

# STRAIGHTWAY

*And straightway they forsook their nets, and followed him [Mark 1:18].*

## CHRISTIAN PURITIES FELLOWSHIP

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## Christ's Final Plea to the Final Church Age Part One

Dr. H. T. Spence

The next several articles of *Straightway* are collectively entitled "Christ's Final Plea to the Final Church Age." This burden is drawn from the Book of Revelation, which contains the last words of Jesus Christ specifically to the churches. Dated around A.D. 96, Revelation was the last of the New Testament books to be written.

The Book of Revelation, like the Book of Daniel, is *apocalyptic*. *Apocalyptic* is a term meaning "to unveil" or "to uncover" and thus "to reveal" something which has been beforehand hidden. Apocalyptic writings are usually

written in times of trouble and distress of God's people. It becomes evident from reading this particular apocalyptic book that persecution and difficulty were already threatening the Church. Both without and within, serious problems and sufferings were present.

In Daniel 9:20–27, Gabriel reveals to Daniel that following the seventy years of the Babylonian Captivity another seventy weeks of years (490 years) are determined against the Jews and the city of Jerusalem. It is evident that the first sixty-nine weeks of years take us through

*This edition includes three articles on*  
**Christ's Final Plea to the Final Church Age**

the first coming of Christ and His rejection by the Jewish nation (9:25, 26). Although we know that there is a final week against the Jews and Jerusalem still unresolved, Daniel does not inform us of what takes place between the sixty-ninth and seventieth week. It has been some two thousand years since the fulfillment of the sixty-ninth week; the seventieth week is yet to come.

### **The Seven Churches of Revelation 2-3**

Could it be that the seven churches mentioned in Revelation 2 and 3 are representative of time periods between the sixty-ninth and seventieth week? We dare not minimize the literality of the seven churches of Asia Minor chosen by the Lord. There were many churches located in the areas where these churches were found. In Asia Minor alone there were well over five hundred districts; one could only speculate as to how many churches populated these districts. Nevertheless, God divinely

chose *only* these seven churches, electing not to send messages to other churches that conceivably might have been more important.

The geographical order of presentation begins with Ephesus and moves north to Smyrna, farther north to Pergamos, then east to Thyatira, south to Sardis, southeast to Philadelphia, and finally southeast to Laodicea. Did these seven churches collectively represent all of the characteristics that marked the churches in existence at that time? Each church needed a particular message, and the spiritual state of each church corresponded precisely to the exhortation which was given by the Lord. The selection of these churches was also governed by the fact that each church illustrated conditions common in local churches at that time as well as throughout later Church history.

These seven churches teach the decline of the Church on earth. The professing church, instead of increasing in spiritual and world-converting power, becomes lukewarm, faithless, and Christless. Like the decline of Israel in the Old Testament, there is a clear decline of the church even within the epistles of the New Testament.

In Romans 11:15-27, the apostle Paul presents a parable of two olive trees. He shows how the “natural branches” of the “good olive tree” (Israel) were broken off because of “unbelief.” As a result, the “wild

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olive tree” (the Gentile church) was “grafted in.” Eventually (also because of unbelief), the wild olive tree is taken out in order that the “natural branches” might be “grafted back again” thus revealing that the Church does not take the place of Israel permanently. The Church simply fills in the “gap” between Israel’s “casting off” and its “restoration of divine favor.” This “gap” period helps explain the separation between the sixty-ninth and seventieth weeks.

Although the Laodicean period closes the Church ages (or as Paul explains that the “fulness of the Gentiles be come in”—Romans 11:25), we must realize that this particular time period concludes earlier than the “times of the Gentiles” (Luke 21:24b). The “times of the Gentiles” continues through the Tribulation Period culminating with the world-ruling powers of Antichrist. The “times of the Gentiles” began with Nebuchadnezzar, while the “fulness of the Gentiles” began possibly in Acts 13 with the sending forth of Barnabas and Paul unto the Gentiles. Although at that time God did not specifically declare they were going to the Gentiles, it was simply stated, “Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.” The rest of the Book of Acts indicates predominately Gentile churches being established, not Jewish churches. It is at this time that the Gentiles spiritually came to the forefront in Bible history.

Now that two thousand years

have passed, it is evident in the way Church history has unfolded that the Gentile church has come to the same end as the nation of Israel. The Jewish nation rejected the first coming of Christ; this final church age is rejecting Christ and particularly His return. Much was declared and prophesied to the Jews concerning the first coming of Christ, yet only a few knew Him at that coming. The Institutional Church is saying much about the Second Coming, but only a *few* are truly looking for the biblical Jesus Christ. Are we coming to the end of the “fulness of the Gentiles” when God will turn the church over to apostasy as He did Israel?

### **Characteristics of the Seven Churches**

As there are seven empires mentioned by Daniel and John (in Revelation), beginning with Egypt and culminating with the worst (the Antichrist), there seems to be seven periods of the Kingdom of Heaven on earth. The first to be mentioned by the Lord in Revelation 2 is the church of Ephesus. It seems to cover a period from A.D. 70 to 170, beginning with the destruction of Jerusalem and the scattering of the Jewish nation and ending with the last of the Apostolic Fathers. It was a time of a backsliding church. The final epistles to have been written in the New Testament warned of such an impending reality.

Smyrna, the second church, is presented as a persecuted church.

God took the earthly church through a great crucible of persecution, especially from around A.D. 170–312 (when the Edict of Milan was passed legalizing Christianity).

Pergamos, the third church (A.D. 313–606), was a very licentious church. That time period was marked by the Roman government’s taking over much of the leadership of the organized church, while allowing more of the world into its congregations. This period is consummated with the leadership of Gregory I.

The fourth church addressed is Thyatira, meaning “feminine oppression.” In Thyatira one witnesses the rise of the papal system from Gregory I to the maturation of the Roman Catholic Church at the beginning of the Reformation (A.D. 606–1517).

Sardis, the fifth church, means the “escaping one” or “coming out” one. This church had a name that it was alive, but it was dead. Though the Reformation came in 1517, the powers of the Enlightenment Period eventually invaded Reformation churches bringing sad religious and political effects. This church period lasted from A.D. 1517–1750.

Philadelphia, the sixth church, represents a period from around A.D. 1750–1900. During this time, there was a great stir in dead Christendom. This was the era of revivals, missions, and the awakenings in Europe and America. There has been no move of God like this time period in the

church. It was a time of revival of life and spiritual fraternity among Christians. Christ gave several commendable words to this church. They had kept His Word and had not denied His Name; therefore, the promise had been given that they would be kept from the Tribulation to come. This seemed to be a great move of God before the final collapse of the organized church. Clearly, an awakening was taking place, anticipating the cry, “Behold the Bridegroom cometh.”

This brings us to the last church mentioned by the Lord Jesus Christ—the church of Laodicea. One of the classic commentaries written on the Book of Revelation in the 1870s was by Joseph A. Seiss (1823–1904). After viewing the six churches from a similar historical perspective, he writes concerning Laodicea:

There is yet one other phase. Shall I say that it is yet future, or that we have already entered it [referring to the Laodicean Church Age]? Here are still some whom Christ loves, mostly suffering ones, under the rebukes and chastenings of their gracious Lord. But the body of Christendom is quite apostate, with Christ outside, and knocking for admission into his own professed Church. Paul prophesied of the church that in the last period, men would be mere “lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce-breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good,

traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying the power thereof” (II Timothy 3:1–5). This is a fearful picture, almost as dark as that which he gave of the heathen world before Christianity touched it presented in Romans one. But it answers precisely to the Saviour’s portraiture of the characteristics of the church in its last phase.

Is this the last phase of the Church’s history? When did it start? Many place it at the turn of the so-called “Christian Century,” the twentieth century. The Philadelphian Church Age was the time period of the initial cry of the Second Coming of Christ. This does not mean, however, that the Second Coming was not believed or acknowledged in preaching and writings of God’s men throughout the centuries. However, the Holy Spirit did not bring this truth to the forefront of preaching until the last half of the Philadelphian Church Age. As the Lord was preparing His people for His coming, the worst apostasy of the church in history came in like a flood. It was the Laodicean Church Age.

### **The Laodicean Church Age**

This is our church age, and we are well into it. This church is conformed in everything to the popular judgment and will of the people. It is the extreme opposite of the Nicolaitans, who though found in the first and third church ages, culminated their power in the fourth. Instead of

being a church of domineering clericals, Laodicea is the church of the domineering mob, in which nothing may be safely preached except what the people are pleased to hear. This is the church age in which the teachings of the pulpit are fashioned to the tastes of the pew, and the feelings of the individual override the authority of God’s Word. It is “lukewarm” with nothing decided; partly hot and partly cold, divided between Christ and the world; it is not willing to give up the pretense and claim to heaven and being a Christian yet still clings close to the world! It is a church age that has too much conscience to cast off the name of Christ and too much love for the world to take a firm and honest stand entirely on Christ’s side. It has much profession, but little faith. The ballroom of the world adjoins its communion table. It is self-satisfied, boastful, and *empty*. Having descended to the world’s tastes and acquired the world’s praise and patronage, the Laodiceans think they are rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing.

Yes, this church age has splendid and expensive churches; the congregations are intelligent and influential in society; the preachers are learned, magnanimous in personality and academic degrees; the worship services are admirably orchestrated with the best of musicians, the moving of its music equal to or greater than Broadway and Hollywood. It has such excellently manned and endowed institutions; it has its missionaries

(long term and short term) all over the world; billions and billions of dollars are given for charitable uses. With such an array in all the attributes of greatness and power, what more can be wanted? What more could be asked for? What more could be accomplished? We have reached a grand apex in Christianity: "I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing."

Nevertheless, in the sight of the Head of the Church, it is not just the nations that are being weighed in the balance and found wanting, but the Church as well. What the Church declares outwardly is not what the corrupt heart of the Church *is* in reality; yea, it is wretched, miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked! The Church leaders of today talk of the Church as destined by God to a glorious triumph. They believe it is commissioned of God to convert the world. They do not see that the AMEN hath spoken! The Faithful and True Witness has declared, "I will spue thee out of my mouth." The Greek rendering suggests, "I am at the point of doing so; I am about to." When will this take place? How will this take place?

What is found in these two chapters of Revelation is *Christ's own history of His church!* They are Christ's own criticisms upon the "grafted-in" Church over the past two thousand years. These seven declarations are epistles of Christ Jesus. They declare that the history of the Church on earth is a sadder story than that of

the fall of Israel. Is the tendency of Christendom toward improvement and perfection? Or, like everything else with which fallen man has to do, is it earthward, deathward, and "hellward"? Will the *true* flock of God ever be anything else in this segment of history (this present age) than a feeble, rejected, and hated minority? The Institutional Church prides itself in its horizontal accomplishments and its earthly glory. Yet it refuses to see itself as Christ sees it. Oh, to love what Christ loves, and to hate what He hates. Oh, to hope only as He has given us authority to hope!

Is it true that money corrupts? Is it true that the love of money is the root of all evil? We see in the corporate world how it has corrupted a vast majority of businesses. Why is it that in poverty-stricken geographies more spirituality is seen among its Christians than in those living in prosperous places like America? The Philippian Christians, amidst their poverty, knew the presence and communion of Christ, while the believers of the affluent and thriving city of Corinth were filled with the world and carnality.

### **Ministers in the End Time**

A careful observation should be made concerning these brief but sobering epistles to seven churches. Each one of them is addressed to the angel, the messenger, or the minister of the church. Is it a declaration of his life and ministry *or* of the true messenger and the message

that he preaches of his church (or age)? Revelation 1:16, 20; 2:1 speak of seven stars in Christ's right hand. These seven stars are distinct from the seven candlesticks; He walks among the candlesticks, but He holds these ministers in His right hand.

In the democratic idea of church organization today, all power proceeds from the members and makes the ministerial position nothing more than the collective will or desires of the church. In contrast, true ministers of the gospel have a relationship to Christ and to the Church which ordinary church members have not. They partake directly of Christ's authority and are responsible directly to Him. They are upheld by His right hand, beyond the power of men or angels to displace them. Christ holds them as precious, as most esteemed! They are His messengers! They will speak what is needed for their generation. They are part of a group of stars from over the centuries of voices speaking to the Church age of their contemporary!

As a minister of the Gospel in the End Time of the Last Days, I must see that *this* is *my* Church age! Just as God has appointed me the messenger to the local church (such as Foundations), He has appointed others as messengers to *this* Church age. It is the last Church age; He is standing now at the door of the heart. Soon another door will be opened, the door that leads to the air—the Rapture. I cannot be deceived by my

Age, and I cannot be deceived by my Church age! Yes, things outwardly are looking good and prosperous, but inwardly the church is in the most pitiable state ever in its existence. It is in its most wretched state, its greatest hour of poverty spiritually. I must see this as a minister!

My dear earthly father in a trilogy of books sets forth these contrasting positions upon which each of us must decide: *Charismatism: Awakening or Apostasy?* *Rome: Crusade or Crucible?* and *Pentecostalism: Purity or Peril?* How do I view my church? How do I view my Church age? What part of the dialectic principle am I proclaiming as the true commentary of my Age?

May God deliver me from my secular age and my lukewarm Church age that I believe is the End Age of the Church on earth. [S]

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# Christ's Final Plea to the Final Church Age

## Part Two

Dr. H. T. Spence

In the previous article we observed that Christ addresses His message of Revelation 3:14–22 to the angel of the Church of the Laodiceans. He declares to this messenger that his congregation has become “lukewarm.” The Greek word used here for *lukewarm* occurs only this one time in the New Testament; it carries the meaning of “tepid water.” In this address Christ refers to three different spiritual states: a state of coldness, a state of warmth or fervor, and a state of lukewarmness. There are many in the world who are cold to the things of Christ; the Gospel leaves them totally unmoved and uninterested as to any aspect of spiritual fervor. Every believer once knew this cold state that gave no evidence of grace. By contrast, those who are described as hot are ones who show genuine spiritual fervor and leave no question as to the presence of eternal life, the sanctifying power, and the presence of the Holy Spirit; they have a fervent testimony.

When saving grace comes to the cold, dead soul there is an immediate transformation from a state of coldness to a state of spiritual warmth and fervor. A classic example is seen in the conversion of Saul of Tarsus who became Paul the Apostle. Acts 9 reveals this drastic change once the transformation of grace took hold of his life. He never lost that hot zeal

and spirit for Christ! Mark 5 tells the story of the man of the Gadarenes whom Christ saved from a legion of demons. We read that he was suddenly “sitting, and clothed, and in his right mind” (5:15). Although he longed to stay with Christ, the Lord told him, “Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee” (5:19). This is the way it should be in a real work of God: going directly from cold to hot instantly.

However, it is this third state of lukewarmness that characterizes the church in Laodicea. This spiritual state refers to those who have manifested some interest in the things of God. They may be professing Christians who attend church while falling far short of a true testimony for Christ; their attitudes and actions raise questions concerning the reality of their spiritual life. It is seen in the way they dress, what excites them, and what they really desire. Though they have been touched by some concept of the Gospel, there is no clarity as to whether they really belong to Christ. For Laodicea, lukewarmness is not a transition from cold to hot; it is a *final* state. It is this final fixed state for which the Lord has such great abhorrence. (It is interesting that R. C. Trench observed that no pagan sacrifice to the gods was ever

rendered lukewarmly; always it was either a cold or hot sacrifice, never a lukewarm one. Even paganism abhors lukewarmness.)

As a result of this final spiritual state, Christ declared that He was about to spew them out of his mouth. Christ's disgust here is not with cults and false religions such as Romanism; here, He is disgusted with the church, the closet thing identified with true Christianity. The great tendency of the Laodiceans was toward a policy of toleration, allowance, and compromise.

There is something about the intermediate state of being lukewarm that is utterly obnoxious to God. Far more hopeful is the cold state of one who has been untouched by the Gospel and making no pretense of putting his trust in Christ than the state of one who makes some profession without a life that truly honors the Christ whose Gospel he has heard and professed. How many within the churches in Fundamentalism have satisfied their own hearts and have been lulled into a sense of false security? This unbiblical security has become a prominent, pressing doctrine today among many. They want an eternal security without abiding in Christ, without continuing their belief in Him, without any accountability to God and His Word. The hardest individual to reach for Christ is the religionist, the one who is quite satisfied with the measure of his devotion to God and with the

contemporary state of professing Christendom. Yes, it is far easier to win the harlots and publicans than the lukewarm!

The great danger embodied in the term *lukewarm* is "indifference." Often the indifferent are ignorant of basic convictions respecting the central doctrines of the Christian Faith, such as the necessity of a dramatic change in life and perspective required of a true Christian. Today, the emphasis upon memberships into organizations is greater than being a part of the Body of Christ, which only comes through the miracle of the New Birth.

It is interesting to note that none of the sins mentioned in the preceding churches of Revelation 2 and 3 are itemized here in Laodicea; at the same time, no works are commended. Is not this shocking considering how much the church today is filled with works? While pressed to believe that we are in the greatest revival period in history, the Head of the Church declares that we are wretched, blind, naked, and in spiritual poverty.

*It is evident that the pride of Laodicea's wealth was carried into the spiritual life.* In the Textus Receptus, Revelation 3:17 reads "I, I AM rich; therefore I have gotten riches." It is declaring, "Since I am rich physically, it is evident that I am rich spiritually." How true is this of the present institutional church! The church's physical success has become (in the thinking of its leaders) the commentary of its spiritual state. We can *never* take the view that

since we have money and are doing well, this is the commentary on our spiritual relationship with God. On the contrary, it is rare that a person with a lot of money is spiritual. Why is this true? Note First Timothy 6:9–11:

But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness.

Riches produce blindness; they have a way of lulling men into a sleep. “He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful” (Matthew 13:22). Oh, the deceitfulness of riches!

Revelation 3:17 also states that thou “knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.” Here the original Greek is very emphatic: *Thou art the one wretched*, or “Thou, thou that boastest, thou art the one miserable; thou art poor [absolute spiritual poverty]; thou art blind.” It is evident that their blindness is because of self-complacency. The Church, obsessed with its riches and goods, cannot see its miserable spiritual poverty. Oh,

this is the Great Pretence, the great deception! Matthew 24:24 declares that with the show of great signs and wonders and all that the church seems to have, that if it were possible the very elect would be deceived. The church can be deceived by the world, by contemporary false religion, and through self-deception. We cannot deceive ourselves that positive providences are the sign of spirituality, for they are not.

In contrast, note Christ’s call to the Laodicean Church in Revelation 3:18:

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.

Can we not hear the Head of the Church!? “I counsel thee to buy of me.” “You think you are wealthy and able to obtain anything you want? You *must buy of me*, not from the world!” How are spiritual things purchased from God? Isaiah 55 declares that it must be without money, and without price. It is procured *of me*: through and by Christ. He is acknowledging that it is exclusively *His* wealth and *His* gold.

“I am about to spew thee out of my mouth”—You must buy of me quickly! Gold, the white raiment, and the eyesalve must all be gained from the Head of the Church. Are we blind to the spiritual state of our church? Are we blind to the spiritual

state of our own life as a messenger? Are we blind to the true condition of Fundamentalism? The End-time Church, the last Church Age is fully deceived concerning what it truly is spiritually!

In Revelation 3:19, Christ then gives the warning to repent: “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.” The word here for “love” may be surprising. It is the term *phileo*, a term for affection with less depth than the term *agapao*. Here, those who are the objects of His affection are also the objects of His rebuke and chastening. Christ will be the hardest on the End-time Christians—those whose souls He rebukes, exposes, or convicts. This is not simply a verbal rebuke; they are also chastened: trained, disciplined, and educated. These rebukes are to a few whose lives have taken on the same lukewarm characteristics as those professing Christians around them. The fact they are rebuked and chastened is evidence that they are true children of God. Sometimes Christians become and look like those who only have a profession. But God knows the difference. Those whom He loves, He will deal with, sometimes severely.

Revelation 3:20 declares, “Behold, I stand at the door, and knock.” To all who will hear comes this great invitation to the final Church Age. Christ is represented in relation to the church as well as to the individual, as standing outside the door and

awaiting an invitation to come in. Christ must be invited to come in and become the center of worship, adoration, and love; and this must also be true of the heart of man. In this present age God does not force Himself upon anyone. No one is compelled to obedience who wants to be rebellious. Nevertheless, to the one who longs for Christ to come, He will come in.

In Scripture, the concept of the door is often associated with the Second Coming. Luke 12:35, 36 states, “Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; And ye yourselves like unto men that wait for the lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately.” Observe how quickly this will be: immediately. Note Matthew 25:10, “And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut.” This is noted after the coming of the bridegroom; here the foolish virgins came and knocked on the door. Here and now, the door of the present time and age is the time for men of lukewarmness to hear Him.

Thank God, He stands at the door! Thank God, He stands continually there at this time! And not merely standing there, He knocks at the door! What door is it? The palace of the soul has many doors. There is the door of the intellect; to this He comes with the evidence of reasonableness

of His faith and makes His claim. There is the door of the conscience: showing how He ought to be obeyed in righteousness. There is the door of love: expressing how much He has done for us over our lifespan. There is the door of fear: this is the alarm of the awakened conscience, looking for His judgment to come. And, there is the door of hope: Christ's promises for the change that can come!

He knocks in many ways. Sometimes it is by His Word; either through reading, through preaching the soul is aroused. Oh, how often He has done that! Sometimes it is by His providence: through sickness, bereavement, loss of wealth or friends, disaster, nearness of death,

trouble of mind, body, or estate. Sometimes it is by His Spirit's calling: "The Spirit says, Come."

Dear reader, Where are you spiritually before the Lord? Are you in lukewarmness? Will this lukewarmness be permanent? Dear preacher, is it to the messenger the Lord speaks? or to the church? or to *both*? Lukewarmness is the most paralyzing power now in the church! We must acknowledge it; we must come to see it . . . *now!* For Christ declares, "I am about to spew you out of my mouth." What awaits the insensitive Christian? May the Lord help us not to be part of this last church age!

§

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**SERMONS FROM THE FOUNDATIONS PULPIT  
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DR. H. T. SPENCE, PASTOR**

*(June 2011, Men's Prayer Conference)*

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**Dr. H. T. Spence**

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# BEHOLD, CHRIST STANDS AT THE DOOR

28th Men's Prayer Conference, 2010

"Christ's Final Plea to the Final Church Age" — Revelation 3:20

H. T. Spence

Robert Wilson

1. The Church has seen two thou - sand years of his - t'ry to un - fold. \_\_\_  
2. The Judge of heav'n now stands to give His Church its fi - nal plea! \_\_\_  
3. Be - hold, the End-time Church of Christ as she re - jects her head! \_\_\_  
4. Be - hold, He knocks at door of heart! Oh, let Him en - ter in! \_\_\_

Her a - ges rip - en: end is near! That end God's Word fore - told.  
She boasts of be - ing lu - cra - tive, with much pros - per - i - ty!  
There is no love for the true Christ; its love for self in - stead.  
To share His sup - per as a part of liv - ing free from sin!

God's \_\_\_ pro - vi - dence has giv - en time to bring ma - tu - ri - ty.  
She \_\_\_ sees her glo - ry all with - in; no need of Christ and grace!  
She \_\_\_ is not hot, nor is she cold; luke - warm-ness, to her Lord!  
Luke \_\_\_ warm-ness gone! Let pas - sion reign! Christ's com - ing, our de - sire!

But End - time Church com - mits the crime: Luke - warm - ness, ap - a - thy!  
How wretch - ed, poor, her depth of sin un - veils her sad dis - grace.  
But at the door He cries, "Be - hold!" A plea that brings re - ward.  
May love for Christ be our con - straint; His ho - li - ness, our fire!

# Christ's Final Plea to the Final Church Age

## Part Three

Dr. H. T. Spence

In this third article, we continue by drawing from Revelation 3:20:

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.

Christ makes it very plain in this epistle to the messenger of the church of the Laodiceans that lukewarmness is a spiritual state or condition. It is evident the pastor was to reveal to his congregation that they were in a state of lukewarmness. Although there is the implication that this condition possibly could change, it seems clear by the end of the epistle that they will choose not to change. The statement is obvious: "I will," or in the original Greek, "I am about, I'm on the verge, I'm at the point of spewing you out of my mouth." The church of the End Time is in a state of lukewarmness, a state far more dangerous than coldness. The *state* of lukewarmness is another term in the Bible for *apostasy*.

Beginning in verse 19 and to the end of the epistle of this chapter, Christ turns from speaking to the church and addresses the individual. This *he* refers to individuals of the remnant or the elect of that period of Church history. From one perspective, this could be a person who is on the verge of entering or has entered

lukewarmness; God will give him an ear. Or it may be an individual who has not slipped into lukewarmness in his personal living; he has continued by grace as an overcomer.

No works of the first six churches are mentioned in the last church. No problems of the first six are seen in the seventh. This is a new phase, a last phase of the church; it is like none other. Rather than reappearances of old master sins or works, this phase in Church history births a *neo*-realm of Christianity through the Laodicean Church. It is interesting that since the beginning of the twentieth century, the word *neo* has become the prominent term by the world church. Neo-Orthodoxy, Neo-Morality, Neo-Evangelicalism, and Neo-Pentecostalism are all terms coined by their proponents. These are their terms representing a new breed within public Christianity. Their cry has intelligently shouted the biblical Jesus out of the church.

### The Hearing Ear

Crucial to these brief final verses of chapter 3 is the concept of hearing. God designed and created the human ear for two important things: for hearing and for balance. Nerves traveling from the ear to the brain carry electrical impulses communicating both balancing and auditory information.

The auditory impulses include information concerning frequency and decibels. Whereas decibels concern the loudness or softness of the sound, frequency communicates the highness or lowness of pitch. There are so many sounds the ear receives on a given day. A very acute ear can detect frequencies as low as 20 to 16 vibrations per second. The lowest of these are more often felt than truly heard. Higher detectable sound frequencies by the ear can reach an average of 20,000 vibrations per second; some gifted hearers can discern pitches as high as 38,000 vibrations per second. Many animals go beyond the human ear: dogs, up to 45,000 vps; bats, up to 100,000 vps; and porpoises, up to 150,000 vps.

The ears detect not only frequency but also intensity or loudness of sounds, measured in decibels (dB). The ticking watch is around 20 dB, a whisper is about 30 dB; the average conversation, normal tone, is between 50 and 60 dB. Lawnmowers and chain saws are about 90 to 95 dB, and when standing about five feet from a jet engine, full-blast, up to about 130 to 140 dB. When you get to 145 you are crossing the threshold from pain into unconsciousness.

The ears are an important part of the body of an individual. From a spiritual perspective God has given this great ability to the inward man as well. All humans have an outward man and inward man (having nothing to do with Jesus, the new man). A sinner has an inward man; he has

an outward man. The outward man is ever perishing, declining, and decaying. Nevertheless, the cry from God is to allow the new man Jesus Christ to come into our inward man.

It is clear in the Scriptures that there are correlating faculties between the physical body and the soul of the inward man. This is not figurative language; this is a literal language in a spiritual realm. Whatever is observed for the physical body has a counterpart within the concept of the soul. For example, the ability of the soul to taste is not figurative or metaphorical. This is literal in the spiritual concept of the inward man. A person can taste of the world or he can taste of the Lord. He can either feed off the world's putrefaction or he can taste and see that the Lord is good and literally feed from God's Word. Although the heart is mentioned over eight hundred times in the Bible, only twice does it refer to the physical heart; the rest of the times it concerns the spiritual heart—either of a sinner or of a Christian. It is a literal, spiritual heart. This heart is the fountain and the seat of the affections and desires of our life.

Like the ability to taste, the soul can also see. People can be physically blind, such as the prophet Ahijah of the Old Testament. But oh, what he saw through the power of God in sight and truth that were needed in his time.

Furthermore, the soul has the ability, literally, to hear. This matter

of hearing is crucial throughout the Scriptures. Although Genesis chapter 3 gives us the oldest human sin recorded in the Bible, we are told in Romans 5:19 what specific sin Adam committed that day. The apostle Paul declares that by one man's disobedience sin entered into the world. The Greek word here for "disobedience" is *parakoe*, meaning Adam refused to hear. In Genesis 2 God told Adam he was to till, dress and keep the garden. God also explicitly told Adam about the trees of which he could freely eat, adding that he could not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil lest he die. Adam heard God's Word that day; however, Adam failed to hear that Word on the day of temptation and yielded knowingly to the temptation given through his wife.

The Jew in the Old Testament viewed the ear as the important instrument to receive the communication of the knowledge of God as well as commands of God. The ear was given primarily to hear and obey those commands. One final part of the seven-day consecration of the high priest, as recorded in Leviticus, was the placing of blood on the right ear lobe of that priest. This was symbolic of that which was to be literal. The priest was ever to hear the Word of God and by hearing the Word he must keep it; he could not fail to hear or fail to keep God's commands.

In Leviticus 14, when a leper was healed of God, he was to come back

to the priest to be cleansed from that leprosy. When this cleansing took place there were two things that were placed on his ear: first blood and then oil. This declared that the leprosy had come because of sin, the sin of a failing to hear the Word of God; now, God had healed him through repentance and forgiveness. In the restoration of this man he was rededicating that ear to God placing it back under the blood. What he failed to do—failing to hear the Word—will now be under the blood. The oil was to symbolically declare that the ear would now be anointed to continue to hear the Word of God.

### **Those That Hear the Word**

Luke 8:4–15 presents another declaration concerning the truth of hearing. Following the parable of the sower, the disciples asked Jesus to explain the parable. In verse 11 Jesus states, "Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God." Then Jesus explains four types of soil into which the seed can be cast. In verse 12, "Those by the way side are they that hear" (they hear the Word), but "then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word out of their hearts."

Now what does hearing do? Hearing produces thoughts. The hearing of sound immediately produces thought. The air molecules stirred by conversation reaches one's ear where it is transformed into electrical impulses that provoke the brain to thought. A person may audibly hear the Word of God, but in order to be

saved, he must both hear and believe. It must go from the ear of the body to the ear of the soul. Each individual must believe, that is, he must hear that word in his heart. For as a “man thinketh in his heart,” that is what he is.

However, in this context Jesus says that the Devil can take away the Word out of one’s heart lest that one should believe and be saved. From this “hearing” comes Faith. This hearing is not physical hearing; even the physically deaf can become Christians. Unbelievers can hear, but how often the Devil comes and takes the word that they heard out of the heart, lest they should believe and be saved.

In verse 13, “They on the rock are they, which, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, which for a while believe.” In this soil the hearing does continue toward believing, but only for a while. In time of temptation or testing of that Word they fall away. In verse 14, the language changes a little. “And that which fell among the thorns are they, which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection.” In this soil they are hearing to a point to be saved. They may have been saved in a crisis, but their life is not being saved. They are not continuing to hear. They have *heard*, but they are not presently *hearing*.

Finally, there is the soil of verse

15: “But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it and bring forth fruit with patience.” In each of these four soils there is a deepening of receiving the seed. First, there is a hearing but not believing; there is a hearing and believing for a time; there is having heard or when they heard, but other voices vie with that soul’s ear. The cares of life, the deceitfulness of riches, the pleasures of life—these will produce that lukewarmness. They have heard, but they have allowed the other voices to quell the hearing.

Nevertheless, the good soil declares that they have heard. They also continue in the present tense to keep it, that is, they continue to hear. One may go through all four stages of these soils in his life. He may have had byway soil at one time, hearing but not believing; from the byway he may have come to rocky soil, evidenced by a vacillating life of backsliding and restoration. Even more prominent in our day is the thorny soil. According to Luke 21:34–36, the cares of life will be intensified in the End Time. These cares and pleasures tend to crowd out what I am to be hearing from God. Although they may be legitimate pleasures, oh, how the pleasures of life can begin to slowly choke out what I have heard from the Lord.

It is the fourth soil that the Christian must come to. This soil is a heart that is good; it is a heart that is honest, continually hearing and keeping the Word of God.

This soil gives evidence there has been a deepening of the soul's ear, a cultivating of the soul's ear to the sensitivities of God and His Word—even to the whispers of God.

Ecclesiastes chapter 12 affirms that the ears physically begin to change as we get older. The aging process limits our ability to appreciate the full spectrum of sound in, for example, profound and beautiful music. However, this is not true about the soul! The older we grow in our walk with God through hearing and believing, the broader the range of spiritual frequency and sensitivity we have toward His callings upon the soul. Oh, to hear God, to understand His Word and His commands! Even if I am privately reading the Bible—not audibly reading—my heart can be literally hearing. How much more sensitive can the ear of the soul become as one continues to hear, to keep and to obey over a lifetime with God! How sensitive, years down the road, will my life be to the insight of the sounds of God coming to me?

### **The Hearing of the Love Slave**

Another insight to this truth of hearing is found in Exodus 21 concerning the love slave. In a slave's seventh year with his master, he is faced with a choice. For six years he has been required to hear his master; perhaps, at times, it was with a stubborn heart, sometimes reluctantly, sometimes complaining over the commands of his master. At the beginning of his seventh year with

this master, according to the Law, he could be set free.

Nevertheless, there was a provision in the Law if that servant had come to love his master, and thus the word or commands of his master. If this servant is now willing to give the rest of his life to continue to hear this beloved master, never again will he have the choice to leave this master. This once-in-a-lifetime choice concerns committing the rest of his life to this master. If he personally chooses to remain, it is because the servant loves the master. He loves his commands; he loves his word.

This servant, after going before the judges of the gate, next is to go to the door (Christ is the Door, John 10) and to the door post (the Post of the Door is the Cross), where his earlobe is to be placed. Next, the hammer of the Word of God and the spike of the Spirit of God drive a hole through that ear lobe crucifying, yea, circumcising that ear. This ear is now to be more sensitive than at any other time in its life. The very whispers of God that ear will delight in!

Psalm 40:6 declares, "Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; *mine ears hast thou opened.*" This is the language of Exodus 21's love slave! "Burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required. Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me. I delight to do thy will, O my God." Why is this true? Because, "thy law is within my heart."

This kind of love is not true of

a carnal Christian; it is not true of a lukewarm Christian. These stubbornly react to the Word of God; they seek a new Christianity that somehow mixes the pleasures of this world with God. In contrast, as a true believer is going on with God, God is dealing with every part of his soul, including the ear. His ear should be coming to a greater sensitivity and a greater delight in the Word. Although the world is filled with the voice of many masters, this love slave is dedicated to only one voice, one word: his master's. He knows his voice; he knows his word. It could be in the dead of night, yet the slave immediately hears and obeys the wishes of his master. He knows it to be the voice of his beloved master that speaketh.

Unlike this rare relationship of the love slave, so many Christians today are like those described by Stephen just before his stoning: "Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye resist the word" (Acts 7:51).

### **The Spiritual Ear**

In I Corinthians 2, Paul deals with the ear of the outward and inward man. Note verses 9 through 13:

But as it is written, Eye hath not seen [the physical eye hath not seen], nor ear heard [the physical ear has not heard], neither have entered into the heart of man, the things [this is going to be the words of God] which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed

them [these things] unto us by His Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep [deeper] things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? Even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual.

As Christians, we now are in a spirit world; verse 14 clarifies, "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."

My ear is to hear; my ear is to respond. God declares in the Book of Deuteronomy, through Moses, "that your ears are heavy," sluggish. They are slow to hear God, slow to respond to Him. This concerns the literal ability of the soul to sluggishly hear.

### **He that Hath an Ear Let Him Hear**

Several times in the Synoptic Gospels we read this phrase, "he that hath ears to hear." What do you do with the ear? You don't smell with it; you don't taste with it. "He that hath the ears to hear, let him hear." It is not until we get to the Book of Revelation that this phrase returns. Seven times it appears in chapters 2

and 3, culminating in Laodicea: “He that hath an ear.” What do you do with an ear? You are not to be deaf with it; you are not to put your hands over your ears like those who refused to hear Stephen preach. If you have an ear, you are to hear with that ear.

What is the problem of the state of lukewarmness? The apostle Paul gives this final exhortation to Timothy in II Timothy 4:2 “to preach the Word.” He didn’t say preach psychology; he didn’t say preach self-esteem, or preach philosophy, or contemporary thought, or that which will please the mob, the populous. Timothy was to preach the Word, whether convenient or not, whether they wanted to hear it or not, in season and out of season. And in this preaching, he was to “reprove” or bring to conviction.

If our sermons don’t bring conviction, we are not preaching the Word of God. We must preach in reproving, rebuking, exhorting with all longsuffering and doctrine (or teaching). Neo-evangelicalism has popularized expository preaching, “Expository preaching” is merely teaching, not biblical preaching! Teaching is not preaching. Preaching is *exhorting*; preaching is *reproving*, preaching is *rebuking*; nevertheless, while you are preaching you are educating the people spiritually. Merely just teaching, just going down and giving an exposition from verse to verse, is not preaching. We cannot call teaching preaching. The ideal preacher is the pastor-teacher referred to in Ephesians 4:11. Today’s

pastors are coping out by getting the people fat with objective knowledge served without application; there is no rebuking; there is no condemning. Peter on the Day of Pentecost presented the Gospel, and with many other words *exhorted* them to save themselves “from this untoward generation.”

Second Timothy 4:3 reminds us that “the time will come [the season will come, the season of Laodicea], when they will not endure [they will not put up with] sound doctrine [healthy teaching] but after their own lusts, shall they heap [or accumulate] to themselves teachers.” Why? Another word is found here to describe the ear: an *itching* ear. Itching-ear hearers are those that have become tired of oft-repeated truth and they are longing for something new. It is the oft-repeated truth from generation to generation that is most important. Apostasy did not begin so much with believers; it began with the mob rule of the populous. This group grew tired of the old hymns, tired of the old preaching, tired of the old standards, tired of hearing strong preaching; they wanted a softer voice. According to this passage, it is the people that have produced the false prophets of our time. They have turned their ears from the truth; note verse 4: “They shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables [or myths].” They create and accumulate unto themselves these teachers. All such men are a product of the people.

This sounds so similar to the excuse of King Saul; “the people made me do this”—the people, the people, the people.

### Conclusion

The Laodicean Church is a product of the people. They are tired of Bible preaching; they are tired of Bible teaching; and they want something that is more palatable to their carnal, worldly lukewarmness. I remember my father preaching in open-air tabernacles, a thousand or two thousand people on July nights with the sweat flies all around, no backs to the benches. He would preach for two and a half hours, followed by altars filled past midnight with people crying out as the Word of God dealt with them. We see not such desperation today. A preacher who preaches over thirty minutes is met with complainers or those who merely walk out, refusing to hear.

Proverbs 20:12 declares, “The hearing ear, and the seeing eye, the Lord hath made even both of them.” For a man to see in these days is a gift from God; for a man to hear the true voice of Christ amidst the many “Jesus” voices is a gift from God. Note the Lord’s exhortation to Ezekiel: “All my words that I shall speak unto thee receive in thine heart, and hear with thine ears” (3:10). In that we live in days such as Amos where the Lord has sent a famine of the hearing of the words of the Lord (8:11), one will now almost have to compass land and sea in order to find a true Bible preacher.

The remnant must have an “ear” to hear in these days in which we live. Only God can give it. Pray for it, dear Christian: pray that God will give you the hearing ear and the seeing eye in order to make it through this last church age before the coming of Christ. [S]

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Registration

The Foundations Schools

August 24 – 8:00 AM

Special Opening Services

August 24-26 – 7:00 PM

Special Evening of Fellowship

August 27

Founder's Day

October 2

Congress of Young Fundamentalists

October 5-9

Thanksgiving Day

November 24

Winter Break for the Schools

December 16

Foundations Bible College

"If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?"

Psalm 11:5

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