

THE PROBLEM WITH SARDIS

Rev. 3:1 And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write; These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead.

As we have travelled through the ancient region of Asia Minor we have visited four of the seven churches, - Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira. We have noticed their strengths and failings, and the whole point of our study is to allow the Word of God to speak to us individually and also as a body of God's people ... and to encourage us where we need to be encouraged, and to challenge us where we need to be challenged. Warren Weirsbe wrote, "We are still listening to what the Holy Spirit has to say to the churches; for these messages from Christ belong to our day as well as to the first century. Churches are people, and human nature has not changed. So, as we continue our study, we must not look on these letters as ancient relics. On the contrary, they are mirrors in which we see ourselves!"

From the city of Thyatira we're travelling thirty-three miles southward along the Roman highway to the city of Sardis ... about 15 miles inland from the Aegean Sea, and it was the greatest city in the Roman province of Lydia. It sat on a hill 1500 feet high, and it looked absolutely impregnable ... dominating the valley ... looking across to the foothills of Mount Tmolus (5900 feet high). The almost perpendicular cliffs looked unassailable. It was so easy to defend ... or so it seemed.

It was also one of the oldest cities in Asia, with a history dating back to 1200 BC when it was established as the capital of the Lydian king Croesus, a name synonymous with wealth. Despite its apparent impregnability, the city fell to the Persian armies of Cyrus in 549 BC. (Cyrus was one of the kings during whose reign Daniel prophesied.) Unfortunately for Sardis, it was captured again by Alexander the Great in 334 BC, and by Seleucid Antiochus in 214 BC, and by the Romans in 188 B.C. Then, in AD17, it was struck by a powerful earthquake, a blow from which it never fully was able to recover.

So basically, it was a city that erroneously considered itself undefeatable ... even though the evidence pointed to the contrary!

That's the background, what of the letter itself?

Who is speaking?

The Lord Jesus is described as *having* the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches (1:20) ... and the seven Spirits of God refers to the Holy Spirit, cf. Rev. 1:4 John to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace *be* unto you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from **the seven Spirits** which are before his throne; 4:5 And out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunderings and voices: and *there were* seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are **the seven Spirits** of God; 5:6 And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are **the seven Spirits** of God sent forth into all the earth..

What is the significance of the Lord Jesus and the Holy Spirit being mentioned together? ... Well, the Holy Spirit accompanies the Lord Jesus as He observes the churches, *These things saith he [Christ] that hath **the seven Spirits of God** [Holy Spirit], and **the seven stars** [Church]*. The Lord Jesus introduced a similar theme as He spoke with the disciples, Jn. 14:16 I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; 17 Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.

But it is important to make the point that He, - the Holy Spirit, - is *outside* this church of Sardis ... How can we say He is outside the church? Well, notice His judgement concerning them, v.1 *thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead*. You reckon you are alive and doing well, but, - declared Jesus, - you are not, because you are dead! Now, since Jesus is *the way, the truth and the life* (Jn. 14:6) ... life and death are mutually exclusive in Christ, - the person who belongs to Jesus has been born again and has life more abundantly ... but the church at Sardis was dead ... Therefore, Christ was standing on the outside!

Now, how can a church be a true church if Christ is on the outside?! Well, there is the problem!! This church was living on past glory. At present they were deemed to be busy ... but not as far as the Lord was concerned. No matter how many man-made programs and projects they had in motion, they were spiritually lifeless ... dead to Christ! It didn't matter how active they seemed to be, - they were more a *circus* than a church, so spiritually-speaking Christ judged them as a corpse.

... And such serious implications! Why was He standing outside? Because that is where this church had ostracised Him, - that was where they wanted to keep

Him, ... and when you keep the Saviour out, you also keep the Holy Spirit outside ... and when you keep the Holy Spirit out you keep God out, and you keep His Word out, and you keep His blessings from your door! ...

Now ... what kind of a church is it that doesn't have the Holy Spirit?!! These people from Sardis were so used to telling themselves how invincible they were, they had started to believe it ... And it was affecting them spiritually! Like their city, they considered themselves spiritually impregnable, but in reality, they were a defeated congregation ... and the worst about it was, they couldn't even recognise it! They were fooling themselves. They had lost their strength and life in the Holy Spirit, and God had become excess to their requirements. They didn't even notice when He wasn't among them!

What seemed to be one of the problems that contributed to how they were spiritually? Well, there was no mention of persecutions, - there was no mention of some of the hardships and difficulties suffered by some of the other churches. In fact, it was a fairly easy life being a Christian in Sardis and you didn't have to put yourself out all that much for your faith. It was a kind of an 'add on' Christianity rather than a 'take over'. Basically, being a Christian was 'fairly handy', - it didn't need to take too much out of you! As a consequence, you didn't rely all that much on God, and the Holy Spirit ... You continued being a Christian very much as it suited you ...

Jesus had explained to the disciples why the work of the Holy Spirit was so necessary, Jn. 16:8 And when he is come, he will reprove [*rebuke, scold, correct*] the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: 9 Of sin, because they believe not on me; 10 Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; 11 Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged ... 13 Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will show you things to come 14 He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you. ... Basically, a church is not a church if the Holy Spirit isn't in it. ... And the Church doesn't have authority/power unless it takes notice that the 'seven stars' are in the right hand of Christ (1:16). If the church doesn't take the Holy Spirit of God seriously it's closing off the air which is necessary for it to breathe ... and when you don't breathe ... *you die!*

... It's the Holy Spirit Who comes and makes you aware of your sin and your need of salvation ... and your *continued* need of salvation. It's the Holy Spirit

Who in Sovereign Grace applies the blood that has cleansed you and continues to cleanse you from sin. It's the Holy Spirit Who is God's seal upon your heart that proves you belong to Christ. ... If you haven't known the work of the Holy Spirit *you're not saved!* ... *and it doesn't matter whether or not you are a baptized church member, or even a pastor!*

And a church cannot be a church without the Holy Spirit ... because each member of the Church of Christ has been baptised with/by/in the Holy Spirit the moment God opened your heart to your need of salvation, and you believed in the Lord Jesus Christ to be saved (I Cor. 12:13)! ...

Since almost the beginning of the New Testament church the work of the Holy Spirit has had to be carefully understood. Some saw it as a kind of magical formula to carry out the spectacular. In fact, it came to be the 'benchmark', - in some congregations, - as to a person's spirituality. If they could 'speak in tongues' better than another believer, or 'prophecy' better than another ... then that person was held in higher esteem. It was held to signify that person was somehow more spiritual, more advanced in the faith. It caused such spiritual pride that a furore erupted in the Corinthian church ... and the doctrine of the Holy Spirit has been similarly abused many times since!

Paul even had to warn the churches to be extra-vigilant. There were those who set out to imitate the ministry of the apostles, as he explained, **Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light (II Cor. 11:14)** ... and that He tries to impersonate the things of God. And Satan is doing that more and more, especially as the end of the age rapidly approaches. Remember, the working of Satan, - wrote Paul, - is accompanied **with all power and signs and lying wonders (II Thess. 2:9)**. Jesus Himself warned *His disciples*, Mt. 24:4 **Take heed that no man deceive you.**

And then there is another danger ... We could go the other direction and start to limit the Holy Spirit's power. We could become so suspicious that when the Holy Spirit *is* working we dampen His work by failing to attribute that work to Him! ... This was one of the issues during revival times when some from the more hyper-Calvinistic school tended to disbelieve that God *was* truly working!

But the bare fact is that the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ cannot do without the work of the Holy Spirit. Without the work of the Holy Spirit the church is dead ... And that was what was happening in Sardis!

The majority of the church in that city did not notice the Holy Spirit had left them. ... But, how can you not notice? Well, it's quite easy, actually. Instead of trusting in God for their future, they began trusting in men ... and in committees ... and in their own 'clevernesses'. After a while, they had started to replace the things of God with what they considered might be more attractive to the people. I would reckon the numbers plummeted in their prayer meetings. I would also guess more people found more reasons to be absent from the means of grace. After all, the people in such a large city as Sardis led busy lives ... and they wouldn't always have been able to commit themselves as much as they might have told you they would have wanted to.

At the beginning it had been a great going work. It had made an impact on the community. ... We don't read about Paul having to write a letter to this church to sort out some problem or another. In the beginning they simply 'kept their heads down' and got on with the work. ... How many congregations in Kirkcaldy, - including our own, - used to be so well-attended and used to have a vibrant witness in the area? I would imagine the church in Sardis would have been good at one time, - good, sound, old-fashioned Gospel preaching ... Sunday Schools packed with children eager to learn ... congregations filled with people unashamedly presenting Christ faithfully in the area ...

What is happening nowadays though? How true it is that the Lord Jesus surveys many a once-faithful congregation with the judgment falling from His lips, *I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead ... dead ...* in a place that's supposed to uphold and preach Jesus Christ as the Way the Truth and the Life. ... *Dead!*

It was a mournful message He brought to them ... but wouldn't it have been even more mournful if He hadn't brought it to them at all! ... He could have 'let them go without saying a thing'. But here, - once again, - is God's grace in action. He drew near to these people because He wanted to offer them another opportunity to return to being a Holy Spirit-filled church. ... We call it 'revival'! Really, you cannot claim to be a true church of Christ *without* being Spirit-filled ... so He was calling them back to their roots.

Then, you might say, but how can they hear Him if they are dead ... for if they are dead they're deaf to His call. Yes, that is absolutely true, but look at the 'chink of light' in v.4 ... there remained *a few names even in Sardis who had not defiled their garments*. It was to that small number the Saviour appealed. The Holy Spirit had not left Sardis completely ... He was still alive in the testimonies of

a few ... even a few! And remember again how God delights to work when everything seems to be against Him. ... When David stood in front of Goliath, when Elijah was hiding in the cave, when Habakkuk was bemoaning the wickedness of His people, ... when the work seems to be almost finished ... those are the times when God steps in to achieve His purposes!

When we look around us today the Church in the United Kingdom is taking an awful battering ... and I don't see any signs of it improving anytime soon ... but God will always continue to work through His faithful people until our Lord Jesus Christ returns.

It's a personal question to you, as we bring our study to a conclusion ... Which side of the church in Sardis are you sitting on? Are you sitting on the side that wants to keep up with the world and bring in many of its contraptions? Don't you see how that has not served the Lord's work well! Instead of strengthening our hand, it has weakened us to what we are today. ... Or are you sitting with the few on the side where God the Holy Spirit is being implored to come again to His people ... the side that lifts up the Name of Christ? That's the side of the church where He is in the centre. It is Him that is preached, and not another. That is the side of the church where you will find the Bibles still opened and God's Word being faithfully taught.

It was only a wee small group ... but Christ continued to have His people there ... people faithfully seeking Him out. I trust we shall listen to Him, and stay by His side, and not be afraid or ashamed to uphold His precious Name. Amen.

THE PREDICAMENT WITHIN SARDIS

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

In our previous study we looked at **the problem with Sardis** ... that even though they had a name to be alive, God had judged them spiritually dead. There was an apathy in their souls, and an emptiness in their meetings, and a listlessness in their witness! They had lost their testimony, and they had taken their eyes off the Saviour. They had allowed themselves to become infiltrated by

error and they had succumbed to the spirit of compromise and the influence of godlessness. This was **the predicament within Sardis**.

And in order to deal with the dilemma, action had to be taken immediately. The situation was so far-gone the church in Sardis was in danger of disappearing. And as such drastic circumstances prevailed, the Lord Jesus addressed His people. First of all, He told them ...

BE ATTENTIVE *Be watchful*

The life in their assembly was going from bad to worse. By virtue of them being told to be watchful indicates they were lacking in that area! Anything and everything was being allowed to creep in through their doors and cause disruption and harm. There were 'no sentries on guard' and the enemy had infiltrated God's people and was 'sucking the life' out of these church members. ... They had laid aside the armour of God mentioned by Paul in Eph. 6 ... And this was a serious situation, for the light of the Gospel witness was going out!

It is so sad that the majority of these church members didn't even have the capacity to be aware of what was happening around them. Issues that as Christians they ought to have been awake to, they were completely ignorant. Their Bibles were closed, faithful preaching of God's Word was virtually non-existent, there was no feeling of necessity to guard the things of God ... *Does it sound familiar?! ...* They had nothing to say any longer to their community. When something happened that required them to stand up for Christ, they remained silent ... for they had nothing to say. You could imagine them not having an opinion on anything substantial ... They were asleep, and they were failing to fulfil the purpose for which Christ had saved and called them!

So, then, what use were they? They were no use! They were being told to **be attentive**, ... but it was too late for the most of them for even though they had a name to be living, they were dead as far as their witnessing for the Lord was concerned! ... And what else can you do to the dead but bury them! They were of no use. But, in the grace of God, He continued to contend with His people and He instructed them to **be watchful** ... to waken up!

... And we ought to remember the secular background to this city. It sat on a high hill 1500 feet above the surrounding countryside. It looked, - and was reputed to be, - impregnable ... but you remember how it fell to the Persian armies of Cyrus in 549 BC ... then it was captured by the Greek Alexander the Great in 334 BC, and again by Seleucid Antiochus in 214 BC, and by the

Romans in 188 B.C. Finally, it was struck by the powerful earthquake in AD17, from which it never fully recovered. ... The same thing that happened to the city was happening to the church. They thought they were invincible, but they weren't ... Waken up, and **be attentive!**

BE ACTIVE [and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die](#)
 Christ reminded them of their duty. He reminded them of what they had to do. Get back in control. Get back onto your feet, and stand! Yes, their situation was dire, but they were being given a final opportunity and if they squandered that opportunity through their spiritual complacency, neglect and lethargy, their witness *would* be removed ... the light of their candlestick would be extinguished. The last spark would be put out ... and this was their final warning! ... And it wouldn't be the community of the ungodly who would put their light out, - it would be Christ!

As we look at this church in Sardis we can't help but look at ourselves. How much do the characteristics of these Christians in that city mirror the image of our church and the church of today? We have a name to live ... but are we truly alive?! Are we '*playing*' at being Christians? How much of a hold over our lives does Christ really have? These were questions the congregation in Sardis needed to ask ... but weren't asking. And because they didn't think to ask these questions *Christ* came onto the scene and He brought it to their attention in a very forceful manner! It was a serious situation, - it was 'the last straw', as we say!

And when Christ confronted them He made it clear they had to accept the blame for losing their zeal for His Name, - they hadn't looked after themselves spiritually as they should have done.

They had allowed outside influences to come in and ruin their witness and testimony. They had ceased from being faithful to the Lord, and they had become lazy, careless and slack in His work. This same Lord Who gave His life for them was calling them to account.

And yet, to those who were prepared to listen to His voice He told them to waken up and [strengthen the things which remain](#). What did it involve, to [strengthen the things which remain](#)? It involved returning to where they once had been with the Lord ... to getting back to the foundations on which their church had been built ... to faithfully uphold and maintain the Name and cause of Christ. ... **Be active** ... And then the Lord then went on to tell them to ...

BE AWARE for I have not found thy works perfect before God.

He had examined them, and He could find no evidence of their works being acceptable before God. They were being weighed in the balance and were found wanting. Yes, their church remained open, - but the whole emphasis of their meetings was on themselves, and not on the Lord. Their church had become a place for social and community gatherings ... and the preaching of the Word had been squeezed out ... And the new people who had come in had brought their new 'gospel' with them, which was not the Gospel of Christ!

But now the Lord was giving them one last opportunity ... and they had to do something about their spiritual dearth. They had to follow the Lord's instructions and they had to make sure their works before God would be counted as perfect once again. What a responsibility they had! ... What a change they had to bring about in that fellowship! People were going to be offended. Many of them who had become comfortable with these new ways would leave. ... They would either go somewhere else, or they would go nowhere at all ... but Jesus had to be listened to! It was His church, and it had to be returned to the foundations upon which it was built.

What little was left, was ready to expire ... and they had to draw the witness in Sardis back from the brink! ... And so they were then instructed to ...

BE ADMONISHED Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent.

As He did in His message to the Ephesians (Rev. 2:5), He told them to 'remember'. These memories, - when remembered correctly, - would lead them back to repentance. They would stop being complacent, for complacency in the Lord's work is sin, and sin in the life of the believer requires repentance.

Christ challenged them to remember those early days when the Word of God was precious to them and they were not ashamed to stand up for His truth. He challenged them to remember the great times of blessing, the powerful preaching of the Word of God, the glorious ingathering of souls unto salvation. He was telling them to remember, return and repent!

"Remember" - it's old-fashioned because it involves casting your mind back to former days, but that is what this church was told to do. Many nowadays like to be the first to explore so-called new areas of Christianity ... and they catch the imagination of those who yearn for the spectacular ... It's like the [vain jangling](#) Paul refers to in I Tim. 1:6.

“Remember back to the ‘day and hour’ when you took Christ as your Saviour and Lord” ... when you began your walk with Him, *Ps. 77:11 I will remember the works of the LORD: surely I will remember thy wonders of old. 12 I will meditate also of all thy work, and talk of thy doings. ...* “Hold on to that, and return to the place where you once were with the Saviour” ... *Jer. 6:16 Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein. ...* “Don’t keep Him outside. Open the door, and *let Him in!*”

... What happens if you don’t listen to Him though? What happens if you don’t heed His Word? ... Here is what happens ...

BE ASSURED *If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.*

A thief comes to steal that which you hold dear ... and he comes when you don’t expect him. He’ll rummage through your property and he’ll look for the most precious things you own and he will take them away from you.

These people held many things precious, and Jesus told them He would strip them of their glory if they do not heed His warnings. You see, they weren’t expecting Christ to chastise them, - He didn’t come into their calculations anymore. They were doing well, - they had good plans that were successfully achieving their purposes and aspirations ... and they were doing very well, thank you! They weren’t worrying about the consequences of setting the Lord aside. Nonetheless, Jesus warned them, *If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.* This was what would happen if they refused to repent. ...

Jesus is coming back again but I’m not sure if this warning refers to the Second Coming. I believe it refers to the occasions when the Spirit of Christ visits a local assembly of His people. He enters in on their proceedings and He listens to the conversations and watches what is going on in His Name. And the problem with this church in Sardis was that they were sleeping, and they failed to awaken. As a consequence, they didn’t notice Christ had come in amongst them and was examining them. He came in unexpected, uninvited and unannounced. ... And the people were caught out! ... The Lord Jesus was telling them that everything in their church was going to be lost if they would not heed the Word He was bringing to them ... and they needed to repent.

CONCLUSION

How do we conclude our study? The situation in Sardis was bad ... but what made it even worse was that the people didn't realise *how bad it really was*. As we look around us today we see a society who has turned its back against God. They have no interest in Him and they don't want to have anything to do with Him. ... But what we have been studying isn't about the society outside, it is about those who are claiming to belong to the Lord Jesus Christ.

... How much of a hold does He have upon you and me? Am I a Christian out of convenience ... because it gives me hope for eternity ... or am I a Christian because I love the God that has saved me, and I want to serve Him to the very best of my ability ... and I won't allow anything to get in the way of what He requires from me? ... Is that why I am a Christian?

... Or am I only a Christian for an hour a week or for a Sunday ... but the rest of the days I live as if He doesn't matter ... I only give Him second place? ... I only 'take Him out' when I come along to the meetings? It is examination time ... Paul wrote, II Cor. 13:5 Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?

To the church in Sardis Jesus gave the very direct warning, ²Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God. ³Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee. ... May the Lord be pleased to see His Word being heeded amongst His people here today! Amen.

THE PROMISE TO SARDIS

Rev. 3:4 Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy. ⁵He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels. ⁶He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

Previously we mentioned how the city of Sardis was built upon a hill, 1500 feet high ... looking out over the Hermus Valley. The hill was always locally referred to as *the rock*. However, it wasn't a rock at all! It was a 1500 feet high mound of compacted mud, easily dissolved by rain ... A far cry from the delusion its citizens were happy to believe! The geologists say that rain and

frost continually wore it away until today little remains of the plateau on which the city formerly stood.

In other words, the city standing proudly over the whole countryside was built upon nothing more than shifting mud. Perhaps, like me, your mind is taken immediately to the parable the Lord Jesus told about the man who, - unlike his neighbour who *did* build upon a rock, - he instead decided to build upon the sand. All was well until [the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house \(Mt. 7:27\)](#). But, because it had no foundations holding it firmly, that house fell, and [great was the fall of it!](#)

The lesson Jesus was teaching his hearers was that many people pursue religion, but their energy is wasted because they build upon a shifting base. That was what was happening in the church of Sardis ... many of its members were putting their faith in the latest craze to come in through their doors.

But God always keeps back a portion for Himself. It doesn't often seem to amount to much. He has done it from the beginning though, - He kept back Abel for Himself, and Seth, and Noah, and Abraham ... and throughout Scripture He has always maintained a faithful witness. The Bible refers to this faithful witness as the remnant, and that remnant is what is left over after the majority of the people have *abandoned* God

Here, - *even* in Sardis, - God had kept back and maintained His remnant! You may sometimes become down-hearted at the state of the Church in the United Kingdom, and throughout the Western hemisphere ... but you need not worry for the future of the Church is not founded upon its members ... the future of the Church is founded upon the One Who *bought* the Church by the shedding of His own precious blood on the hill of Calvary. ...

Therefore, the Church is eternally secure. It will continue until the end of time, and then will extend throughout eternity. ... And so, - *even* in the city of Sardis, among the professing congregation, - God had His truly blood-bought and born-again people who honoured His Name. Let's look at them and see the kind of people they were so we can follow their example.

THEIR GARMENTS [Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white ... 5 the same shall be clothed in white raiment](#)

In spiritual matters, you are known by the clothes you wear. You are either clothed in garments that are defiled, or in garments of pure white. Of course, we

are born with the garments that are defiled for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God (Rom. 3:23) ... 10 There is none righteous ... 12 There is none that seeketh after God. When we come to realise how defiled we are before God, we want to have a change, and we look within ourselves for how we can bring about that change. So we work out religion has something to do with it, and we look to some form of religion to cover our spiritual nakedness, as it were.

However, God has only one thing to say about the garments we would choose to cover up our nakedness ... He says they are nothing more than filthy rags (Is. 64:6). They are totally inadequate. No matter how fitting we might think they are, God says they are unclean. It is like when Adam and Eve discovered their nakedness they tried to cover themselves with fig leaves (Gen. 3:7) ... but everybody knows leaves fade, and their nakedness would soon be uncovered again. So, therefore, God replaced their fig leaves with the skin of an animal He slaughtered. Their guilt was covered by the first sacrifice God ever made on this earth.

As you have come in this morning, how are you dressed in the presence of God? You can be dressed from your own wardrobe belonging to this world ... or you can be dressed in that fine white raiment from the wardrobe of Heaven.

Consider the white raiment of the Ancient of Days ... Daniel saw Him sitting on His throne, and His garment was white as snow (Dan. 7:9). Such are the garments with which He clothes His own. .. That which the King wears, His children wears also.

... When the Lord Jesus was transfigured on the mountain, His raiment was white as light (Mt. 17:2). When Mary saw Him in the Garden after His resurrection, she remembered how His raiment was white as snow (Mt. 28:3). In his vision, John was shown a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes (Rev 7:9) ... the same robes as their Master ... dressed in the righteousness of our God.

What else do those white robes tell us? They tell us that every member of Christ's Church is dressed by the same means. There is no different way for the rich people and for the poor. The Indians of South America are saved in exactly the same way as the citizens of our large cities. There is not one way for some people to be saved, and then it changes for someone else to be saved. No, Jesus explained it, Jn. 14:6 I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the

Father, but by me. Salvation does not come through a church or a denomination ... While we all come to Jesus from different situations, in order to reach Heaven we need to come through Him ... through saving faith in Christ alone. Therefore, in Christ all the Redeemed are the same, as John described, to her *[Christ's Bride]* was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. (Rev 19:8)

These garments of the redeemed, - granted unto His people from the wardrobe in Heaven, - defined their position in Christ ... and as a consequence of **their garments** we also notice how the Lord presents ...

THEIR GLORY for they are worthy.

How are they worthy? ... In such a city as Sardis ... belonging to such a congregation ... how can these few names possibly be worthy?! Basically, the Saviour had made them worthy. There was nothing in themselves that constituted their own worthiness. They were worthy because of God's grace. The psalmist declared, 34:2 My soul shall make her boast in the Lord ... 44:8 In God we boast all the day long, and praise Thy Name for ever. ... Paul told the Corinthians, - people who were all-too-ready to boast in themselves, I Cor. 1:31 He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.

Just over a year ago the coffin of a well-known celebrity was paraded through the streets of Leeds ... The crowds praised him, television programmes spoke of his charitable works ... but that man was found out, and the glory he heaped upon himself has disappeared forever. ... In recent weeks the glory of a religious leader, - the highest member of his establishment in this United Kingdom, - greatly-respected and highly-honoured, - has lost the credibility he had built up for himself over many decades. ... *How are the mighty fallen* (II Sam. 1:19)!

If you choose to live in your own glory, that glory will one day be taken from you and disappear. However, if you are living according to the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ, that glory will continue with you on out into eternity, Rom. 8:29 For whom *[God]* did foreknow, he also did predestinate *to be* conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. ³⁰ Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, *them he also glorified.*

What does it mean to be glorified? It means to be dressed in **the garments** of our Heavenly Father. It means we are no longer standing naked before Him, or dressed in filthy rags ... We are standing before Him adorned in the garments of His glory, purchased for us by the blood of Jesus Christ shed on Calvary!

Their garments, their glory ...

THEIR GAIN ⁵He that overcometh, ... I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.

He that overcometh ... Yes, God has His people who, - beyond any shadow of a doubt, - will overcome. In the garden of Gethsemane, He blessed His Father, Jn. 18:9 Of them which Thou gavest Me have I lost none. None for whom the Saviour has died can ever been taken out of His hand (Jn. 10:29) ... and, wrote Paul, Phil. 1:21 For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. ... Even death is swallowed up in victory (I Cor. 15:54) ... Death, where is your sting? Grave, where is your victory? ... v.57 I thank God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Even before they lay my body in the ground, I shall already have had the victory. The very moment I take my last breath on earth is the very moment I first breathe the beautiful air of Heaven! I shall have lost nothing, for entering Heaven will be my gain.

I shall not have to worry if I have been good enough ... because I know if it had been left to me, *I never* would have been good enough ... and that is why I trust in Christ as my righteousness. He is the reason I'm saved, and He is the reason I'm going to Heaven. I can contribute nothing to my eternal destination, - it is only because of the goodness of God in grace that I am assured of His presence forever in Glory. *That's my gain!*

My name is in the Lamb's Book of Life ... and even before He came to die on the cross my Saviour had already my name written there. "Such love was Your design, O Lord, before the worlds were framed, that God the Father and the Son in covenant formed a mighty plan, my rebel heart to gain".

In mercy, love and grace He has written your name, believer, in the Book of Life ... and there is nothing that can ever erase it ... And on the day you stand before the judgement throne you will stand with Christ by your side ... and He will say to His Father ... Yes, this is one of my Redeemed! Imagine, the King of kings claiming you as His own!

CONCLUSION There was only a relatively small number, - *a few names even*, - in Sardis who were genuinely faithful to the Master ... and He knew each

one of them. This was Christ's promise to the few in Sardis ... He promised them **their garments, their glory, and their gain**. ... And then He said, *He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches*. This letter to Sardis, therefore, is to each of us as well. ... How does this message from the Saviour find you?

Are you studying these verses with us but you cannot say for certain you have this relationship with Christ described here as belonging to these privileged people? You are not sure of your place in Heaven. ... What if you used to be sure, but now it's not as clear as perhaps it once was? With things that have crept into your life, you cannot say for certain you're saved and you will one day go to be with the Lord. You don't have that assurance, and you're afraid the profession you once made lacked the genuine seal of God? Well, the time to make sure is *now*. *Is. 55:6 Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: 7 Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.*

Believer, you're being faithful to the Lord ... but it sometimes seems there are becoming fewer and fewer who hold on to the old Bible truths that have been passed down to us ... Don't fret. Don't give in and change. Stand your ground. Look again to what is ahead of us ... and how the promise of victory comes from no less than our Saviour. In Him, our **garments** have been prepared, the **glory** of Heaven awaits us, and every moment will be our **gain**.

May the Lord encourage us as we take it in, *what the Spirit saith unto the churches!*
Amen.

PHILADELPHIA, - THEIR AUTHORITY

Rev. 3:7 And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write; These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth

Philadelphia was the youngest of the seven churches. It was founded during the reign of King Attalus II, who ruled Pergamum between 159-138 BC. He had a deep affection for his brother, Eumenes, and so he was nicknamed *Philadelphos*, - 'one who loves his brother'. That is how the city got its name.

Even though it was a city in Asia Minor, Alexander the Great's policy of 'hellenization' had brought the Greek culture and language to the region. This meant the local people gradually forgot their own original language and were all but Greeks. Into this culture the church was introduced, and the Lord Jesus presented to His people there in Philadelphia a challenge, [v.8 I have set before thee an open door](#).

As a city, though, Philadelphia was built in fairly precarious surroundings. The city was on the perimeter of a great plain known as the *Burned Land*, - ... on the edge of a large volcanic area. While the benefit in living in such a geological area meant the land was fertile and, therefore, the city benefited from the excellent soil and was a producer of famous wines ... on the downside, who wants to live on the edge of a live volcano?! Not unsurprisingly, the people were frightened and many of them lived out in the countryside. Those who dared to dwell in the city were reckoned to be mad!

However, the words of Christ, - [he shall go no out more \(v.12\)](#), - gave the believers a fresh confidence there would come a new day when they could live safely in their city again.

Normally, in each of the other letters to the churches the Lord Jesus introduced Himself using the descriptive terms of Rev. 1:14-16. He didn't do that, though, when He wrote to this church in Philadelphia. Instead, He reminded them of four aspects of His Divine character.

Firstly, He presents Himself as [He that is holy](#). He sets Himself apart from all the idols worshipped across the city. The word 'holy' relates to His character which is free from sin ... that which is 'clean' and 'pure'. It is that which is set apart. It describes Him as the One in Whom absolute purity is personified. He is unlike any other. There is no sin in Him, and He remains untouched by sin. Sin cannot now or ever attach itself to Him. He only is perfectly holy.

That is the God every fellowship of believers is acquainted with. Therefore, His are the standards He would have us to emulate. It is a high calling and a heavy burden to pursue. It doesn't come lightly, or with little effort. Serving Christ is a *burdensome* task, [Mt. 11:29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me](#). It's a responsibility we take on when we become His ... and these believers in Philadelphia were being reminded Whose they were and Whom they served.

It is a serious 'business' ... belonging to Christ for He is the *holy* God and, therefore, He expects *holiness* from His people, [I Peter 1:15 But as He which hath](#)

called you is holy, so be ye holy ... 16 Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy. ... That was how the Saviour began His introduction to this church.

Secondly, v.7 *These things saith he that is holy, he that is true* ... The word means “that which has not only the name and resemblance, but the real genuine nature corresponding to the name”. He described Himself, Jn. 14:6 *I am the way, the truth, and the life*. ... In the opening chapter of his Gospel, John wrote, 1:14 *the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth*.

He is not just *any* truth, - one form of truth among many - ... He is *the only* truth, and there is no other truth besides Him. He is the *unique* truth. He does not share His truth with another. In Christ and in Christ alone is absolute and perfect truth. Every word that proceeded out of His mouth was truth ... and that is why it is so futile to compare the true faith of Christianity with other faiths and religions. Christianity is not merely one path to God ... alongside other religions ... faith in Christ is the *only* path to God.

And the *label* of Christianity is not in itself truth without making it plain that the true centre of Christianity is Christ and His work on the cross ... as Paul wrote, *we preach Christ crucified (I Cor. 1:23)*. ... The Divine reality of God-given truth is in Christ alone. He is the centre of our faith. Our faith relies and depends upon Him, for it is founded upon Him ... He is the chief cornerstone upon which the building of our faith stands, Eph. 2:21 *In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: 22 In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit*.

These Philadelphian believers were being reminded of the One they served Who is *the Truth* ... and they were to hold their relationship with Him in the truth of His Word to expound their testimony in the city.

Thirdly, *These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David* ... This is in reference to Christ’s absolute authority. He made it abundantly clear He is the only One Who holds the key to the door of salvation ... Jn. 10:9 *by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved*. There is no other means of admission into the presence of God, except through the Name of Christ. His Name alone gains us entrance into the royal courts of Heaven.

He told His disciples that many would come to Him on that day expecting to gain entrance into Heaven (Mt. 7:21), - they knew He had ‘the key to the door’.

It's not a St. Peter or any of the apostles who admits the traveller into Heaven ... The only entrance into Glory is gained by knowing the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour, and because He died for you He has the key in His hand that opens the door for you to enter in. You see, [Acts 4:12](#) *there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved* ... and the only way to be saved is to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ for only by Him can anyone enter Heaven. It is as straightforward and as direct as that!

There is no point trying to serve God and gain entrance into Heaven without trusting in Christ as Saviour and Lord. There is no point being tied to a religion that does not have its confidence in the salvation He procured for us. To be a Christian is to be in a living and present relationship with Christ and to be knowing Him, to be loving Him, and to be serving Him. It is not merely having your name on a church role, or adopting a label. It is to know your sins forgiven, you belong to Christ, and you are on your way to Heaven. It is being under the ownership of the One Who has the key in His hand ... and Who has the authority to open the door and welcome you in.

Fourthly, *These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth.* The point here is not now the possession of the key, but the use of it. This part of the verse relates back to a story in Isaiah 22. There, we are introduced to a man called Shebna. He was the treasurer of King Hezekiah's household. However, he became so arrogant the king replaced him with the faithful steward Eliakim ... of whom it was said, *v.21 I will clothe him with thy robe, and strengthen him with thy girdle, and I will commit thy government into his hand: and he shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and to the house of Judah.* ²²*And the key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder; so he shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open.*

The key was the symbol of the trust and confidence Hezekiah invested in Eliakim ... and it speaks of the trust and confidence God the Father had placed in His only-begotten Son. In turn, in the context of the church in Philadelphia, the power of His presence was being invested in the believers... and their continued faithful witness.

When Christ 'opened the door' for them to work, the church at Philadelphia would not and could not be hindered. ... God's purposes through them would be achieved, regardless of any opposition! Conversely, if the believers in Philadelphia set out on a process that was not led of Christ ... no matter how

much effort was invested ... it would come to nothing. In other words, their attention needed to be taken up with Jesus, and how He would lead them.

And so the description of the Lord Jesus given to the believers in Philadelphia was what they needed to hear ... for it had practical implications concerning their service for Him.

Because He is holy, they were to be holy also. They were to stand out in that city as God's 'set apart' people ... by upholding the Name of Jesus Christ.

Because He is true, the foundations of their faith had to be built upon that truth of Jesus Christ alone. They weren't to waver, - they weren't to be as clouds without water (as Jude puts it, v.12), or trees without fruit. They were to produce the evidence they were true servants of God.

Because He hath the key of David, the promises of God have their source in Him, and only through access to Him can they be achieved. Our salvation is all because of Christ ... and we can also take it further, - as Peter on the Day of Pentecost applied it ... Acts 2:29 Men *and* brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day. ³⁰Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne ... Peter went on to explain, v.34 David is not ascended into the heavens: but he saith himself, The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, ³⁵Until I make thy foes thy footstool [*cf. Ps. 110:1*]. That is anticipating the day yet to come when every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess to the glory of God the Father that Jesus Christ is Lord (Phil. 2:10,11). *That day is coming!* Christ holds the key to the opening of the door on that day!

And the fourth aspect of the character of Christ we have been considering is that whenever He opens the door for service, no man can close it ... and when He shuts the door, no man can open it. He is in control of all the circumstances. ... How beautiful it is that even today in the city of Philadelphia in the country of the anti-Christian Islamic Turkey God continues to honour His promise and maintains a body of believers there. When He opens the door, nothing can close it!

These are the truths the church in that city was being reminded of ... And we need to be reminded of them in these days also! Remember Whose we are and Who we serve. We serve the One Who works out all things in accordance with

His own Divine, eternal and perfect will ... and He calls upon His people to be faithful to the truth we own in the Lord Jesus Christ. For, after all ... I Cor. 3:5 Who then is Paul, and who *is* Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? 6 I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. 7 So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase.

... That was the same message Christ was presenting to the church in Philadelphia, and it is the same message we need to attend to in these increasingly wicked and Godless days. This is the one true God in Whom we must rely. We are indebted to Him for our salvation, purchased for us by His Son on the cross ... and we are today and forever indebted to Him for keeping us faithful to His Word even in the midst of a society like the changing Philadelphia.

Yes, the concept of Christianity is changing beyond any Biblical recognition. It is now considered to be one religion among many, - one path to God along with others. But that is not what the Word of God teaches. Our nation has been built upon the truth of God's Word and allegiance to His Name ... and yet, in modern times, we can see, - before our very eyes, - how our nation is now crumbling because it is abandoning God.

Indeed, these opening words to the church at Philadelphia are for us today also ... not to lose hope, but to keep going on, and to be strong in the strength of this same one and only God. Yes, it teaches those of us who know and love Christ as Saviour and Lord to continue in our faithfulness to *he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth.* ... May the Lord find us to be truly trusting in Him ... and may He be pleased to bless our witness! Amen.

PHILADELPHIA, - THEIR ALLEGIANCE

⁸I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name. ⁹Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee. ¹⁰Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.

The letter to the church at Philadelphia opens with the description of the Lord Jesus (he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth). We looked at how He was **their authority** ... the Source and Guardian of their faith.

Now we come to consider **their allegiance** to Him. This concerns their daily and ongoing experience in Christ ... First of all, we notice He shows them ...

HIS OMNISCIENCE ⁸I know thy works

Each of the letters to the churches contain these same words, *I know thy works*. ... He knew all about the church at Ephesus, - He commended them (2:2,3), but He also knew about their backslidden state (v.4). In Smyna, the church was passing through persecution and He assured them He knew about their suffering (2:9). In Pergamum and Thyatira, the Lord Jesus knew about their efforts in the Gospel, but He also knew they were prepared to accommodate those whom they should have renounced (vv. 13,14). At Sardis, He knew that despite all the 'gloss' the majority of the congregation was spiritually dead ... there was just a small number who contended earnestly for the faith.

And as the Saviour looked into the church in Philadelphia, He could see the burdens pressing heavily upon them, and He knew how they wanted to be faithful in their service to Him, *I know thy works*. They wanted to give their very best.

But, at the same time, such words as *I know thy works* can also be daunting. It is chilling to consider the Lord Jesus is standing over our congregation ... and He knows all our works. ... He knows what's 'going on' ... He knows all about the intimate details of our conversations, the opinions and considerations we hold concerning each other, and the work in this place. He knows of what it consists, and our faithfulness to the doctrines of Scripture, and our witness concerning Him. ... **His omniscience**, - the all-knowingness of God, - observes our every thought and action, as He declares, *I know thy works*. ...

He then went on to instruct the people to *behold* ... to stop what they were doing and pay close attention to what He was saying! After they had grasped the fact of **His omniscience** He continued in His epistle to present something they really needed to hear for their witness in that city. He set before them ...

THEIR OPPORTUNITY *behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it*

They were obviously surrounded by godless people, and the tone of the letter indicates the enormity of the task before them for the Lord Jesus approached them tenderly and with encouraging words, *I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it* ... In other words, “I have opened the door, and the door will remain open”. Yes, of course, as the Saviour indicates, there will be those who will try to shut the door, but He won’t allow them.

This also demonstrates that the initial work in the spreading of the Gospel is started by God. He is the power behind it. We don’t initiate it, - we cannot cause a single anxious thought ... it is God that begins the ‘stirring’, and then He calls His people to work with Him in the bringing about of His purposes. ... *He ‘opens the door’*.

You and I look around us and we can see all the obstacles and hindrances that stand against us ... All we see is a barren wilderness, bereft of spiritual life but the Lord, nevertheless, says, *behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it*. ... We could also entitle this part of our study, **His omnipotence**. Not only is He **omniscient**, - all-knowing, - He is also all-powerful, - **omnipotent** - ... and that means He can do whatever He sets His mind to do ... and when He opens a door, even if all the forces of Hell were to try, they could never close it!

Where God has chosen to reveal Himself in the world no government/leader, no false religion, no set of manmade laws has ever been able to, - or will ever be able to, - shut the *door of opportunity* God opens. In the lands today where there are forces determined to annihilate the Christian church, the enemies of God will fail because where God chooses to open a door, no-one can shut it!

That is our opportunity to work! ... It is God that opens the door, and it is God Who keeps the door open. And, as long as He keeps that door open His people have the responsibility to take advantage of the opportunities He is giving us.

The last time I preached on this passage was in Nigeria. In the northern part of the country, - shortly after we left, - thirty-seven people were killed by an Islamic car bomb ... but the preaching of Christ has continued despite the enemy. In the southern part of that country, - just before we arrived, - the missionaries had been pulled out because something like 168 Christians had been killed for their faith ... but the enemy *still* could not stop the preaching of the Gospel and souls being saved. Why? ... because the sovereign Lord has set before the people in that land an open door, and no man can shut it.

And for as long as the Lord has decreed, He will continue to maintain the witness of His people in that land, other lands, and also in this country of Scotland. ... And let's make it even more personal, bringing it into our own congregation ... It is only the will of God that is keeping our doors open, and as long as it is His will, there is nothing that can shut them!

Humanism and atheism is becoming increasingly more arrogant against the Church of Christ. Lethargy and disinterest is more widespread than ever before, - Jesus said it would be, *Mt. 24:12 the love of many shall wax cold* ... And, - on an ordinary level, - it is hard to see how the tide can be turned ... Yet, at this moment, there continues to be an open door before us. And it is the Lord Jesus Who has opened that door, and He will continue to keep it open ... regardless of the opposition!

That's great news ... but, we also have to be aware that along with the *promise* comes the *privilege* ... and with the *privilege* comes the *pledge* for God's people to be responsible to the charge He has given us ... This leads us on from considering **His omnipotence** and **our opportunity** to ...

OUR OBEDIENCE *for thou hast a little strength*

We know what kind of an area we live in, - people aren't interested, and we could begin to feel as if our work is in vain. But even if we were a large church faithfully involved in the Lord's work, the enormity of the task would still show us we have only a little strength. Yet, when you look at this church in Philadelphia, this is one of its most beautiful attributes ... that they were simply lovely people who were precious to the Lord, and He was precious to them ... and they wanted to serve Him to the very best of their meagre ability, as helped by the Holy Spirit. ...

I could imagine the Lord Jesus looking at them in the same tender way as He had looked at the widow leaving her two coins on the offering plate in the temple. Remember how He said about her, *Mk. 12:43 this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury.*

And here in Philadelphia, Christ was surveying the fellowship of believers, - they didn't seem to have much, and neither they did, for they honestly recognised the wisdom and truth in His words, ... and they *did* only possess 'a little strength' But, - on another level, - what a mighty strength this faithful

remnant were blessed with because of their confidence in the Lord Jesus! ...
That was what commended the church in Philadelphia to Him. They loved and trusted Him ... and He knew it!

They were obedient ... and that is when God achieves His purposes in His people, - and that is why He kept their door open. In fact, it is when we realise how weak we truly are in our own strength, that is when God declares we are at our strongest for Him, - I Cor. 1:27 But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty ... II Cor. 12. 10 Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong. ... **Our obedience** ...

OUR OBLIGATION and *[thou]* hast kept my word

That's the most important activity to occupy the believer, - to keep the Word of God. ... To keep the Word of God means that I'm paying attention to what He is saying to me. It means that I am recognising His authority over me, - He's my Heavenly Father, and I'm His child ... I'm His servant, and He's my Master. ... And how privileged and blessed I am to be in such a standing with the Lord of all creation!

It's the consequence of knowing you are saved by the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ shed on Calvary ... You know your salvation is all because of God's grace, and it was nothing of your own good works or efforts that saved you. The Bible explains that we were dead in trespasses and in sins (Eph. 2:1) ... Eph. 2:4 But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, 5 Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) ... Because of sovereign grace, - that which I could never have earned, or even considered asking from God, - He saved me through faith, and the Scriptures make it plain, v.8 and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: 9 Not of works, lest any man should boast. 10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

And central to how God makes Himself known to us is through His Word, I Pet. 1:23 ... born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you. This is the Word we are challenged to keep ... and this church in Philadelphia is commended for keeping it. ... Yes, here we see *their loyalty to the Scriptures* (thou hast kept my word), and *their loyalty to the Saviour* ...

God's Omniscience, Our Opportunity, Our Obedience, Our Obligation

... We can finish off our study by referring to the closing words in verse eight under the title ...

HIS OWN

and hast not denied my name.

We shall return to a further aspect of this when we come to study the next few verses under the title **Philadelphia, - their ambition**; but just for now, in conclusion, consider these words, and [*thou*] hast not denied my name. This is God's claim upon **His own**. They had passed the test.

'Saved and lost' is not a doctrine you will find in the Scriptures. Those whom Christ saves, He keeps from now and into all eternity. Yet, God's Word instructs us, II Pet. 1:10 *give diligence to make your calling and election sure*. Don't take it for granted. When the Lord Jesus claims you, He places within your heart the desire to follow after Him ... to endure *to the end that you will be saved* (Mt. 10:22). He keeps you going and He prevents you from giving up. He gives you the desire for His people and His Word. He changes you from the inside out, - you are no longer the person today you used to be. Christ has come into your life and He has made it His home. That means He has cleaned it all out ... for He won't live anywhere there is dirt. He has done His work on you from head to foot ... and He owns every part of you.

Therefore, everything you are is His. You are no longer your own, - you belong to Him. He has 'the say' over you. Whatever you are thinking of doing, you put it past Him first ... and He directs you by His Word. ... And these people in Philadelphia realised that. They looked to Him as their Protector and their Guide.

And that is how it is with us too. We are under the authority of the Lord Jesus. He is not simply a part of our lives ... He is the whole extent of our being, - the reason we are. You see, that was what He meant to this church ... to these believers. That was how He could commend them so warmly, - they had kept His Word, and had not denied His Name.

CONCLUSION

So He had them in the palm of His hand, and He was using them in the fulfilment of His purposes there in that city of Philadelphia, - He was keeping the doors open! To the outside world, it didn't seem as if they might accomplish anything of much worth ... but the Lord Jesus knew what they were capable of.

And they were willing to be used in His service ... to give to Him all of the little they possessed ... and, you know, God blessed them. They were going to see “the synagogue of Satan” coming to recognise Christ as the Messiah, present in the congregation of Philadelphia. The Jews that were so often antagonistic to the Gospel were going to receive it, - that was a promise Christ gave ... and we know He keeps His word!

And when the time of trial would come upon His people He would keep them safe ... as the Old Testament Scriptures had recorded He had kept them in the land of Goshen when the final plague descended upon the Egyptians.

In verse seven we saw Christ in His relationship with the church in Philadelphia as **their authority**. Then, we see here **their allegiance** to Him ... and that was what kept them in those days. The purpose for which Christ has saved us is to serve Him ... and that purpose remains the same today. As long as we are obedient to His will we can trust in Him to maintain our witness. If we trivialise His calling and ‘walk away’ from our responsibilities, you can understand it if He was to shut the door and withdraw His company. Yes, He calls for our **allegiance** ... ‘keeping our hand on the plough, and not looking back’.

May the Lord teach us through the study of His people there in Philadelphia to serve Him faithfully together ... and not to allow the enormity of the task to overwhelm us, but to simply keep on trusting in Him! Amen.

PHILADELPHIA, - THEIR AMBITION

¹¹Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown. ¹²Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, *which is* new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and *I will write upon him* my new name. ¹³He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

This church in Philadelphia has been faithful from the early days when they came together as a body of God’s people. They have known Him as **their authority (3:7)** and have given to Him **their allegiance (v.8-10)**. Now, at the conclusion of the letter, the Lord Jesus speaks of **their ambition (v.11-13)**.

They were steadfast to His cause. At times it would have been so easy for them to have abandoned the work in the city because of the constant threat of earthquakes ... and they could have scattered to the surrounding countryside ... and the cause of Christ could have been severely affected. Instead, though, they remained faithful to their calling and the Lord Jesus honoured their commitment by opening a door before them that no man could shut. Even though, - on the face of it, - the strength of their abilities was considered to be very limited, yet they had faithfully maintained their witness in presenting the Name of Christ in the city of Philadelphia.

For their faithfulness, they received a promise from the Lord that even their opponents from the “synagogue of Satan” would recognise the work and presence of God in their midst ... He also promised His people would be kept from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.

This was a promise that stretches out into the future, and yet the Lord was preparing His people already. It's very important to recognise God works His purposes out on a different timescale to ours. For example, the psalmist declared, 90:4 a thousand years in Thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night. Peter made a similar assertion, II Peter 3:8 that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. ... What is a long time to us is very short with Him.

Within this setting, then, He spoke, first of all, of the present, and what the people of Philadelphia are already privileged with ...

THE CROWN

¹¹Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown. Behold, I come quickly ... We shall return to that later. But for now, let's notice there is a beautiful inconsistency here that demonstrates the Lord's tenderness towards this congregation. In v.8 He tells them how He is aware they have only a “little strength”. There is nothing particularly powerful or energetic about them ... they have merely a “little strength”. And yet, the Lord Jesus instructed them to nevertheless hold that fast which thou hast. ... Keep a firm grip on the truth you have been privileged with! He *knows* they are able because they have been already trusting in Him to strengthen them.

They are like the small elderly fellowship that seems to have very little ‘going for them’, and yet the Lord continues to sustain them in their endeavours. Why? ... because they are faithful to Him. They mightn’t be able any longer to do the outreach and the activities they used to do ... but they are faithful in what they *can* do, and they pray earnestly for the work to be carried on, and they seek the advancement of the Kingdom of God with the seemingly meagre contribution they can make.

They uphold His Word and guard the holiness of His Name ... and He blesses them for it ... for after all, He is the One Who is maintaining their witness. Were it not for His blessing upon their work they would not survive/continue. They have only “a little strength”, and yet they are being obedient to the Lord’s command to [hold that fast which thou hast](#).

I heard a lovely statement from a lady last weekend. It was totally unprovoked, and wasn’t an attempt at being ‘holier than thou’. With a warm glowing smile, she very simply and sincerely made the remark, “I wish it was Sunday every day ... but it’s hard work!” ... That was the kind of person that would have been a member of this church in Philadelphia.

And yes, these things don’t go unnoticed with the Lord. He has given each believer, - as it were, - a crown. It is an inheritance we have already obtained in Christ (Eph. 1:11), for He has made us into kings and priests unto God, His Father (Rev. 1:6). These crowns we shall lay one day at His feet (Rev. 4:10). It is God Who has so graciously given them to us ... and we shall be returning them to Him in true gratitude!

Now, these are separate from the crowns we shall receive as a reward in glory. For example, Paul writes, [II Tim. 4:8 there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day](#) ... The crown John refers to in Rev. 3:11, though, is the crown God’s people are presently responsible for here on earth ... in our service to Him *now*. We reign with Him *now*.

The word used here for ‘crown’ is the word *στέφανος*, and it is the crown that is a mark of royal and exalted rank. It is also the word describing the garland that was given as a prize to the victors in the games. It is the same kind of crown Paul referred to in II Tim. 4:8 that he is looking forward to receiving because he had fought a good fight and finished the course (v.7). That is what the

believers in Philadelphia were told to hold fast ... **the crown**. It is the mark of your continued faithful testimony. ...

As a child of the King, you are reigning with Him today. That is what **the Crown** in v.11 speaks to us about. It not only speaks of authority, but it also speaks of our commitment and responsibility to Christ.

THE CONQUEROR

¹²Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out

This responsibility continues in the next statement. In order for this privilege of being made, - as it were, - into a pillar in the temple of God, we must overcome. Now, to overcome takes a certain kind of mindset, - it is for the person who will not stop until they achieve their goal.

This symbolism concerning the pillar in the temple relates to Solomon's temple. Standing at its entrance were two massive bronze and intricately decorated pillars that were named Jachin ("God establishes") and Boaz ("strength"). Jachin stood on the right, and Boaz stood on the left (II Chron. 3:17). They were each almost six feet thick and twenty-seven feet high.

By way of encouragement, then, what is the Lord Jesus saying to this church? Well, - in keeping with Paul's teaching, - the temple refers to the Church, the born-again body of believers ... not a building or a structure ... but a people called out and faithful to God. For example, Paul wrote, *I Cor. 3:16 Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? 17 ... the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are....* So Christ is saying to these believers in Philadelphia to keep on holding fast so that they will be afforded the privileged status of a "pillar" in the Kingdom of God.

Remember that in Heaven, the Book of Revelation tells us there is *no temple therein: for the Lord God almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it (21:22)*. ... So, this is symbolic language being used to encourage the believers in Philadelphia, - and the believers down through the ages, - that their reliability and trustworthiness on earth to the cause of Christ, will be granted the honour and privilege of Heaven.

Now that is not, - in any way, - to suggest you can work your way into Heaven, because you cannot. Entrance into Heaven is based upon the redeeming work of Christ on the cross alone, - only by faith in what the Lord Jesus did for you

on Calvary are you assured of a home in Heaven, - ... but what this does refer to is that God will honour your service for Him. ...

Remember how he honoured the faithfulness of the servant who turned his five talents into five more, and the servant who turned his two talents into two more, - they were both highly rewarded. We should also remember the plight and destiny of the other servant who would not do anything with what the master had given him, except bury it ... There is a warning there for any who profess to serve Christ, but their actions show otherwise!

Yes, we don't deserve to be conquerors, and we don't deserve the promise of a home in Heaven ... and yet, - if we remain faithful, - that is how He will reward us when we *do* get there. ... And remember the earthquakes that used to shake Philadelphia, and how all the people fled to the outlying areas? Well, in the city of God that won't happen anymore for *he shall go no more out*. The people of God will be safe for *we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us* (Rom. 8:37)!

Yes, these believers are promised **the crown**, for they will be **the conquerors**.

THE CITIZENSHIP

and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, *which is* new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and *I will write upon him* my new name. 13 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

Here is yet another promise. It is the final promise that will last throughout eternity. Inscribed upon every saint already is the mark that shows they belong to Christ. Paul refers to how we are sealed with that **Holy Spirit of promise, Who is the earnest of our salvation** (Eph. 1:13,14). We are sealed, we are guaranteed, and we are secured in Christ! ...

He has *marked* us with that same mark with which the children of God are sealed on their foreheads, in Rev. 7:3. It sets them apart as those who are privileged to wear **the crown** and who have become **the conquerors**. These names of these people are written in the Lamb's Book of Life ... and Christ is promising to write upon each of them His new name. That is a name that no-one knows yet, only Christ Himself (Rev. 19:12).

This citizenship in Heaven is promised to these faithful people in Philadelphia, and to each child of God who follows their example until Christ returns.

And finally, that is the theme we shall conclude our study with as we anticipate those opening four words in verse eleven. They emphasise to us ...

CHRIST'S COMMITMENT

¹¹Behold, I come quickly.

You see, it is not as if Christ is telling us to do something that has no aim in mind ... He is telling us how to live in expectation of His coming again! ... Do you believe that Jesus Christ will return to this earth? Do you believe that He will establish His Kingdom? ... Well then, if you do, - and you ought to, because His Word clearly says it in both the Old and New Testaments, - then you and I should be faithfully living to His glory in the expectation of that day.

On that day when He comes, it will be a great shock to many. It will throw them into absolute and total disarray for ... *Rev. 1:7 Behold, He cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see Him.* ... That's what the Word of God says! They will run and try and hide themselves from His wrath, but they will find no place. It will be the most frightening of all days from the creation of the world.

Yet, we can also equally say that when Christ returns, it will be the most wonderful day for His people ... And we should also say that His coming is not without warning. Surely, we do not know the hour or the day of His coming but as we look around us today the signs are telling us it can't be much longer. Jesus will return to this earth. It is something too fantastic for my mind to adequately describe with the use of any of my words, so I'll leave it to the Word of God, *I Cor. 4:15 For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. 16 For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: 17 Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.*

Whereas the unsaved will be fearful, the people of God will be joyful as we rise to meet our Saviour, Lord and King ... and we shall reign with Him forever. ... That's **the commitment** Christ gave the believers in Philadelphia ... and through them, this is our blessed hope also!

Are you eagerly anticipating that day, and are you working faithfully towards His coming? ... Remember, these people in this church only had "a little strength" but nonetheless, they were told to hold fast to what the Lord had already given them in Christ. That was the basis of their rewards when Christ would come again. That was **Christ's commitment** to them!

CONCLUSION In conclusion, the familiar closing statement is advanced, *He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches. ... Isn't that telling us this message is as much for us today as it was in the first century AD?! Remember how God works His purposes out on a different timescale to ours ... a thousand years in His sight are but as yesterday when it is past.*

¹¹Behold, I come quickly [**Christ's Commitment**]: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown [**The Crown**]. ¹²Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out [**The Conquerors**]: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, *which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name.* [**The Citizenship**] ¹³He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

Let, then, that be our **ambition** as we heed what the Lord Jesus wrote to this church in Philadelphia, so we may also enjoy the rewards He has promised. Amen.

LAODICEA, - THE CHURCH IN CRISIS (Rev. 3:14-22)

Each of the seven letters come from the Lord Jesus Christ and are specifically addressed to “the angel” for each individual church (2:1,8,12,18; 3:1,7,14). These seven angels are the seven stars (1:20) held in the right hand of the Lord Jesus (1:16) Who stands in the midst of (1:13) the seven candlesticks (i.e. the seven churches, 1:20). Who were the angels? There is no reason to complicate the issue, and it is best to simply understand them as angels (ἄγγελος). They belong to the great company of angels referred to throughout Revelation.

The Laodiceans ... what kind of people attended the church in that city? Well, firstly, let's recap the identifying features we have highlighted about the churches we have already considered.

We began our tour around the seven churches, beginning first of all at *Ephesus* (2:1-7). Among the believers there was a faithfulness the Lord recognised and commended, Rev. 2:2 I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars: 3 And hast borne, and hast patience,

and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted. We saw, however, they had left their first love (v.4), and the Lord called them to repent and return. They had allowed themselves to become a **careless church**.

The second church was the church in *Smyrna* (2:8-11), a beautiful example of a faithful fellowship ready and prepared to face persecution and imprisonment for the Name of Jesus Christ. He promised them a crown of life ... **the crowned church**.

The third church was in *Pergamum* (2:12-17), and it also consisted of a significant number of faithful and loyal members. However, they had not been as watchful because certain factions of troublemakers had been allowed to infiltrate the fellowship and were causing havoc and confusion. Rather than confront the divisive infiltrators, the church in Pergamum 'took the easy road' and became **the compromising church**.

The fourth church was in *Thyatira* (Rev. 2:18-29), and it contained some faithful believers, but the majority of the membership was too willing to accommodate *that woman Jezebel* (v.20), and she and her followers became so influential they succeeded in contaminating the majority with her falsehoods ... **the corrupted church**.

The fifth church in *Sardis* (Rev. 3:1-6) had the unenviable description, 3:1 *thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead*. If they continued the way they were going and failed to take account of the words of the Lord Jesus ... they were facing severe Divine retribution, v.2 *Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die* ... **the crippled church**.

The sixth church in *Philadelphia* (Rev. 3:7-13) was faithful to the Lord and He gave them a most beautiful promise, v.10 *thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth*. This was **the committed church**.

We now move on to the final message of the Saviour, addressed to the church at *Laodicea*. One of the most appropriate titles for this church is **the complacent church** ... or, **The Church in Crisis**. They were self-satisfied, self-confident, self-contented, self-possessed, self-righteous, and self-glorifying. Just about everything a church ought not to be, *it was!*

This was a *church*, but what rightly constitutes a *true* church? For a church to be a *true* church, Christ must be central. You can meet in a building that is called a church, you can go through all the liturgy that is associated with a church, - you can sing the hymns and read the Bible, etc – but if Christ does not occupy the central place ... call it what you like, but it is not a true church ... not as far as God is concerned.

... For example, the word ‘Christianity’ has Christ in it ... and so John preached Christ, each of the apostles preached Christ, down through the generations of God’s people men have preached Christ ... and so Paul rightly declared, **II Cor. 4:5 we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord**. That is our responsibility ... to preach Christ, and to preach Christ only! ... We have no other remit!

It is true, though, Christ is not always preached. Often religious men and women replace His message with a message of their own ... and when you take Christ out of Christianity, what you are ultimately left with is ‘*i*-anity’. Your message starts to centre round yourself, and your own wants and needs, and the society and the environment. And so the message changes ... and it gets further away from *Who* ought to be preached, namely Jesus. Paul described it as **another gospel (Gal. 1:6)**.

What happens then is that God sees no longer any use for such a place that is preaching another gospel ... and He leaves it. Very often, it is not even noticed He has gone! If His Word is opened and read from, it has no resonance in the hearts of the men and women who hear it. The doctrines upon which they ought to be steadfast are not upheld because the people manipulate the things of God to suit them in their world of convenience, comfort and complacency ... To their shame, that’s the type of church Laodicea had become!

If you truly love the Lord, it wouldn’t have been an attractive church. It wouldn’t have attracted you to become a member, or have anything to do with it. It was a church in name only, because Christ was not in the centre ... In fact, He was standing outside the door (v.20).

So, what about the city of Laodicea? Laodicea was situated on an important highway junction, - forty miles south-east of Philadelphia and due east of Ephesus. Its position made it one of the great commercial and strategic centres of the ancient world. It was a distinguished banking and financial city, - it was one of the wealthiest (v.17a)!

A major problem it had though, was despite all the surrounding streams, the city had no internal water supply. In the early days of its history water was drawn in from these nearby streams but, as the city developed and grew larger, the water from the streams became ‘not fit for purpose’. Therefore, water had to be piped in from the surrounding areas ... and this meant, in the event of a siege, the enemy could easily stop the water supply and the city would have to surrender. Consequently, Laodicea was always eager to make concessions in order to ‘keep the peace and quiet’ with everyone!

Nevertheless, in this city gold was in abundance. It was refined in Laodicea and stamped for purity. The city was also well-known for its wool. The nearby Lycus valley was ideal for sheep. In fact, the Laodicean cloth and carpet was renowned throughout the ancient Roman world! ... Something it was specifically known for was its eye salve. Sufferers travelled from near and far to visit the famous school of medicine, dedicated to the idol Asclepius (who is referred to in the medical symbol of the serpent entwined around the staff).

So, Laodicea was a city proud of its wealth and potential. It believed itself to have everything it needed, - it was comfortable in its own achievements. Even when it was devastated by a massive earthquake in 17 AD, and again in 61 AD, its rich and independent citizens refused outside help and rebuilt the city from their own resources ... and that was what Jesus was referring to in **v.17 Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing.** ... The secular mindset of this materialistic and earthly-minded city had seeped into the church, ... to those who professed the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Here is a body of believers who reckoned they had it all ... *spiritually*, as well as *materially*. But let’s examine them and we shall see four major areas of significant and drastic need in the church at Laodicea. ... This is merely an introduction ... We shall look a little more closely into this assembly in further studies ... but just for now let’s notice ...

THEY HAD LOST THEIR VITALITY (vv.16,17)

Now, look at this church as we have looked at the others ... and examine ourselves to see if we have any their traits. We must be honest. Do I see anything in the church at Laodicea that relates to me?

They had lost their vitality ... They had next-to-no spiritual life in them. In the Christian experience, there are three ‘spiritual temperatures’: - firstly, a heart on fire for God; secondly, a cold heart; and thirdly, a lukewarm heart.

If you have a heart on fire for God, you love to hear the mention of His Name. You're looking forward to the day when He returns. You love to read the Word of God. You love the doctrines and the teachings of Scripture. ... Your heart is 'on fire' for God! ... That is how the Lord saved us to be.

But, it is also the case that some professing believers have little or no desire for Him, and it shows in that they pay scant regard to read and study His Word. They have little or no desire to put it into practice. They are happy to get through life with doing as little for the Lord as they possibly can. There is hardly a stirring in their souls when the precious Name of Jesus is spoken ...

The third group falls somewhere in between, - neither 'one thing or the other' towards the Saviour ... lukewarm, apathetic, unmoved, unexcited ... and none of the enthusiasm they once claimed. ... You try and speak to them about Jesus ... but they might be interested ... they might not! ... **They had lost their vitality.**

THEY HAD LOST THEIR VALUES (vv.17-18a)

All their calculations were so far 'off the mark'. ... The church in Laodicea was boasting not in Christ, but of their achievements in wealth and possessions.

They were brimming over with self-contentment and self-achievement ... They weren't even missing Christ! They were all excited about their *own* plans and prospects ... but God wasn't included in them. He wasn't even consulted! ... If anything, He was a 'nice' 'badge/label' to wear. That was all!

"Look at our balance sheets! Look at how well we're doing!" ... But the Lord Jesus said to them, v.17 *thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.* ... Here's a church that was seeking prosperity in the things of this world, and yet they had failed to invest in Heaven's bank!

However, did Jesus condemn them without giving an opportunity to repent? No, He didn't. He appealed to them, v.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.*

Jesus was more gracious to these people than they deserved. Nothing would have warmed His heart more than them realising their dire spiritual need and returning to Him ... but their sad condition was this ... **they had lost their vitality** and **they had lost their values** ... And instead of the situation improving, it was getting worse, for the next observation we make is ...

THEY HAD LOST THEIR VISION (v.18b)

They were blind, spiritually! Oh yes, they could see all their earthly possessions and how to achieve even more ... They could see their riches and their lavish lifestyles (v.17) ... and how dare you tell them they're blind and they're poor! ... They wouldn't have taken it well! They would say *you* are the one that's blind! ... And I wouldn't be surprised if they tried to tell you *they* are the ones the Lord is blessing, because they have so much! ... In fact, you'd be wasting your time trying to explain these things to them. ... They simply could not see what you are talking about!

... And this was because of their spiritual apathy towards the things of the Lord ... They couldn't see ... not *spiritually* could they see ...

They had lost their vitality, they had lost their values, they had lost their vision ... and ...

THEY HAD LOST THEIR VESTMENTS (vv.17-22)

They had exchanged the garments of the believer for the fading garments of this world. Instead of being a separated people, they had become the same. Like their society, they were busy in their self-exaltation and promotion. There was nothing of how John described it in the Gospel, *Jn. 3:30 He must increase, but I must decrease* ... There was none of that! Christ hardly even came into the equation! **They had lost their vestments.** They were spiritually naked before God ...

CONCLUSION

They had lost their vitality, they had lost their values, they had lost their vision and **they had lost their vestments.** They were in an awful state, and they didn't even know it!

We have only very briefly cast our eyes over them. We haven't looked into them in any detail and yet we recognise this was a **church in crisis**. This was a serious situation.

What more do we need to say? ... May it cause us to examine and assess our position in Christ ... where we stand, and how the Lord judges our walk with Him, individually and in the life of our fellowship. Amen.

LAODICEA, - THE DEITY OF CHRIST

Rev. 3:14 And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God

Back in Old Testament times the nations that surrounded Israel were lost in the worship of idols such as Baal, Chemosh, Dagon, Ashtoreth, Tammuz and Molech. It is something within our nature, - our makeup, - that we inherently 'sense' there is a 'greater' than us that requires our worship, and throughout history mankind has tried to determine this spiritual consciousness, ... hence all the gods that have been produced. The psalmist wrote, 115:4 *Their idols are silver and gold, the work of men's hands.* ⁵*They have mouths, but they speak not: eyes have they, but they see not:* ⁶*They have ears, but they hear not: noses have they, but they smell not:* ⁷*They have hands, but they handle not: feet have they, but they walk not: neither speak they through their throat.* ⁸*They that make them are like unto them; so is every one that trusteth in them.*

As we proceed through the great civilizations, - for example, Egyptian, Babylonian, Greek, Roman, - they all shared the common feature of idolatry. This, of course, is continued today through Romanism, Islam, Hinduism, etc. No matter where you go in the world, - be it into the deepest jungles, - you will find people worshipping some form of a deity or deities. And despite their protestations to the contrary, idolatry is also carried on in secularism where man worships himself and all his achievements.

The most subtle and most dangerous types of idolatry, though, lie within the parameters of our own faith, - Christianity ... even, in particular, within what we refer to as evangelicalism. This, - by all accounts, - was an 'evangelical' church in Laodicea. They had originally been established upon the foundations of the Gospel, and Paul included them when he wrote to the church at Colosse, 4:16 when this epistle is read among you, cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans; and that ye likewise read the *epistle* from Laodicea.

Indeed, as the epistle to the Laodiceans also demonstrates, the greatest danger to our faith is that which subtly introduces itself while continuing to maintain its error. We saw this in the other evangelical churches too. ... The heretical

Nicolaitans were active in Ephesus (Rev. 2:1), and in Pergamum, along with those who espoused the equally-heretical doctrine of Balaam (v.14,15). There was “that woman Jezebel” in Thyatira (v.20). It shows clearly that there is never any shortage of error when the devil infiltrates even the people of God. From the Garden of Eve he introduced his error, and he succeeded in deceiving Adam and Eve to reinterpret God’s clear instructions ... and he will continue to deceive until the end of time, II Thess. 2:7 For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth [*i.e. restrains, hinders, hold back*] will let [*i.e. will continue to restrain, hinder, hold back*], until he be taken out of the way. ⁸ And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: ⁹ *Even him*, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, ¹⁰ And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. ¹¹ And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie.

It is prophesied this deception would proceed to such a convincing degree that the success of the false Christs and false prophets, - accompanied by their miraculous signs and wonders, - would even try to seduce and permeate the very elect of God ... if it were possible ... *which it is not* (Mk. 13:22)!

And so, on the great judgment day there will be those who stand before the Lord Jesus expecting entrance into Heaven ... “Lord, we have prophesied and preached in Your Name. We have cast out devils in Your Name. We have done many wonderful works *in Your Name*” ... And yet the Lord Jesus will turn them away because He has never known them. They have never cried out to Him in repentance, seeking salvation from their sin ... They have never acknowledged their need and believed in Him as their Saviour and Lord.

You see, we are not so much speaking about *any* religion here ... This epistle is addressing, in particular, the relationship these people in this church in Laodicea claimed to have with the Lord Jesus Christ. ... And, you know, that is a very significant claim to make. Faith in Christ is the difference between eternity in Heaven and eternity in Hell. When you claim to be a Christian it inevitably makes certain expectations. The greatest of these is you know Jesus Christ as your own and personal Saviour and you serve Him as your Master.

So, Who is this Jesus? To Whom are we referring? Bearing in mind the false ‘Christs’ ... what distinguishes the *true* Christ? The true Christ, of course, is presented in His Word ... and to the church in Laodicea three of His unique qualities are particularly presented ...

THE DIVINITY OF CHRIST

the Amen

If we were to study this subject to a level approaching anything near appropriate, it would take us right out into eternity. It is such a vast concept to grasp, - **the divinity of Christ**. How could you, me or anyone else, - in any era, - know all there is to know about Him?! It cannot be done ...

Nonetheless, though, why did Jesus refer to Himself as **the Amen** in the beginning of His letter to this church at Laodicea?

Firstly, He referred to Himself as the “Amen” in relation to the Divine purposes. Paul explains it like this, **II Cor. 1:20 For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us**. Christ is the Divine seal upon all that God has designed.

Before a single day came into existence, - as described in Genesis chapter one, - there was already the Ancient of Days (Dan. 7:9,13,22). He lived in a ‘time’, - eternity, - before all times. In His own mind He conceived the plan of redemption. He foresaw the world ruined by sin, and He determined that a number whom no man could comprehend should be redeemed unto Himself to be forever His children, the beloved of His soul. ... And He said “Amen”, so be it. In concert with His will, - these purposes He made, - He fixed them fast ... that there should be a people who would show forth His praise forever.

These purposes were but promises and intentions until God said “Amen”, and made them valid and sure decrees by determining to give His only-begotten Son. If God had not resolved to sacrifice the Lord Jesus Christ to be the Redeemer, the purpose of Redemption would have had no Amen.

If He had not appointed Christ to be the Head, His Purpose concerning the body would have lacked the Amen. The giving of our souls to Christ according to the Scriptures was a most ancient Covenant transaction ... for it was eternal ... And the gift of the Son was of equally ancient date, for He is regarded by God as the Lamb slain from before the foundation of the world. “That gift of Christ to us in the Everlasting Covenant was the mighty Father’s virtually stamping His decree, and making it valid and good. Long before you and I had a being, before this great world was made by God out of nothingness, God had made every purpose of His eternal Counsel to stand fast and firm by the gift of His dear Son to us. He was then God’s Amen to His Eternal Purpose.”
(<http://www.spurgeongems.org/vols10-12/chs679>.)

Then, you can take it a step forward. Christ was the Amen to all the Old Testament prophecies concerning His first coming to this earth. Consider the very first of them, [Gen. 3:15](#) I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.
...

Is. 7:14 tells us He would be born of a virgin. Isaiah 9:6 describes Him as the Wonderful, the Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Prince of Peace, the Everlasting Father. Micah 5:2 prophesies He would be born in Bethlehem. His life, death and resurrection were also prophesied ... and He was God's *Amen* to the Old Testament prophecies.

... And also ... He is God's Amen concerning fulfilment of the prophecies yet to take place. When His coming again was planned, God declared "Amen" ... and His establishment in the new Kingdom ... God said, "Let it be so", His defeat of the enemies ... All of God's plans have Christ as their Amen ... so, therefore, none of the promises of God *will not* and *cannot* fail! "Standing on the promises of Christ my King, Through eternal ages let His praises ring, Glory in the highest, I will shout and sing, Standing on the promises of God."

Now, I feel very inhibited at this point because I know I haven't even started to 'scratch the surface' concerning the **Divinity of Christ** as **The Amen** ... It is so vast! However, I trust it is sufficient to emphasise our God is like none other. Every other claimant to His throne falls infinitely and pitifully far short. There is none to match His perfect Godhood. He alone is God, and there is none beside Him ... none to equal Him. This is the Christ Who addresses this church in Laodicea ... the same Christ in Whose presence we are humbly gathered today. And when He declares His intention it is as good as done! ... **The Divinity of Christ** ... The Amen of God.

THE HUMANITY OF CHRIST

[the faithful and true witness](#)

Whereas [the Amen](#), - to a great degree, - points to promises that brought Christ into this world, the title [the faithful and true witness](#) points to His life and testimony while *in* this world. From the manger to the cross, every day of His earthly life He was always both [the faithful and true witness](#).

When the nation was in the worst of moral conditions ... when any religion seemed as if it was on a par with the worship of God ... in due time God's Faithful Witness steps into a world made by His own hands. In His coming, He showed all the more the utter ruin and distance from God into which the people

had fallen. Sin, moral darkness, and death were universal, and Satan, the enemy of God, had enthroned himself as “the god of this world”.

Yet, God’s Faithful Witness shone the invincible light of His glory ... and the darkness could not put it out ...

He brought the conquering love of God into the midst of evil where even at the cross His enemies declared, *Truly this was the Son of God (Mt. 27:54)*.

As the obedient and perfect Man, He came to this earth to do the Father’s will ... and grace and truth marked every step He took, and flowed out to all with whom He came into contact.

Nothing turned Him away from such obedience to the Father, - neither malice, ignorance, hatred, nor anything else for He alone was truly and perfectly faithful. In His every motive, thought, word and act, - like the old offerings in the tabernacle, - a sweet savour ascended up before God; and it was He alone who could say, *Jn. 14:30 The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me*”. ... He was untouched by sin for He knew no sin (II Cor. 5:21). Unfettered and free ... and yet gloriously bound to the wonderful and eternal will of God.

He alone could confidently declare, *Jn. 17:4 I have glorified thee on the earth; I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do*. And, the Father’s voice bore witness in agreement, *Is. 42:1 Behold, my Servant, mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth*. In life and in death, this humble and dependent Man, - a man approved of God (Acts 2:22), - demonstrated the faithful and true witness in **His humanity**.

Whether as tempted by Satan in the wilderness, or in answering the insults and innuendoes of the Jewish leaders, faithfulness and truth marked all His words and ways. He is ever the same, *full of grace and truth* ... always the Faithful Witness, for *never man spake like this man (Jn. 7:46)*. Then, as we gaze on Him on Calvary’s cross, His one and only object was the glory of His Father Who gave His beloved Son that whosoever would believe in Him for salvation would not perish but have everlasting and eternal life. ... That was the Father’s plan for **the humanity of Christ**, the faithful and true witness to which the Godhead declared a resounding Amen!

The divinity of Christ, the humanity of Christ ...

THE ETERNALITY OF CHRIST *the beginning of the creation of God*

Where you have truth, nearly always error is lurking somewhere close by ... and we see that in these churches. False doctrine was never too far away.

Throughout church history groups such as the Arians, Unitarians, the Jehovah Witnesses and others have vigorously denied **the eternity of Christ**. They claim He was merely the first created being, ... and simply a creature. They do not recognise His Divinity. ...

Such teaching contradicts a whole host of Biblical evidence, for example, Jn. 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²The same was in the beginning with God. ³All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. It also contradicts even the Lord Jesus for He referred to Himself as I AM (Jn. 8:58) ... the title Jehovah used to refer to Himself when He spoke to Moses from the burning bush.

In fact, it is very significant the Lord Jesus should emphasise Himself here as the beginning of the creation of God in this epistle for this letter to the church in Laodicea would most certainly have been read in the church at Colosse (cf. Col. 4:16). There, this doctrine concerning His eternity was under dispute by some. ... Col. 1:12 Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: ¹³Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated *us* into the kingdom of his dear Son: ¹⁴In whom we have redemption through his blood, *even* the forgiveness of sins: ¹⁵Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: ¹⁶For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether *they be* thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: ¹⁷And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.

In keeping with Col. 3:16, the Greek of Rev. 3:14 can also be translated, “the beginner of creation”, “the One from Whom all created things originate”. ... And for Him to be the Creator, eternity, - not time, - is His realm. Jesus Christ is the eternal God, the Second Person of the glorious Trinity. ... And this is the recurring theme in Rev. 1:17 I am the first and the last ... 2:8 These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive ... 21:6 I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. ... 22:13 I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last.

CONCLUSION

So then, here is the **Deity of Christ** ... the Christ Who is God ... and the One Who is speaking to this church in Laodicea. He is presented in **His Divinity, His Humanity and His Eternality**. This is true God of true God, the Saviour, the Redeemer, the Justifier, the Head of the Church, the Bridegroom Who is awaiting His Bride, ... the sovereign Lord.

In grace, this is the same Lord Jesus Whose message is the same for His people, even today. May we be attentive, and receive all He has to say, for ... These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God ... Amen.

LAODICEA, - THE DECADENCE WITHIN THE CHURCH

Rev. 3:15 I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. 16 So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. 17 Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: 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. 19 As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.

Previously, we have given this church in Laodicea the overall title, *The Church in Crisis*. They were in a terrible state, and they had lost credibility in the eyes of the Lord. They had allowed their attention to be influenced and diverted by the surrounding Godlessness.

In answer to their condition the Lord Jesus began by presenting to them His Deity. We looked at this in the three stages He expressed in verse fourteen, - *His Divinity* (the Amen), *His Humanity* (the faithful and true witness), and *His Eternality* (the beginning of the creation of God ... the One from Whom all things originate).

What a privilege it ought to have been for these people belonging to the Laodicean church to be associated with Christ! They faced no danger, no persecution, and no maltreatment for being Christians. As believers, they had been commissioned to speak forth His Name ... in the words of the Lord through Isaiah, Is. 43:12 I have declared, and have saved, and I have shewed, ... therefore ye *are* my witnesses, saith the LORD, that I *am* God. They were to be the light in that dark city ... to shine so the ungodly would see the good work of the Christians, and glorify their Father in Heaven (Mt. 5:16). That was why the Lord had settled them there.

However, all was not as it ought to have been. The light became hardly a flicker, - it was almost out! Let's have a look at them to examine ourselves in the mirror of God's Word.

THEIR TEMPERATURE v.15 thou art neither cold nor hot

When someone says to you, “I’ve heard about you!” ... It can either bring a smile to your face, or else you could be thinking nervously to yourself, “*What* have they heard about me?!” Here, it is the Lord Jesus Who addresses these church members, and He tells them, *I know thy works*. His knowledge, of course, is based upon His omniscience. ... There is nothing He doesn’t know about us, as Peter wrote, *I Pet. 3:12 For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous*. That is a good thing, of course. The eyes of the Lord are over the righteous to protect, defend and encourage us when we are obedient. And even when it is necessary to go through the many valleys in life, He remains with us. But, along with the privilege comes the responsibility ... and He is watching!

... Before we go any further, notice how He was watching these churches and how He commended them ... the church in Ephesus (2:2 *I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars: ³And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name’s sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted*) ... and Smyrna (2:9 *I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich)*) ... and Pergamum (2:13 *know thy works, ... and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith*) ... and Thyatira (2:19 *know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last to be more than the first*) ... and Sardis (3:4 *thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments*) ... and in Philadelphia (3: *I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name*).

Then, in four out of six of those churches He also pointed out their weaknesses ... but in this seventh church, - in the church of Laodicea, - He didn’t have a single word of commendation for them! Instead, He moved immediately to words of *condemnation*.

What a shock this must have been for the assembly there! Even if you are lazy and useless you don’t like anybody telling you ... or, at least, you would like them to dress it up in nicer language ... or you would like them to try and see it from your perspective. But Jesus didn’t ‘wrap it up’ and present it in flowery words, - He told it as He saw it! I say once again, what a blow it would have been for those people in that church!

However, we can trust the words of Christ because they are the words of God ... and what He said to these people was absolutely accurate. Indeed, throughout the Scriptures, - especially in the Old Testament, - God often had to speak harshly to His people to make them waken up and pay attention. For example, Jer. 13:10 This evil people, which refuse to hear my words, which walk in the imagination of their heart, and walk after other gods, to serve them, and to worship them, shall even be as this girdle, which is good for nothing ... Hosea 11:7 my people are bent to backsliding from me: though they called them to the most High, none at all would exalt *him*. ... And Christ is speaking bluntly to these people in Laodicea because their behaviour demanded it!

Surely, when you see someone going wrong you approach them gently, at first ... but if they don't and won't listen, you need to be more direct ... And that was what Jesus was here to this church in Laodicea. He had previously spoken to them gently ... through Paul's letters. He wrote to them directly ... and he also told the Colossians to share their letter with them, Col. 4:16 And when this epistle is read among you, cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans; and that ye likewise read the *epistle* from Laodicea.

So, this wasn't the first time Christ had spoken to them ... but had they listened? Not a bit of it!! Therefore, there was nothing for which He could commend them. It's sad. They had the Gospel truths and the doctrines of the Kingdom ... but the things of God were having little-to-no effect upon them.

Look at how verse seventeen begins ... It seems these people were constantly reviewing their own spiritual health, *Because thou sayest*. It is in the present tense ... and it is good and right and proper to examine ourselves, - that was what Peter instructed his readers to do, II Peter 1:10 *give diligence to make your calling and election sure*. ... And so, these people often looked at themselves but it is obvious their view was distorted simply because they were judging themselves by the same credentials as the ungodly. What they thought of themselves was nothing like what Christ thought of them!

You could imagine them listening in to some of the messages to the other churches, - Pergamum had a liberal toleration because they were prepared to hold to the doctrine of Balaam and the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, Thyatira tended to be too tolerant of that woman Jezebel, Sardis deserved everything He said to them too ... But, you know, Laodicea was in a different league altogether! In their own eyes, they were rich, increased with goods, and they reckoned they had need of nothing ... Surely that was because God was blessing them?!

No, not so, for Christ said they were neither cold nor hot, neither one thing nor the other ... and He was just about ready to spew them out of His mouth! The name of the city, Laodicea is made from two Greek words meaning “the judgment of the people” ... And in their eyes, they were doing fine ... but sadly ... not in the eyes of the Lord, where it truly matters. **Their Temperature,**
 v.15 thou art neither cold nor hot

THEIR TREASURES v.17 thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor,
 and blind, and naked

Imagine such a hard condemnation from Jesus! These were the same people He described in verse sixteen as being neither hot nor cold ... and He would rather they were one thing or the other because they were hopeless to Him in their present state. As they were, they had nothing spiritual going for them! They simply ‘trundled along’ thinking everything was okay. ... “Okay”, - what kind of a word is that?! It simply means, “it’ll do”!

What kind of a Christian is happy with “okay”? Aren’t they the kind that reckons Jesus will make do with whatever little they are prepared to give Him? ... But what kind of an employer would do with “okay” from his workforce? If we had someone in working on our house, would we be satisfied with an “okay” job? ... I don’t think so. ... Translate it, then, into the spiritual and you will understand what Jesus is saying to these people.

In spiritual terms they were wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked! How does a believer become like that? ... Well, before we ‘go there’, we’ve got to ask how many of these people were truly saved! You can belong to a church, be baptized in a church, contribute to a church, be involved in a church ... and yet not know Christ as your Saviour. You see, the proof Christ is your Saviour is that He is also your Lord. When He takes control of your life, He takes over and you live for Him. That is the purpose of every born-again believer, - **for me to live is Christ** (Phil. 1:21). ... If I am not living for Christ, it sets a huge question mark over my profession of faith.

And surely it’s the case that if the unsaved come in among God’s people, and they are permitted to pursue a spurious agenda, it is inevitable it will have a damaging effect upon the work and the witness of the Gospel

... A friend was telling me recently of a very large church that had a reputation for giving pastors a very hard time ... so-much-so, the church was infamous for

sacking even the best of pastors. The senior deacon was well-known for his extra-marital affairs, and some of the other deacons were also involved in activities contrary to their profession of faith ... but nobody would confront them. The church was, - on the face of it, - going well; numbers were rising, and they had no financial problems. ... You see, unsaved men can infiltrate the leadership and infect the saved with the spirit of lukewarmness.

In Laodicea there had been a relaxation of the fundamental truths, and it had led to a virtual abandonment of that upon which their assembly had been founded. Compromise and concession had taken the place of obedience.

Devotion to Christ had extended to include man's priorities ... and many in the Laodicean church could no longer tell the difference between the truth of God and error. ... It's sad when God's professing people become like this. It is not what He intended. They have taken their eyes off Him ... that is, assuming their eyes were 'on Him' in the first place.

They can't tell the difference any longer between being 'wretched' and 'desirable', or 'miserable' and 'cheerful', or 'poor' and 'rich', or 'blind' and 'sighted', or 'naked' and 'clothed' ... It is a terrible thing when God's people can't tell the difference anymore between what is right and what is wrong! You see, the Bible teaches us what is truth, from God's perspective, and it is our responsibility to uphold that truth and to make it alive in our testimony. The world is watching us, and God is watching us! If there is no difference, we are neither hot nor cold and we are nothing more than wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked in the eyes of God.

And if we are like that, we are no different to the unsaved. The whole point about being a Christian is to be different ... and if we are not different, what is there that would attract the world to Christ! *Nothing!* Solomon, - with all his earthly treasures, - wrote, [Prov. 15:16 Better is little with the fear of the LORD than great treasure and trouble therewith.](#) What had happened to these people in Laodicea was this, [James 5:3 Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you ... Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days.](#)

Their temperature and their treasures ... Yes, we can see how, through this epistle, we must be constantly aware of the *decadence* that threatens to be rife amongst God's people. They were lukewarm in their service to Christ, and that was because they had *profession* with very little *possession!* ... Their spiritual standards were dictated by the world's standards because it was the pursuit of earthly reward that was their primary aspiration.

Finally, though, look at the grace of God, offered to these people who did not deserve it. Despite their conduct He gave them one last opportunity ...

THEIR TEST

v.18 I counsel thee

Would they listen? ... That is the crux of the matter. Do God's people always listen to Him? Sadly, we don't ... not always. We listen to the other voices that clamour for our attention ... and so often they manage to drown out what God is saying to us.

The business men in this church would have readily sought the advice and the counsel of financial experts ... but here now is Christ, and He's speaking as the counsellor acting for Heaven. His counsel would not necessarily make them wealthy in the worldly terms of Laodicea but it would bring them to laying up treasures in Heaven.

However, the fruits of His counsel were not free because they had to be bought, - a price had to be paid for them, v.18 *buy of me*. ... If you are always being given something for nothing, you'll start to take it for granted. ... So Christ points out that these Christians must *buy* from Him *gold tried in the fire*. Gold is precious, and He was alluding to the preciousness of the very currency of Heaven. Gold in the Scriptures speaks of the glory of God, and the glory of God is expressed in the doing of His will. That is our chief purpose as believers. That is the proof we belong to Him ... to bring Him glory.

That is the difference between a non-Christian in the church and a Christian, - the non-Christian works to glorify him or herself, whereas the Christian works only to glorify God. ... That is something very important for the Lord expects His people to pay the price of commitment to Him ... *that thou mayest be rich*.

He says too that they should also buy from Him the *white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear*. ... Had they not already been clothed with the garments of righteousness when their old filthy rags had been removed, when they believed in Christ and were saved? Yes, they had ... but since then, they had exchanged His garments and had become naked in their sinful pursuits. It was, therefore, necessary for them to purchase back the white raiment. This, in no way, suggests we can *buy* any aspect of our salvation but it *does* teach us we have the responsibility to keep our garments clean ...

It's like when the son left the father and went off to a foreign country to waste his substance on riotous living. He left wearing the best of clothes ... but after a certain time in the foreign country he had squandered his clothes and everything he owned ... and when he finally came back to the father he was almost naked for the father had to instruct his servants, *Lk. 15:22 Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet.* ... To be clothed again, the son had to return to the father ... That's the appeal Christ was making to the members of this church, - "come back to where you once were".

He counsels them to buy of Him the spiritual wealth, to put on again the Christian's garments ... and also to apply the eye solution so their former sight would return.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the true believers in Laodicea are left in no doubt of the mercy of Christ, *As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.*

Maybe when you were bringing up your children and you had to discipline them, they would turn in their tears and ask, "Do you still love me?" Yes, of course, you still loved them. The reason you chastised them was because you loved them. It hurt you and it grieved you when you had to hand out the punishment ... but it was because of your deep and unfathomable love.

Yes, there is no doubt about it, the Saviour loved these wayward children with all His heart, and so He told them, *be zealous therefore, and repent.* Paul reminds us, *II Cor. 7:10 Godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation.* ... Concerning the sinner, if there is no repentance there can be no salvation. Concerning the professing believer, repentance is as the prodigal son returning to the father.

Even to this corrupt and degenerate church, - a church where it was sometimes difficult to distinguish between the truly saved and those who only had a mere profession, - ... even in Laodicea God had a message of hope for those who would attend to it.

What is the lesson for us today? It is simply this ... In the words of Peter, *II Peter 1:10 give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: 11 For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.*

Belonging to the Lord Jesus Christ is not for pretenders ... Neither is it for those who wish to advance their own agenda, - it is for those who have been washed in the blood of the Lamb and Who are walking in fellowship with Him and His people ... and whose desire is all for the glory of God. That was what Christ desired from these believers in Laodicea.

Yes, we can plainly see it ... **The Decadence within the Church**. May God be speaking to each of us who profess His Name that in our self-examination before Him, He would judge us to be worthy of our high calling in Christ Jesus! Amen.

LAODICEA, - THE DOOR OF EXAMINATION

Rev. 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.

The overall title I suggested for our study of this church in Laodicea was *The Church in Crisis*. ... Not "The Church in Christ", but *The Church in Crisis*. The Lord Jesus introduced Himself by presenting **His Deity** (v.14), and we looked at that in verse fourteen under the headings ... *His Divinity* (the Amen), *His Humanity* (the faithful and true witness), and *His Eternality* (the beginning of the creation of God ... the One from Whom all things originate).

Then we looked at **The Decadence within the Church** (v.15-19), and our three specific observations were ... *their temperature* (v.15 thou art neither cold nor hot), *their treasures* (v.17 thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked), and *their test* (v.18 I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich).

Now, it's not always easy for us to see what God is saying ... It is not that He makes His message complicated, but it is often because we don't give Him our full attention. Our minds are too wrapped up in other issues, or - to be quite blunt, - sometimes we don't give too much thought as to what He is saying.

Rev. 3:20 is often used within the context of an evangelistic message, - for the preaching of the Gospel. It is used as an illustration of the Saviour standing outside the door of the sinner's heart pleading and begging to gain entrance. He presents a pitiful figure who can only wait and see if He will either be received or rejected.

However, Rev. 3:20 is *not* a message for the unsaved ... It is a message to those who profess to know Christ as Saviour. These words are brought to the attention of the *church*, - professing believers, - at Laodicea. It is for those who already have a saving faith in Jesus Christ ... who claim Him as their Lord and Master. This verse is for men and women professing to know Christ!

I think one of the best titles we could give our study today is ... **THE DOOR OF EXAMINATION**, 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. ... So let's once again examine ourselves as we attend to the Word of God.

THE SAVIOUR'S PRIORITY Behold

One of the problems with this church in Laodicea was they had long-since stopped *beholding* the Lord. Other issues had crept in and taken priority. I would be certain that in their church they would have been aware of the issues in the other churches ... For instance, in the church at Ephesus it was the Nicolaitans (2:6) who had infiltrated God's people. The same was the case in the church at Pergamum ... where again the good people there had not stood up against those who held to the pernicious doctrines of Balaam and the Nicolaitans. Similarly, Thyatira gave far too much leeway to 'Jezebel' and her cronies ... and the propagation of error followed.

It was different in Laodicea though. There was no openly Jezebel ... nor Balaamites or Nicolaitans! In fact, there is no mention of any inroads being made by false doctrines. And yet, out of all the seven churches, this is the church we particularly associate as being the most defiled.

They were neither hot nor cold, - they were lukewarm ... and so repulsive to the taste of the Saviour. ... He had just about had enough of them and He was for spewing them out of His mouth. They weren't what they put up to be, - they weren't rich, they hadn't the plenty they claimed they had. No matter how beautiful their church, how well-spoken their people, how full their bank accounts ... Jesus declared them *wretched* in His divine estimation.

And yet, because they were His, - not a great example, by any stretch of the imagination, - but, nevertheless, there were those in the church who had been saved by His grace ... and He loved them with an unconditional love (v.19 *As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.*)

It was to these people He spoke the word, *Behold* ... Stop whatever else you are doing ... and listen and pay attention to the words of the Lord Jesus Christ!

There is not one of us who dare close our ears to what He has to say. We can't afford to point out the failings in other churches ... not while the Lord has a message for us. So let's be obedient and *Behold*, - **The Saviour's Priority**.

THE SAVIOUR'S PRESENCE

I stand at the door, and knock

This is the simplest picture for us to imagine. Every one of us here has stood at someone's door and knocked. ... The Lord Jesus describes Himself as standing outside the door, and knocking. Holman Hunt's painting of "The Light of the World" is famous. ...

It represents Christ preparing to knock on an overgrown and long-unopened door, illustrating Rev. 3:20. The door in the painting has no handle on the outside, so it can only be opened from inside.

Of course, in Rev. 3:20, there is no mention of whether or not there is a handle on the outside ... and it doesn't matter whether there was or not. It's irrelevant because you will remember that shortly after the Lord Jesus rose from the dead ... *Jn. 20:19 the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst.* ... In other words, Jesus was *not* standing outside like a pathetic individual pleading with the members of the church in Laodicea to let Him in ... If He had wanted to get in, He would have burst that door down!

No, He was standing at the door and knocking to give those believers in the inside one final opportunity to turn their attention away from all the empty pursuits that were occupying their minds. He had previously called them by His grace and instituted His church in that city for the purpose of preaching His Name for their own edification and for the salvation of souls ... However, 'somewhere along the way' their agenda had taken over from His ... And He was standing, giving them one final opportunity.

He wasn't *forcing* Himself on them ... because if they truly loved Him they would realise how far they had wandered, and they would return. He was simply there to remind them of their duties and responsibilities to Him.

As He stands there knocking, what would have been taking place inside? Well, they would have been busy. They reckoned they were 'rich' (v.17), - let's

understand that description to mean what it says ... that it's referring to what they owned and how well this church was doing in worldly terms ... for they 'were increased with goods'. It would have been no trouble to them to buy new seats or to fix the roof! And they would have been talking about all their achievements ... and what next they were going to do ... and how better looking they were going to make their place of worship ... But, hold on a minute, ... their place of worship ... *who/what were they worshipping?! ...*

Who were they worshipping if Jesus was standing on the other side of the door ... on the outside?! ... That's where He was! ... **The Saviour's Presence, I stand at the door, and knock** ... They were paying no attention whatsoever to **the Saviour's Priority**, to **Behold**.

It is the saddest case of affairs when God's people have Christ standing outside the door ... and they don't even know/recognise He's there! But yes, because of God's grace, He is there. ... And it is so very important to pay attention to what He is saying from the other side of that door ...

THE SAVIOUR'S PRECONDITION *if any man hear my voice, and open the door*

There would have been so much noise *inside* the church at Laodicea ... "Look at how rich I am" ... and they would have been falling over each other to get the top seats at the front of the church ... "Look at how increased with goods I am", - I'm doing so tremendously well ... I must be the envy of all who have been privileged to meet me!" "There is not a single thing I need, for I've got it all!" ... Yes, there was a tremendous noise coming from inside that place.

But, you know, there was one sound in particular that was not there ... The voice of God was not there for He was on the *outside*. Whatever else the preacher at the front was claiming, he wasn't expounding as "Thus saith the Lord". It was *the people's message* that was being preached, - a message they wanted to hear that would bolster them in their own self-gratification. It was the 'vain jangling' Paul warned Timothy about (I Tim. 1:6). And the people who were listening ... their preachers had turned away their ears from the truth, and they were now listening to fables (II Tim. 4:3,4). They were no longer fit to endure sound doctrine, but after their own lusts were following the latest craze, dressed up in religious language.

Meanwhile, with the same hands that had been nailed to the cross, Christ was on the outside knocking on the door. The blood that flowed from His precious body used to be the message preached inside that church, but sadly not any

more. And yes, no matter how long He knocked, there would be some who would never get up and let Him in ... for they were having far too good a time since the world had entered their church. I suppose too that even if some of them had gone to the door and saw Jesus standing there they wouldn't have known Him because they had gotten into the church through some of its back doors. Maybe they had been brought up in the church but had never come to a personal saving knowledge of the Saviour, - they are the type that goes to church just because it's what they have always done ... it means little to them for there is nothing of grace that has been truly worked in their soul.

But Jesus was appealing to a category inside that church ... probably sitting somewhere around the sides, rather than in the centre ... And they knew things weren't right. ...

They knew things hadn't been right for a long time but they never had the courage to confront their concerns. They were listening and watching what was going on around them but they knew things weren't as they should have been. It is for those people Jesus was standing at the door and knocking.

Through all the noise and clamour they hear a knocking that sounds so faint. Even above all the chaos and confusion they hear it! And they arise and they go to that door and open it ... and see Jesus standing there! Jesus has come for them! While the others are caught up in themselves and their own expression of what constitutes 'doing church', Christ stands at the door and knocks to gain the attention of His truly blood-bought children ... those whom He knows will hear His voice and who will come to the door and open it.

Here at **the Door of Examination** we find the Saviour ... Here is the **Saviour's Priority** (*Behold*), the **Saviour's Presence** (*I stand at the door, and knock*), the **Saviour's Precondition** (*if any man hear my voice, and open the door*). Finally ...

THE SAVIOUR'S PROMISE

him, and he with me

I will come in to him, and will sup with

What a promise! Jn. 14:2 In my Father's house are many mansions: if *it were* not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, *there* ye may be also. ... Sitting down at the table with the Master ... back into fellowship with Him! To be with Him, they had to get out from among that former company and to be separate unto Christ. They didn't come and open the door to Him and then go back into the spiritual lawlessness of that Laodicean congregation. When they saw the Saviour they knew the difference between false religion and true.

They returned to the old paths ... the good way ... and that was where they began to walk again.

The centre of our faith is Christ ... It's not us and how good we think we can make ourselves, - it's Christ Who we worship and Who we *fear* with holy and righteous reverence. It's Him we love, and it is His company we enjoy.

If, - perhaps, - you have identified yourself as being among the crowd that has drowned out the knocking of the Saviour, I trust you are starting to hear Him again. If you are truly saved and have known the walk with Him that His Word describes, you will not be happy, - nor right, - until you get yourself up and go to that door, open it, and see Him standing there for you. ...

The only place for a true child of God to be is in the presence of the Saviour.

And I believe this verse is also pointing towards that. Yes, it's speaking about the present ... and it's reprimanding us if we have allowed anything to come in and mar our relationship with Him ... and it is giving us the opportunity to go and open the door to Him. ... And, by the way, if you don't go and open that door, and you ignore Christ knocking I guarantee you will regret it ... for if you shut Christ out, He will eventually shut you out! He will have gone, and you will have missed Him!

But I believe this verse is also pointing towards another day that none of us can afford to ignore. **THE SAVIOUR'S PROMISE**, *I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me ...* This promise will be completed and fulfilled in all its glory when Jesus Christ comes back again. That is the day when the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints (Rev. 19:7,8). That will herald the great meeting of the Bride and the Bridegroom, Christ and His Church. That is the day when He will come in and sup with His people, and He will be with them.

CONCLUSION

At **the Door of Examination** today is our Saviour ... His Word is telling us it is the **Saviour's Priority** for us to *Behold*. He teaches us, - regardless of all the noise and distractions around us, - to pay attention to the **Saviour's Presence** (*I stand at the door, and knock*). To progress forward in His will and purpose, we have the **Saviour's Precondition** (*if any man hear my voice, and open the door*). Then, we are privileged to know the **Saviour's Promise**, *I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me*.

Where does He find us today? Does He find us with the clamour of the world in our ears ... not being able to hear Him and attend to Him? Or does He find us already at the door, where we have been listening for His footsteps? ... Rev. 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.

May the Lord apply His Word to our hearts and receive the honour due unto His most precious Name alone! Amen.

LAODICEA, - THE DELIVERANCE, DELIGHT, AND DESTINY OF THE SAINTS
Rev. 3:21 To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne. 22 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

As we have looked at this church in Laodicea, - a *Church in Crisis*, - we noticed how the Lord Jesus introduced Himself by presenting **His Deity** (v.14), concerning the three aspects of ... *His Divinity* (the Amen), *His Humanity* (the faithful and true witness), and *His Eternality* (the beginning of the creation of God ... the One from Whom all things originate).

Then we considered **The Decadence within the Church** (v.15-19 *their temperature* [v.15], - *neither cold nor hot*, ... *their treasures* [v.17], - *wretched and poor*, ... *their test* [v.18], - *I counsel thee*).

We then spent time in v.20 at **The Door of Examination** where we noted ...

The Saviour's Priority	Behold
The Saviour's Presence	I stand at the door, and knock
The Saviour's Precondition	if any man hear my voice, and open the door
The Saviour's Promise	I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me

We shall conclude our present study of this church in Laodicea by looking at verses 21 and 22, To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches. ... First of all ...

What was there to overcome? We have already noticed the church had become so inward-looking that it had no interest in matters anywhere else, - v.17
I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing.

It comes across very strongly that the members of the church would have been wearing the best suits from the most expensive tailor ... and they would have had the equivalent of the most up-to-date car sitting outside. Their agenda was obviously all focussed on themselves, and not on Christ. ... Just imagine sitting at the Lord's Table with them. It would have been a mockery ... The Name of Christ was merely a title that had diminished in its value.

However, among them were soundly born-again believers. Among them were those who genuinely knew personally the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour ... He addresses them particularly. I would imagine many of them would have been there at the founding of that church. They would have been there when a faithful congregation of God's people preached Christ crucified and gloried in the salvation He had blessed them with. They would have spoken warmly of those former days when God's Holy Spirit was mightily at work. Sadly though, 'others' had come in and changed it all.

Yes, in those early days of great blessing the Lord supplied their every need. They knew He would maintain their ministry, even in the most difficult of times. They trusted Him to sustain the work to which He had called them. As long as they stayed within that remit the Lord would continue their witness.

However, it seems as time passed, the church began to take on a new persona. Over the years, a new set of people had come in, - a very wealthy and at first a very welcome group. ... But the cost of their involvement in the work was a heavy price to pay for the standards of the world had crept in and was now directing the work. Consequently, those who were faithful in carrying out the work of Christ in keeping with the example of Paul and the apostles began to be replaced ... and it wasn't for the good of the Lord's witness in Laodicea.

It is not the way it ought to be. Yes, we can set before the Lord what kind of people we would love to see coming into our fellowship ... and we could tell each other how these types of people would be of great advantage to us. But, what we must never overlook is that this is *the Lord's church* and He will add to it in His own time and in His own way. The people we might think could be good for us could turn out the opposite ... and the people who we might think may be of little benefit could turn out to be the greatest blessing in our midst.

You see, it's the Lord's church ... and *He* is the Shepherd of His sheep (I Peter 2:25) ... And when the church consists of the Lord's people doing the Lord's work in the Lord's strength then we needn't have any doubts about our ability because, - in the Lord, - we are sure to overcome.

It doesn't mean that we might have any greater impact on the society outside, and neither does it mean we shall become more lucrative within the church ... but what it *does* mean is that we are being obedient by putting our confidence in the One Who promised He would supply all our needs according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus (Phil. 4:19). ... And that is how we become 'overcomers'. It is through Him.

He directs His people into the areas where He would have them work. He opens up doors whereby the witness of the Gospel is introduced. Furthermore, when that precious seed is sown and watered, we trust in Him to see it grow.

Even by virtue of the fact He has His people working in a godless world and continuing to present the Gospel in 2013 is a sure sign we are overcoming. How many times has the world thought it had gotten rid of the Church ... and it has never happened ... and it never will happen! Here in Scotland, Queen Mary thought she would rid the land of true Christianity ... but she failed and she became a miserable relic of history. Look at the communist USSR persecuted our brothers and sisters ... but long after the USSR has fallen the Church continues. Look at the Church in Islamic and other countries that are ruled by despots striving for the Church to be wiped from their societies ... Look at the government laws they are being introduced ... intent on squeezing the people of God out of existence ... And yet, God's word says, *To him that overcometh* ... There is no doubt about it, we *are* overcoming ... and we *shall* overcome ... but we must remain faithfully among the number of the Redeemed of the Lord Jesus Christ. John wrote elsewhere, I Jn. 4:4 *Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world.*

To him that overcometh ... From **the deliverance of the saints** to ...

THE DELIGHT OF THE SAINTS *21 To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne*

On great occasions of state, eastern kings did not occupy a single-seat throne but a broad-based raised platform in a prominent place. Honoured guests were

invited to sit beside the king and share his glory. This, then, is the privilege Christ promises those who overcome that they will sit with Him.

What a change of company! ... From sitting with the 'lukewarm' in Laodicea to sitting with the Lord! ... From being among those who could only glory in themselves to sitting with the King of Glory! The Lord Jesus promised, Mt. 25:31 When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: ³² And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth *his* sheep from the goats: ³³ And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. ³⁴ Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. ... That is going to be a very special day for God's people who will overcome.

It is a promise that even though we are totally undeserving, because we belong to Him He will bring it to pass. That is what they were singing about in Rev. 5:9 and 10, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.

That is the promise for those faithful believers, even in Laodicea ... That was **the delight of the saints** ... Christ was assuring them that if they served Him faithfully they would overcome, and He would grant them the privilege and honour of sitting beside Him on His throne. ... That is a promise no earthly monarch would offer you. We don't see any photos of earthly kings or queens on the throne, with their son or daughter on their knee ... But here is the promise for every believer who remains faithful to Christ that there is fast approaching the day when we shall sit beside Him on His throne. ... Even the faithful saints in that church in Laodicea ... and the faithful saints here in Kirkcaldy who will overcome in Christ's strength! That is a promise our Saviour will keep!

It is not easy being a Christian ... not when you take it seriously! It requires standing up for the Lord, and also standing out for Him. The faithful in Laodicea would have found it so difficult ... but nevertheless, it was expected of them to *contend* for the faith in order to *overcome*.

To him that overcometh, - **the deliverance of the saints** ... will I grant to sit with me in my throne, - **the delight of the saints** ... Finally,

THE DESTINY OF THE SAINTS

²¹ To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.

For how long will Christ be sat down on His throne with His Father? ... For how long? ... Forever! That is how long He has promised you will be with Him! It is an eternal and everlasting covenant. It is a promise He will never change or renege on. "Forever with the Lord!" Amen, so let it be! ... That resurrection word, That shout of victory". ... That is **the destiny of the saints!**

Believer, are you looking forward to it? Life has been a battle ... not just with the issues of this world the unsaved also have to contend with ... but I'm referring to those conflicts you have faithfully contended for in the Lord's service. It's the times when you stood for the Saviour and witnessed for Him. It's those times when you were not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ and to be known as belonging to Him. It's those times when you worked tirelessly to gain from the talents He granted you, to His glory.

You are looking forward to **the destiny of the saints** in the presence of the Saviour and His Father for all eternity. He paid the price to ransom your soul. He bought you and redeemed you with His own precious and peerless blood when He died as your sacrifice at Calvary. That is how we can sing, "In a love which cannot cease, I am His and He is mine".

The destiny of the saints ... On the merits of what Christ has done for you, He will take you to Himself. What a wonderful truth from God's Word!

Is that the confidence you have ... that the moment you go absent from this present body is the very moment you will be in the presence of the Lord forever? Do you know Him as your Saviour? Is He your Master? Are you serving Him as He expects? ... His promises are for all who overcome ... Are you an 'overcomer' ... an 'overcomer' for His Name's sake?!

You see, you can only be an 'overcomer' if you know and trust in Christ that He has overcome on your behalf at Calvary ... and that you have cried out to Him to save you from your sin and you are now living in the knowledge that you are His child. ... As John listens, the final words he hears are these ...

CONCLUSION

²² He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

Listen, pay attention, and act upon these things. May this message be life-changing ... that was what he was saying to them. When the word of God speaks to you, He always requires a response, - either you receive what He says and be obedient to His will ... or you simply reject it and you are neither 'not nor cold' for Him.. That especially goes for Christians ... *for unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required (Lk. 12:48)*. And so, this closing message is for us today, *He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.*

Yes, it was written to the congregation in Laodicea but it has come down to us also as a warning and for our instruction. In fact, more than ever we need to heed what it says. We are approaching the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ ... and God's people need to be prepared, Mt. 24:44 *Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh. ...* ⁴⁶ *Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing.*

I trust these seven churches have given us much instruction concerning our work and walk with the Saviour. The lessons they teach are increasingly important for God's people to heed. We are called to be 'overcomers' by the One we serve Who is the Almighty God, the King of Glory.

It is a blessing and a privilege to belong to Christ ... to be saved. The world thinks we're crazy. They reckon we are of no value and we shall soon be 'a thing of the past'. That is not what the Bible teaches us though. Our God has a great future ahead for us ... and never lose sight of *that!* He's coming back to take us unto Himself. And as John wrote elsewhere, I Jn. 3:2 *Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.*

Let's then close our study of these seven churches of Revelation with the words of the Saviour that He commands us to hear and obey, ²² *He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.*