

THE SEVEN CHURCHES

In the Book of Revelation chapters 2 and 3, there is some vital information concerning life and death matters directed to seven groups of people described as the seven churches.

These prophecies show that six out of seven of the Sovereign Father's earthly children who live during the end times will receive severe correction at the hand of Christ and persecution by God's enemies, because their attitudes, behaviors, and works are unacceptable and in need of change that will bring them in conformity to God's ways.

If you believe that you are a true Christian and you are serious about your eternal destiny, these messages are for your benefit, because tucked away in these messages are some little known and understood keys to your physical and spiritual survival during the end or the age. Therefore, you might want to pay careful attention to the information contained in this broadcast.

A Book of Revealing

In his introduction to the Book of Revelation given to him by Jesus, the apostle John said:

"The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants [the elect] what must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John" (Rev.1:1 Para.). He told John to, "Write, therefore, what you have seen, what is now and what will take place later" (Rev.1:19 NIV).

These warnings to the seven ancient churches of Asia are unmistakably meant for the true followers of God today and should be viewed as an extremely serious matter, because how you view these warnings will determine your eternal destiny.

THE MESSAGE TO THOSE OF EPHESUS

"To the angel [messenger] of the church of Ephesus write; These things says he [Jesus Christ] that holds the seven stars in his right hand, . . . I know your works, and labor, and your patience, and how you

cannot not bear them that are evil: and you have tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and have found them liars: and have borne, and have patience, and for my name's sake have labored, and have not fainted" (Rev.2:1-3 Para.).

Those who have the attitudes and behaviors of a spiritual Ephesian persevere, work hard, and zealously protect the congregation against counterfeit Christians. However, the Ephesians have a major problem that needs to be corrected:

Jesus Says:

"Nevertheless I have somewhat against you, because you have left your first love. Remember therefore from where you are fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come to you quickly, and will remove your candlestick out of its place except you repent" (Rev.2:4-5 Para.).

Although the Ephesians do not tolerate wickedness, are solidly against evil, and hate idolatry and immorality, they have lost their first love, which is the love of the Father, his Son, his truth, and their fellow man. They have become rigid to the point of self-righteousness and impose their own standards over God's righteous standards.

An Ephesian seems to forget that a major part of their calling and mission is to grow in grace, knowledge, and love for the things of God. They have lost their intense love and zeal for God and have fallen into apathy at the final call to battle.

Jesus warns them to rekindle their love and zeal for God and his ways or he will remove their candlestick. This is an extremely serious warning. Because the candlestick symbolizes the entire Ephesian group, Jesus is saying that he will remove them from among his followers.

And because the candlestick also represents spiritual truth, he will also remove the truth of God from their hearts and minds; thereby, he will take away their eternal reward and position in the Family and Kingdom of God.

Today, Jesus Christ is saying that, "If you do not repent and have a change of attitude toward your calling and return back to your first love, I will remove the spiritual light from your life. Without spiritual light a person dies spiritually and will suffer the second death in the Lake of Fire.

Although the Ephesians do many positive things (Rev.2:6), they do not maintain their first love. As far as Jesus is concerned, they are not fit for his Family and Kingdom. Ephesians who let their love die as a result of becoming rigid in their belief system and their own way of doing things must repent or they will die spiritually and eternally:

Jesus Says:

"He who has an ear, let him hear what the spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God" (Rev.2:7 NIV).

Those who overcome the trials and tests of this life, remain in a repentant attitude, and maintain their love and zeal for the Father and Jesus Christ, will have eternal life and immortality as portrayed in the eating from the Tree of Life.

THE MESSAGE TO THOSE OF SMYRNA

"And to the angel [messenger] of the church in Smyrna write; These things says the first and the last [Jesus Christ], which was dead, and is alive; I know your works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but you are rich) and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan. Fear none of those things which you shall suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that you may be tried; and you shall have tribulation ten days: be you faithful to death, and I will give you a crown of life. He that has an ear, let him hear what the spirit says to the churches; He that overcomes shall not be hurt of the second death" (Rev.2:8-11 Para.).

Once again, we see the positive aspects of these elect as they try to do things right. Yet some will suffer imprisonment and even martyrdom to test their faithfulness. This is a group of the elect that

will face severe trials and persecution in the time just before Christ returns.

The English word poverty in this scripture is from a Greek word, which means real destitution. Those of Smyrna are under much personal pressure and have virtually no material goods.

One reason for this poverty is the natural order of things, which can be seen in economically disadvantaged countries and the lower economic class of society as a whole. In the early church, the elect were impoverished as a result of persecution that caused them to flee to other areas. And sometimes their goods were stolen while they were being beaten in their own homes for their beliefs.

The prophecies indicate that these conditions will also exist during the time just before Christ returns. Some of spiritual Smyrna will suffer imprisonment a short time during a time of intense persecution that will come to an end. However, in the ancient world, imprisonment was just a prelude to being executed. Thus, many of these true Christians will end up being persecuted and some will be imprisoned before being executed.

Christ is telling those of Smyrna that he and his Father demand absolute loyalty even in the face of death. Christ warns those of Smyrna not to give up but to remain steadfast in the faith and become overcomers through their persecution, imprisonment, and physical death in order to obtain the crown of eternal life.

In addition, Smyrna is filled with internal strife and persecution caused by those who do not have God's holy spirit within them. Instead of removing the cause of their trouble or removing themselves from the problem in accordance to clear scriptural instructions, many of those of Smyrna will suffer persecution from within the church and outside of the church.

THE MESSAGE TO THOSE OF PERGAMOS

"And to the angel [messenger] of the church in Pergamos write: These things says he [Jesus Christ] which has the sharp sword with two edges; I know

your works, and where you dwell, even where Satan's seat is: and you hold fast my name, and have not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwells" (Rev.2:12-13 Para.).

Historically, Pergamos was the administrative center of Asia, which meant that in the first century it was a center of Caesar worship for the whole province. This is why it is referred to as Satan's seat. Pergamos was a city where people were required to worship Caesar. The punishment for refusal to worship Caesar was death.

Jesus praises those of Pergamos for not being afraid to be called Christians and for holding onto the faith, even after one of their group was martyred for being faithful. However, some of them hold the teaching of Balaam who taught Balak to entice the Israelites to sin by eating things sacrificed to idols and by committing sexual immorality:

Jesus Says:

"But I have a few things against you, because you have there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumbling-block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit fornication. So you also have them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes, which thing I hate. Repent; or else I will come quickly to you, and will make war with them with the sword of my mouth" (Rev.2:14-16 Para.).

What is said about some of the elect of Pergamos can also be said of some today. Today's society is extremely promiscuous with many sexual perversions being accepted and practiced. And some true Christians, including their spiritual leaders, suffer from the same attitudes and behaviors found in ancient Pergamos. Because of this, Christ says that he will fight against those of Pergamos who do such abominable things. Therefore, any to whom this warning applies should take it very seriously and act appropriately.

Those of ancient Pergamos lived in an environment where Satanic influence, through false religions,

was exceptionally strong and some of the elect had compromised God's standards in order to avoid problems with the society around them. Rather than having an attitude of coming out of this society and being separate as God the Father requires (2.Cor.6:17), they became a part of the evil society around them.

Christ warns that anyone who has an attitude of compromise concerning the truth of God during the time just prior to his return will find themselves at war with him. Remember that the word of God cuts as a two edged sword. Therefore, we can assume that division over what is right and wrong will cause great turmoil among those with the attitude of Pergamos. They will be persecuted by the world and warned by Jesus Christ of his intent to kill those of his church who refuse to behave righteously and avoid partaking of the evils of this society:

Jesus Says:

"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. I will also give him a white stone with a new name written on it, known only to him who receives it" (Rev.2:17 Para.).

THE MESSAGE TO THOSE OF THYATIRA

"And to the angel [messenger] of the church in Thyatira write; These things says the Son of God [Jesus Christ], who has his eyes like to a flame of fire, and his feet are like fine brass; I know your works, and charity, and service, and faith, and your patience, and your works; and the last to be more than the first" (Rev.2:18-19 Para.).

Once again, Jesus offers much praise for the good done by this group of true Christians; however, there is a very serious problem that needs to be corrected if they are to be successful in gaining eternal and immortal life.

Jesus Says:

"Not withstanding I have a few things against you, because you suffer that woman Jezebel, which calls

herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed to idols. And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not. 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 that searches the mind and heart: and I will give to every one of you according to your works" (Rev.2:20-23 Para.).

The problems within Thyatira did not come from outside the church; they came from within. They began with Thyatira's acceptance of the teachings of a woman who was thought to be a prophetess from God, but who in actuality was an evil person, as was king Ahab's wife Jezebel. This woman urged them to compromise in order to comply with the world's standards and thereby gain the acceptance of non-believers, advantage in business, and prosperity in other areas of life.

This false prophetess was not necessarily trying to destroy the church; she just wanted the church to view the truth of God in a more liberal way than Jesus Christ and the apostles had taught. However, her teachings led to compromise, especially in relation to idolatry, which led to spiritual fornication.

Today, there is a very large Sabbath-keeping group that follows the foolish and dangerous teachings of a prophetess that came from within their group. Although these people carry on a dynamic, outgoing, and powerful ministry to the world around them, they are in deep trouble with Jesus Christ.

On the surface this church looks very productive by having good people with good works. Yet, they have compromised the truth of God. They are self-seeking and deceived because they have been following the false teaching of a false prophetess for many generations. Therefore, this is a serious warning to them from Jesus that their salvation is in jeopardy.

Many of Thyatira will receive the trial of fire because of their lack of zeal for the truth of God.

Jesus will put them through great persecution and even martyrdom in an attempt to awaken them to their sinful condition and give them a final opportunity to repent.

Jesus Says:

"But to you I say, and to the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak; I will put upon you none other burden" (Rev.2:24 Para.).

Some of God's people deliberately seek to do evil. Why? The teachings of the ancient Jezebel seemed to encourage sin, because one could repent and accept God's graciousness and make God look good. Many today have actually built this case by corrupting the scriptures and thereby turning God's grace into a license to sin.

Although these people show service, faith, love, and perseverance, it is apparent that they desire to be entertained rather than instructed, to be soothed rather than corrected, and to be more of a social club than an educated congregation. If you went into this congregation, on the surface you would think this is a dynamic group with great works, yet they do not really want to be educated in the truth of God nor follow his spiritual ways.

At the center of Thyatira's problems is the acceptance of the teachings of The false prophetess and, perhaps, in some cases, a false prophet. Many of these people appear to be righteous, but they will not easily give up their false beliefs.

This particular group has a problem of worshiping the Sabbath, which is idolatry. Moreover, they worship a person and her false teachings, which is idolatry and compromising the truth of God. To those of Thyatira who are carefully and zealously following the teachings of God, Christ says:

"But that which you have already hold fast till I come. And he that overcomes, and keeps my works to the end, to him will I give power over the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to pieces: even as I received of my Father. And I will give him

the morning star. He that has an ear let him hear what the spirit says to the churches"(Rev.2:25-29 Para.).

THE MESSAGE TO THOSE OF SARDIS

"And to the angel [messenger] of the church in Sardis write: These things says he [Jesus Christ] that has the seven spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know your works, that you have a name that you live, and are dead. Be watchful, and strengthen the things that remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found your works perfect before God. Remember, therefore how you have received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If you will not watch, I will come on you as a thief, and you shall not know what hour I will come upon you. You have a few names even in Sardis that have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy" (Rev.3:1-4 Para.).

Within the Sardis grouping of the elect, there are only a few who have not defiled themselves spiritually. The implication is that unless there is a major change in their attitude and behavior, most who have the attitude of the Sardis church will end up in the Lake of Fire.

The first time a person makes a serious mistake after their conversion, they may recognize this as a sin due to a weakness in their life. If a person deals with it at the time and resolves to change, the problem will be overcome. But, if one compromises themselves again and again, each subsequent compromise becomes easier and easier, until self-delusion sets in and sin becomes an acceptable way of conducting oneself before God the Father and Jesus Christ. A person with the Sardis attitude does not truly believe that the wages of sin brings eternal death. See Rom.6:23.

The congregations pictured as Sardis do not appear to be troubled by heresy, because they do not have anyone among them who is thinking enough to come up with a heresy. They are so spiritually dead and so lazy that they just accept whatever doctrines seem pleasant and easy to comply with.

They are just drifting along in ignorance to their plight and the serious danger that confronts them. This church is not likely to be troubled by an attack by Satan or any other outside source, because the truth is, that, they are so spiritually dead already that they are not worth the effort.

The warning to those of Sardis is that they had better quickly wake up to their deadly lethargy and watch out, because their salvation is in jeopardy. Christ also warns that within the congregations of Sardis there are only a few who truly love the Father and his Son and are following the ways of God.

Jesus encourages these few to continue to be watchful and they will receive their reward. However, most of their brothers and sisters in Christ who appear outwardly to be spiritually alive, but are spiritually dead, and will die the second death in the Lake of Fire if they do not repent of their evil ways.

Most of Sardis are in great danger. They have accepted the sacrifice of Jesus Christ as their own and have known the Father; therefore, they are having their opportunity for salvation. But, because of their sins, they are on the pathway that leads to eternal death. This is why this warning is so severe. They have little or no will to prayerfully study God's word or to use it on a continuing basis to help them overcome their spiritual flaws. They are so self-deceived that they do not even realize that the little truth they have is slipping away and that they are in danger of losing their salvation.

Jesus Says:

"He that overcomes, the same shall be clothed in white garments; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels. He that has an ear, let him hear what the spirit says to the churches" (Rev.3:5-6 Para.).

Those of Sardis are not fulfilling their responsibilities to grow in grace and knowledge nor are they fulfilling their commission properly. Most in Sardis are complacent and are not trying to live a righteous life. They have allowed the truth of God

to slip away, and Jesus considers them spiritually dead.

Because they have stopped trying to overcome, Jesus sees no benefit in pursuing their salvation any further and will allow them to die if they do not make an effort to repent and live righteously.

Jesus says that any with the attitude of Sardis are on the verge of losing their eternal life because of a compromising, complacent, and lazy attitude toward the things of God and their calling. What a terrible accusation from our Lord and Savior. Those of Sardis have a reputation for being alive; however, they are in fact already spiritually dead; because, they are lazy and uninspired by the awesome opportunity that they have been given to be among the first of humanity to enter the Family and Kingdom of God as immortal sons of God the Father. The elect of Sardis still have hope of obtaining salvation, if they will only repent and endure to the end with a righteous attitude.

THE MESSAGE TO THOSE OF PHILADELPHIA

"And to the angel [messenger] of the church in Philadelphia write: These things says he [Jesus Christ] that is holy, he that is true, he that has the key of David, he that opens, and no man shuts; and shuts, and no man opens; I know your works: behold, I have set before you an open door, and no man can shut it: for you have a little strength, and have kept my word, and have not denied my name" (Rev.3:7-8 Para.).

Only one of the seven groupings of God's elect children is used by Jesus to carry out the final dynamic preaching of the gospel. Although others of the elect may be given awesome gifts from God to work great miracles and perform a great witness, those of the Church of Philadelphia seem to be the only ones who are empowered with the gifts shown in 1 Corinthians 12:4-11, and Romans 12:6-8, in order to reach out to the world as a whole, both within the body of the elect and through world-wide evangelism:

Notice the emphasis upon having kept Christ's word and not denying Christ's name. In the Greek language, the verbs are in the aorist tense, which describes a definite, specific act in the past. The implication is that there has been some particular spiritual trial out of which those of Philadelphia have emerged victorious. It is for this reason that God uses and empowers them to perform a great work for him in the end of the age.

Part of the reward for having the Philadelphia attitude and behavior is to be given an extremely prominent position in the Family and Kingdom of God:

Jesus Says:

"Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and bow before your feet, and to know that I have loved you. Because you have kept the word of my patience, I will also keep you from the hour of trial, which shall come upon all the inhabitable earth, in order to try those dwelling on earth. Behold, I come quickly. Hold what you have so that no one takes your crown" (Rev.3:9-11 Para.).

Only those with the Philadelphia attitude and behavior are given a significant measure of protection by God during the end times. This does not mean that they are totally free from persecution or even martyrdom, but of all God's children, they are the only ones who have major protection promised to them in order for them to proclaim the Good News of the coming Kingdom of God, whereas the rest of God's elect children will be severely reprimanded by Jesus Christ through the word of God and the persecution by Satan and the world at large in order to try, purify, perfect, and save them from eternal death.

Jesus Says:

"The one who overcomes I will make a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall not go out any more. And I will write the name of my God on him, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from

my God; and my new name. He who has an ear, hear what the spirit says to the churches" (Rev. 3:12-13 Para.).

Those of the Philadelphia attitude and behavior are the only ones who have a completely positive description. They are faithfully keeping the word of God, they are not denying Jesus' name, and they are enduring patiently with persistence. Because of this, they are promised special protection against Satan in order to do a mighty work for God, yet there is a serious warning within the message to them.

A Warning

Jesus Christ warns them to hold on to what they have, so that no one takes their crown. This is not an issue of theft; it is an issue of becoming unworthy to wear the crown. Jesus gives responsibilities, opportunities, and physical and spiritual gifts to each of the elect of his Father. If a person performs their responsibility, seizes the opportunity, and properly uses the gifts they have been given, they will be rewarded accordingly; they have a crown reserved for them to wear in the Family and Kingdom of God. But, if they prove themselves unfit, Jesus will give their task to someone else and they will lose their reward and perhaps their eternal life.

THE MESSAGE TO THOSE OF LAODICEA

"To the angel [messenger] of the church of the Laodiceans write: These things says the Amen [Jesus Christ], the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God; I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot: I wished that you were either cold or hot. Because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I am about to vomit you out of my mouth" (Rev.3:14-16 Para.).

Of all the seven congregational groupings of God's elect directly spoken to by Jesus Christ, this group is the most pointedly condemned. They are neither faithful nor unbelieving; rather, they are completely indifferent. Their indifference to God's truth is sickening to Jesus. The Laodiceans are so self-satisfied that they think everything is fine and that they are doing great works. They view

themselves as the recipients of great spiritual understanding, but they have practically none.

Jesus Says:

"Because you say, 'I am rich; and have need of nothing, and do not know that you are wretched, and miserable and poor and blind and naked. I advise you to buy from me gold having been refined in the fire by me, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, and your shame and nakedness may not be revealed. And anoint your eyes with eye-salve, that you may see'" (Rev.3:17-18 Para.).

Here, we see a people who are so apathetic and lazy because of their perceived knowledge and spirituality, that they are in danger of being cast away from God. They are self-deceived into thinking that they are spiritually rich; however, they are not. Christ is giving them their last opportunity to repent and become zealous for God. If these people will hear and heed what he is saying, he will again establish fellowship with them. If not, they will be cast into the Lake of Fire with the unrepentant wicked.

Christ is searching for people that want him and his Father to be a major part of their life. He says he is at the door knocking, hoping the wayward elect will let him back into their hearts and minds. But he will not force his way into their lives. These individuals have to make a decision to repent of their nauseating quality of being spiritually lukewarm, self-satisfied, complacent, and in need of nothing.

Their indifference has left them self-deluded and they do not realize they are spiritually poor, miserable, wretched, blind, and naked. Those who lead such a people and do not themselves repent are in deep trouble. These individuals have an attitude of having it made, but have no real commitment for spiritual growth. They feel secure as long as they associate with a particular group of people. This kind of attitude leads to indifference and complacency, which will result intense trials in the hope of awaking them to their need of genuine repentance:

Jesus Says:

"As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Be zealous then, and repent. Behold I stand at the door and knock; If any one hears my voice and opens the door, I will go in to him, and I will dine with him and he with me" (Rev.3:19-20 Para.).

The kind of rebuke that Jesus speaks of here, is a severe rebuke that compels a person to see the error of their ways. Christ is showing, in an extremely strong way, that some of the elect who are in this decadent condition can expect extremely severe trials that come directly from him.

Because of their self-righteous attitudes, Jesus says they will be tried in fire. A Laodicean needs a major attitude adjustment in order for him to be used by God, and allowed to enter the Father's Family and Kingdom of God.

Jesus Says:

"To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I overcame and sat down 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 NIV).

I see that my time is up,/ but if you want to know more about the prophecies concerning true Christians and what God the Father and Jesus Christ expect of them or more about the other subjects that I have briefly touched on in this in this broadcast, Write to me at the at the address given in the following announcement. Until next time this is Bud Cocherell for Bible Research .org. profane or defile.

File CB31 6/06