitans. The Nicolaitans were believers who compromised their faith in order to participate in the sinful practices of the Ephesian society. The name Nicolaitans is held by some to be roughly the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew word for "Balaamites."

Revelation 2:8-11 - The Persecuted Church: ⁸ "And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write, 'These things says the First and the Last, who was dead, and came to life: ⁹ "I know your works, tribulation, and poverty (but you are rich); and *I know* the blasphemy of those who say they are Jews and are not, but *are* a synagogue of Satan. ¹⁰ Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw *some* of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life. ¹¹ "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death.'"

Comments:

What was special about the Persecuted Church? It is spiritually disappointing that the Churches at Smyrna and Philadelphia were the only two of the seven not rebuked by our LORD Jesus Christ. Similarly, of the millions of Churches around the world, we must realize that only a minority that remains faithful will receive the "well done, good and faithful servant" welcome in Heaven from Christ unless they repented. Remember what someone asked the LORD Jesus in Luke 13:22-27? "LORD, are there few who are saved?" or "will only a few be saved?" Christ replied: "Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I say to you, will seek to enter and will not be able." Is your Church striving to enter through the narrow gate in obedience to God's Word after receiving the Word of GOD? Does your church continue in perseverance through prayers for God's Grace, Mercy and Protection?

The Smyrna Church remained faithful to the LORD in spite of tribulation and persecutions from outsiders and so-called Christians who made it difficult for them to concentrate on worshiping God. The LORD strengthened the Church and encouraged them not to fear the harsh treatments that the devil would inflict on them.

Many Christians today are afraid to take a stand for Christ and express their convictions at work, at school and in society because they are afraid of being

persecuted. They are anxious of losing their worldly friends, so they blend in with the ungodly things around them. They prefer to be undercover Christians. But Christ called Christians out so we could be the light that brightens the dark world. Lot knew what he was doing when he went to stay with the immoral and wicked Sodomites. He knew they were sinners, yet he settled among them and was unable to take a stand against their sins.

Some Christians know that they are not supposed to involve themselves in certain sinful things, yet they do to satisfy their curiosity and return tempted, and lusting after those forbidden things. The strongest man in the Bible, Samson was not supposed to pay any visits to the beautiful Philistine women, but he went, and looked, and stayed, and talked, and returned with a desire to marry them in disobedience. Samson lost his eyes and life as a reward.

The congregation at the Smyrna Church was not afraid to be martyred because of the persecutions they were facing. How would you handle it if you were living in China today and were not allowed to own a Bible or gather for Church service or evangelize? What would you do if the little Church house you erected was bulldozed each time you gathered for service? Persecutions of Christians are being reported daily in Iran, Iraq, Egypt, Sudan, North Korea and in other parts of the world. Christians are not allowed to worship at their own church; they have to worship at the state-approved church.

Are you afraid of being persecuted? Are you afraid of losing your life? Do you know that persecution and death do not last forever? Rather, as soon a true Christian dies, he is ushered into Abraham's bosom and in the presence of the LORD? Death in this world is only temporary, but life in Christ is forever as "absence from the body is presence with the LORD" as confirmed in the story of the rich man and Lazarus in Luke 16:19-31. Is your Church a persecuted Church? Take courage, says the LORD, "Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer...Be faithful until death, and I will give you a crown of life." (Revelation 2:10). Which Church Do You Belong To? If your Church is going through persecution and remains faithful, a crown from Christ awaits her!

Revelation 2:12-17 - The Compromising Church: ¹² "And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write, 'These things says He who has the sharp two-edged sword: ¹³ "I know your works, and where you dwell, where Satan's throne *is*. And you hold fast to My name, and did not deny My faith even in the days in which Antipas *was* My faithful martyr, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells. ¹⁴ But I have a few things against you, because you have there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit sexual immorality. ¹⁵ Thus you also have those who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate. ¹⁶ Repent, or else I will come to you quickly and will fight against them with the sword of My mouth. ¹⁷ "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give some of the hidden manna to eat. And I will give him a white stone, and on the stone a new name written which no one knows except him who receives *it*.'"

Comments:

The Pergamos Church was built on a hill 1,000 feet above the surrounding countryside, creating a natural fortress. It was a sophisticated city, a center of Greek culture and education, with a 200,000 volume library. But it was also the center of four cults, and it rivaled Ephesus in its worship of idols.

As the center for four idolatrous cults (Zeus, Dionysius, Asclepius and Athene), Pergamos was called the city "where Satan's throne is," and continued to serve God but experienced great pressure to compromise or leave the faith. Surrounded by worship of Satan and the Roman emperor as god, the Church at Pergamos refused to renounce their faith, even when Satan's worshipers martyred one of their members named Antipas, they did not compromise. Standing firm against the strong pressure and temptations of society is never easy, but the alternative is deadly.

You may ask, what was wrong with the Pergamos Church? Apparently, some in the Church had compromised, and tolerated those who taught or practiced what Christ opposed: the doctrine of Balaam. Compromise can be defined as a blending of the qualities of two different things or a concession of principles. Christians may cooperate with people, their worldly neighbor or those they work with as much as they can, but they must avoid any alliance, partnership or participation that could lead to immoral or ungodly practices.

We remember Balaam was a pagan sorcerer from the Book of Numbers 22-24, who specialized in cursing and blessing others. Balak, the king of Moab hired Balaam to place a curse on Israel out of fear that Israel would attack Moab and Ar. God had forbidden Israel to attack Moab because of the descendants of Esau and Lot, in His Commandment to Moses, but Balak either did not know this or did not believe it. He and the people of Moab were exceedingly afraid and sick with dread. (Read Deuteronomy 2: 1-9).

What was the doctrine of Balaam? When Balaam realized that he could neither curse Israel nor change God's blessings on His chosen country, he resorted to seduction, with the goal of turning the hearts of Israel away from the LORD GOD through sexual immorality and idol worship. He encouraged the Moabite women to use their beauty to charm the Israelite men. The Moabites deceived the Israelites into letting down their guards that they wanted to fellowship with them and learn about the Great GOD Who had given them all the victories along their journeys. Unfortunately, the Israelites fell into the trap, and before they knew it, they were visiting with the Moabites women and worshiping their idols. What was the result of Balaam's doctrine? Twenty-four thousand Israelites died for worshiping Baal of Peor and committing sexual immorality with the Moabites. (Read Numbers 25: 1-9).

The doctrine of the Nicolaitans was similar to the doctrine of Balaam--sexual immorality, idol worship and eating meat sacrificed to idols. As a Church, have you compromised? Which Church Do You Belong To?

Some Christians have fallen into the same trap invented by the father of lies, the devil, through the doctrines of Balaam or the Nicolaitans. They see a girl or boy in their community, at school or work, and assume, "Oh, this girl or boy would be a wonderful wife or husband to marry." They convince themselves that their love for that person would change the worldly beliefs of the man or woman after they are married. But, later on, they find out that their partner has a totally different faith or principle, especially when it comes to trusting God for spiritual, physical or material

matters. Instead of changing their partner, they end up compromising their faith to the unequally yoked spouse and are led away from worshiping God in spirit and in truth. Sadly, many of our brothers and sisters have compromised and married partners against God's Commandment. God's warning to new believers and children is ever-present in His Holy Bible, because experience has shown that those who disobeyed are still living a life of regrets, 5, 10, 20, and 50 years later. May God be merciful and forgive each of us through the shed Blood of our Savior Jesus Christ.

¹⁴ Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? ¹⁵ And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? ¹⁶ And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: *"I will dwell in them, And walk among them. I will be their God, And they shall be My people."* ¹⁷ Therefore, *"Come out from among them, And be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, And I will receive you."* ¹⁸ *"I will be a Father to you, And you shall be My sons and daughters, Says the LORD Almighty."* (2nd Corinthians 6: 14-18).

It was not easy to be a Christian in Pergamos, and today is not an exception. The examples above are sufficient warnings. However, we have the encouragement from God to stand firm through the Grace of our LORD Jesus Christ and the Power of the Holy Spirit. Do not compromise your faith for any reason. We must trust God and have faith in His promises. Christ has never failed any believer! (Read Hebrews 11).

Revelation 2:18-29 - The Corrupt Church: ¹⁸ "And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write, 'These things says the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet like fine brass: ¹⁹ "I know your works, love, service, faith, and your patience; and *as* for your works, the last *are* more than the first. ²⁰ Nevertheless I have a few things against you, because you allow that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce My servants to commit sexual immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols. ²¹ And I gave her time to repent of her sexual immorality, and she did not repent. ²² Indeed I will cast her into a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of their deeds. ²³ I will kill her children with death, and all the churches shall know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts. And I will give to each one of you according to your works. ²⁴ "Now to you I say, and to the rest in Thyatira, as many as do not have this doctrine, who have not known the depths of Satan, as they say, I will put on you no other burden. ²⁵ But hold fast what you have till I come. ²⁶ And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations— ²⁷ ' *He shall rule them with a rod of iron; They shall be dashed to pieces like the potter's vessels'*— as I also have received from My Father; ²⁸ and I will give him the morning star. ²⁹ "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."'

Comments:

The Thyatira Church had problems similar to those identified with the compromising Church at Pergamos. The Church had allowed a woman to preach against God's Commandment as declared by the Apostle Paul in 1st Timothy 2: 11-15:

¹¹ Let a woman learn in silence with all submission. ¹² And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence. ¹³ For Adam was formed first, then Eve. ¹⁴ And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression. ¹⁵ Nevertheless she will be saved in childbearing if they continue in faith, love, and holiness, with self-control."

The woman, "Jezebel" seduced and taught the Christians in Thyatira that sexual immorality and eating meat sacrificed to idols were not serious matters of sin for believers. Jezebel, whether or not that was her real name, she influenced the Thyatira congregation to sin.

The other Jezebel, Ahab's wife, ranks as the most evil woman in the Bible. She married Ahab but completely rejected the worship of God. No one was as determined as Jezebel to make all Israel worship her gods. Jezebel contributed to the cause of the eventual downfall of the northern kingdom, which was idolatry. God punished the northern tribes for their idolatry by having them carried off into captivity. Jezebel not only managed her husband, Ahab, but she also had 850 assorted heathen priests under her control. Jezebel's plan to wipe out worship of God in Israel led to painful consequences. She died in the defiant and scornful way she had lived. Jezebel was committed to herself and her false gods.

To what or to whom are you most committed? We question the genuineness of any Christian who continues a life of sin and open rebellion against God's Holy Word in spite of these warnings. A life of complete surrender and strict obedience to the Word of God are the only validation for Christians. How would God evaluate your commitment?

Any Pastor, Leader, Elder or Deacon who is corrupt or hinders the spiritual growth of the Church must not be allowed to stay in office, unless such a person repents. It makes no difference how much revival that pastor or leader had brought into the Church, God's people must not compromise or tolerate such a person. Which Church Do You Belong To?

Revelation 3:1-6 - The Dead Church: ¹ "And to the angel of the church in Sardis write, 'These things says He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars: "I know your works, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead. ² Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die, for I have not found your works perfect before God. ³ Remember therefore how you have received and heard; hold fast and repent. Therefore if you will not watch, I will come upon you as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you. ⁴ You have a few names even in Sardis who have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with Me in white, for they are worthy. ⁵ He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels. ⁶ "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."'

Comments:

The Dead Church in the wealthy city of Sardis was actually in two locations. The older section of the city was on a mountain, but, when its population outgrew the spot, a newer section was built in the valley below.

The problem in the Sardis Church was not heresy, but spiritual death, in spite of its reputation for being active. Sardis was infested with sin. Its works were evil and its clothes soiled. The worship of the Roman Emperor and of Artemis, goddess of fertility, was active in that city.

The Spirit has no words of commendation for this Church that looked so good on the outside but was so corrupt on the inside. The Church at Sardis was urged to obey the Christian truth they had heard when they first believed in Christ, to get back to the basics of the faith. It is important to grow in our knowledge of the LORD, to deepen our understanding through careful study. But no matter how much we learn, we must never abandon the fundamental truths about Christ: The LORD Jesus Christ will always be God's Son, and His sacrifice on Calvary's Cross for our sins is permanent. No new truth from God will ever contradict these Biblical teachings.

The Church at Sardis was leading a double life. It had a reputation in the public for accepting everyone into its congregation. It allowed everyone to come to Church without preaching on Christian responsibilities, sin and its consequence.

Any Church that does not discipline itself, its leaders or members and overlooks sin is dead. Any Church that is not interested in studying God's Word for the edification of the members is lifeless. Any Church that does not support prayer meetings among pastors, leaders, elders and its members is dead in sin. Any Church that does not believe in the fact that our Lord Jesus Christ was crucified on the Cross at Calvary, rose from the dead after three days, and ascended to Heaven is dead. Any Church that preaches that the Lord Jesus Christ is not the only way to salvation, as the Jehovah Witnesses and Mormons believe, is absolutely dead. Churches that condone the dangerous theory that Jews, Muslims, Atheists, Buddhists and other religions that do not accept our Savior Jesus Christ as the SON of GOD, will be allowed into Heaven as long as they have sincere and honest hearts, are dead. Any Church that has women pastors, allows homosexuals and lesbian as its leaders is dead (1st Corinthians 6:9,10; Galatians 5:19-21; 6:6-8; Ephesians 5:5-6).

Recently, one newspaper editor attended a Church service. The next day, he wrote in his article that he attended a "sin Tabernacle" service where everything the preacher said was "all about sin." He felt uncomfortable in that Church.

Christ sent His Apostles out with the Great Commission. Remember the Apostle Paul's admonition to Pastor Timothy:

² Preach the word! Be ready in season *and* out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. ³ For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, *because* they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; ⁴ and they will turn *their* ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables. (2nd Timothy 4:2-4).

Which Church Do You Belong To? Does your Church have a big name, active in the society, but dead toward God? Does your Church preach against the consequences of sin and the lake of fire?

Revelation 3:7-13 - The Faithful Church: ⁷ "And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write, 'These things says He who is holy, He who is true, *"He who has*

the key of David, He who opens and no one shuts, and shuts and no one opens”: ⁸ “I know your works. See, I have set before you an open door, and no one can shut it; for you have a little strength, have kept My word, and have not denied My name.” ⁹ Indeed I will make *those* of the synagogue of Satan, who say they are Jews and are not, but lie—indeed I will make them come and worship before your feet, and to know that I have loved you. ¹⁰ Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth. ¹¹ Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown. ¹² He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more. I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God. And *I will write on him* My new name. ¹³ “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.””

Comments:

Philadelphia, which means “Brotherly Love” in Greek, was a small city located about 40 miles southeast of Sardis. It was founded by the citizens of Pergamos. The community was built in a frontier area as a gateway to the central plateau of Asia Minor. Its location, vineyards, and wine production made it wealthy and commercially important. Philadelphia’s residents kept barbarians out of the region and brought in Greek culture and language. The city was destroyed by an earthquake in A.D. 17, and aftershocks kept the people so worried that most of them live outside the city limits.

Our LORD Jesus Christ commended the Philadelphia Church for being faithfully obedient to God’s Word. Christ encouraged the Church to persevere in the faith; to keep the Word of Christ and continue to honor Him. For their faithfulness and obedience, Christ promised them a place in God’s presence, a new name and the New Jerusalem. Is your Church faithful to all of God’s Commandments? Then you are secure in Christ and on your way to Heaven. As an example to others, the LORD Jesus Christ will make you a pillar and spiritual leader for others to follow. Praise GOD!

Revelation 3:14-22 - The Lukewarm Church: ¹⁴ “And to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write, ‘These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God: ¹⁵ “I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. ¹⁶ So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth. ¹⁷ Because you say, ‘I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing’—and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked— ¹⁸ I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, *that* the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see. ¹⁹ As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent. ²⁰ Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me. ²¹ To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne. ²² “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.””

Comments:

The Lukewarm Church at Laodicea, which was the wealthiest of the seven cities, was known for its banking industry, manufacture of wool, and a medical school that produced eye salve. But the city had always had a problem with its water supply. At one time, an aqueduct was built to bring water to the city from hot springs. But by the time the water reached the city, it was neither hot nor refreshing cool--only lukewarm. The Church had become as bland as the tepid water that came into the city. The Church in Laodicea had become lukewarm and thus distasteful and repugnant. The believers didn't take a stand for anything; indifference had led to idleness. By neglecting to do anything for Christ, the Church had become hardened and self-satisfied, and it was destroying itself. There is nothing more disgusting than a halfhearted, in-name-only Christian who is self-sufficient. Don't settle for following God halfway. Let Christ fire up your faith and get you into the action.

Some believers falsely assume that numerous material possessions are a sign of God's spiritual blessing. Laodicea was a wealthy city, and the Church was also wealthy. But what the Laodiceans could see and buy had become more valuable to them than what is unseen and eternal. Wealth, luxury, and ease can make people feel confident, satisfied, and complacent. But no matter how much you possess or how much money you make, you have nothing if you don't have a vital personal relationship with Christ. How does your current level of wealth affect your spiritual desire? Instead of centering our life primarily on comfort and luxury, let us find our true riches in Christ.

The Church was wealthy—but Christ told the Laodiceans to buy their gold from Him (real spiritual treasures). The city was proud of its cloth and dyeing industries—but Christ told them to purchase white garments from Him (His righteousness). Laodicea prided itself on its precious eye salve that healed many eye problems—but Christ told them to get medicine from Him to heal their eyes so they could see the truth (John 9:39). Christ was showing the Laodiceans that true value was not in material possessions, but in a right relationship with God. Their possessions and achievements were valueless compared with the everlasting future of Christ's Kingdom.

God would discipline any lukewarm Church unless she turned from her indifference toward Him. God's purpose in discipline is not to punish, but to bring people back to Him. Are you lukewarm in your devotion to God? God may discipline you to help you out of your uncaring attitude, but He uses only loving discipline. You can avoid God's discipline by drawing near to Him again through confession, service, worship, and studying His Word. Just as the spark of love can be rekindled in marriage, so the Holy Spirit can reignite the zeal for God when we allow Him to work in our hearts!

The Laodicean Church was complacent and rich. They felt self-satisfied, but they didn't have Christ's presence among them. Christ knocked at the door of their hearts, but they were so busy enjoying worldly pleasures that they didn't notice that He was trying to enter. The pleasures of this world—money, security, material possessions—can be dangerous, because their temporary satisfaction makes us indifferent to God's offer of lasting satisfaction. If you find yourself feeling indifferent to Church, to God, or to the Bible, you have begun to shut God out of your life.

Leave the door of your heart constantly open to God, and you won't need to worry about hearing His knock. Letting Him in is your only hope for lasting fulfillment.

God allows us to decide whether or not to open our lives to Him for His Spiritual Light and blessing through our union with Christ. Do you intentionally keep His life-changing presence and power on the other side of the door?

At the end of each letter to these seven Churches, the believers were urged to listen and take to heart what was written to them. Although a different message was addressed to each Church, all the messages contain warnings and principles for everyone. Which letter speaks most directly to your Church? Which has the greatest bearing on your own spiritual condition at this time? How will you respond to the SON of GOD, Who has the two-edged sword, and who is coming back to judge and reward each person? Which Church Do You Belong To? We pray that by now you have made a decision to surrender or rededicate your life to the LORD Jesus Christ, and that you know the Church that you belong to. May God bless you! Amen.

Judgment Day Is Coming – Repent!

Then he said to me, "These words *are* faithful and true." And the Lord God of the holy prophets sent His angel to show His servants the things which must shortly take place. ⁷ "Behold, I am coming quickly! Blessed *is* he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book." ⁸ Now I, John, saw and heard these things. And when I heard and saw, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel who showed me these things. ⁹ Then he said to me, "See *that you do not do that*. For I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren the prophets, and of those who keep the words of this book. Worship God." ¹⁰ And he said to me, "Do not seal the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is at hand. ¹¹ He who is unjust, let him be unjust still; he who is filthy, let him be filthy still; he who is righteous, let him be righteous still; he who is holy, let him be holy still." (Revelation 22:6-11).

Jesus Testifies to the Churches

¹² "And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward *is* with Me, to give to every one according to his work. ¹³ I am the Alpha and the Omega, *the* Beginning and *the* End, the First and the Last." ¹⁴ Blessed *are* those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city. ¹⁵ But outside *are* dogs and sorcerers and sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and whoever loves and practices a lie. ¹⁶ "I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things in the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, the Bright and Morning Star." ¹⁷ And the Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely. (Revelation 22:12-21).

A Warning

¹⁸ For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; ¹⁹ and if anyone takes away from the words of the book

of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and *from* the things which are written in this book.

I Am Coming Quickly

²⁰ He who testifies to these things says, "Surely I am coming quickly." Amen. Even so, come, LORD Jesus! ²¹ The Grace of our LORD Jesus Christ *be* with you all. Amen.

We are always glad to give Scriptural advice and counsel to those who desire to write us about their problems, and to remember their requests for prayer in our services.

In addition we publish sermons on other subjects, which take up in detail teaching on how to deal with GOD successfully and be delivered out of all our troubles. We will gladly send them to those who desire them for their own use or for others.

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Which Church Do You Belong To?

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