

THE SEVEN CHURCHES.

LAODICEA. – REV. 3:14-22.

"Unto the messenger of the congregation in Laodicea write." Laodicea is interpreted as "a tried, or judged people." The description shows us that they were tried and found wanting. "These things saith the Amen." This is the word so often translated "verily" in the gospels, and used by our Lord as a kind of affirmation or solemn prefix to some important announcement.

From the peculiar use Jesus made of it, we should at once recognize the speaker and perceive that he is about to send a message of more than ordinary interest and solemnity.

"The beginning of the creation of God." If we understand Christ's meaning here this message is sent particularly to those who profess his name but deny the truth he here himself presents. Let those who do so, read with special care this special message.

"What think ye of the Christ? Whose Son is he?" (Matt. 22:42) is a question that has had many answers. More Bible and less hymn-book theology would have made the subject clearer to all. The doctrine of the trinity is totally opposed to Scripture, and has not a single reasonable text to support it when the well-known interpretation of 1 John 5:7 is discarded and John 1:1 is understood. We suggest that any one who does not see this subject clearly should read carefully and prayerfully John 17.

Another class – Unitarians, etc. – take away from the dignity and honor of our Lord, beside contradicting much Scripture, by denying that he had an existence before his conception in Mary. We ask such, to compare the following texts: Matt. 22:45; John 1:14-15; 3:13; 8:58; 2 Cor. 8:9 – Col. 1:15-17; Phil. 2:6-7.

"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."

Here is a picture of the nominal Church of to-day as our Lord sees her. They are not cold in one sense; they have a good deal of zeal; but it is not according to knowledge. They have, with much labor on the part of some, organized their armies, developed their machinery, and multiplied their stores; but yet the enemy does not fall before them. They claim that their principal object and aim is to convert sinners; to (spiritually) beget children. The prophet puts these words in their mouth when they awake to a knowledge of the situation: "Like as a woman with child, that draweth near the time of her delivery, is in pain, and crieth out in her pangs; so have we been in thy PRESENCE, O Lord. We have been with child, we have been in pain, we have, as it were, brought forth wind; we have not wrought any deliverance in the earth; neither have the inhabitants of the earth come to (spiritual) life." This is said after they have realized the presence of the Lord.

Neither hot nor cold, they incite disgust and are cast out as a hateful thing from being the mouthpiece of the Lord.

To be a minister or priest in the nominal Church of to-day, one must bring with him a plentiful store of that which Paul despised and left behind, namely, human wisdom (1 Cor. 1:17; 2:16). There is a wisdom learned by the mature, "even the hidden," "which the Spirit teacheth." This is not taught "in the schools," neither can it be learned there, but it is "freely given to us of God." Ministers are no more called of God with them. They are made as newspapers are made. Blank paper (sometimes very blank) is put into a machine, impressions are made on it, and it comes out finished. It is wrapped and stamped and is ready to be sent away. We may search the

Scriptures in vain for an instance of God's sending through such a channel.

He hath raised up a new mouthpiece. He sheds increasing light to a little flock who are willing to receive it, and spread it abroad without fear. To those who humbly and prayerfully search for the truth; having but one aim, the glory of God; one desire, to do his will; one hope, to share that glory – according to his promises.

We should not look for light where little remains but the fading reflections of a former glory. That sickly hue which now appears is but the smoke illuminated by the piercing rays from the part of a hand which, high on the wall, is writing, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN.

"Because thou sayest I am rich, and have gotten riches, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art the wretched one, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked."

"I am rich." I have all the spiritual light that exists in the world. I have gotten riches; have still more enriched myself; have much goods laid up for many years. All others are too poor to add to my store. I have all that is worth having, and need no more. "I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall in nowise see mourning." Of course she cannot recognize her own picture, she is "blind." "And knowest not that thou art the wretched one," etc. Just as the Jewish house fell, because they knew not the time of their visitation (Luke 19:44) so, must their counterpart of this dispensation. The visitation (presence) of the Lord is as a stone of stumbling and rock of offence to both the houses of Israel (Isa. 8:14 and Heb. 3:5-6). The fleshly house failed to recognize his presence in the flesh; the spiritual house refuse to acknowledge his presence in a spiritual body. Just as he could be seen by the eye of flesh in his first visitation, so he must be recognized in this only by the eyes of our understanding – the

only spiritual eyesight we now possess. When we are made like him, bye and bye we shall see him as he is.

If she is so blind that she cannot recognize her own condition and location, how can it be expected that she should see his. When she has learned his, she will realize her own, and it will be "pitiabile, and poor, 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 eye-salve, that thou mayest see."

Some may say, How can this be a description of the Church of God? Is it not founded upon the Rock, Christ? We answer, the majority of those who compose the Churches of to-day know nothing about that Rock. Moreover, those who are founded upon Christ, if they refuse to do his bidding, must suffer the consequences. His call is, "Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, that ye receive not of her plagues."

Even though we are built on Christ, yet, if instead of building with gold, silver and precious stones, we daub together wood, hay and stubble, we shall suffer loss; for the fire (of his jealousy – Zeph. 1:18) shall try every man's work; and such "shall be saved, yet so as by fire" (1 Cor. 3:11-15).

The gold that is needed is the wisdom that cometh from above; the white raiment, the righteousness of Christ; the eye-salve, the Spirit's help in the understanding of the Word.

These will stand the fires, and enable those who have them to stand before the Son of man.

"As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous, therefore, and repent."

The words translated rebuke and chasten, are in the Greek much more forcible than here appears. The first means reproach, disgrace; put to shame, dishonor. The latter, to train or educate like a child or youth. What a call! No wonder that the proud and conceited teachers of popular churches cannot hear the call. No wonder that some who have seen and heard refuse, to follow "the path their leader trod." "As many as I love, I disgrace and train: be zealous, therefore, and repent.

"What poor despised company
Of travelers are these,
Who walk in yonder narrow way
Along the rugged maze?
Ah, these are of a royal line,
All children of a King!
Heirs of immortal crowns divine,
And lo! for joy they sing."

"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." **[R506 : page 4]**

Unknown to the Laodicean Church, the Lord has returned. He stands at the door. He could not do this if he were not present. He has not been always there as some think. To Sardis he said, "I will come"; to Philadelphia, "I come quickly"; to Laodicea, it is rap, rap, rap. Awake; let me come in. Do they hear? Solomon's Song 5:3, gives the answer.

Why has this little company had such a continuous feast of truth? Why does the light and glory stream down upon us in ever increasing brightness? It is because the Master has come in, and has girded himself, and made us sit down, and has himself served us. It is because the Sun of Righteousness has arisen, and those on the

mountain and on the house-tops are already bathed in its glorious beams, for

"The glory of the sunlight
Of the bright Millennial day,
Scatters all the powers of darkness;
Lights the gloom with healing ray."

"If any man hear my voice." There is nothing here said about being deaf. If they had been awake they would surely have heard. Jesus clearly foretold that he would come as a thief, but did not tell them the hour. His orders were simply, "Watch." They failed, and fell. "If the master of the house had known in what watch the thief was coming, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken through." He slept on guard.

While the nominal Church is still seemingly in power, while the old glory still hangs about her, while it is still respectable and honorable to be a church member (it will not be so long, in the eyes of many), the little flock of truth-seekers are despised and rejected. They are covered with reproach because they dare to point out the faults of a worldly church. They are looked down upon by her who sits as a proud queen, lifted up that she may have the greater fall.

The decree has gone forth; the fall has begun; while "to him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcome, and am set down with my Father in his throne."

The nominal Church has a vague **[R506 : page 5]** idea of a kind of throne (composed principally of white cloud) somewhere, beyond the bounds of time and space, in the third heaven (counting upwards) where they shall sit forever; principally engaged in making music, and reigning (?) over their own passions (their passions being buried out of sight with their bodies). Strange work for eternity. God's agents, as far as we can see, are always in activity.

Christ does not always sit on the Father's throne; he has one of his own. He will occupy it. And those who have followed him, by the way of the cross, shall share it with him. "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches."

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