

Lesson from the Seven Churches of Revelation 2 & 3

(Day 49)

Fred R. Coulter—June 15, 2024

Greetings, brethren, and welcome to Day 49, the seventh Sabbath, the day before Pentecost. As we will see tomorrow, ***Pentecost is going to be an absolute worldwide shaking of the greatest magnitude possible!***

We need to understand about the Word of God, and we need to understand about the Churches. So, let's come to the book of Revelation, because on this, the 7th Sabbath or the 49th day, we're going to do a survey of the seven Churches in Rev. 2 & 3.

We're going to learn what we need to do, because as we will see, Jesus says to every one of the Churches, ***The one who has an ear, let him hear!*** That means listen intently ***so that you:***

- may believe
- may obey
- may love

God the Father and Jesus Christ!

Now one of the ways that God intends us to understand what is happening is to realize this. Remember what Jesus said in John 10, that ***My sheep hear My voice!***

Every time you read the Word of God, you're hearing the voice of God spoken to you that way, which is a miracle itself, ***and you need the Spirit of God within you!*** You need to exercise your free moral agency to understand, first of all, the awesomeness of God ***and His great creation and what He has made and how He has made it!***

The universe is so fantastic and so far beyond anything we can grasp or imagine, even with the greatest telescopes in the world, to view clear into the outer reaches of the heavens.

This is the God that is dealing with us! That's why everything here is 'God spoke...' The Word of God came to the prophet speaking, saying, whatever, ***Jesus Christ coming into flesh and speaking the very words of God as a human being!*** But the Son of God to those whom the promise was given, that He would come, ***and He did!***

Then we have the four Gospels and the book of Acts showing and preserving these words. So, whenever you read anything in the Bible, it is the voice of God to you, to me, to anyone who reads it.

We know that in Deut. 30 that God sets before us life and death, blessing and cursing, and He says, ***Therefore, choose life that you may love the Lord your God!***

We're going to see that's the theme of everything here with the seven Churches. We will see that too many times, just like as in the Old Testament, men

- add to
- delete from
- neglect
- try and compromise

with the world, and they always get in trouble!

Let's come to Rev. 1, and let's understand about this book. Remember how many times we have covered that every introduction in the Epistles of Paul or any of the other apostles, it is always ***from God to Father and Jesus Christ!***

The first two or three verses tell us that and everything in there is what God wants us to know. In this time with impending troubles and difficulties coming, we're going to see that we've got to take advantage of every minute of tranquility and lack of turmoil:

- so that we can draw close to God
- so that we can learn His Word
- so that we can have it written in our heart and mind
- so that we can love God and serve Him and do what He wants

Let's begin here Rev. 1 and let's understand the importance of it. As we will see that the messages to the seven Churches are the direct messages to all the Churches at all times, so that they do not fall into the same traps.

This comes from God the Father! Do we understand that? So, let that sink in. Let it sink into our heart and mind ***that these words of God come directly from God to us!*** With His Spirit in us:

- He gives us understanding
- He gives us Truth
- He gives us knowledge
- He gives us willingness

Revelation 1:1: “*The* revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave to Him, to show to His servants the things that *are* ordained to come to pass shortly; and He made *it* known, having sent *it* by His angel to His servant John.”

Now then, isn't that interesting? John was the one who Jesus loved!

Verse 2: “Who gave witness *to* the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ, and all the things he saw.”

Here's a summary of the whole book of Revelation in the first two verses. Notice what is to come of this. All of this is to be a benefit to every one of Christians down through time. Of course, we've had the opportunity as it says on our letterhead, *Restoring Original Christianity for Today*, the way that God wants it. That's what we're going to focus in on for Day 49!

Verse 3: “Blessed *is* the one... [that blessing comes from God] ...who reads, and those who hear the words of this prophecy and who **keep**...”

That means not only to do and perform, **but it also means to guard and protect!**

“...the things *that are* written therein; for the time *is* at hand” (v 3).

For every Christian in every age, the time for each one of us is always at hand, whether it is day-to-day while we're living and overcoming and staying close to God, or whether we are close to the end of our lives, or whether we are close to the return of Christ.

All of those things apply here, because God's Word is multi-layered. It's not like any other book, because other books, without the Word of God, have very little if any, inspiration of value spiritually for God.

Here's what John did, what comes to him, so here's what he writes:

Verse 4: “John to the seven Churches that *are* in Asia...”

Why did he pick that? *Because it was a mail route, from Ephesus all the way to Laodicea!* This shows that the connection to the churches down through time will be there.

“...Grace and peace *be* to you from Him Who is, and Who was, and Who *is* to come; and from the seven spirits that are before His Throne” (v 4)

So right here, this tells us Christ is active, the seven Spirits of God are the seven Spirits sent into all the earth as the eyes of God to find those who are seeking Him. Then the Spirit of the Father draws them:

- we come to repentance
- we are baptized
- we receive the Holy Spirit

God opens our minds as we yield to Him and takes away the hostility of the carnality of the human mind that is so desperately wicked, evil and deceitful above all things.

That is to be converted! But in the process we will see there are difficulties that come along, and we need to be aware of those so we don't get entrapped by any of them.

Verse 5: “And from Jesus Christ, the faithful Witness, the Firstborn from the dead, and the Ruler of the kings of the earth...”

Now that's over all the kings of the earth today (Jer. 18). He judges all nations all the time, and with His laws He's judging every human being all the time, for good or for evil, depending on how they live their lives. That has nothing to do with conversion, that's just physical existence. Conversion is another process. Conversion means you answer the call of God and God gives you His Spirit when you are baptized.

It's for us doubly, because this is to educate us to be the kings and priests (Rev. 20) and reign with Christ a thousand years.

“...To Him Who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and has made us kings and priests to God and His Father; to Him *be* the glory and the sovereignty into the ages of eternity. Amen” (vs 5-6).

How's that for an introduction? That is tremendous, that is awesome!

Verse 7—this will happen, and as I wrote in my May-June letter. You know how it's going to happen and we'll find out tomorrow at Pentecost some more of it.

Verse 7: “Behold, He is coming with the clouds, and every eye shall see Him...” *That means every eye of every human being on the earth!*

“...and those who pierced Him...” (v 7) won't see him until the second resurrection, but *they will see Him!* However, because our sins have been paid for through the sacrifice of Christ, and we are conjoined to the sacrifice of Christ, that piercing of

Him was part of letting out all of the blood so that He would shed all of His blood, because He was God in the flesh.

- there can't be any better blood
- there can't be any better sacrifice
- there can't be anything that any man can add to that to make it any better or to make it effective

Any more than God can Himself personally!

“...and all the tribes of the earth shall wail because of Him. Even so, Amen: (v 7).

Two verses ending in *Amen*. That means ***so be it!*** Now notice what Jesus says; here's where we really get:

- the feeling and understanding of what is transpiring in our lives
- our calling
- what we are doing
- why we have the Word of God
- why we need to study
- why we need to pray
- why we need to live God's way

always asking God

- to help us
- to guide us
- to direct us
- to lead us

especially in this evil generation that we are living in now!

Verse 8: “I am the Alpha and the Omega...”—*first letter and last letter of the Greek alphabet*, showing that He intended this to be written in Greek.

So, all of those out there who say that it was written in Aramaic, *you're liars!* All those out there who say that it was written 200 or 300 years after the apostles, *you're liars!*

“...*the Beginning and the Ending*,’ says the Lord...” (v 8).

God started the whole process with creation, carrying it on down through time, the ending with things on the earth, and *then a new beginning* when we find in the last two chapters of the book of Revelation the New Heavens and the New Earth.

“...Who is, and Who was, and Who *is* to come—the Almighty” (v 8).

If He's Almighty, can anybody do anything against Him and succeed? *No!* All you have to do is just read Isa. 40:

- no one has been the counsel of God
- no one was there when He laid the foundation
- no one was there, that is human beings
 - there were angels
 - there was Lucifer before he fell
 - there were the angels that went with him before they fell

They were there and they saw it; an amazing thing! This is what we need to grasp.

Verse 9: “I, John, who *am* also your brother and joint partaker in the tribulation and in the kingdom and endurance of Jesus Christ, was on the island that *is* called Patmos because of the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ.”

So, John is saying, ‘Here's what happened, and here's what came to me.’ When we read this and we understand, don't you think that John would write everything exactly as Jesus said? *Yes!*

But men, in all of their egotistical, intellectual ignorance, reject revelation, reject the Word of God, say there is no God. Well, just wait and see. All of you who believe that, what are you going to do when you look at Christ in the face and He says, ‘What have you done?’

Verse 10: “I was in *the Spirit* on the Day of the Lord...”

Now some egotistical Protestants try and say that's Sunday! *It's not!* It's the day of the coming of the Lord and all of the events leading up to it.

The book of Revelation tells us all of the events leading up to the first resurrection in one straight line. All of the time in between, we find in other parts of the Bible so we can put the whole thing together.

“...and I heard a loud voice like a trumpet behind me, saying, ‘I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, and what you see, **write in a book**...” (vs 10-11)—*that's why we have it!*

It doesn't matter, God preserved it in spite of men, but though He used them, because He wanted His Word preserved so that down through time all would have it.

“...write in a book, and send *it* to the Churches that *are* in Asia: to Ephesus, and to Smyrna, and to Pergamos, and to Thyatira, and to Sardis, and to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea” (v 11).

Notice what a startling revelation this was. This is important because it's just like:

- when Isaiah saw God
- when Ezekiel had a vision of God
- when Jeremiah had a vision of God

God does this to put it in our mind that God is the One Who is doing this. **IF** we:

- get that
- understand that
- realize the greatness of God through it
 - **THEN** we can understand more of the Word of God
 - **THEN** we can love God more
 - **THEN** we can draw close to God more

Verse 12: “And I turned to see the voice that spoke with me; and when I turned, I saw seven golden lampstands; and **in the midst** of the seven lampstands... [they were in a circle] ...*One* like the Son of man, clothed in *a garment* reaching to the feet, and girded about the chest with a golden breastplate. And His head and hair *were* like white wool, white as snow; and His eyes *were* like a flame of fire” vs 12-14).

- think about that
- think about the power
- think about what it is to be a spirit being

We’re going to be the sons and daughters of God!
We’re not going to be exactly like that, but we’ll have the same kind of existence as Christ!

Verse 15: “And His feet *were* like fine brass, as if *they* glowed in a furnace; and His voice *was* like *the* sound of many waters. And in His right hand He had seven stars, and **a sharp two-edged sword** went out of His mouth...” (vs 15-16).

That’s the Word of God; Heb. 4 ‘the Word of God is living and sharper than any two-edged sword.’ All God has to do is speak it, and it is done! Let’s think of that in relationship to the printed Word of God, because John was told to write it.

“...and His countenance *was* as the sun shining in its *full* power. And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as if dead; but He laid His right hand upon me, saying to me, ‘Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last, even the One Who is living; for I was dead, and behold, I am alive into the ages of eternity. Amen. And I [Christ] have the keys of *the* grave and of death’” (vs 16-18).

Only He can unlock death, ***and that’s through the power of the resurrection!***

Verse 19: “**Write**...”

He says that also back in Rev. 19: ‘Write, for these are the true and faithful words of God.’ So, how important is the Word of God written? *Amazing! Amazing!*

Verse 19: “Write the things that you saw, and the things that are, and the things that shall take place hereafter... [then He revealed the mystery]: ...The mystery of the seven stars that you saw in My right hand, and the seven golden lampstands, *is this*: the seven stars are *the* angels of the seven Churches; and the seven lampstands that you saw are *the* seven churches” (vs 10-20).

What’s most important to God of everything that’s on this earth? *His people, His churches!* He wants every one of us—wherever we are, whatever time period it is—to understand as much as we can of the Word of God.

These were the seven Churches that were in Asia. They also depict the seven iterations of the Church of God down through time to the coming of Christ.

Also, we can see from looking at history, looking at back as much as we’re able to with the history that we are able to discern as the proper history, that even though one of the Churches characteristics is predominant at any one period of time down through history, ***there are still parts of all seven Churches!***

At the end, we have all seven Churches all together, wherever they are. Listen, brethren, there are Churches of God we know nothing about in countries that we don’t know, and brethren that we have no idea about because God has them there and He knows them Himself.

Now, we know in some of the countries that we’re able to do some things, we understand that. But what we’re going to cover here now in the seven Churches are all of the difficulties that the Churches are confronted with in various times in varying degrees. ***But the lesson is here for us to learn!***

Revelation 2:1: “To the angel of the Ephesian Church, write: ‘These things says He Who holds the seven stars in His **right hand**... [meaning *work*; that the Churches of God must be doing the work of Christ] ...Who walks in *the* midst of the seven golden lampstands.’”

That means Christ is always there guiding and directing what goes on as long as we are yielding to God. He’s still doing it even if there’s sin involved. ***We will see whenever there’s sin involved that Jesus corrects it!***

Church of the Ephesians

Now then, we're coming to the most important thing for all the Churches. Right here in the Church of the Ephesians.

Verse 2: "**I know your works...**" *We're going to see He talks about:*

- works
- faith
- repentance
- hearing
- doing
- repenting

We'll see that in all of the seven Churches!

Verse 2: "**I know your works...**"

Remember that we're going to ***be judged by our works!*** Never does He say you're going to be judged by your faith, ***because if you have the faith of Christ, you're going to have the works!***

So, anyone who says that because we have the grace of God, you don't need works, read Eph. 2; it says ***that for those who are under grace, that we are to walk in the works that God has beforehand provided or ordained for us to walk in!*** That's *the way of God with Christ!*

"...and your labor, and your endurance, and that you cannot bear those who are evil; and *that* you did test those who proclaim *themselves* to be apostles, but are not, and did find them liars" (v 2).

Do we still do that today? *Yes, indeed!* So, that element is still in the Churches!

Verse 3: "And *that* you have borne *much* and have endured, and for My name's sake have labored and have not grown weary; **nevertheless, I have this against you...**" (vs 3-4).

Christ always brings out the things that we need to repent of. As long as we're in the flesh, we're going to have things to repent of every single day, especially today with all of the digital and visual input and sound that comes into our mind, which were never there in the centuries leading up to us.

Here we can just add into it right here: Remember when that helicopter crashed in Iran? We knew about it the instant that it happened, right after it happened. That's halfway around the world. So, we know the things that go on.

Christ says He has something against us; here it is. Here's the first step of problems that each one of us will have if we allow this to happen:

"...**that you have left your first love**" (v 4).

What is the first love? First love is ***to love God with all your heart, with all your mind, with all your soul, with all your being, and with all your strength!*** (Matt. 22, Mark 12 and Deut. 6). ***It's there all through the Bible!*** Loving God is the most important thing!

When we leave the love of God, what do we do? *We start implementing the ways and mindset of men!* Can anything replace the love of God the way that God wants? *No!*

Verse 5: "Therefore, remember from where you have fallen, and repent..."

Of the seven Churches, only two were not told to repent. All the other five, and some of them especially—Pergamos, Thyatira, and Laodicea—had terrible problems.

"...and **do the first works; for if you do not...**" (v 5).

- Is loving God *a spiritual work* as well as an emotional attachment: devotion, as well as worshiping in awe? *Yes, indeed!*
- Are those spiritual works? *Yes!*
- Is that what God wants? *Yes!*

That's why he told us that!

"...if *you do* not, I will come to you quickly; and **I will remove your lampstand** out of its place unless you repent" (v 5).

That's why the daily prayer has repentance in it as the model for us.

Verse 6: "But this you have: that you hate the works of the Nicolaitans..."

The Nicolaitans were those who believed in a hierarchical structure; that you could only get to God through that hierarchical structure. That they would rule over their subjects or over the brethren.

Remember what Jesus told the apostles back in Matt. 20? Even had 'mother Zebedee' bring James and John with her to Jesus and said, 'Lord, I've got something I want to ask you.' *What is it?* 'That these two, my sons, one may sit on Your right hand and one on Your left hand in Your Kingdom.'

Jesus said, 'Woman, you don't know what you are asking.' Then He turned to James and John and He said, 'You're going to be baptized with the same baptism as I am. Do you think you're going to take that?' They said, 'Oh yes, we will.'

Then He went on to explain how not to have a hierarchy. Take a look at the Roman Catholic Church.

- Where in the New Testament does it say you need a pope? **Never!**
- Where does it say you need a college of cardinals? **Never!**
- Where does it say that the pope has sole authority? **Never!**
- Where does it say that you cannot have any salvation unless you agree to the hierarchy and trinity of the Roman Catholic Church? **Not in the Bible!**

That's the end result of what was started right here, and that's with us today.

“...you hate the works of the Nicolaitans, **which I also hate**” (v 6).

What did Jesus say? *You know that the rulers of the earth lorded over them!*

I don't think we understand about how powerful that over-lording was in the days of Jesus and their religious figures. They exercised authority upon them. That is, they tell them what to do in their lives rather than for the brethren to study the Word of God and learn what to do in their lives.

So, He says, “...you hate the works of the Nicolaitans, **which I also hate.**”

That's an answer to what happened to Worldwide Church of God. You can kind of take all the sins of all the seven Churches and mix them all together with everything that was in Worldwide and understand why God destroyed it.

Those of us who were scattered, that's a blessing today because great persecution and threats of death are going to come in increasing intensity like we have never known. So, to be removed, to have small gatherings where they don't know where we're meeting is a blessing.”

Verse 7: “The one who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the Churches. To the one who overcomes... [we're always to be overcoming, He says this to all seven Churches] ...I will give *the right* to eat of the Tree of Life that is in *the* midst of the paradise of God.”

Church at Smyrna

We have all the faults that lead to complacency by leaving the first love. When you leave the first love, what tries to enter in at that time? *Satan the devil!*

We will find that was a powerful movement. And the way it was after the Apostle John died with Polycarp, Polyquities, and all of those who followed John, that they stayed true. ***But Satan was there:***

- forming the proto-Catholic Church
- denouncing everyone who kept the Sabbath and Holy Days
- proclaiming that they shouldn't keep the Sabbath

and all of those who didn't would be killed!

Verse 8: ““And to the angel of the Church of *the* Smyrneans write: These things says the First and the Last, Who was dead but is alive. ‘I know your works...’” (vs 8-9).

- God knows all of our works
- He knows what we do
- He knows our thoughts
- He knows our intent

But our free moral agency, He hasn't taken away. We need to use that:

- to draw close to God
- to pray
- to study
- to live God's way

Verse 9: “I know your works and tribulation and poverty (but you are rich)...”

If you are close to God, there are no riches in the world that could pay for that.

“...and the blasphemy of those who declare themselves to be Jews and are not, but *are* a synagogue of Satan” (v 9). *The synagogue of Satan resides in two places:*

1. in Rome
2. in rabbinic Judaism

Both of them exert power over a great deal of the earth!

Verse 10: “Do not fear any of the things that you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast *some* of you into prison, that you may be tried; and you shall have tribulation ten days....”

That was the ten years of intense persecution right after the Apostle John died and on into the later 100s and 200s_{A.D.}

“...**Be faithful unto death...**” (v 10).

That's for every one of us, not just the Samaritans. We have to be faithful unto death.

Remember, Hezekiah, he was faithful until he showed the ambassadors from Babylon all of the wealth and gold and things that God delivered to them from the Assyrian army that he killed. They had all the wealth and all the booty and all of that thing brought into Jerusalem.

Then Hezekiah made the stupid thing of vanity, of showing it to the ambassadors from Babylon. Isaiah had to come to him and ask, ‘What is this that you have done? What did they see?’

Hezekiah said, ‘Well, I showed them everything.’ Isaiah said, ‘All of this is going to Babylon.’ It wasn’t going to go there until Hezekiah made that stupid decision! Likewise! So, you’re going to be tried.

“...you shall have tribulation ten days. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you a crown of life. **The one who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the Churches. The one who overcomes...**” (vs 10-11).

Meaning you can overcome these things. You can’t overcome death, but death can be overcome by Christ.

Verse 11: “The one who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. **The one who overcomes shall not be hurt of the second death.**”

That’s a warning that if you go too far, guess what’s going to happen? ***The second death!***

There are a lot of lessons in here for us and we need to learn them. You can look up other Scriptures to add to this, to put in play here, but I want to concentrate on going through the seven Churches so that we get the message for all the brethren everywhere, *that they are for us today and for those in the future whom God would call! So that we can help everyone come to love God with all their heart and mind and soul and being and trust in Christ and trust in his strength and have their lives directed with the Spirit of God in them!*

(break@44:00)

We saw that the synagogue of Satan is introduced in the Church of Smyrna and in a historical setting we’ll put this in the late 100s and through 400_{A.D.}

Church in Pergamos

Look what happens if you don’t shut the door on Satan. We have the Church in Pergamos. Here we have the things that they introduce into the Church would seem good to them *because they use*

human reasoning—instead of the Spirit of God—*which seems right to them* because it looked good, but were actually satanic.

So let’s read what Christ says to the Church of Pergamos, the city where they had the great altar to Zeus, Satan’s headquarters at that time.

When Satan is deceiving the whole world today, think how that affects the whole world, because whenever Satan can get in through the door, he takes over the whole thing. Is that what’s happening in the world today?

Verse 12: ““And to the angel of the Church in Pergamos, write: ‘These things **says He Who has the sharp two-edged sword.**”

Meaning that they weren’t following the Word of God, ***and God was going to execute upon them His Word!***

Verse 13: “I know your works and where you dwell, where the throne of Satan *is*; but you are holding fast My name, and did not deny My faith, even in the days in which Antipas *was* My faithful witness, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells.”

So, they were faithful as long as they had a leader that was faithful. But when he was killed, look at what happened:

- paganism creeps in
- changing of the Passover creeps in

This is the introduction of the Sacrifice of the Mass that the Catholics have today, and the introduction of Easter, which Catholics and Protestants have today.

So what it means is that the thing that Satan likes to get after, likes to change and likes to destroy as much as possible is the Passover.

Isn’t that the thing that these churches of Satan have destroyed and substituted their own sacrifice of things which Paul writes in 1- Cor. 10 are sacrifices to demons in the Churches of God? Obviously, they apostatize. Some few left, but it cost them their lives.

Verse 14: “But I have a few things against you because you have there *those* who hold the teaching of Balaam...”

Now the teachings of Balaam was that you get them involved in adultery and illicit sex and you can destroy them because God will destroy them for you if you get them involved in that. Doesn’t that sound a lot like what’s happening in the world today? *Yes, indeed!*

“...who taught Balak to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit fornication” (v 14)—*that’s sexual immorality!*

So, there you have it. Not only physical sexual immorality, but:

- look at the sexual immorality within the Catholic Church
- look at the sexual immorality that we have in this society today
- look at the sexual immorality that is in Islam
- look at the sexual immorality that is in Judaism

Wherever it may be, once any society, any group, any family, any person gets involved in sexual immorality, ***they bring the judgment of God upon them!***

- What happened in the Worldwide Church of God?
- Remember a man called Garner Ted Armstrong?

When he finally got caught, he admitted to—during the time that he was a minister—to having affairs with 200 women or more.

- Was that sexual immorality in the Church?
- What happened to the Church?
- What happened with the lies that came with it?

Sound a little bit like Smyrna here? *Yes, exactly!*

Verse 15: “Moreover, you also have *those* who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate.”

- hierarchy
- ruling over the brethren
- all of those things combined

Then some people say, ‘I wonder why God took down Worldwide?’ There are even some people that have a whole website devoted to Herbert W. Armstrong. Well, as long as he did good, he was fine. But when he started lying about his son Ted, that all of these things were rumors and not true, and he started preaching another gospel that wasn’t correct... It wasn’t the coming Kingdom of God.

- What is that called?
- What happened to the Church?

Just like right here, just like I said at the beginning, these things you can find in varying degrees in various Churches of God down through time and history.

Verse 16: “**Repent!**....”

Well, Herbert Armstrong probably repented of his personal sins the last two years before he died. I have that on firsthand testimony of a woman who met with him every day for the last two years of his life.

But Christ says, “...For if *you* do not *repent...*” (v 16)—because that repentance was only for himself (HWA), because the Church had gone too far.

So let’s see what Christ says He does when it goes too far.

“...I will come to you quickly, and will make war against them with the sword of My mouth” (v 16).

Did God destroy Worldwide? *Yes!* It was Christ’s war against the Church for sin, just exactly as it was with Pergamos.

Verse 17^[transcriber’s correction]: “The one who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the Churches....” *That means:*

- hear
- listen
- learn
- overcome
- repent
- don’t do the same things again.

“...To the one who overcomes I will give *the right* to eat of the hidden manna; and I will give him a white stone, and on the stone a new name written, which no one knows except the one who receives *it*” (v 17).’

Now then, with Pergamos it got worse. Same way, after God scattered Worldwide, it got worse. They went and converted to Protestantism. Now some of the remnant are thinking about, ‘How do we speak in tongues today?’

Listen, we don’t need to speak in tongues today because English is the universal language, and the Bible is translated into over 3,000 different languages. Back in the days of the apostles, they didn’t have that. So, they had speaking in tongues to unbelievers, just like it was on the Day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit came. But they also had the problem of satanic speaking in tongues, and that’s what we have today.

Church of Thyatira

They really got into it. So, this is the time during when the Catholic Church came to power and when they persecuted the true Christians and those who were living in the place that God put them to protect them up in the Alps and so forth.

All of this was going on, and the greatest compromises were coming. Those who remained steadfast to the Truth were martyred, just like in Pergamos.

Verse 18: “And to the angel 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 fine brass. **I know your works...**” (vs 18-19).

Understand this: God knows the works of every one of us all the time. So, don’t let our deceitful minds trick us into thinking anything other than that.

Verse 19: “I know your works, and love, and service, and faith, and your endurance, and your works; and the last *are* more than the first.”

Very interesting! The Seventh-Day Adventists tie their origin to this time in the history of the Church. Look at how they’re compromised today. The only thing they have left is the Sabbath, and most of them keep it from sundown Friday to sundown Saturday, but some keep it from midnight to midnight.

Verse 20: “But I have a few things against you, because you allow the woman Jezebel...”

- Who was she? *She was the daughter of the high priest of Baal!*
- What do you have with the Roman Catholic Church? *Baal! Sun-worship!*

“...who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce My servants into committing fornication... [that’s spiritual fornication and physical fornication] ...and eating things sacrificed to idols” (v 20).

They say that in their communion with the Sacrifice of their Mass, which they also call the Eucharist, that the priest has the power to command the bread to turn to Jesus’ flesh and the wine to His blood.

- How blasphemous of a lie can there be than any such thing?
- Can any man tell God what to do? *Never!*

So, that’s a lesson for all of us to learn, as well!

Verse 21: “And I gave her time to repent of her fornication, but she did not repent..”

That was through the decades of the Council of Trent. And it went like this: The Protestants had left and their motto was ‘Solo Scriptura’ that is Scriptures only. We just need to follow the Scriptures. Let’s get rid of all the idols and all the things.

So, the Protestants started out well, but they never came to the point of keeping the Sabbath. A lot of those in Britain did, a lot of those in Holland did. In the days of Cromwell, he got rid of Christmas and these pagan things for 20 years.

Now then, here we have it “...eating things sacrificed...” The space of repentance is the Council of Trent, because there was within the Catholic Church at that time a segment of the Scripturalist within the Catholic Church that were wanting to get rid of the idols and all the traditions of men and follow the Scriptures.

But after Luther refused to keep the Sabbath and Carlstadt, one of his close friends, tried to convince him to keep the Sabbath, but he wouldn’t do it. Then Luther joined the Catholics in putting down the farmers’ rebellion. So, the decision of the Council of Trent was this: In order to understand what has happened here is there are those who say Scriptures only and not tradition.

But even those Protestants who left still keep Sunday, which is a tradition of the Roman Catholic Church. So therefore, we cannot go by Scripture only, but by Scripture *and tradition!*

When you come to that, you have a wide open door for Satan the devil to continue, and that’s what happened here. They gave them space to repent, but they didn’t.

Verse 22: “Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation...”

Look at all the tribulation that they had, especially the 1100s through 1300s there in Europe. *Amazing! Amazing!* Even the armies of the Mongols coming in right to the doorsteps of Vienna.

“...unless they repent of their works. And I will kill her children **with death**...” (vs 22-23)—*that’s the second death!*

If you kill someone, they’re dead. But if you say *kill with death*, I mean, can you kill someone and not have them die? ***So, that means the second death!***

“...and all the Churches shall know...” (v 23).

Here's the lesson right smack in the middle of everything that Christ is saying to the seven Churches and for us to learn.

Verse 23: “And I will kill her children with death; **and all the Churches shall know that I am He Who searches the reins and hearts...**”

Christ is always actively looking, judging, evaluating, searching, trying, testing the hearts and reins. Now, the reigns is that special thing that God has that He can know our thoughts, that He can test us that way spiritually.

“...and I will give to each of you according to your works” (v 23).

Because as you think and as you do, you have worked and God is going to judge what you on what you think and what you do and the works that are a result of what you do with that.

Verse 24: “But to you I say, and to *the* rest who *are* in Thyatira, as many as do not have this doctrine, and who have not known the depths of Satan...”

Now how far of a compromise did they get into? *I mean look at the Roman Catholic Church today and all of the things that they have!*

It's nothing but pure paganism with the name of Christ attached to it, or the name of Mary, or the name of some saint.

“...as they speak; I will not cast upon you any other burden, but hold fast what you have until I come. **And to the one who overcomes and keeps My works...**” (vs 24-26).

We're going to see a little later, *keeps the Word of God!*

“...unto *the* end, I will give authority over the nations. and he shall shepherd them with an iron rod, as vessels of pottery are broken in pieces; as I have also received from My Father; and I will give him the Morning Star. **The one who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the Churches**” (vs 26-29).

All of the Churches, all of these things apply at all times. There are times when in history one of the Churches of God will prevail much greater than the other.

Rev. 3—after all of this and down through the Middle Ages and down through all the slaughtering of the Catholic Church and the wearing out of the saints, the Church became small. It became hard to hold to the true doctrines and it looked like it was going to disappear, *but it didn't!* It

was revived beginning with the Church of God Seventh-Day. In the 1800s they did a lot of:

- writing
- preaching
- teaching

Now you can go to **FriendsofSabbath.org** and there Greg White has the history of the Churches and all the things that Church of God Seventh-Day taught.

Now most of them did not keep the Holy Days and because they didn't keep the Holy Days they didn't have a very good understanding of prophecy.

Church of Sardis

Revelation 3:1: “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...’”

Stop and think about it! God knows what we're doing at any time!

“...and that you have a name as if you are alive, but are dead” (v 1). *In other words, they were just a warm corpse.*

Verse 2: “Be watchful, and strengthen the things that remain, which are about to die....”
Because:

- **IF** we don't overcome every day
- **IF** we don't pray every day
- **IF** we don't study every day
- **IF** we don't hold fast to the Word of God
- **IF** we're not learning to think with the Word of God With the Spirit of God

which is the greatest way to think that there is would you not say? Yes!

- **THEN** it can dwindle down to almost death!

“...For I have not found your works complete before God” (v 2).

Isn't that interesting? *A lot of them substitute faith for faithful works! Keep that in mind.*

Verse 3: “Therefore, remember what you have received and heard, and hold on *to this*, and repent. Now then, if you will not watch, I will come upon you as a thief, and you shall by no means know what hour I will come upon you.”

- Isn't that interesting?

- Did that not happen to Worldwide? They didn't know that Christ was going to come—and BOOM!

Verse 4: “You have a few names even in Sardis who have not defiled their garments, and they shall walk with Me in white because they are worthy. The one 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” (vs 4-5).

So they're still going to make it. They'll receive eternal life. That fits in with everything that God is going to do, only Christ and God the Father know.

Verse 6: “**The one who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the Churches.**”

So, as we go through all of this, let's ask ourselves this:

- Are we going to hear what God is telling us?
- Are we going to learn the lessons that God has given us here?
- Are we going to apply ourselves with diligence every day, every Sabbath, every Passover, every Holy Day, in everything that we do?

Because we have the time right now to have in the forefronts of our mind ***all the Word of God*** and everything that there is that He has provided for us that we've been able to do and make and produce and distribute.

That's why it's very important that all of you have been active passing out the Bibles. Remember this: the Bibles in the warehouse don't do anybody any good. God provided the funds and provided the way and provided the means so that we could have these Bibles printed.

All of you, brethren out there, can now be part of helping get the Word of God out with *The Holy Bible in Its Original Order, A Faithful Version!* With the commentaries and appendices we have, we give them more than just the Bible. We give them the tool and how to understand it. Pray that God will use that as a means:

- of calling new people
- as a means of calling new brethren
- as a means of helping those who have been in the Church a long time that need to be encouraged and rekindled and stirred up
- that this will help them do it

Church of Philadelphia

Verse 7: “And to the angel of the Church in Philadelphia, write...”

Philadelphia means *brotherly love!* What happens when Satan enters in, as we saw in these other Churches? ***Love disappears! Judgment and false doctrine come in!***

You can't have brotherly love without loving God with all your heart, mind, soul and being! Isn't that true? *Yes, because if we have the love of God in us, that will come out as love of the brethren!* Remember that!

Christ says, “...write: ‘These things says the Holy One, the One Who is true; the One Who has the key of David, Who opens and no one shuts, and Who shuts and no one opens’” (v 7).

What is the key of David? *The key of David is to understand God in your heart and mind and through repentance and deep devotion to God!*

Verse 8: “**I know your works**.... [we have our works] ...Behold, I have set before you an open door, and no one has the power to shut it because you have a little strength, **and have kept My Word**...”

We're small, but we keep the Word of God, and 'keep' means *to guard and protect!* In that sense, ***restoring original Christianity is part of what this is and what we do!***

“...and **have kept My Word and have not denied My name**” (v 8).

Now then, notice confrontation with the synagogue of Satan. Isn't that what happened with the Church? *The synagogue of Satan came in and took it over right in Pasadena!* An amazing thing! The auditorium that was supposed to be to the true God was dedicated by Benny Hinn of the Speaking in Tongues Chinese Church. *Amazing! Absolutely amazing!* Synagogue of Satan! **So, we need to be alert to that all the time!**

Verse 9: “Behold, I will make those of the synagogue of Satan, who proclaim themselves to be Jews and are not, but do lie. Behold, I will cause them to come and worship before your feet, and to know that I have loved you.”

Now, this is very important here; this is 'agape love.' ***Love directly from God,*** because that's how we have the love of the brethren—***agape love***—keep that in mind.

Think about the last few verses of John 21 when Jesus came to Peter and He said:

‘Simon, son of Jonah, do you *love* [agape] Me? And Peter says, ‘Lord, You know I love [phileo] You’—*that friendly love!* That’s not the deep devoted love of ‘agape.’ Then Jesus said, ‘Feed My sheep.’

Jesus asked Peter the second time and he answered the same way. And Jesus said, ‘Shepherd My sheep.’ Then Jesus asked Peter the third time and lowered it from ‘agape’ to ‘phileo’: ‘Do you love Me?’

Peter said, ‘Yes, Lord, You know I love You.’ And Jesus said, ‘Feed My lambs.’

There’s a lesson for us here. We’ll see that in a little bit when we get to Laodicea.

Verse 10: “Because you **have kept** the Word of My patience...”:

- to keep
- to do
- to guard

That’s what we do! We are to guard the Word of God from any encroachments of:

- Satan the devil
- the synagogue of Satan
- doctrines of men
- thoughts of men

trying to be added to the Word of God, we reject!

He says, “...I also will keep you from **the time of temptation**, which *is* about to come upon the whole world to try those who dwell on the earth” (v 10).

We don’t know exactly what that temptation is. Is that referring just to the mark of the beast *or* is it also referring to tribulation? Well, both could fit! However, it’s saying that only Christ can deliver us from the troubles that we’re going to be facing.

Verse 11: “Behold, I am coming quickly; **hold fast that which you have so that no one may take away your crown.**”

That’s what we do. That’s why when we stand for the Truth and protect the Truth and will not yield to any man, that that’s what we are doing. Though it may be no one will stand with us for quite a while, *but that’s what God wants us to do!*

Verse 12: “**The one who overcomes will I make a pillar in the temple of My God...**”

The greatest promise given to any of the seven Churches right here! Why? Because all the

problems of the other Churches leading up to this point, we don’t partake of!

“...and he shall not go out anymore; and I will write upon him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which will come down out of heaven from My God; and *I will write upon him My new name*” (v 12)—*a triple name!*

- name of God the Father
- name of the city
- name of Christ

Amazing!

Verse 13: “**The one who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the Churches.**”

Church of Laodicea

Verse 14: “And to the angel of the Church of the Laodiceans, write: These things says the Amen... [this is God’s final word to the Churches!] ...the faithful and true Witness, the Beginner of the creation of God.”

That tells us something very interesting! He made everything that there was. It’s interesting that when people begin to forget God, they don’t think that He won’t take it into account. Well, unless there is repentance and the kind of repentance worthy of whatever the transgression was, **He *is* going to take it into account!**

Laodicea, at that time had every convenience, every wonderful thing that they could have. Much like the society that we have today, everything is here at our fingertips. Yet, we don’t realize how fragile that it really is when complacency sets in.

This is what happened to the Laodiceans. They became dull of hearing, they became lukewarm in what they were doing to God. Yet, God still hasn’t given up on them. So, let’s take this as a lesson for all of us today living in a society where everything we have is at the push of a button at our fingertips. An amazing thing indeed!

I think about that every day. Everything that we have. Walk into a store. What do you want? You pick up a catalog, and you can have hundreds of catalogs with thousands and thousands of things of every description of every kind. You can go to your computer, you can order it, you can have it sent to you, you never see a person, you never talk to a person, but you get what you want. *Amazing!* Same thing with buying and selling.

Same thing with the food that we have. Same thing with all the conveniences that we have. But remember, the Achilles heel of all of it is electricity. You take away electricity, everything is gone.

Verse 15: “I know your works that you are neither cold nor hot; I would *that* you be *either* cold or hot”—*because God can deal with you in a better way!*

Verse 16: “So then, because you are lukewarm, and *are* neither cold nor hot, **I will spew you out of My mouth.**”

How many people are there, even in the Church of God, that wonder, ‘Where is God?’ Well, you might reverse the question: **Where do you stand before God?**

- Would you not say that destroying Pasadena and Worldwide Church of God was really a massive spewing out of the mouth or the Body of Christ? *Yes!*
- Have we learned anything? *That’s a question we all need to ask ourselves.*
- What are we going to do once we know and understand it?
- Are we going to repent?
- Are we going to come to God?
- Are we going to be zealous, as Jesus says here?

Notice the attitude:

Verse 17: “**For you say...** [this is the reason He spews them out of His mouth] ...**I am rich, and have become wealthy...**”

- Is that true? *Look at Worldwide! The highest income was \$120 million in a year! Think of that!*
- Where did it all go?
- How was that all squandered?
 - ✓ lukewarm
 - ✓ rich and wealthy
 - ✓ have need of nothing

It’s like the parable: The man had a wonderful crop and he said:

Oh, look, I got all of this. What am I going to do? Well, I’m going to say to my soul, ‘My soul, you have all of this, so I’m going to build bigger barns and greater fields and have more and just sit back and I have everything that I need.’

That’s a paraphrase of it! What was God’s answer to him? ***Know this, tonight your soul I will require!*** Nothing like a little fast judgment here!

“...and have need of nothing’; and you do not understand that you are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, *and naked*” (v 17)—*physically and spiritually! Both!*

Isn’t that what we have today? I read this and I can’t help but think about perhaps there may be a good number of Protestants that are part of this. They have a name, but what are they doing?

Now notice, *they are blind!* Who does the blinding? *Satan, the devil, and our own carnal nature!*

“...**and naked**” (v 17)—*meaning you don’t have the spiritual clothes of Christ!*

Here’s God’s Word to them; God’s Word to each one of us, because in all the seven Churches there are things we can apply to ourselves so that we can do as Jesus said, **‘The one who has an ear, let him hear. Repent!’**

Here’s what God tells the Laodiceans; v 18: “I counsel you to buy from Me gold purified by fire...”

What does that mean? You come to Christ and that is going to cost you all of the carnality that you have allowed to come into your life; ***that you need to repent of and get the true spiritual riches from God!***

We’ve got a book coming out on that: *The True Spiritual Riches of God.*

“...purified by fire...” *by trial!* Tie in 1-Cor. 3, you have gold, silver, precious stone, wood, hay, and stubble. All of this right here referring to the Laodiceans is wood, hay, and stubble.

They need to get the pure gold and the silver so that you may be rich. In other words, the true riches that Jesus said, ‘Don’t lay up treasure for you on the earth, but in heaven.’ ***Let your treasure be in heaven!***

What does that mean? ***You receive from God all of the spiritual blessings and things for you to overcome and grow and develop into a son or daughter of God so at the resurrection you will shine in glory and splendor!***

What can that be compared to any physical riches on the earth? *It can’t!*

“...and white garments so that you may be clothed, and the shame of your nakedness may not

be revealed; and to anoint your eyes with eye salve, so that you may see” (v 18).

When real repentance comes and it’s just between you and God and you really see what you are as God sees you. That can only come through prayer and study and yielding to God and fasting so that you understand.

Verse 19: “As many as I love...”—very interesting here, this is not ‘agape’; this is ‘phileo.’

“...I rebuke and chasten...” (v 19).

There are going to be things we’ll go through that are difficult; they’re rebukes and chastenings.

“...Therefore, be zealous and repent” (v 19)—*this is what God wants from everyone!*

- repentance from the heart
- true repentance
- honest evaluation of our own selves compared to the Word of God
 - ✓ compared to what we are doing
 - ✓ compared to our works
 - ✓ compared to how we approach God

All of it together!

Verse 20: “Behold, I stand at the door and knock...” ***This is the door of your mind!***

So, this says they are lacking very much the Spirit of God. Or that the Spirit of God with Christ is on the outside knocking to get in.

Is this where a lot of the Protestants stand? *I don’t know!* I just bring this out as a possibility because many of the things that are here can apply to those Protestants who think they’re really doing the will of God, but are not.

Everything here applies to them as to even many members in the Churches of God.

“...**If anyone hears My voice...**” (v 20).

As I started out, how are you going to hear the voice of God? *By studying!* You know what God has said, and opens the door. That is you open your mind to Christ. *You open your heart and your spirit to Christ!*

- you begin to love Him with ‘agape’ love
- you begin to obey Him and keep His Word
- you begin to be zealous

“...and opens the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me” (v 20). So that you can have that true spiritual riches of God:

- of knowing His plan
- of understanding
 - ✓ by loving Him
 - ✓ by believing Him
 - ✓ by doing the things that God wants in the way that God wants
 - ✓ by coming close to God

Now notice what He says here, because He doesn’t give up on the Laodiceans. The Laodiceans are not the unpardonable sin. The Laodiceans are those ***who need to be zealous and come to God and not handle all of these things in a lukewarm, half-hearted way!***

Verse 21: “**To the one who overcomes** will I give *authority* to sit with Me in My Throne, even as I also overcame, and sat down with My Father in His Throne.”

These are the messages to the seven Churches! So it’s fitting on Day 49—the day before Pentecost, which pictures the resurrection:

- that we evaluate our lives
- that we evaluate our relationship with God
- that we as individuals and Churches come to God
- that we look at it the way that God looks at it
- that we look at it through the lens of Scripture and the Holy Spirit

and not through the lens of our self-contentment and satisfaction of the good things that we have!

This is the message for today, and we’ll end it with:

Verse 22: “**The one who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the Churches.**”

Scriptural References:

- 1) Revelation 1:1-20
- 2) Revelation 2:1-29
- 3) Revelation 3:1-22

Scriptures referenced, not quoted:

- Deuteronomy 30
- Jeremiah 18
- Revelation 20-22
- Isaiah 40
- Hebrews 4
- Revelation 19
- Ephesians 2
- Matthew 22
- Mark 12

- Deuteronomy 6
- Matthew 20
- 1 Corinthians 10
- John 21
- 1 Corinthians 3

FRC:bo/po
Transcribed: 5/29/24

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