

The Seven Churches (Day 49)

Fred R. Coulter—June 11, 2005

Greetings, brethren! Welcome to the Sabbath before Pentecost, the 49th day. As we have seen in Lev. 23, we are to count seven complete weeks and one day: *50 days!* So, we'll talk about the 50th day tomorrow.

In Deut. 16 we are told to count seven weeks from the beginning of the harvesting of the grain. That first sheaf that was harvested was *Christ!* That was a special ceremonial sheaf that was taken to the temple and waved by the priest on the day after the Sabbath during Unleavened Bread. This year—because Passover came on a Sabbath—the Passover Day is an unleavened bread day, ***and should always be an unleavened bread day*** when you understand it. Then the first Holy Day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread becomes the Wave Sheaf Offering Day. That means by time we get through the seven days of Unleavened Bread we are already one week toward Pentecost.

Even though this year it appeared that the Passover was late according to the Roman calendar, you need to see that winter was still going quite late. As a matter of fact, the very week before the Passover they had quite a snowstorm back east and in Ohio.

1-Cor. 15 is important for us to understand and realize concerning Christ and the Wave Sheaf Offering, because that is what starts the count of the seven weeks.

1-Corinthians 15:20: “But now Christ has been raised from *the* dead; He has become the Firstfruit of those who have fallen asleep.”

We find in Exo. 23 that the first of the firstfruits God said do not fail to offer that, ***because all of that symbolizes Christ!***

Verse 21: “For since by man *came* death, by Man also *came the* resurrection of *the* dead.”

Let's understand something very important: You can take care of your body perfectly; you can eat all organic food; you can exercise and do the things you need to, which we ought to.

Verse 22: “For as in Adam all die...”

After Adam sinned, ***part of the judgment that God passed on to Adam***—and hence it became part of us in our very genes—***is a death gene in every one of us!*** That's why there's a time to be born and a time to die. So, there's going to come a time even if you are in the best health all your life, *at*

the end you are going to die because God has the resurrection!

“...so also in Christ shall all be made alive”
(v 22).

That's what Jesus said in John 5, ‘The day is coming when all who are in the grave will hear the voice of the Son of Man and those who have done good will come forth to a resurrection of life; and those who have done evil, to a resurrection of judgment’

Verse 23: “But each in his own order: Christ *the* Firstfruit; then those who are Christ's at His coming.”

We are going to examine that part of His coming as it relates to the Church and how the seven churches and the seven weeks of the harvest and how all of that fits together because God is doing something with His Church and through His Church, ***and the harvest is continually going on!***

Verse 24: “Afterwards the end *comes...*” Christ is coming. Then we have the Millennium, the White Throne period, and the end:

“...when He shall have delivered up the Kingdom to Him Who *is* God and Father, when He shall have put an end to all rule and all authority and power. For it is ordained that He reign until He has put all enemies under His feet” (vs 24-25).

We know that Christ in Rev. 1 is called the Firstborn from the dead, and also in Col. 1. He is the first of the firstfruits. Then we have the promise that those who are Christ's are going to be raised when the end comes when He returns.

Now let's understand something about the Church. Let's understand why this is important for us to realize. In the Old Testament the firstborn was always dedicated to God; all the males were to go to God. All the females of firstborn were to go to the festival tithe, which then is still dedicated for the purpose of God. All the males were to be redeemed. All the unclean animals like the donkey and the horse and so forth were to be redeemed. So important was this redemption that God said ***if you didn't redeem it*** you would break its neck. *So, the firstborn is very special to God!*

Let's understand something about the Church. Let's see what the Church is called, because we, along with all of those whom God has called before us, we belong to what is called ***the Church of the Firstborn, which is registered in heaven!***

Hebrews 12:22: “But you have come to Mount Zion, and to *the* city of *the* living God... [this is talking about the things in heaven] ...heavenly Jerusalem; and to an innumerable company of angels; *to the* joyous festival gathering...” (vs 22-23).

As we are going to see tomorrow, the Feast of Pentecost pictures the very first resurrection, because that is the end of the harvest. There is a seven-week harvest, which is a special harvest. Then there is a 50th Day harvest, which we will cover tomorrow.

“...and to *the Church of the Firstborn*... [that’s why we are special to God] ...registered in *the Book of Life* in heaven; and to God, *the Judge* of all, and to *the* spirits of the just who have been perfected; and to Jesus, *the Mediator of the New Covenant*; and to sprinkling of *the* blood of *ratification*, proclaiming superior things than *that of Abel*” (vs 23-24).

Let’s also see that as Christ was called the firstfruits and the firstborn, we are also part of the Church of the Firstborn, and we are called firstfruits. We are part of the *first harvest*, but the first harvest occurs over a period of seven weeks and one day!

James 1:17: “Every good act of giving and every perfect gift is from above...”

This is talking about all the spiritual gifts that God gives us. You can put in your margin there Gal. 5 concerning the fruits of the Spirit.

“...coming down from the Father of lights, with Whom there is no variation, nor shadow of turning. According to His own will, He begat us by *the* Word of Truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all His created beings” (vs 17-18).

As we saw during Unleavened Bread, *salvation is creation* and God is creating in us, and this verifies it. We are called *firstfruits*. We are called *firstborn*. That’s important for us to understand and realize.

We’re going to spend some time in the book of Revelation. Let’s look at things a little bit differently. Let’s understand quite a few things that are important here.

Everyone gets all excited about prophecy and seeing it fulfilled in the world. God did not neglect to give a prophecy of His Church down through history, down through the time until Christ would return—that is contained in the first six chapters of the book of Revelation—*before He gets into the events in the world!* That’s profound because we are—the Church is—the most important thing that’s happening on the earth. ***The greatest***

work of God that God is doing is the work that He is doing in you to create in you, the perfect Holiness that comes from Him.

The book of Revelation is a marvelous book. It is not one that you can just pick up and read and understand. You must have a background with most of the rest of the Bible in order to really understand the things that are here.

There is a blessing, and this blessing comes every time you read and study the book of Revelation. Let’s understand something about studying, God’s Spirit, God’s Word and things from this point of view: ***WHEN*** we come to God with a humble heart, a willing attitude, and an open mind toward God, ***THEN*** God’s Spirit will bring the blessing.

If we come to the Word of God like so many people do, and like so many of the Protestants do... And you’re going to see more and more as we come down closer to the end-time, that every single one of these Protestant preachers are liars, ***liars, liars!*** Some of them even coming to the point that they say,

It’s so easy, all you have to do is profess Christ. You don’t even have to repent, you don’t even have to be baptized.

If they read the book of Revelation they won’t understand it. God is not going to give them the understanding.

Psa.111 says, ‘A good understanding have they that do His commandments’

Revelation 1:3: “Blessed *is* the one who reads, and those who hear the words of this prophecy and **who keep the things that are written therein**; for the time *is* at hand.”

Notice it’s three-fold: ***it’s read, you hear, and you keep!*** If those things aren’t all together then you won’t understand. Notice what Christ starts out with:

Verse 4: “John to the seven churches that *are* in Asia: Grace and peace *be* to you from Him Who *is*, and Who *was*, and Who *is* to come; and from the seven spirits that are before His Throne; and from Jesus Christ, the faithful Witness, the Firstborn from the dead, and the Ruler of the kings of the earth. To Him Who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood” (vs 4-5).

That’s quite an opening. Then he continues on here to make sure that we understand how absolutely powerful that the rest of the book of Revelation is going to be.

Verse 6: “And has made us kings and priests

to God and His Father; to Him *be* the glory and the sovereignty into the ages of eternity. Amen. Behold, He is coming with the clouds, and every eye shall see Him, and those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth shall wail because of Him. Even so, Amen. 'I am the Alpha and the Omega, *the* Beginning and *the* Ending,' says the Lord, 'Who is, and Who was, and Who *is* to come—the Almighty'" (vs 6-8).

So, He instructed John to write and to send the first message to the seven churches that are in Asia. That's very important to understand about the seven churches because there were churches all over the world. There was a Church in Corinth, a Church in Colosse, Rome, various parts of Asia Minor, Britain, France, over in Babylon with the converted Jews, Parthia, and Media. **To select these seven churches is a prophetic message to the Churches of God that applies down through time!**

Verse 19: "Write the things that you saw... [everything that he saw: the vision of the Son of man, His glory and so forth] ...and the things that are... [beginning with the time that is] ...and the things that shall take place hereafter."

The things that take place hereafter go all the way on to the beginning of God's plan throughout eternity.

Verse 20: "The mystery of the seven stars that you saw in My right hand, and the seven golden lampstands, *is this*: the seven stars are *the* angels of the seven churches; and the seven lampstands that you saw are *the* seven churches."

Why seven churches? *That fits exactly with the seven weeks of harvest!* Beginning with Passover on to Pentecost, *that is the Church Age!* God has revealed about what His Churches do and what they should do. He also as He does in every place in the Bible, ***He reveals the sins and shortcomings of His people and calls them to repentance!*** He also shows through every one of these that we have to overcome. He also shows that there are certain limits in our behavior beyond which, ***if we don't repent***, we won't receive salvation. That's important to understand.

Now what I want you to do is write down the seven churches:

1. Ephesus—Epistle of Ephesians
2. Smyrna—Epistles of Thessalonians
3. Pergamos—Epistle of 1-Corinthians
4. Thyatira—Epistles of Galatians & 2-Corinthians
5. Sardis—Book of Hebrews
6. Philadelphia—Epistle of Philippians
7. Laodicea—Epistle of Colossians

Most people don't realize that the Apostle Paul wrote epistles to seven churches. Right next to the column that you wrote here of *the seven churches of Revelation*, find the seven churches that Paul wrote to.

Overall is Romans, which applies to all of the churches, because this is general instruction on the condition of the world:

- how the world came to be the way that it is with all of the sin
- what it is that all are sinners, Jews and Gentiles
- how we are forgiven through Christ
 - that we follow the example of Abraham
 - that we stand in grace
 - that we receive our human nature from Adam
 - that we have the law of sin and death in us but we overcome it
 - if we are Christ's we are walking in the Spirit
 - nothing will keep us from receiving our inheritance

Those are the first eight chapters of the book of Romans. The next seven are some general instructions, and the last chapter is all salutation. **Romans is kind of overarching!**

Colossians 4:16: "After you have read the epistle, see that it also is read in the Church of *the* Laodiceans, and that you also read the one from Laodicea."

There you have a pattern. There you have some things that you can learn.

- since we are the harvest of God
- since we are the firstfruits of God
- since we are the Church of the Firstborn and Christ is the First of the firstborn among many brethren

let's look at the harvest that God has here in Rev. 2 & 3! Then we will look at some of the things in teachings and admonitions in the books as they relate in parallel to the churches that we just covered here.

The Church of Ephesus

I'm not going to read every verse because I suppose I could take a sermon for each one and do a sermon on each one. So this is going to be kind of an overview to give you a little bit different perspective.

Revelation 2:2: *Christ says*: "I know your works, and your labor, and your endurance, and that

you cannot bear those who are evil; and *that* you did test those who proclaim *themselves* to be apostles, but are not, and did find them liars; and *that* you have borne *much* and have endured, and for My name's sake have labored and have not grown weary; nevertheless, I have *this* against you, that you have left your first love" (vs 2-4).

So they kind of got stagnated. We'll see a little bit of that in the book of Ephesians.

Verse 5: "Therefore, remember from where you have fallen, and repent, and do the first works; for if *you do* not, I will come to you quickly; and I will remove your lampstand out of its place unless you repent."

Verse 7: "**The one who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the Churches. To the one who overcomes...**" *That's to every one of the churches:*

- we have to hear
- we have to listen
- we have to overcome

There's something that we need to do.

Now let's come back here to the book of Ephesians, which is the book to the Christians in Ephesus, and let's see what a tremendous and wonderful thing that they had.

Ephesians 1:3: "Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly *things* with Christ; according as **He has personally chosen us**" (vs 3-4).

They had all of the understanding. They had the direct teachings of the Apostle Paul who was taught by Jesus Christ. Then they had Timothy, Titus, and the other elders.

Verse 17: "That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you *the* spirit of wisdom and revelation in *the* knowledge of Him. *And* may the eyes of your mind be enlightened in order that you may comprehend what is the hope of His calling, and what *are* the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints" (vs 17-18).

They had great and tremendous things given to them. One of the most inspiring chapters that you have in the New Testament is Eph. 3.

Now let's see how they understood, and how they did not give in to the false prophets. No place in the book of Ephesians do you find that they gave in to any of the false prophets. It mentions them.

Ephesians 4:11: "And He gave some as apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists; and some pastors and teachers for the perfecting of

the saints, for *the* work of *the* ministry, for *the* edifying of the Body of Christ until we all come into the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto *the* measure of *the* stature of the fullness of Christ" (vs11-13).

So what happened? They began to slack away from that in losing their first love.

Verse 14: "So that we no longer be children, tossed and carried about with every wind of doctrine by the sleight of men in *cunning* craftiness, with a view to the systematizing of the error."

They are commended that they did exactly that, they didn't give in to them, and that they are holding the truth in love and so forth.

Now let's see the warning that the Apostle Paul gave to the elders at Ephesus in Acts 20. After this took place that's when they lost their first love. I also think another thing that they did in losing their first love, since the canonized New Testament was finalized there in Ephesus by the Apostle John, and the Church at Ephesus was the one to make the copies and send it to all the other churches. I'm sure that in slacking off and taking care of the New Testament the way they should have, that was also part of losing their first love.

Paul calls the elders down there and he talks with them. He testified to them.

Acts 20:26: "I testify to you on this day that I am pure from the blood of all, for I have not held back from preaching to you all the counsel of God. Take heed, therefore, to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to feed the Church of God, which He purchased with His own blood. For I know this: that after my departure grievous wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves men will rise up speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after themselves" (vs 26-30).

When that happened that's when they lost their first love and God called them to repentance!

Now let's see one warning that the Apostle Paul gave concerning this; he told them, 'Don't let any of the unfruitful works of darkness take place among you.'

Ephesians 5:14: "Therefore, He says, '*You* who are sleeping—wake up, and arise from the dead! And Christ shall shine upon you.' So then, take heed that you walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as those who are wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. For this reason, do not be foolish, but understanding what the will of the Lord *is*" (vs14-17).

That ties right in with the message Jesus gave them that they were to repent!

The Church of Smyrna

The Church of Smyrna had quite a bit different circumstances than the Church at Ephesus. The Church of Smyrna is the persecuted Church. Today persecutions are going on. They happen even today. We'll see that in just a minute.

Revelation 2:8: "And to the angel of the Church of *the* Smyrneans write: These things says the First and the Last, Who was dead but is alive. 'I know your works and tribulation and poverty (but you are rich)... [spiritually] ...and the blasphemy of those who declare themselves to be Jews and are not, but *are* a synagogue of Satan. Do not fear any of the things that you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast *some* of you into prison, that you may be tried; and you shall have tribulation ten days. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you a crown of life. The one who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. The one who overcomes shall not be hurt of the second death'" (vs 8-11).

Now 1st & 2nd Thessalonians, let's go there, because there is some more instruction here because of all the Churches that the Apostle Paul had. The Church in Thessalonica suffered persecution, and persecution in quite a different way. It was not for ten days, but it is an example of the persecution that they suffered.

1-Thessalonians 2:12: "And *earnestly* testifying, that you may walk worthily of God, Who is calling you to His own Kingdom and glory. Because of this, we give thanks to God without ceasing: that when you received *the* Word of God, which you heard from us, you did not accept it as the word of men, but even as it is in truth—*the* Word of God, which is also working in you who believe. For, brethren, you became imitators of the Churches of God in Judea which are in Christ Jesus; because you also suffered the same things from your own countrymen as they also *suffered* from the Jews" (vs 12-14).

They were persecuted, they were killed, and as a matter of fact it was in Philippi that Paul, Timothy, and Silas were cast into prison. They went into Thessalonica and they were arrested there. They had a terrible amount of persecution here. *Notice it says of the Jews:*

Verse 15: "Who killed both the Lord Jesus and their own prophets, and drove you out, and do not please God, and *are* contrary to all men."

1-Thessalonians 5:6: "So then, we should not sleep, as others *do*; but we should watch, and we

should be sober. For those who are sleeping sleep in *the* night, and those who are drunken get drunk in *the* night. But we who are of *the* day should be sober, having put on *the* breastplate of faith and love, and *for* a helmet *the* hope of salvation" (vs 6-8).

That's what you need if you're going to be persecuted, if you are going to be killed for what you believe!

Verse 9: "Because God has not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, Who died for us, so that whether we *remain* alive *until He comes* or we *fall* asleep *before that day*, together we may live *forever* with Him" (vs 9-10).

So this is the same promise that you see in Rev. 2; that regardless of what happens, whether life or death, ***Christ is with you!***

Let's see the persecution that Stephen went through when he was brought before the Sanhedrin, which was a type of the synagogue of Satan. He was arrested and hauled in there because they said he was preaching against the Law of Moses, and he didn't. He upheld the Law of Moses but was preaching against the sins of the religious leaders and the governors there of the Sanhedrin and running Judea and Jerusalem, because they had killed Christ.

Acts 7:54, *after he told them that they had killed Christ:* "And when they heard these things, they were cut to their hearts, and they gnashed their teeth at him."

They just sat there and grinding their teeth waiting to get on him.

Verse 55: "But he, being filled with *the* Holy Spirit, looked intently into heaven *and* saw *the* glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. And he said, 'Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing at the right *hand* of God.' Then they cried out with a loud voice, *and* stopped their ears, and rushed upon him with one accord" (vs 55-57).

They were so incensed because he said, 'You are hard-hearted and stiff-necked and you always resist the Holy Spirit.' They couldn't stand that. So they:

Verse 58: "And cast *him* out of the city *and* stoned *him*.... [the first real martyr for Christ] ...And the witnesses laid down their garments at the feet of a young man called Saul. And they stoned Stephen, who called upon *God*, saying, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.' And he fell to his knees *and* cried with a loud voice, 'Lord, do not lay this sin to their charge.'

And after he had said this, he died” (vs 58-60).

In being called to persecution, don't worry about it! You are called to eternal life!

Now let's give you an example of what's happening today, and this happens to be in Ethiopia. We have a gentleman over there who's name is Kassahun and he receives all the material. He has translated some of it into Ethiopic, and here is the e-mail that Jim Hyles received. He said:

I got your e-mail today. Sorry for not writing in such a long time but I have been arrested by false accusations orchestrated by some furious SDA ministers ten days ago, after the Passover. Before the Passover I was distributing leaflets, which explain the true Passover and the fallacy of Easter to some SDA members. The leaders reported the situation to the local police. They took me from my home and kept me in their custody until Wednesday. Finally, they released me because they couldn't prove me guilty, praise God. Yes, I have kept the Passover materials and they are great. Thanks. Passover was great here. I believe it was great for you too. Glory be to His name. Don't forget that I'm always praying for you. Keep up the good work.

So, always be praying for him!

Then Richard Umo over in Nigeria made a trip with the brethren to visit them and he unfortunately got some water, which had parasites in it. So, he's having to recover from that.

What I want you to understand is that the world and the Christianity of this world want you to think and believe that what God has called you to is easy. And we are so rotten and spoiled that the least little thing that comes along we can hardly tolerate it.

The Church of Pergamos

Here's a Church that has some real problems; a Church that even Christ had to fight against because of what they allowed. Here we're dealing with people that in the Church of God, and we see it today because what we can say is this: Every one of these seven churches, not only was for the seven churches that was at the time that John wrote, but it is a history of God's Church down through time until the return of Jesus Christ through Rev. 6.

It is also a snapshot, as it were, of all the attitudes and problems that would prevail in the Churches of God. That's why they're coordinated back to the Epistles of the Apostle Paul so that we

can learn the lesson here and go back and see in Paul's epistles what we need to do to correct it because we're told here to listen to what Christ has to say and to overcome.

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

He's saying, “If you don't change I'm going to come after you with a sword.’

Verse 13: “I know your works and where you dwell, where the throne of Satan *is*...”

When you're close to Satan and you're close to the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil the good looks so good. ‘Why can't we do that?’ God says, ‘You don't do that.’

“...but you are holding fast My name, and did not deny My faith, even in the days in which Antipas was My faithful witness, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells... [they were faithful for a time] ...But I have a few things against you because you have there *those* who hold the teaching of Balaam...” (vs 13-14).

- Balaam is to use religion for money
- Balaam is to teach people to sin

“...who taught Balak to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit fornication. Moreover, you also have *those* who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate” (vs 14-15). *That is an overbearing hierarchical system!*

Verse 16: “**Repent!** For if you do not repent, I will come to you quickly, and will make war against them with the sword of My mouth.” *Then Christ admonishes them to overcome and to change.*

Let's see how some of these things are. How does this kind of thing get started? How is it that people come into the Church where they have false doctrines and things like this and get settled in and then cause problems later on? ***Because people follow men instead of Christ!*** That's the very first thing that Paul wrote of back here in the first chapter.

1- Corinthians 1:12: “Now this I say, since everyone among you says, ‘I am of Paul’; or, ‘I am of Apollos’; or, ‘I am of Cephas’; or ‘I am of Christ.’ Has Christ been divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized into the name of Paul?” (vs 12-13). *All of the things that went on there!*

1-Corinthians 3:1: “I: And, I, brethren, was not able to speak to you as to those who are spiritual,

but as to those who are carnal—even as to babes in Christ.”

That’s how these things come in. You have people who do not really repent the way that they ought to and so they had carnal minded people there, carnal minded doctrines, and that’s exactly what Satan the devil wants so he can bring in the doctrine of Balaam. It also talks here about the Christianity and the brethren *are just like a harvest*.

Verse 6: “I planted *and* Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. Therefore, neither is he who plants anything, nor he who waters; for *it is* God Who gives the increase” (vs 6-7).

Verse 10: “...But let each one take heed how he builds upon *it*”

It goes from plant to growth. Then it goes into that each one of us, because we receive the Holy Spirit of God, are a Temple of God. *So that’s really quite something!*

(break)

- 1-Cor. 5 we have fornication! Isn’t that what Balaam taught Balak to do; teach the children of Israel fornication?
- 1-Cor. 6 we have sex sins again. *Flee fornication!*

I tell you, it’s amazing how these things tie in together!

- 1-Cor. 8—things sacrificed to idols

What it was probably getting into back there in Rev. 2 was the beginning of what later became known as the Eucharist, or the Catholic Mass as it is today. They claim that whenever they have the Mass, Christ is sacrificed again anew. So it is truly something sacrificed to an idol. I tell you, it’s amazing.

1-Corinthians 10:7—*Paul again talks about not getting involved in all of these*: “Neither be idolaters, as *were* some of them; as it is written, ‘The people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play.’ Neither should we commit sexual immorality, as some of them committed, and twenty-three thousand were destroyed in one day. Neither should we tempt Christ...” (vs 7-9).

Verse 14: “Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry.”

Now let’s understand what Paul says about the things that the Gentiles do.

Verse 19: “What then am I saying? That an idol is anything, or that which is sacrificed to an idol is anything? But that which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons...” (vs 19-20).

That’s what happens when you get into those kinds of religions practices and they come into the Church.

“...and not to God; and I do not wish you to have fellowship with demons. You cannot drink *the* cup of *the* Lord, and *the* cup of demons. **You cannot partake of the table of the Lord, and the table of demons**” (vs 20-21).

- 1-Cor. 11—about women’s hair length

In the world today you have exactly what we’ve talked about over and over again. The feminists do not want equal rights with men, they want all the rights of a woman and all the rights of a man, and none of the rights be extended to men. They cannot have any rights. Women’s rights are over the men’s rights.

Now you see almost every other woman going around with haircuts like a man because they don’t know the Bible, and even some in the Church have that. Where in 1-Cor. 11 says long hair is given to a woman for a covering and it is a shame for a woman to have shaved head or shorn hair. Some of them are cropped up and I tell you what, when I walk through the airport I’m amazed. Sometimes I can’t tell if it’s a man or a woman.

Then you have taking the Passover incorrectly. What do we have in the Church today?

- 14th Passover/15th Passover
- as soon as the sun goes down/at night
- foot-washing first/foot-washing last
- Passover late in the afternoon
- Passover with a meal

Paul clearly defined that ***you’re not going to have a meal*** with it. He says that you are to eat before you are to come to the Passover.

- 1-Cor. 12 seeking after spiritual gifts.

Paul tells about the love of God, which is the only way to solve it. Then we have speaking in tongues,

- 1-Cor. 15—they didn’t even believe in the resurrection

So, you see how all of that ties together!

The Church of Thyatira

Now we come to a church that is worse. The church at Thyatira is worse from this point of view: it is probably the worst and probably somewhat close to being about second or third best when they repent.

Rev. 2 and read about the Church at Thyatira, and that ties in with Galatians and 2-Cor.,

because they really, really got carried away there with Thyatira.

Revelation 2:18: “And to the angel of the Church in Thyatira write: ‘These things says the Son of God, He Who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet *are* like fine brass.... [His eyes just blazed down upon all the things that they were doing] ...I know your works, and love, and service, and faith, and your endurance, and your works; and the last *are* more than the first. But I have a few things against you, because you allow the woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce My servants into committing fornication and eating things sacrificed to idols” (vs 18-20).

They got into the depths of this even more than Pergamos!

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

Who was Jezebel? *Jezebel was the wife of King Ahab, and the daughter of the high priest of Baal in Tyre!* Look how awful Israel became under Ahab. God had to send Elijah. The people there were of such that they had an opinion about God. When you count up the prophets of the grove and the prophets of Baal, Elijah was outnumbered 850 to 1.

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

This doesn't mean the Great Tribulation at the end! There have been tribulations, troubles, wars and great tribulation down through history. We're probably talking about the time here when just before the Protestant Reformation from the time of about 700_{A.D.} to the time of the Protestant Reformation.

Verse 23: “And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know...”

This is the key important thing. This is right here at the middle church of the seven. So, He gives this warning:

“...all the churches shall know that I am He Who searches *the* reins and hearts...” (v 23).

God is not waiting for the judgment day to judge us; it's *every day!* Every day He searches the hearts and tries the reins.

- How do you respond to God?
- How do you love God?
- Have you repented of your sins?
- Are you snuggling up to some of these quaint little doctrines that are in the so-called Christian churches of this world?

They sound so good!

We just recently had a couple ministers from a couple Churches of God go off on the grace limb and cut it off. So you see, it's still happening today. I've seen it over and over again.

What Christ is telling us here in all of this is ***He wants us to get serious about salvation!*** He wants us to quit all our moaning and groaning and crying and whining and get real with the calling of God, and to do what He wants us to do to repent, grow and overcome. That's what He wants! That's why this is here; we are to learn from this. If we learn from it then we receive the blessing from reading it and hearing it.

Notice how far they went; v 24: “But to you I say, and to *the* rest who *are* in Thyatira, as many as do not have this doctrine, and who have not known the depths of Satan... [getting right into spiritism and séances] ...as they speak; I will not cast upon you any other burden, but hold fast what you have until I come” (vs 24-25).

I want you to understand ***that the way of God and the Church of God is not about following men!*** I'll tell you the greatest sin that has ever happened in the modern-day Church of God, coming out of the Worldwide Church of God and all of the others is ***the idolatry of ministers!*** Some people even claim one man was *the only apostle, the great apostle*, and if you go beyond anything he taught then you are not right.

Let me tell you something: ***only one Being has all the knowledge and all the truth, and that is God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ! No man!*** If you follow a man and idolize a man to the point that you think that only what he taught is what you should follow, you are an idolater. You are going to lose some of your reward. You are going to be held back from the things that God wants to give you. You need to understand.

Listen to what Paul said; Galatians 1:6: “I am astonished that you are so quickly being turned away from Him Who called you into *the* grace of Christ, to a different gospel, which *in reality* is not another *Gospel*; but there are some who are troubling you and are desiring to pervert the Gospel of Christ” (vs 6-7).

I just named a lot of things that they pervert. It begins with the Passover. The reason why it begins with the Passover is because Satan the devil does not want any of us in covenant of eternal life with Jesus Christ and God the Father. That's what they were doing.

Verse 8: “But if we, or even an angel from heaven, should preach a gospel to you *that* is

contrary to what we have preached, LET HIM BE ACCURSED! As we have said before, I also now say again. If anyone is preaching a gospel contrary to what you have received, LET HIM BE ACCURSED! Now then, am I striving to please men, or God?....” (vs 8-10).

Who are we trying to please? *If the minister tries to please the brethren and not preach the Truth of God, he’s trying to be a man-pleaser!* He’s trying to be accepted and the people look to him because he’s a man. We see that going on today.

“...Or am I motivated to please men? For if I am yet pleasing men, I would not be a servant of Christ” (v 10).

Every minister, every elder of God must stand for the Word of God *first and always!*

Now then he talks about how he didn’t receive the Gospel from men (Gal. 2). Then he talks about those doctrines of Judaism. Are we not bothered with the doctrines of Judaism? Yes!

- prayer shawls,
- praise dancing
- Passover problems
- Pentecost problems
- calendar problems

I mean, add it up!

Galatians 3:1: “O foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you *into* not obeying the Truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ, crucified, was set forth in a written public proclamation?”

Then Gal. 4; this is exactly what is happening, and this is the only translation that has the correct translation of it here:

Galatians 4:8: “Now on the one hand, when you did not know God, you were in bondage to those who are not gods by nature.... [to demons] ...But on the other hand, after having known God—rather, after having been known by God—how *is it that* you are turning again to the weak and impotent elements, to which you again desire to be in bondage? You are *of your own selves* observing days, and months, and times and years” (vs 8-10).

This had nothing to do with the days of God. This has everything to do with the former pagan days that they had. What do we have today? *Churches of God going back to Easter, Christmas, New Years, Halloween and all of those things and saying that ‘we are delivered to do all of these things.’* That’s why the Church in Thyatira was as bad as the Churches in Galatia, the worst. Then you find how he talks about it here in Gal. 5 about all of the fruits of the flesh and all the witchcraft and all

the things that was taking place. Then he gives the fruits of the Holy Spirit.

2-Cor. is another one where they get into the very depths of satanism. Here is what we see going on, and this is what Jezebel was doing. Jezebel is the Catholic Church today, and all of the doctrines that emanate out from there. You need to understand that we are in a spiritual battle. There are those who want to take down the Churches of God *and corrupt them, infiltrate them, take them away from God!* How do they do it?

2-Corinthians 2:17: “For we are not like the many, who for *their own* profit are corrupting the Word of God; but we speak with sincerity, as from God, *and before God, and in Christ.*”

2-Corinthians 3:1: “Do we again begin to commend ourselves? Or do we, as some, need epistles of commendation to you, or *epistles of commendation from you?*” *I tell you, the things that they were going through was absolutely amazing!*

2-Corinthians 4:1: “Therefore, having this ministry, according as we have received mercy, we are not fainthearted. For we have personally renounced the hidden things of dishonest gain, not walking in *cunning* craftiness, nor handling the Word of God deceitfully...” (vs 1-2).

That is how every false doctrine comes about, *by people handling the Word of God deceitfully!* I tell you, it’s amazing! One man wrote a paper and says that ‘ben ha arbayim’ is not even in *Strong’s Concordance*, so we don’t need to pay any attention to that. He’s supposed to be a minister. *Then he twists and turns the Word of God and says:*

Oh, by the way, we should wash the feet *after* the Passover, and we should combine Passover and the Night Much To Be Observed, and the whole thing is only seven days long and ends on the 20th.

Handling the Word of God deceitfully!

You know there are some people just like lemmings and follow right along. When I was at the Last Day of Unleavened Bread down in Phoenix I talked to a man who escaped that group. He couldn’t believe the things that he fell into and all the others fell into there. Amazing!

Here is what needs to be: “...but by manifestation of the Truth, we are commending ourselves to every man’s conscience before God. But if our Gospel is hidden, it is hidden to those who are perishing; in whom the god of this age has blinded the minds of those who do not believe, lest the Light of the Gospel of the glory of Christ, Who is *the* image of God, should shine unto them. For we

do not preach our own selves...” (vs 2-5)—*that is our own ideas!*

Just exactly as Jesus said, He didn’t speak *His* words. He didn’t teach *His* doctrines. **He did exactly as the Father commanded Him!** Likewise the Apostle Paul says *that’s what they do*. **That’s what we are to do!**

“...but Christ Jesus *the* Lord, and ourselves your servants for Jesus’ sake” (v 5).

Here’s the epitome of the Church at Thyatira listed right here

2-Corinthians 6:14: “Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers....” **Especially in doctrine!**

Some people will come along and say, purring oh so nice and sanctimonious, *Let us agree to disagree and get along*.

- you tell that to Christ
- you tell that to the Father

Do you think you’re going to get into the Kingdom of God if you disagree with God? *Let us agree to disagree is how false brethren and tares come in the congregation*, and sooner or later they’re headed for doomsday.

Verse 14: “Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and lawlessness *have* in common? And what fellowship *does* light *have* with darkness? And what union *does* Christ *have* with Belial? Or what part *does* a believer *have* with an unbeliever? And what agreement *is there* between a Temple of God and idols? For you are a Temple of *the* living God, exactly as God said: ‘I will dwell in them and walk in *them*; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. Therefore, come out from the midst of them and be separate,’ says *the* Lord, ‘and touch not *the* unclean, and I will receive you; and I shall be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters,’ says *the* Lord Almighty” (vs 14-18).

That’s what God wants. That’s why to every one of the Churches He says *repent*, and ***if you have an ear to hear, listen to what the Spirit says to the churches!***

- 2-Cor. 10 we covered during Unleavened Bread: ***bring every thought into captivity to Christ!***

2-Corinthians 11:3—*this is exactly how Jezebel got in the door*: “But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds might be corrupted from *the* simplicity that *is* in Christ. For indeed, if someone comes preaching another Jesus, whom we did not preach, or you receive a different spirit, which you

did not receive, or a different gospel, which you did not accept, you put up with it as *something good*” (vs 3-4)—*oh let’s get along!*

That’s the whole basis of the Ecumenical movement in this world. They’re going to knock down all the differences. If you’re religious—it doesn’t matter what the religion is—and if you’re faithful to that religion, you’re all accepted. *Let’s agree to disagree!* You put up with it **as something good**. That’s not what Christ says. **NO! NO!**

Verse 13: “For such *are* false apostles, deceitful workers who are transforming themselves into apostles of Christ.”

You can go back and read in 1-Kings 13 & 14 how that God sent one of His prophets to Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, to give a witness from God. When you go you don’t eat, you do what I tell you to do, you give the witness and you return. As he was returning back another man came out and said, ‘Well, I’m a prophet of the Lord like you, and the Lord told me it’s all right if you come in and eat with me.’ So, rather than obeying God, he obeyed a man. He went and ate with him and after he left God sent a lion to devour him on the way.

God means business! When it comes to these false teachers and false apostles—because they smile, because they are friendly:

- How are they going to deceive people?
- Are they going to come in hostile and angry and lead people away?

No!

- they’re going to come in purring
- they’re going to come in glad-handing
- they’re going to be friendly
- they’re going to say nice, wonderful words
- they’re going to say how great everything is

Then the doctrine comes!

“...transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. And *it is* no marvel, for Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. Therefore, *it is* no great thing if his servants also transform themselves as ministers of righteousness—whose end shall be according to their works” (vs 13-15).

2-Corinthians 13:5—*no other Church was given this challenge*: “Examine yourselves *to see* whether you are in the faith; prove your own selves. Don’t you *of* your own selves know that Jesus Christ is in you? Otherwise, you are reprobates.”

That’s how the tares get in. That’s how the false brethren get in. They follow the teachings of Jezebel and think it is so great.

The Church at Sardis

I have yet to hear anyone say they are a minister in the Church of Sardis, and ‘we are all a bunch of dead-heads.’ *Everyone wants to be a Philadelphian!* Some may have the courage to say they are Laodiceans. But no one has the courage to say, ‘I’m a Sardisite.’

Revelation 3:1: “And to the angel of the Church in Sardis, write: “These things says He Who has the seven spirits of God and the seven stars. I know your works, *and* that you have a name as if you are alive, but are dead.” *Just as I’ve said before, a corpse with a pulse!*

Verse 2: “Be watchful, and strengthen the things that remain, which are about to die. For I have not found your works complete before God.”

Verse 5: “The one who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments; and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life...”

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

The book of Hebrews is for those who are nearly dead, who are slipping away. After Paul reminds them of the great thing that Christ did in coming to save us from our sins:

Hebrews 2:1: “For this reason, it is imperative that we give much greater attention to the things, *which* we have heard... [sounds like Rev. 3] ...lest at any time we should slip away.” *You have a name that you live, but are dead!* For if the word spoken by angels was *enforced* without fail, and every transgression and disobedience received just recompense, how shall we escape, *if* we have neglected so great a salvation; which was first received when it was spoken by the Lord, *and* was confirmed to us by those who heard *Him*”(vs 2-3).

Heb. 3—*don’t be rebellious, don’t give up on the Sabbath:*

Hebrews 3:12: “Beware, brethren, lest perhaps there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in apostatizing from *the* living God.” ***IF you apostatize you go to spiritual death!***

Hebrews 4:3: “...If they shall enter into My rest...”—*the Kingdom of God!*

It talks about the Sabbath. When you have a Church of God that is nearly dead, what is one of the symptoms of it? *Sabbath is a bore! Sabbath is a dirge! God says His Word is like a sharp and powerful sword!*

- Heb. 6—warning against the unpardonable sin. Note our In-Depth Study on *Hebrews*

{truthofGod.org}. He said that you are about ready to die. I tell you, it’s something!

Heb. 10, again the unpardonable sin, that they don’t listen to God.

Hebrews 10:26: “For if we willfully go on sinning after receiving the knowledge of the Truth, there is no longer any sacrifice for sins, but a terrifying expectation of inevitable judgment and of fierce fire, which will devour the adversaries *of God*” (vs 26-27).

There’s the warning to them all the way through! We do not want to be like this. Don’t be like the children of Israel in the wilderness and reject God.

The Church of Philadelphia

Everyone wants to be a Philadelphian, but they have their challenges, and they have their problems, too. *They are few! They are faithful with the Word of God and they are commended for it, and they enduringly keep the Word of God!*

Revelation 3:8: “I know your works. Behold, I have set before you an open door, and no one has the power to shut it because you have a little strength...”

- open door can be *preaching the Gospel*
- open door can be *understanding the Truth of God*

because Christ has the key of David, and the key of understanding!

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

That was not said of any other except part of the time in Pergamos before they apostatized!

Now notice we have an encounter with those who are of the synagogue of Satan, ***the churches of this world!***

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

Here is the characteristic of a true Philadelphian. Not because anyone professes to be one, or a church claims that it is one, but because of this:

Verse 10: “Because you have kept the Word of My patience, I also will keep you from the time of temptation, which *is* about to come upon the whole world to try those who dwell on the earth.” This is right at the end; leads into the end.

Let's just put in there the book of Philippians, 1 & 2; the Church of Philadelphia and the book of Philippians.

- not one bit of correction
- they fought off the synagogue of Satan, those who were of the concision

they were praised for

- their love
- their devotion
- their work
- what God was going to do to finish it
- how to develop the mind of Christ

They were praised by Paul for saying that they always obeyed even when he wasn't there. That's the Church at Philadelphia.

The Church of Laodicea

Revelation 3:14: "And to the angel of the Church of *the* Laodiceans, write: These things says the Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the Beginner of the creation of God. **I know your works that you are neither cold nor hot...**" (vs 14-15).

What is the word that most defines this generation, which is lukewarm? *Cool!* You hear that all the time. 'Oh, that's cool.'

"...I would *that* you be *either* cold or hot. So then, because you are lukewarm, and *are* neither cold nor hot, I will spew you out of My mouth" (vs 15-16).

You're going to be put out of the Church of God by Christ with your own lackadaisical attitude: ho-hum, don't care, not important.

Verse 17: "For you say, 'I am rich, and have become wealthy... [\$20 in an offering is a whole lot for me to give] ...and have need of nothing...'; and you do not understand that you are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.... [can't even see your own self] ...I counsel you to buy from Me gold purified by fire so that you may be rich; and white garments so that you may be clothed, and the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and to anoint your eyes with eye salve, so that you may see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore, be zealous and repent" (vs 17-19).

It's so hard to get people up off their couches. It's so hard to open the Bible and read it. You're so busy, you don't have any time to pray.

The book of Colossians is for the Laodiceans. What is their greatest problem? *Intellectual vanity and philosophy, and bordering*

into the worshipping of angels! He wants them to understand this:

Colossians 2:1: "Now, I want you to understand what great concern I have for you, and *for* those in Laodicea, and as many as have not seen my face in *the* flesh; that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love unto all riches of **the full assurance of understanding, unto the knowledge of the mystery of God,** and of *the* Father, and of Christ..."

That's exactly like Christ said, '*Buy of me gold tried in the fire that you may have the true riches.*' This is what he's talking about here "...the full assurance..."

Verse 3: "In Whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge."

You see the intellectual vanity of the Laodiceans and all of their philosophical approach is what leads them into destruction.

Verse 4: "Now, this I say so that no one may deceive you by persuasive speech." *They come in with enticing messages. Sounds good. It's wonderful!*

Verse 6: "Therefore, as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, be walking in Him... [not in the world; not in wealth; not in selfishness] ...being rooted and built up in Him, and being confirmed in the faith, exactly as you were taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving. Be on guard so that no one takes you captive through philosophy and vain deceit, according to the traditions of men..." (vs 6-8).

This is what is happening with those who are Laodicean. They get all of these good sounding warm, fuzzy, purring Protestant doctrines all involved, which are:

"...according to the elements of the world, and not according to Christ. For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily, and you are complete in Him, Who is the Head of all principality and power" (vs 8-10).

Then he talks about putting off the body of sin through the circumcision of Christ. They get into strange religious philosophical practices.

Verse 16: "Therefore, do not allow anyone to judge you in eating or in drinking, or with regard to a Festival, or new moon, or *the* Sabbaths."

They are ashamed of these things when God says these are the things that teach you the Truth!

Verse 17: "Which are a foreshadow of the things that are coming, but the Body of Christ. Do not allow anyone to defraud you of the prize *by* doing *his* will in self-abasement and *the* worship of

angels, intruding into things that he has not seen, vainly puffed up by his own carnal mind... [eastern mystic religious experiences] ...and not holding fast to the Head, from Whom all the body, being supplied and knit together by the joints and bands, is increasing *with* the increase of God. Therefore, if you have died together *with Christ* from the elements of the world, why are you subjecting yourselves to *the decrees of men* as if you were living in *the world*?" (vs 17-20).

That's what's the matter with the Laodiceans. *They are living in the world*—we all have to live in the world—***and they become part of the world!*** Jesus said that ***we are not to be of the world just as He was not of the world,*** even though we have to live in the world.

- don't snuggle up to the world
- don't snuggle up to their philosophies
- don't snuggle up to their religious teachings

The Laodiceans are given some counsel!

Revelation 3:19: "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore, be zealous and repent.... [whatever the correction is, take it] ...Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me" (vs 19-20).

You can recover from Laodiceanism if you come back to Christ. He's knocking at the door. He has spewed you out of His mouth and He is not dwelling in you, but He's still with you ***hoping you'll repent!*** So, answer the call and open the door.

Verse 21: "To the one who overcomes will I give *authority* to sit with Me in My Throne, even as I also overcame, and sat down with My Father in His Throne. The one who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches" (vs 21-22).

We'll pick it up tomorrow right here at Rev. 4 and see how the Church Age ends, and ***then the 50th day harvest, which is the harvest of God!***

Scriptures from *The Holy Bible in Its Original Order, A Faithful Version*

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- 1) 1 Corinthians 15:20-25
- 2) Hebrews 12:22-24
- 3) James 1:17-18
- 4) Revelation 1:3-8, 19-20
- 5) Revelation 2:2-5, 7
- 6) Ephesians 1:3-4, 17-18
- 7) Ephesians 4:11-14
- 8) Acts 20:26-30
- 9) Ephesians 5:14-17

- 10) Revelation 2:8-11
- 11) 1 Thessalonians 2:12-15
- 12) 1 Thessalonians 5:6-10
- 13) Acts 7:54-60
- 14) Revelation 2:12-15
- 15) 1 Corinthians 1:12-13
- 16) 1 Corinthians 3:1, 6-7, 10
- 17) 1 Corinthians 10:7-9, 14, 19-21
- 18) Revelation 2:18-25
- 19) Galatians 1:6-10
- 20) Galatians 3:1
- 21) Galatians 4:8-10
- 22) 2 Corinthians 2:17
- 23) 2 Corinthians 3:1
- 24) 2 Corinthians 4:1-5
- 25) 2 Corinthians 6:14-18
- 26) 2 Corinthians 11:3-4, 13-15
- 27) 2 Corinthians 13:5
- 28) Revelation 3:1-2, 5-6
- 29) Hebrews 2:1-3
- 30) Hebrews 3:12
- 31) Hebrews 4:3
- 32) Hebrews 10:26-27
- 33) Revelation 3:8-10
- 34) Revelation 3:14-19
- 35) Colossians 2:1-4, 6-10, 16-20
- 36) Revelation 3:19-22

Scriptures referenced, not quoted:

- Leviticus 23
- Deuteronomy 16
- John 5
- Revelation 1
- Colossians 1
- Galatians 5
- Palm 111
- Revelation 6
- 1 Corinthians 5-6; 8; 11-12; 15
- Galatians 2; 5
- 2 Corinthians 10
- 1 Kings 13-14
- Hebrews 6
- Philippians 1-2

Also referenced: In-Depth Study:

Epistle of Paul to the Hebrews

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