

A SERIOUS WARNING TO ALL BIBLE-BELIEVING CHRISTIANS!

“For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee.”
Rom. 11:21

The Work of Unclean Spirits and the Messages to the Seven Churches of Revelation *All Scripture (KJV)*

By Pastor Del Wray

Jesus warned of the work of unclean spirits in the last days. He spoke of great deception. He warned of the increase in evil spirits, devils and demons. He said these evil spirits would increase more and more, that their deception would be greater than when He came the first time. In fact He said seven times greater. The Bible makes it clear that even the very elect; those that are saved may even be deceived. Two thousand years ago when He came the first time there were evil spirits everywhere and He called them “seducing spirits” 1 Tim. 4: 1-4 when He comes the second time they will be wide spread even more so. Unclean spirits concentrate their work on believers especially those that will uplift and magnify the living Word of God! Our churches today are full of them and when you try to warn your brothers in Christ they only scoff in unbelief. Why is there such an increase in all these new false bibles? I’ll tell you why, “unclean spirits!” How about all the many different churches being established across our land? Unclean spirits! What about those in possession of evil spirits, false teachers and cultists? Want me to name a few? Here they are; Oprah Winfrey, T. D. Jakes, Pat Robinson, Joel Osteen, Rick Warren, Jane Fonda and even Martin L. King, Jr. was one just to name a few. Why are our mental hospitals filled to capacity? Unclean spirits! How about Abortion? Why are our leaders and politicians passing laws to legalize the murder of millions of unborn babies each year? Unclean spirits! I could go on but lastly churches across America are shutting down and being turned into night clubs, why? Unclean spirits! We find in the Scripture that the Lord gives us a representative history of the churches and the Church Age or Church Periods represented by the Seven Church’s found in Revelation two and three. Furthermore, He said a Church could be removed from its place out of His presence. “Ichabod” the glory of God has departed as did with Israel.

Will Christ remove your churches candlestick out of its place? Has God withdrawn His Spirit, His Holy Spirit from our churches today? He warned that He would. There is surely an enormous contradiction when passionate but hopelessly misguided Christians read and hurry directly past these WARNINGS that are laid out in the book of Revelation as they make for other parts of God’s Word, when these warnings could be telling them that their congregation has already had its “candlestick” removed from the Lord’s presence! As students of God’s Word know the Book of Revelation is a summary of the Bible, so are chapters two and three of the book Revelation a summary of Church history and it would do us well to complete and in depth study of the history of His Church. God has graciously given the believer the scope of the very days in which we now live, the closing days of God’s dealing with the gentile world powers and His intervention and restoration of Israel as the World’s number one power through which He will bless the nations that go into the millennial Kingdom.

Why are these messages to the Seven Churches recorded for us? Why are they in the Bible? The truth is that much of the Bible which is God’s message to mankind is a WARNING to believers.

“A Serious Warning to All Bible-Believing Christians,” warnings that are to be taken seriously! The truth is these warnings to the Seven Churches are warnings for today’s churches much like to those comparatively typical Christian congregations which had grown up in Asia Minor of the Apostle John’s day, which is today modern day Turkey. Revelation chapters two and three are a vivid description of seven church congregations. Which were in existence towards the end of John’s life, somewhere around 95 AD? Several of these congregations are told to Repent! Others are praised for their faithfulness but they are typical. They are recorded for us to read today as both a warning and, if we are doing the right things, as an encouragement! If we look closely at the conditions and circumstances prevalent in these congregations, we will also see our own congregations of the early Twenty First Century!

I’m afraid that too many of today’s Christians have selfish ambitions when it comes to the role of their pastor and the role of their other brothers and sister in the church, especially when it comes to the outreach program of the church, its growth and congregational life. They easily forget the command of the Lord but nowadays frequently neglected New Testament doctrine on accountability and Christian obligation to the lost world! Sure, we should follow our pastors overall lead and authority, but that never negates our individual answerability to Jesus Christ! Jesus Christ is the founder of the Church, its Head! And the Bible is His rules when it comes to the believer’s faith and practice, His “final authority” not any man! “Follow your pastor as long as he is following the Lord” and when He ceases to follow the Lord your accountability is to Jesus Christ, ALONE!” No man can follow Jesus Christ outside of the Bible, outside of the King James Bible.

I’ve heard it said often, “Yes, I go to a liberal denomination church and I don’t agree with some of the preaching, but my parents went to the same church and I won’t leave it now!” While we might all admire such loyalty. Where does this leave the individual spiritually and his responsibility before Jesus Christ?

Might we now look at these Seven Churches and consider a few significant lessons; please be prepared for surprises. And of course, some straight talk!

EPHESUS The first is the Church at Ephesus: She had a biblical zeal, but put duty before love!

Revelation 2:1-7, it is perhaps fitting that Ephesus heads the list since John himself had associations with this congregation of believers. Ephesus was wealthy, popular and famous for its shrine of Diana. Paul visited the city Acts 18:19-21 traveling from Corinth to Jerusalem, during his second missionary journey, around AD 52. Later on, when he was headed home on his third trip, Paul made a farewell visit to the leaders at Ephesus, Acts 20:17-38. This would have been around AD 57.

The Church at Ephesus was plainly zealous for the truth. Jesus says,

“I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil:” Please note: by today’s “politically correct” permissive modernism, this would make the Ephesus congregation “narrow-minded,” “bigoted,” with a “critical spirit” and they are here being praised for that! *“and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars:”* Rev 2:2-3.

Here is a congregation who are faithful and absolutely zealous for correct doctrinal teaching! They had “tried” some who had claimed to be apostles, found them to be liars, and undoubtedly branded them as such! Wow! Such zeal and dedication for the truth! This all sounds very impressive, but wait! They have one problem, “they have left their first love” Rev. 2:4 in other words, they were not as close to Christ as they had been, suddenly doctrine was somehow, in their eyes, more important than “love”! In our Christian lives, we need their concern for correct biblical teachings but we must continue to love!

Christian love is always important to John; tradition states that, as a very old man and after his release from Patmos, a feeble John would be carried into church and he always would say, "Little children, love one another." A Roman building still standing in Ephesus is testimony to that truth.

Ephesus is now Izmir, Turkey and it still has a few remains of Roman buildings which would have been lavished and impressive in the days of the apostle John, Paul and others.

I've preached in a few churches that are a little like Ephesus in this respect: a great zeal for correct doctrinal teaching and a vast zeal to expose false teachers, but "where is the love for Christ?" Where is the love for souls? They too have lost their "first love" for Jesus Christ and where is that love which reaches out to those in this spiritually dark and bankrupt world who are so badly in need of being saved? Where are those old fashion Spirit filled revivals of years gone by? It is important to be concerned about correct teachings where false teachers and teachings abound, but sometimes this can lead to an excess of concern for duty and exposing false teachers and somehow Christian worship and love seems to have disappeared! Born again believers in Jesus Christ must avoid the loss of that "First Love"! Our life of worship for our Saviour must go above and beyond a meticulous concern for doctrine alone!

In verse five the Ephesian members are warned to repent, with the famous warning that, if this does not happen, Christ will remove your candlestick! This may well mean that their church will no longer be considered a body of true believers in Christ and could well mean death and its place removed from the presence of Jesus Christ. I've been told that today it's hard to find any true believers at Ephesus!

SMYRNA The second Church in this passage is Smyrna. Jesus said she was faithful, even through tribulation and material poverty! Rev. 2:8-11

"And unto the angel of the church in Smyrna write; These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive; I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art 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 thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death."

It appears that the Smyrna congregation was established by the apostle Paul somewhere around AD 55, on Paul's third missionary journey; this is based on Acts 19:10. Smyrna was believed to be a grand and attractive city. The city was known as a reliable supporter of Rome as Rome grew in power and influence. Arno C. Gaebelein believed that none other than Polycarp was the leader of the Smyrna Church at the time. Polycarp was martyred in AD 155, and is known to have been faithful unto death. Gaebelein also testifies as to the known poverty of this assembly at Smyrna. We should always remember that many, many first century Christians were often extremely poor; often such people were not allowed to be employed and they totally relied on God's provision for their survival. And yet, in our day, we have the benefit of the Word of God, faithful teachers, and we are financially prosperous, although all the while we are spiritually destitute. Some say that if we are not rich God must have placed a curse on us. How Paul would have been angered by such individuals claiming to teach Christ while denying Him in so many ways.

Look at verse nine: *"I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan."* Rev. 2:9

Jesus is telling the faithful at Smyrna that while they may appear to be poverty suffering as the world sees things; in reality they are rich, spiritually rich. At Smyrna the believers were also troubled by a large Jewish presence who apparently opposed the Christians wherever possible. But Christ called these Jews “the synagogue of Satan” but what does the text mean when it says that these Jews claimed to be Jews “and are not?” The answer is to be found in Romans 2:28-29. Under the New Covenant and in God's eyes, Christians become Spiritual Jews and circumcision is now deemed to be of the heart and spirit, no longer of the flesh. So the Church at Smyrna was completely faithful even amidst great material poverty and they did not receive a single rebuke from the risen and glorified Christ. What a lesson for us in our churches today?

Well undoubtedly one of the lessons is that we should never measure a believer's walk with God by their financial state! Are you the treasurer in a church which somehow never quite has enough funds? Well, let me put it to you that your financial state will still be far better than it was for the church at Smyrna! Moreover, it is not wise to compare your church with someone else's who has a huge membership and seemingly endless financial resources! Is the Word being boldly and fearlessly preached there? This and the presence of real Christian love within the assembly are the most vital things! However, if the gospel is just as strongly upheld within that huge church which neighbors yours, yet your local church is no longer growing, there could be serious questions for your pastor and its leaders to ponder! But there is still another rebuke for those false teachers who claim that a Christian's life should be constantly happy and harmonious, as long as we do certain things. We need to consider verse ten:

“Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.” Rev. 2:10

“Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life”

Observe the recognition of God's sovereignty here:

“Things which you are about to suffer, the devil will cast you into prison, you will have tribulation” Yet some would erroneously say, if those things come upon you, you must be either secretly sinning in some major area, or you have got to be lacking faith! Of course, this verse says why God will allow these things to happen to a few of the faithful believers at Smyrna. “That you may be tested, be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life”

PERGAMOS The third church, John wrote of having “faithfulness” but also having a toleration of false teachings and worldliness!

Revelation 2:12-17.

At Pergamos there were many pagan altars including the Great Altar to Zeus. Perhaps Christ had this in mind when He refers to Pergamos as, “...Where Satan's throne is” verse thirteen.

The Pergamos church was certainly faithful to Christ even during days of considerable persecution, but they had a certain lack of doctrinal and moral discipline which meant that false teachings and compromise with a pagan society gained entrance. I will quote Arno C. Gaebelien here, because he believed that members of the Pergamos congregation had become involved in idolatrous worship at several local pagan shrines:

“Some of the members of the church had attended heathen festivals, and had, in all probability, even participated in the immoralities that characterized these feasts. Similar practices had occurred among the

children of Israel in the days of Balaam Numbers 25:1-2, 31:16. Like Israel too, Pergamum had its Nicolaitan's. Let us not think too lightly of this temptation. For one refusing to partake of idol-meats, and especially refusal to attend the heathen feasts, meant withdrawal from a great part of the whole social life of the time. For one thing, the trades had many deities which would be worshipped at the feasts. Refusal to join in these feasts often meant that a man would lose his job, or even become an outcast"

Just who were the Nicolaitan's? They were apparently a heretical sect which formed within, and then broke away from the Church. These people had apparently worked out a compromise with surrounding paganism. For the Nicolaitan's, spiritual liberty meant that they were free to practice immorality and idolatry! Tradition has tended to identify them with Nicolas, who had been one of the first seven deacons in the Jerusalem church Acts 6:5, but no one can be sure.

It's reasoned those in the Pergamos Church, probably under Nicolaitan's influence, had apparently even been drawn into the illicit sexual activities which were part and parcel of pagan worship life. Christ shows His anger towards those who had compromised so seriously with their purity of belief: *"Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth."* Rev. 2:16

What about today's church? What about you? Have we compromised with this often permissive and frequently corrupt modern western society? Those who read our literature and are familiar with our work here at Victory Bible Baptist know that I believe that the church overall in our day and far too many Christians in our independent Baptist ranks have done just that! We've surrendered our Baptist biblical standards in exchange for worldly methods and programs which have not met the needs of our people bringing on dwindling congregations which in actuality is stealing from God and robbing His people of their rich spiritual heritage. It's known as doctrinal compromise with the liberals and modernist's in our churches. It's important that we Bible believing Christians must firmly resist all such influences and stand against such intrusive error!

As did those in the church known as Pergamos.

So Pergamos was a church which had shown great faithfulness in days gone by, but had now become fatefully compromised by false teachings which had led to some acceptance of sinful behavior. To be frank, this sounds like a pretty good description of our churches where the modern, 'politically-correct' standard has now been raised! Suddenly homosexuality is acceptable, queers are now being ordained as church leaders, no matter what the Bible says, so are extra-marital affairs common place, so is abortion; meanwhile there is no longer any great motivation to preach the gospel since such influences will also have introduced the concept of religious pluralism and inclusionism: That all religions lead to God mentality. Hogwash! Bible believers should never tolerate such blasphemy! And it must be rejected for solid biblical reasons!

THYATIRA Our fourth Church, Christ found a number of faithful members but major corruption was prevalent!

"And unto the angel of the church in Thyatira write; These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet are like fine brass; I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last to be more than the first.

Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto 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 which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works. But unto

you I say, and unto 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. But that which ye have already hold fast till I come. And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto 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 shivers: even as I received of my Father. And I will give him the morning star. He that hath an ear let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.” Revelation 2:18-29.

According to the Josephus, Thyatira was founded by one Seleucus I, 311-280 BC, to be a military outpost. Lydia, a dealer in “purple cloth” Acts 16:14, came from this town. As in most cases, the glorified Christ starts off with some positive comments about the Church at Thyatira, but then John writes about a more serious problem there which must be exposed and dealt with.

Thyatira has a false female teacher who apparently thinks she is a “Prophetess,” from within the church, this false teacher is leading many, though apparently not all, of the believers astray. She appears to be called “Jezebel” for a nickname. There is no question that this prominent and influential woman is advocating tolerance toward pagan sexual practices:

“Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols.” Rev. 3:20

While Paul had shown that an idol is nothing and meat offered to idols just like any other meat, this understanding was for the more mature in the faith and on the understanding that the acceptance of such meat did not bring one into pagan influences. But here we see a woman "prophetess" who the church leaders were apparently encouraging, rather than powerfully rebuking, encouraging active participation in pagan sexually immoral practices. Her teaching was Nicolaitism which was also affecting those at Pergamos. Almost certainly she was encouraging the use of temple prostitutes, but verse twenty-two also seems to suggest that she also offered her own sexual services. It is believed that both heterosexual and homosexual activities were catered for within these evil places of pagan worship, and here was somebody within a Christian church promoting and encouraging such behavior. Amazingly, despite this, Christ had been patient with this woman and had granted her “time to repent” as revealed in verse twenty-one but she had just continued with her evil ways and apparently some of the church leaders had just gone along with her evil ways, but now her time was up and Christ is about to punish her with sickness and death. Now Christ is also going to grant space for those she corrupted to repent, otherwise they will be brought into tribulation and finally death. This is pointed out in verses twenty-two and twenty-three.

But it is plain that some at Thyatira had separated themselves from this woman's evil influence, and Christ promises to spare and save those. John wrote this in verses twenty-four thru twenty-nine showing this.

What are the lessons you and I can learn from the Church at Thyatira for our own benefit?

Do we allow individuals to be self-appointed prophets or so called prophetesses to arise from within? Of course not! Do we allow them undue influence when it becomes plain that they are leading others astray? Certainly not! Do we allow divisions to develop where it is plainly avoidable? Do we pride ourselves that our church is tolerant and non-judgmental? Are there influences within our churches which are effectively leading church members back into the world of corruption and lust for the flesh and the leaks of Egypt? More than ever the saints of today in our churches must be continually on guard against all these unclean spirits that war against our Saviour and His Church.

SARDIS The fifth Church written about in Revelation chapter three was a spiritually dead Church.

“And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write; These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead. Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God. Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee. Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy. He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; 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 hath an ear let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.” Revelation 3:1-6.

Sardis was situated on a hill overlooking the Hermus Valley. We cannot be entirely sure when it was evangelized, since the name “Sardis” only occurs here in the Book of Revelation.

In the case of Sardis, the rebuke is not prefaced by any encouraging comments at all! Whereas serious situations occurred at both Thyatira and Pergamos, it is still clear that not all in those congregations were swept along with the serious errors, but here almost the whole congregation had apparently descended into a kind of spiritual stupor. The Sardis church had utterly failed in its duty to be the “salt” and “light” of the world in the midst of a dark and wicked city; it wasn't that the false teaching of Nicolaitism had gained some influence as at Pergamos and Thyatira, but that the whole church had become disinterested, bored, and no longer devoted to having Christ walk with them. Satan hadn't needed to infiltrate them with false teachers and teachings as at the more spiritually dynamic Pergamos and Thyatira, since their indifference and apathy meant that they were no longer enjoying an active relationship with their Saviour in any case! Christ says,

“Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God. Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.” Rev. 3:2-3

Nevertheless, even at Sardis, a very few had “kept the faith” verse four, it seems that even in the most spiritually weak and the most doctrinally compromised church, the Lord will always have a few, “remnant” that are His, if that was so then, it so today! But surely at Sardis, it really was just a very few, apparently fewer than had managed to stay by the stuff at Pergamos and Thyatira.

I have actually preached in spiritually dead churches like Sardis. One in Salisbury, MD a church near a beautiful city park the hub of the Eastern Shore of Maryland on the East Coast where I have no doubt that the Lord Jesus had removed His candlestick many years back. The church, once, no doubt, a soul winning picture of evangelistic activity where people were brought into an active, living relationship with the risen Saviour Jesus Christ, were today few in number, disinterested, indifferent and tired. As the visiting preacher, I asked one of the members if we could pray together before the service, as I usually do before meetings but I was told, “That wouldn't go over well here.” I found out later that their pastor was new and a graduate of Bob Jones University a Bible college that had gone apostate. Understandable! I simply beseeched them to awaken from their weariness and to renew their dedication to Jesus Christ. It was a short powerful message, but the atmosphere was that of the local morgue. I kept looking for the back door as there was no freedom for bold preaching there. Expectedly, I was told afterward that I wouldn't be invited back as often is the case. My wife and family and I simply left the church in disbelief. How could a once thriving church go so wrong?

Still I know the church was once a light house for the lost and a hospital for sinners. I can remember when two hundred and fifty crowded the sanctuary there but now its candlestick had apparently been removed with only about fifty attending now. That church had become indifferent, apathetic, weary and, as far as one could tell, spiritually dead. It was so sad and I was heartbroken. You see God used me to start that church back in the 1970's. That church was one of four that the Lord helped this poor old boy to start in Maryland. Where has time gone?

Yes, Jesus Christ does remove His candlestick from churches.

PHILADELPHIA the sixth Church was a faithful, gospel preaching church and the Church was committed to Jesus Christ even though small in numbers! Christ was its head and their final authority in all matters of faith and practice.

The town of Philadelphia, Asia Minor

Philadelphia is now Alasehir in modern Turkey. This was always great farming country and the town of Alasehir derives its living mainly from farming.

“And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write; These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth; I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name.

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 worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee. Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth. Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown. Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name. He that hath an ear let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.”

Revelation 3:7-13

Many Christians know that “Philadelphia” means “brotherly love” but not many know the origins of why this was applied to this place in Asia Minor. According to Arno C. Gaebelein, the name comes from Attalus II, 159-138 BC, whose loyalty to his brother, Eumenes, led to him becoming known as “brother-lover”. Apparently this family had associations with the town later renamed Philadelphia. The town was founded in order for it to become a centre of Greek learning, philosophy and manners, but it was not necessarily a prosperous place. The Church at Philadelphia had something strongly in common with the Smyrna Church; neither received any rebuke from Christ at all, and both churches were poor financially. Philadelphia was of little power, undoubtedly small in number but was exceptionally loyal to Jesus Christ and to His Word, to His gospel.

These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth; I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name. Rev. 6:7-8

In the New Testament, an “open door” seems to indicate an opportunity to preach the gospel! Compare this with 1 Corinthians 16:9, 2 Corinthians 2:12 and Colossians 4:3. There is no doubt that Christ decides

how wide He will open any particular churches door to preach the gospel. Undoubtedly that is exactly the same today! For many, perhaps, the glorified Christ only opens that door part way, but for others He opens it widely. By the way, this should never be used as an excuse for inaction! All churches should push firmly against this door to see how wide Christ may open it!

Secondly, since Philadelphia was weak in strength as we all should be, they still flourished. Absolutely no church can grow without Jesus Christ's favor, at least a godly church. But again, this does not mean that huge churches are necessarily mightily blessed by Christ, is the gospel truly and faithfully preached in order to bring in new souls? Or are other contemptuous means devised, such as making a place as accessible to the people as possible with plenty of modern style contemporary music but precious little old fashion, sin hating, soul winning preaching, as in the early stages of the founding of this country.

But just what is the "key of David"?

Many cults and sects have had much amusement with "the key of David" which, they have deceived their followers, claiming this key was handed down to them alone. But we should note that this Scripture pictures this key of David as being in the possession of Christ. Why the key is mentioned here? Because Christ speaks of opening a door and a door often requires a key to unlock as authenticated by the Bible, read Isaiah 22:22. Christ alone possesses this key, it is surely symbolic of the greatest power and authority within the kingdom of God; Christ grants effective use of this key to His Church alone, Matthew 16:19. Some have claimed all kinds of explanations for this key; one example Herbert W. Armstrong, the founder of a large Pentecostal sect, for instance, said that only they were the Philadelphia church and that he alone held the Key of David which was the understanding that the British and Americans were descended from Israel, one of his many lies. This was a classic case of rejecting the Bible's own explanation of Revelation's symbols and introducing an outside perception, completely foreign to the Scriptures as an explanation but Revelation's symbols are always rooted in the Bible itself and to be interpreted nowhere else!

The "synagogue of Satan" gets another mention here as in Revelation 2:9 when discussing the church at Ephesus, it might seem harsh to some but there is little doubt that Jesus is talking about persecution from local Jews, all I can say is that if any think the language a bit harsh, perhaps they should consult equally strong comments addressed to disbelieving Jews in John 8:43-44.

We need perhaps, to remind ourselves that Christians in God's sight now become "spiritual Jews." National and ethnic Jews who reject Christ no longer stand in a special relationship with God.

The specific promise of protection from the "hour of trial" or, temptation might well have had a fulfillment in one of the early persecutions for the church at Philadelphia, but most would also see it as a bigger promise affecting faithful Christians with a Philadelphian attitude concerning extra protection at the events leading to the "end of the age" and to Christ's return!

LAODICEA the seventh and last Church was a wealthy church and its people were dead spiritually and called by Jesus as "lukewarm," unenthusiastic, unexcited and halfhearted.

"And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; these things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God; I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest

see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent. Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me. To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne he that hath an ear let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches” Revelation 3:14-22

Paul refers to the congregation at Laodicea when he states that his epistle to the Colossians should be read there Colossians 4:16. Colossae was not too far away from Laodicea. His epistle was probably read in the church around twenty five years earlier.

If we are considering these first century AD Churches, to see what lessons we can learn from their experiences in our own day, which I hope, is our inner purpose, we might almost learn more from the Laodicea Church than from several of the others put together. Why? Because the Laodicean's were about the only one of these seven churches who lived in some financial affluence and security, which makes them very similar in that regard to the Western world of 2014 and its churches.

There is an ancient aqueduct which once carried water rich in calcium that is still clearly visible in the Laodicea area. You might surmise that there were no wealthy Christians in this period of Church history, if so you would be wrong. Any student of Church history knows that the members of the Laodicea Church were quite wealthy. And certain of the current day “prosperity” teachers have claimed that all the early Christians were wealthy. The so called saints of our day just displays their lack of understanding and ignorance of God's Word, because many back then were slaves and lived their lives exiled from society, while a lot of them were excluded from being able to work, when they accepted Christ. Many of our kin worshipped in mountains, caves and dins, as out casts from the general population. This was the way the pagan religions of that day treated the Christian minority by forcing them into exile.

Over the years, many have probably learned that there was a school of medicine at Laodicea which had become especially famous for its eye salve, hence Christ's comment, “...Anoint your eyes with eye salve that you may see.” Rev. 3:18 Many have probably also heard that there were hot springs here which continually gave out lukewarm water, hence Christ's use of His terminology “lukewarm” :

“I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.” Rev. 3:15-16

Interestingly, fragments of the aqueduct which once carried this water can still be clearly seen today, albeit now badly narrowed from calcium deposits.

Most Bible believers do not even realize how wealthy the town was even its believers. Laodicea was very famous indeed for its wealth! Bible commentators have often seen it as something of a first century “millionaire's playing field,” it contained a fine theatre, a stadium and a gymnasium with lavish baths; it was an abode of bankers and the successful. Apart from its famous eye-salve, the town which was quite close to Colossae was famous for its wonderful glossy black wool which they got from local black sheep farmers; this was sought after far and wide. We know too, from Tacitus, that this city decided not to receive any aid when part of it was devastated by an earthquake in AD 60. Tacitus expressed surprise at the refusal of said aid.

Laodicea, then, became noted for its wealth, luxury and fine living. Maybe there was also more religious freedom for Christians, with the pervading pagan lifestyle having a much looser grip, since we know that the Christian Church there also enjoyed real luxury compared to many. But Laodicea also became noted for a certain snobbishness, boastfulness and pride, and it seems that these attitudes also spread to some of its Christian community! So why was Christ prepared to “spew” the Laodicea Church out of His mouth?

"Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked:" Rev. 3:17

Christ said that the true picture was that the Laodiceans were not rich at all, but were poor, blind and naked, spiritually and needed to repent to get back to their first love! I myself have witnessed the terrible tendency of affluent, well-off and financially comfortable Christians apparently becoming blinded to the fact that Christ is no longer at the centre of their lives; rather, He has been replaced, as their main center of attention by the search for even greater financial security and by all of the trappings of prosperity and abundance! How blind we sometimes are? In fact the majority of our churches have gone this way. Let's not kid ourselves, even those churches that are fewer in number tend to be the same way. The Laodicean's spirit has swept across our country and world. Apostasy is in full blown denial of our God and His Bible. Financial prosperity tends to bring spiritual problems, and our blindness to these problems becomes even greater when the Word of God is magnified.

One Word of Caution:

There is no such thing as a perfect church, its members are sinners and as often as not walk in the flesh exposing a church to various unnecessary problems. Perfection is just around the corner though, dear saints. You've heard the old saying haven't you? "If you ever do find a perfect church don't join it, if you do it will no longer be perfect." The wisdom of babes!

All churches have their weaker and stronger rudiments and any church with over two or three members will have their own problems to deal with and that's true about any church. Human nature doesn't change and the churches of our day are no different from those in the embryonic church of the First Century, except for our freedom to worship as in the early church period many had to worship underground. And as in the Laodiceans church period their wealth is comparatively much like the churches of our day. From poverty to wealth! From holiness to decadence! And from biblical truth to apostasy! As in all dispensations of God's dealing with man in each of the seven dispensations every one of them ends in Apostasy, turning from the truth.

"As go the pastor so goes the church and as go the church so goes the nation."

Yes, we must realize that the unfavorable influences within five of the seven churches of Revelation two and three were major in danger, contact, influence and occurrence! Of course, many of today's unbiblical infiltrations into our churches are many more times dangerous to God's children and to those who are lost. I believe it would be wise and important that we consider how one's own church measures up in light of divine truth. Especially, now that we live in the end days of the churches history and knowing that Jesus warned us of the increase work of "unclean spirits" on believers. So may I plead that we not ignore or neglect the messages of the seven churches hence forth!

YOUR CHURCH IS IT THYATIRAIAN OR IS IT A PHILADELPHIAN? Examine closely! If they are more like Thyatira, Sardis or Laodicea, let us be more determined to surrender ourselves in humility to Jesus Christ and His power that our churches may be pure and holy before Him. For He does demand a pure Church! Run the demons, devils and unclean spirits out by using the life giving Word of God! When and where ever the Word of God is elevated and magnified you will find evil seducing spirits busily at work trying to hinder God's program. As I said earlier when Jesus Christ came the first time devils were everywhere around Him at work Mark 1:23, Mark 1:34-39, Mark 3:11, Mark 6:7 and 13, Luke 4:41, Luke 10:17 causing much deception, "seducing spirits" 1 Tim. 4:1-4 concentrating their efforts mainly on believers. When He returns the second time the "unclean spirits" will be widespread again. You will find in every case that when the Word of God is moving souls to come to Jesus Christ and when His Word is

magnified that these evil spirits will be most active. What's more important is that, believers must and I say again "must" realize that evil spirits are at work in everyday normal life. We tend to think that this only happens on foreign mission fields in pagan lands but that is scarcely the case. One prime example is how the devil has used Billy Graham through the years to bring about division in local New Testament churches all across this land with his "inclusive" policy. I've cried out through the years at his having Roman Catholic priest on his platform. Only unclean spirits support such betrayal. Roman Catholicism is a Baptist's worst enemy outside the Devil himself. The Pope has always been the mouthpiece of Anti-Christ and will soon be the incarnated Devil ruling from Jerusalem. That's another matter so I better shut up. The word "Baptist" means "Anti Catholic." My cries seemed to have landed on deaf ears. Let us take a look at those whom God chose to name in the Bible and inspired to write His Word, the Holy Scriptures! That we too may learn from them and see how they preached! As should we!

"Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace. And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work." Rom. 11:5-6

CONCLUSION:

Here is the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. Eccl. 12:13.

Bold and fearless preachers they were not like the effeminate cowards in today's pulpits:

John the Baptist laid the ax to the root of the trees Matt. 3:10. Did John the Baptist have a critical spirit when he plainly confronted King Herod on his audacious adultery with Philip's wife and then was beheaded for it? Mark 6:17, Luke 3:19

Was it a terribly "critical" attitude that Stephen had when he disputed and argued before the high priest? And with the council of Cilicia and of Asia telling them, *"Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye. Which of the prophets have not your father's persecuted? And they have slain them which shewed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers and was then gnashed on and stoned to death."* Acts 7:51-52?

Was it a scathing and "negative spirit" that Elijah had when he troubled all of Israel calling for a three and one-half year drought, and then mocked and slew 450 prophets of Baal at the Brook or River of Kishon right before the very eyes of the people 1 Kings 18:40, Judges 5:21 and then he was immediately threatened with being put to death by Queen Jezebel, Was it? 1 Kings 18:40; 1 Kings 19:2

Was it a harsh "critical spirit" when God told Jeremiah to preach and warn Israel that He was going to destroy Judah as follows: *"How shall I pardon thee for this? Thy children have forsaken me, and sworn by them that are no gods: when I had fed them to the full, they then committed adultery, and assembled themselves by troops in the harlots' houses. They were as fed horses in the morning: every one neighed after his neighbour's wife. Shall I not visit for these things? Saith the LORD: and shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?"* Jer. 5:7-9

Jeremiah was later starved and tortured for his harsh words against Israel.

Was it an excessively "negative attitude" when the LORD told Jeremiah not to *"pray not for this people for their good. When they fast, I will not hear their cry; and when they offer burnt offering and an oblation, I will not accept them: but I will consume them by the sword, and by the famine, and by the*

pestilence” Jer. 14:11-12 and *“the young men shall die by the sword; their sons and their daughters shall die by famine.”* Jer. 11:22

Did Amos have a “political correct message” when he preached to King Jeroboam that he would die by the sword, and that Israel would be led away captive for their awful sins, such that it was said the whole land could not bear Amos’ words because they were so strong? Amos 7:10-11

Was it “enormously unhelpful” of Paul and Silas to stir up the people with their preaching so that the whole city of Thessalonica was in an uproar? Acts 17:5

Did Paul lack the love or compassion of Christ when he boldly preached so that everyone in Jerusalem was in an uproar and the people threw him out of the temple, laid hands on him and ran together to kill him? Acts 21:27-31

Did Paul have a hardened and critical heart when he criticized the people at Ephesus for their widespread worship of idols, including Diana of the Ephesians, so that the whole city was in confusion and an uproar? Acts 19:26-41

Was John the Baptist too hard when he spoke to the Pharisees and Sadducees saying, *“O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?”* It seems a little critical of him, doesn’t it? No! Matt. 3:7

Again was Christ moved by a critical spirit when He, from His throne in glory, threatened the churches at Ephesus, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, and Laodicea to repent of their fornication, adultery, idol worship, and other sins, or he would summarily remove their candlestick? *“Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the Day of Judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world.”* 1 John 4:17 Many talk about the love of God, but conveniently fail to tie the love of God to keeping His commandments. *“By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous”* 1 John 5:2-3.

The way to love your brother under such great sin is to warn your brother of his sin, not condone and enable it!

The Wicked Sin of Homosexuality: God says homosexuality is wicked Gen 13:13, and that it is an abomination Lev. 18:22, 20:13, and that those who practice it are worthy of death. Rom. 1:24-32 People dishonoring their own bodies and burn in their lust, doing that which is unseemly with one another. Rom. 1:24-32 Men committing the sin of sodomy brought on the condemnation and Wrath of God upon Sodom and Gomorrah. Gen. 18 and 19 are set forth as an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire. Jude 7, 2 Pet. 2:6 Christ said that as soon as Lot left Sodom, God utterly destroyed it with fire and brimstone and that in the last days before His returns, the world will be just like Sodom. Luke 17:28-30 As if homosexuality were not bad enough, now there are laws allowing homosexuals to marry. Christ said that from the beginning, God established marriage as between male and female. Matt. 19:4 People marrying homosexuals is what brought on the flood of Noah’s day! Luke 17:26-27

Unadulterated Adultery: adultery is a plague that infects nearly every single Church in America. Christ said plainly that if you marry, divorce, and remarry, then you are committing Adultery Luke 16:18 He also said that whosoever marries one that has been divorced is committing adultery Luke 16:18 God said, *“What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.”* Matt. 19: 6 More than half of all marriages end in divorce in the United States, millions end that way. Divorced and remarried people litter the pews of all of the mainline churches today and nearly every single church

in the U.S. including independent Baptist churches. *“Thou shalt not commit adultery.”* Ex. 20: 14 God said He hates divorce and so should we! Mal. 2:14, Matt. 19: 7-8

He said adulterers shall not inherit the kingdom of God 1 Cor. 6: 9, and that He will judge whoremongers and adulterers Heb. 13: 4 and that adultery is enmity with God. James 4: 4
The sin of adultery puts any church at risk of having their candlestick summarily removed by Jesus Christ Rev. 2:22 your duty and mine is to refuse fellowship with unrepentant adulterers, so they may be convicted of their sin and that the church be not defiled. 1 Cor. 5: 6-7

Proud Fornication: God says to flee fornication, and that the one who commits fornication is sinning against his own body. 1 Cor. 6:18 He says to not let fornication be once named among you Eph 5:30, to abstain from it 1 Thess. 4:3, to not eat the Lord’s Supper with a fornicator 1 Cor. 5:11, to exclude fornicators from your membership I Cor. 5, and that the fornicators shall not inherit the kingdom of God 1 Cor. 6: 9 and like adultery, the sin of fornication puts any church at risk of having their candlestick taken by Christ. Rev. 2:20-21

Abortion, Murderers Committing Murder: Doctors commit abortions every day and it has been legalized by a murderous society voted upon by nine Supreme Court Murderers, brutally murdering millions of tiny innocent babies every year. These law makers further compounds the widespread whoredom practiced in this country with the Church of Rome and the many gods of the East. “A generation of vipers” says the Lord. The U.S. also started the Iraq War, though there were no, zero weapons of mass destructions, and the war in Afghanistan over 9/11, though the charge from God was not to “avenge yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath” Rom. 12:19. The Lord said, “Thou shalt not kill” Ex. 20:13, and “whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment.” Matt. 5:21

“But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.” Rev. 21:8

Self Righteous Sins This generation is given over to worshipping idols, making and worshiping graven images Exodus 20:4-5, covetousness, a man’s life consists not in the things he possesses. Luke 12:15 Also can be included envying, drunkenness, murders, revellings or partying, drug usage, self-righteousness, self-sensitiveness, self-indulgence, greed and any number of sins that result from being born with a depraved heart, all sins of the flesh. Gal. 5:21. And I could go on and on, man in complete rebellion against his Sovereign Creator even down to doubting and changing His very WORDS. As Jesus concluded;

“And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin.” Rom. 14:23

Our churches have gone as far as permitting the so called Bible scholars of our Colleges and Seminaries to change the very Words of God, “no longer taking God at His WORD” but actually changing them, adding or subtracting from them. Even the majority of graduates from our Bible colleges and seminaries have been turned into Bible critics polluting the true Word of God with all their false new bibles and soiling the ancient line of God’s men who’ve shed their blood and given their lives so that we could have the very Words of God, untampered with. We’ve graduated Bible critics from our schools who are not God sent preachers and they as leaders control most of the pulpits across this land today. Will God spare America? Will God spare your church? Whatever happened to that child like disposition that all of God’s people must have when it comes to our Father in Heaven? Why are we not heeding the Words of Jesus Christ?

And said, *“Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.”* Matt. 18:3

Is it not that America is lost? Is it not that our society has refused to listen to God’s WARNING?

“For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee.” Rom. 11:21

YOU HAVE BEEN WARNED!