

Int'l Training for Elders and Responsible Ones

(Fall 2016)

Returning to the Orthodoxy of the Church

Message Eight

The Church in Laodicea

Scripture Reading: Rev. 3:14-22

- Rev 3:14 And to the messenger of the church in Laodicea write: These things says the Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the beginning of the creation of God:
- Rev 3:15 I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot; I wish that you were cold or hot.
- Rev 3:16 So, because you are lukewarm and neither hot nor cold, I am about to spew you out of My mouth.
- Rev 3:17 Because you say, I am wealthy and have become rich and have need of nothing, and do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked,
- Rev 3:18 I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined by fire that you may be rich, and white garments that you may be clothed and that the shame of your nakedness may not be manifested, and eyesalve to anoint your eyes that you may see.
- Rev 3:19 As many as I love I rebuke and discipline; be zealous therefore and repent.
- Rev 3:20 Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, then I will come in to him and dine with him and he with Me.
- Rev 3:21 He who overcomes, to him I will give to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat with My Father on His throne.
- Rev 3:22 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

I. In Greek Laodicea means “opinion, judgment, of the people” or “of the laymen”—Rev. 3:14:

- Rev 3:14 And to the messenger of the church in Laodicea write: These things says the Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the beginning of the creation of God:
- A. Once Philadelphia fails, she becomes Laodicea; the only warning for the church in Philadelphia is for them to hold fast what they have that no one take their crown:
1. They should not be weary of doing the same things for a long time and should not ask for a change; they should not contemplate doing something new after all the years of doing the same things—keeping the Lord’s word and not denying His name—vv. 8, 11.
- Rev 3:8 I know your works; behold, I have put before you an opened door which no one can shut, because you have a little power and have kept My word and have not denied My name.
- Rev 3:11 I come quickly; hold fast what you have that no one take your crown.
2. What they have done is right and is blessed by the Lord; therefore, they should continue in it; they have to hold fast what they have and not let it go!
- B. Laodicea is a distorted Philadelphia; when brotherly love is gone, the opinion of the majority is the accepted opinion; as long as the majority is in favor, it is all right:
1. When brotherly love is lost, the Body relationship and consciousness are lost.

2. The fellowship of life is cut off as well, leaving only the opinions of men.

II. “I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot; I wish that you were cold or hot. So, because you are lukewarm and neither hot nor cold, I am about to spew you out of My mouth. Because you say, I am wealthy and have become rich and have need of nothing, and do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked”—vv. 15-17:

Rev 3:15 I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot; I wish that you were cold or hot.

Rev 3:16 So, because you are lukewarm and neither hot nor cold, I am about to spew you out of My mouth.

Rev 3:17 Because you say, I am wealthy and have become rich and have need of nothing, and do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked,

A. In the eyes of the Lord, the characteristics of Laodicea are lukewarmness and spiritual pride:

1. Spiritual pride comes from history; some were once rich, and they think that they are still rich; they still remember their history, but they have lost their former life.

2. The Lord was once merciful to them, and they remember their history, but now they have lost that reality.

3. They remember that they were once wealthy and had become rich and had need of nothing, but now they are poor and blind.

B. If we want to continue in the way of Philadelphia and avoid becoming Laodicea, we have to remember to humble ourselves before God—Matt. 5:3; 19:23-24; Isa. 57:15:

Matt 5:3 Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of the heavens.

Matt 19:23 And Jesus said to His disciples, Truly I say to you, Only with difficulty will a rich man enter into the kingdom of the heavens.

Matt 19:24 And again I say to you, It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.

Isa 57:15 For thus says the high and exalted One, / Who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: / I will dwell in the high and holy place, / And with the contrite and lowly of spirit, / To revive the spirit of the lowly / And to revive the heart of the contrite.

1. “Love does not brag and is not puffed up...Love never falls away”—1 Cor. 13:4b, 8a.

1 Cor 13:4b ...Love does not brag and is not puffed up;

1 Cor 13:8a Love never falls away....

2. We should bear in mind that we have nothing we have not received—4:7; cf. 2:12; John 3:27; 1 Pet. 4:10.

1 Cor 4:7 For who distinguishes you? And what do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though not having received it?

1 Cor 2:12 But we have received not the spirit of the world but the Spirit which is from God, that we may know the things which have been graciously given to us by God;

John 3:27 John answered and said, A man cannot receive anything unless it has been given to him from heaven.

1 Pet 4:10 Each one, as he has received a gift, ministering it among yourselves as good stewards of the varied grace of God.

3. Those who live before the Lord will not be conscious of their own riches.

C. Laodicea means to know everything but, in reality, to be fervent about nothing; in name it

has everything, but it cannot sacrifice its life for anything; it remembers its former glory but forgets its present condition before God; formerly, it was Philadelphia, but today it is Laodicea.

- D. When a person becomes proud, forsakes the way of life, and neglects reality, while reminiscing on his history and his own riches, the only thing left will be the opinions of many:
1. Among such ones there can only be discussion and consensus; it appears to be a democratic society but bears no resemblance to the Body relationship.
 2. If you do not know the binding, authority, and life of the Body, you do not know brotherly love.
- E. Those who follow the Lord have no pride; the Lord will spew the proud ones out of His mouth:
1. May the Lord be merciful to us; this is a warning to all of us: we must not be proud in our speaking.
 2. A person must live before the Lord continually before he can refrain from proud words; only those who live before God continually will not consider themselves rich; only they will not be proud.
- F. To be hot for the Lord and the church is to be boiling; to be spewed out of the Lord's mouth by being lukewarm is to be rejected by the Lord and to lose the enjoyment of all that the Lord is to the church.
- G. In the eyes of the Lord the degraded recovered church has the following five characteristics:
1. She is wretched because she is proud of being rich in the vain knowledge of doctrine, but in reality she is sorely poor in the experience of the riches of Christ.
 2. She is miserable because she is naked, blind, and full of shame and darkness.
 3. She is poor because she is poor in the experience of Christ and in the spiritual reality of God's economy.
 4. She is blind because she lacks the true spiritual insight in the genuine spiritual things.
 5. She is naked because she does not live by Christ or live Christ as her subjective righteousness, as the second garment in her daily walk—Psa. 45:1-2, 9, 13-14; Matt. 22:11-12; Phil. 3:8-9; Rev. 19:8.

Psa 45:1 My heart overflows with a good matter; / I speak what I have composed concerning the King. / My tongue is the pen of a ready writer.

Psa 45:2 You are fairer than the sons of men; / Grace is poured upon Your lips; / Therefore God has blessed You forever.

Psa 45:9 The daughters of kings are among Your most prized; / The queen stands at Your right hand in the gold of Ophir.

Psa 45:13 The king's daughter is all glorious within the royal abode; / Her garment is a woven work inwrought with gold.

Psa 45:14 She will be led to the King in embroidered clothing; / The virgins behind her, her companions, / Will be brought to You.

Matt 22:11 But when the king came in to look at those reclining at table, he saw there a man who was not clothed with a wedding garment,

- Matt 22:12 And he said to him, Friend, how did you come in here without a wedding garment? And he was speechless.
- Phil 3:8 But moreover I also count all things to be loss on account of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, on account of whom I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as refuse that I may gain Christ
- Phil 3:9 And be found in Him, not having my own righteousness which is out of the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is out of God and based on faith,
- Rev 19:8 And it was given to her that she should be clothed in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteousnesses of the saints.

III. “I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined by fire that you may be rich, and white garments that you may be clothed and that the shame of your nakedness may not be manifested, and eyesalve to anoint your eyes that you may see. As many as I love I reprove and discipline; be zealous therefore and repent”—3:18-19:

Rev 3:18 I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined by fire that you may be rich, and white garments that you may be clothed and that the shame of your nakedness may not be manifested, and eyesalve to anoint your eyes that you may see.

Rev 3:19 As many as I love I rebuke and discipline; be zealous therefore and repent.

A. In the Bible our operating, working faith (Gal. 5:6) is likened to gold (1 Pet. 1:7), and the divine nature of God, which is the divinity of Christ, is typified by gold (Exo. 25:11); by faith we partake of the divine nature of God (2 Pet. 1:1, 4-5):

Gal 5:6 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision avails anything nor uncircumcision, but faith avails, operating through love.

1 Pet 1:7 So that the proving of your faith, much more precious than of gold which perishes though it is proved by fire, may be found unto praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ;

Exo 25:11 And you shall overlay it with pure gold; inside and outside you shall overlay it; and you shall make a rim of gold upon it all around.

2 Pet 1:1 Simon Peter, a slave and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who have been allotted faith equally precious as ours in the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ:

2 Pet 1:4 Through which He has granted to us precious and exceedingly great promises that through these you might become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption which is in the world by lust.

2 Pet 1:5 And for this very reason also, adding all diligence, supply bountifully in your faith virtue; and in virtue, knowledge;

1. The degraded recovered church has the knowledge of the doctrines concerning Christ but not much living faith to partake of the divine element of Christ.

2. She needs to pay the price to gain the golden faith through the fiery trials that she may participate in the real gold, which is Christ Himself as the life element to His Body.

3. Thus, she can become a pure golden lampstand (Rev. 1:20) for the building of the golden New Jerusalem (21:18).

Rev 1:20 The mystery of the seven stars which you saw upon My right hand and the seven golden lampstands: The seven stars are the messengers of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.

Rev 21:18 And the building work of its wall was jasper; and the city was pure gold, like clear glass.

B. White garments signify conduct that can be approved by the Lord; such conduct is the Lord Himself lived out of the church, and it is required by the degraded recovered church for the covering of her nakedness.

C. The eyesalve needed to anoint their eyes must be the anointing Spirit (1 John 2:27), who is the Lord Himself as the life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45b); the degraded recovered church needs this kind of eyesalve for the healing of her blindness (cf. Job 42:5-6):

1 John 2:27 And as for you, the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you, and you have no need that anyone teach you; but as His anointing teaches you concerning all things and is true and is not a lie, and even as it has taught you, abide in Him.

1 Cor 15:45b ...the last Adam became a life-giving Spirit.

Job 42:5 I had heard of You by the hearing of the ear, / But now my eye has seen You;

Job 42:6 Therefore I abhor myself, and I repent / In dust and ashes.

1. In the New Testament sense, seeing God equals gaining God; to gain God is to receive God in His element, in His life, and in His nature that we may be constituted with God—cf. Matt. 5:8.

Matt 5:8 Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

2. Seeing God transforms us (2 Cor. 3:16, 18; cf. 1 John 3:2), because in seeing God we receive His element into us, and our old element is discharged; this metabolic process is transformation (Rom. 12:2).

2 Cor 3:16 But whenever their heart turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.

2 Cor 3:18 But we all with unveiled face, beholding and reflecting like a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord Spirit.

1 John 3:2 Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not yet been manifested what we will be. We know that if He is manifested, we will be like Him because we will see Him even as He is.

Rom 12:2 And do not be fashioned according to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of the mind that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and well pleasing and perfect.

3. To see God is to be transformed into the glorious image of Christ, the God-man, that we may express God in His life and represent Him in His authority.

4. The more we see God, know God, and love God, the more we abhor ourselves and the more we deny ourselves—Job 42:5-6; Matt. 16:24; Luke 9:23; 14:26.

Job 42:5 I had heard of You by the hearing of the ear, / But now my eye has seen You;

Job 42:6 Therefore I abhor myself, and I repent / In dust and ashes.

Matt 16:24 Then Jesus said to His disciples, If anyone wants to come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me.

Luke 9:23 And He said to them all, If anyone wants to come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow Me.

Luke 14:26 If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, and moreover, even his own soul-life, he cannot be My disciple.

D. Dead, vain knowledge and doctrinal forms have made the degraded recovered church lukewarm; she needs to repent of her lukewarmness and be zealous, boiling, burning, that thereby she may regain the enjoyment of the reality of Christ.

IV. “Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the

door, then I will come in to him and dine with him and he with Me”—Rev. 3:20:

Rev 3:20 Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, then I will come in to him and dine with him and he with Me.

- A. The door is not the door of the hearts of individuals but the door of the church:
1. The Lord as the Head of the church is standing outside the degraded church, knocking at her door.
 2. We must realize and hold on to one principle: God’s presence is the criterion for every matter; regardless of what we do, we must pay attention to whether or not we have God’s presence—Exo. 33:11, 14; 2 Cor. 2:10; Psa. 27:8; 105:4.
- Exo 33:11 And Jehovah would speak to Moses face to face, just as a man speaks to his companion. And Moses would return to the camp, but his attendant Joshua the son of Nun, a young man, would not depart out of the tent.
- Exo 33:14 And He said, My presence shall go with you, and I will give you rest.
- 2 Cor 2:10 But whom you forgive anything, I also forgive; for also what I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, it is for your sake in the person of Christ;
- Psa 27:8 When You say, Seek My face, / To You my heart says, Your face, O Jehovah, will I seek.
- Psa 105:4 Seek Jehovah and His strength; / Seek His face continually.
- B. The door is the door of the church, but the door is opened by individual believers:
1. The church in Laodicea has knowledge but does not have the Lord’s presence.
 2. The Lord is dealing with the whole church, but the acceptance of the Lord’s dealing in order to feast on Him must be a personal and subjective matter.

V. “He who overcomes, to him I will give to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat with My Father on His throne. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches”—Rev. 3:21-22:

Rev 3:21 He who overcomes, to him I will give to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat with My Father on His throne.

Rev 3:22 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

- A. Here to overcome is to overcome the lukewarmness and pride of the degraded recovered church, to pay the price to buy the needed items, and to open the door so that the Lord can come in; Christ as the unique Overcomer includes all the overcomers.
- B. To sit with the Lord on His throne will be a prize to the overcomer, so that he may participate in the Lord’s authority and be a co-king with Him in ruling over the whole earth in the coming millennial kingdom.
- C. We need to see that the seven epistles in Revelation 2 and 3 were written as one book to the seven churches; these epistles were addressed by the Lord to the seven particular churches separately (2:1, 8, 12, 18; 3:1, 7, 14), but they were sent not as seven books but as one book.
- Rev 2:1 To the messenger of the church in Ephesus write: These things says He who holds the seven stars in His right hand, He who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands:
- Rev 2:8 And to the messenger of the church in Smyrna write: These things says the First and the Last, who became dead and lived again:

Rev 2:12 And to the messenger of the church in Pergamos write: These things says He who has the sharp two-edged sword:

Rev 2:18 And to the messenger of the church in Thyatira write: These things says the Son of God, He who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet are like shining bronze:

Rev 3:1 And to the messenger 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 living, and yet you are dead.

Rev 3:7 And to the messenger of the church in Philadelphia write: These things says the Holy One, the true One, the One who has the key of David, the One who opens and no one will shut, and shuts and no one opens:

Rev 3:14 And to the messenger of the church in Laodicea write: These things says the Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the beginning of the creation of God:

D. Although the contents of the seven epistles differ, at the end of each epistle there is the same closing word: “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches”—2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22:

Rev 2:7 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, to him I will give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of God.

Rev 2:11 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes shall by no means be hurt of the second death.

Rev 2:17 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, to him I will give of the hidden manna, and to him I will give a white stone, and upon the stone a new name written, which no one knows except he who receives it.

Rev 2:29 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

Rev 3:6 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

Rev 3:13 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

Rev 3:22 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

1. This means that each epistle was written to all the churches, and it indicates that in all the positive things of the Lord Jesus, the churches should be the same; in the Lord’s speaking to the seven churches, the positive things were commended, strengthened, encouraged, and exalted by the Lord for their abounding.

2. The seven churches differed abnormally only in the negative things, which were rebuked, judged, condemned, and corrected by the Lord for elimination.

E. If the lukewarm church forgets all her dead knowledge and listens to the speaking of the living and burning Spirit, she will be delivered from her degraded condition.