

AN OVERVIEW OF THE SEVEN CHURCHES OF ASIA

by William McCarrell

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CHAPTER 8

LAODICEA - THE CHURCH CHRIST SPEWS OUT

"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; I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor 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. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent. 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. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches" (Revelation 3:14-22)

SUGGESTIVE STUDY OUTLINE

I. THE COMMAND TO WRITE. Vs. 14

II. THE CHURCH ADDRESSED -- LAODICEA. Vs. 14

III. THE DESCRIPTION OF THE SPEAKER (CHRIST). Vs. 14

1. The "**Amen**"

2. The "**faithful and true witness**"

3. The "**beginning of the creation of God**"

IV. THE REBUKE AS TO WORKS. Vss. 15, 16

1. Neither cold nor hot -- lukewarm

2. Displeasing to CHRIST

V. THE WARNING. Vs. 16

1. Spued out of the mouth of CHRIST
2. Rebuked
3. Repudiated
4. Rejected
5. Reason - lukewarm

VI. THE DESCRIPTION OF THE CHURCH. Vs. 17

1. As estimated by man (self)
 - a. Rich -- wealthy -- much goods
 - b. Ned not realized
 - c. Self-sufficient -- self-confident -- self-satisfied
2. As estimated by GOD.
 - a. Boastful -- proud
 - b. Wretched -- miserable
 - c. Spiritually poor -- spiritually blind -- spiritually naked.
 - d. No righteousness before GOD.

VII. THE HEAVENLY COUNSEL. Vs. 18

1. Secure gold tried in fire. (Heavenly truths)
2. Be made spiritually rich
3. Be clothed with white raiment (GOD's righteousness)
4. Shame of nakedness (spiritual) covering
5. Experience spiritually anointed eyes

VIII. THE NEEDED EXPLANATION. Vs. 19

1. As to chastening
2. Chastening is CHRIST's rebuke
3. Chastening is evidence of CHRIST's love
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IX. THE DESIRE OF CHRIST FOR REPENTANCE. Vs. 19

X. THE POSITION OF CHRIST

1. Before individual
2. Standing at heart's door
3. Knocking for entry

XI. THE OFFER OF CHRIST

1. To enter human heart (as guest)
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3. To fellowship with and entertain human soul

XII. THE CONDITION STATED BY CHRIST -- AN OPEN HEART. Vs. 20

XIII. THE REWARD TO OVERCOMERS -- TO SHARE CHRIST'S THRONE (REIGN). Vs.

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THE SEVENTH LETTER

GOD completes things in cycles of seven. "Seven" is the Bible's number for completion. GOD's work in Genesis one and two was completed in seven days. The Bible sets forth GOD's earthly program as divided into seven dispensations. Kingdom mysteries during this age are described in seven parables (Matthew 13). Seven angels, seven stars, seven spirits, seven seals, seven trumpets, and seven vials are a few of the many sevens in Revelation, which is the Bible's consummation book. The Laodicean letter, the seventh in Revelation two and three, completes GOD's prophetic foreview of the church's earthly history. While the Philadelphia letter prepictures GOD's true (fundamental) church which is raptured at CHRIST's coming, the Laodicea letter prepictures the false present-day (modernistic) church which immediately precedes and is rejected at CHRIST's return to earth.

AN APOSTATE CHURCH

A study of CHRIST's startling description of the apostate modernistic last-day church reveals absence of any commendation by CHRIST. His description is strengthened by the church's name, "**Laodicea**" (Revelation 3:14). This name means "*The rights, customs, rule of the people,*" The name, "**Laodicea**," suggests that this church represents those who follow man rather than GOD. The present-day modernistic church increasingly accepts man's word rather than GOD's Word, acts mans way rather than GOD's way, and obeys man's will rather than GOD's will. In proportion as GOD's Word, GOD's way, and GOD's will are rejected, GOD's Son is supplanted. This will climax during the great tribulation in the rejection of JESUS CHRIST by mankind in general and the acceptance and worship of Antichrist (Revelation 13). Bible-taught Christians can easily discern a continual diminishing of the preeminence of CHRIST in the thinking, conversation, and conduct of mankind in general. This is especially noticeable in the modernistic church. this sinful trend evidences the terrible working of the spirit of Antichrist as it prepares this world for his personal coming, acceptance, and exaltation: **"Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time"** (I John 2:18) and **"Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world"** (I John 4:1-3). Thus mankind, aided greatly by the working of the modernistic church, steadily moves toward the literal fulfillment of JESUS' warning, **"I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive"** (John 5:43).

During the French Revolution, the cry, "Vox Populi -- Vox Dei," swept France. It means, "The voice of the people is the voice of GOD." The spirit permeating the present-day modernistic church and described in the letter to the Laodicean Church, provides democracy which decays into socialism, and culminated in bolshevism. Present-day religious modernism, often strongly

functioning through denominational leadership and church federation, is frequently a strong auxiliary to Communism though many sincere individuals may not realize the same. Little wonder that strong accusations are increasingly heard from reliable sources, including conservative statesmen, as to religious modernism being allied with Communism.

WARNING AND ENCOURAGEMENT

The Speaker, CHRIST, is described by three deeply significant and suggestive titles. they warn every person tested or affected by conditions described in the Laodicean letter. Especially do they warn anyone who is a party to such conditions. These same titles offer strength to every saved one tested by the same condition.

CHRIST is described as the "**Amen.**" It signifies eternal certainties, fixedness. It assures of eternal certainties, fixedness. It assures of eternal, unchangeable authority. It means, "It is fixed and cannot be changed." This word, which is rendered, "**Verily,**" is used twenty-five times in John's Gospel. What enlightening comfort it conveys as one reads, "**Verily, verily,**" "*Amen, amen,*" or "It is fixed and cannot be changed. It is fixed and cannot be changed, **I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on Him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life**" (John 5:24). However, while this word offers comforting assurance to acceptors of CHRIST, it sounds solemn warning to rejecters of CHRIST. CHRIST is endeavoring to awaken and warn those linked with and affected by modernistic apostate last-day unbelief as to the importance of GOD's Word and such great truths as CHRIST's Deity, Virgin Birth, Ascension, Resurrection, Atonement and Second Coming. He warns that these truths are settled forever. Having to do with CHRIST, they are as fully and eternally settled as the unchangeable CHRIST of GOD. It warns that CHRIST and Bible truths concerning Himself are forever established. They stand despite every assault through atheism and that which falsely claims to be modern scholarship, even though such opposition emanate from schoolroom, seminary, or pulpit. What comfort this title conveys to everyone who has received CHRIST as SAVIOUR. It comforts those who witness to CHRIST and His truths at any time, especially during end-time apostate days.

The speaker, CHRIST, is next described as "**the faithful and true witness.**" "**Faithful**" indicates *eternal reliability*, while "**true**" indicates *exactness in description*. This title purposed to comfortingly strengthen every saved one at any time, especially during last days of apostasy. It assures them that every promise concerning earthly comfort and help through CHRIST, also heavenly bliss, is dependable, and can be realized exactly as described. It assures them of His faithfulness in fulfilling in exact detail every offer, promise, prophecy, and warning they biblically proclaim to mankind. What solemn warning they Biblically proclaim to mankind. What solemn warning this same title sets before unbelievers as it assures that Biblical statements concerning sin, judgment, also eternal punishment and loss will be faithfully fulfilled in severe exactness.

CHRIST's third title, "**the beginning of the creation of God,**" should produce deep spiritual heart-searching. He is the CREATOR of the material universe. As He is responsible for the beginning of man and this universe, He can and will decide their eternal destiny. Man cannot escape His judgment. CHRIST is also the new spiritual creation of GOD. What warning this title conveys to every individual, especially those affected by times pictured in the Laodicean letter.

What warning to those who prefer man to CHRIST, who follow human reason rather than divine light, who are satisfied with formal religion rather than genuine spirituality. They are warned that CHRIST is not mere religion, but a spiritual, divine, heavenly life. Such are warned that GOD and CHRIST are satisfied only with inward spiritual realities, -- with that which is associated with the new birth. They are warningly reminded that one must be born again, be a new creation in CHRIST JESUS to be saved. They are reminded of the necessity of new life in CHRIST to understand spiritual things, also to serve or worship GOD acceptably.

Everyone affected by that pictured in the Laodicean letter is assured through the title that, in CHRIST, there is new spiritual life which makes possible everything needed for salvation, spiritual growth, GOD-honoring service, and GOD-pleasing worship. How needed in this enlightenment for saved and unsaved in any age, especially in apostate days preceding CHRIST's return to earth. They are thus assured that the problems and needs of mankind caused by sin and especially during last, dark, hard, and tested days, can only be properly met through the new spiritual life which is in CHRIST.

UNUSUAL JUDGMENT

CHRIST warns that represented by the Laodicean Church of unusual judgment. He will spue it out of His mouth (3:16). How startling to ponder that a professing Christian church system will be spued away by JESUS CHRIST. The expression indicates loathing and rejection. It expresses GOD's hatred of all spiritual indifferentism, middle-of-the-roadism, compromise with worldliness, lack of spiritual growth, bible disobedience, and apostasy. These sins produce lukewarmness in unsaved and saved individuals as well as churches and denominations.

People do everything possible to avoid spewing or vomiting into pleasant and valuable places. The spewing out of this false church by CHRIST will take place when He comes to receive His true church. Surely this false church will not be spued into the Millennium. It will be spued into the Tribulation. CHRIST's true church will be caught away from the Tribulation (3:10) and 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18.

HEAVENLY COUNSEL

"Christ in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Colossians 2:3) counsels the Laodicean Church and everyone represented by it. His counsel reveals that which is needed to safeguard from and remedy its weaknesses. He counsels that they concentrate upon spiritual and eternal riches. He exhorts them to make certain of possessing spiritual value, typified by gold tried in the fire. A study of Scripture especially such as is associated with the Old Testament tabernacle and temple and their vessels indicates that gold tried in the fire would signify heavenly realities made possible by CHRIST's passing through judgment fires.

He pleads with them to be clothed in white raiment, which typifies GOD's righteousness imparted unto the believer in CHRIST: **"But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is**

of God by faith" (Phil. 3:7-9). Such clothing makes one acceptable unto GOD in the BELOVED (CHRIST): "**To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us acceptable in the beloved**" (Ephesians 1:6). It delivers from lack of righteousness (nakedness): "**But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities like the wind, have taken us away**" (Isaiah 64:6). He exhorts them to accept GOD's eyesalve in order that they be delivered from spiritual blindness. GOD's truth may smart through its convicting of sin, but when submitted to, it finally heals: "**And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. They answered them, We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free? Jesus answered them, verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin. And the servant abideth not in the house for ever: but the Son abideth ever. If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed**" (John 8:32-36).

ENCOURAGING EXPLANATION

CHRIST encourages genuine turning to GOD by Christians through explaining that His chastening (3:19), which Laodicean conditions are certain to cause, evidences His love (Proverbs 3:11-12; Hebrews 12:5-12). GOD's chastening ever purposes to produce spiritual repentance and Biblical living. Chastening so submitted to results in spiritual edification and thus safeguards from judgment. His chastening resisted assures increase in amount and severity of judgment.

CHRIST'S YEARNING DESIRE

CHRIST pleads for genuine repentance (3:19). This plea is to the individual saved ones identified with the Laodicean system. It is a plea for such change in their lives as will evidence separation from the system and its sin. This plea also suggests that spiritual weakness in church systems, even such a system as pictured by the Laodicean letter, does not eliminate individual responsibility. Repentance such as CHRIST pleads for means such change in living as proves separation from sin and unto GOD.

CHRIST'S POSITION

What heart-searching truth is suggested by CHRIST's description of Himself standing at the door (3:20). The statement indicates that CHRIST is dealing with the individual rather than with the church as a whole. This position suggests much, especially for days prior to His second coming.

In the first letter of Revelation two and three, the Ephesian Church left its first love. This sin was never fully corrected by the church collectively. In the last letter CHRIST is seen on the outside of church systems. Although not desired in the fulness of His person and real work by church systems, He nevertheless deals with individuals. How graphically this is witnessed in present days, as individual believers and groups of saved ones, because of love for and loyalty to CHRIST and GOD's Word, separate from apostate churches and denominations. Their desire for spiritual understanding, growth, worship, and service is being honored of GOD, often with unusual blessing.

CHRIST knocking at the individual door assures that His grace will be offered to the very end. The door is man's heart. CHRIST knocks through adversity, sorrow, catastrophe, suggestions of

conscience, GOD's Word, HOLY SPIRIT reminders, faithful witnessing of saved ones, and various other means. CHRIST will not force the door. Its hinges are man's will.

CHRIST standing at the door assures that the Omnipotent One offers Himself to the weakest; the richest one in the universe to the poorest; the most holy one to the most vile; the CREATOR to the creature; the SAVIOUR to the sinner; GOD to man. Received as a guest He becomes the Host, with salvation and spiritual enrichment beyond human comprehension. What wondrous enriching possibilities in time and eternity such appeals suggest! What fearful loss in time and eternity they warn of! They express the yearning heart cry of the LORD JESUS CHRIST for the individual. They assure each individual that he must in turn stand before CHRIST. They make inescapable a decision involving earthly and eternal gain or loss.

CHRIST, standing and knocking calls for immediate decision. It suggests the lateness of the hour. The door is the place of easiest and most immediate entrance. It also is the place of easiest and most immediate departure.

OVERCOMER'S REWARD

CHRIST assures overcomers of glorious reward. As He now shares His Father's throne, and thus share in his glorious millennial reign (3:21). This throne is the throne of David, from which He shall reign in heavenly glory over the entire earth: "**He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end**" (Luke 1:32-33).

FINAL APPEAL

In this seventh letter, for the seventh time CHRIST cries, "He that hath an ear, let him hear (heed) what the Spirit saith unto the churches" (3:22). What yearning it evidences on the part of GOD's omnipotent, sufficient, and eternal Son to enrich the individual with GOD's best in time and eternity.

Oh for a eye to behold CHRIST's beauty and person
Oh for an ear to hear His message;
Oh for a mind to discern His will;
Oh for a heart to yield to His fulness;
Oh for a desire to do His will
Oh for a will to obey His Word;
Oh for a courage to defend His faith;
Oh for enabling grace to work out His perfect will.

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