

Day 49—2011

Fred R. Coulter—June 11, 2011

Greetings, brethren! Welcome to the Sabbath before the Feast of Pentecost, 2011. A lot of things have been going on this year, but the most important thing that is taking place is what is happening in the Churches of God; what is happening in our lives as we're preparing for the first resurrection and preparing to take over the world to rule it under Christ. As you can see all the things that are going on it has been very devastating, because 'there's a way that seems right to a man, but the ends thereof is the way of death.' Everything that man does, because of his nature, because of Satan the devil and all of those things, there is no way that man can possibly bring the solutions, because *the heart and core of them are spiritual!*

The most important thing in the world today is not what's going on in the world—that's bad enough—but what's going on in the Church, and what's going on in our lives. Jesus has determined that He will use men:

- men who are converted
- men who are dedicated
- men who will serve God

Let's see all about the Church, because the seven weeks leading up to Pentecost have to do with the church harvest. Every week was a completing of the harvest, and then when we come to tomorrow—Pentecost—that was the enactment of the completion of the harvest. That is everything had been harvested in the wheat and barley crop. We'll see tomorrow that that pictures the first resurrection. Of course, that's what's important concerning the Word of God, concerning the Truth of God, and concerning what we are doing.

Before Jesus ascended into heaven, let's notice His instruction to His apostles. Let's come to Matthew 28; this is where they met Him on the mountain in Galilee. Let's see what He told them. Matthew 28:18: "And Jesus came *and* spoke to them, saying, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me.... [Everything that's going on, on the earth, has to come through Christ.] ...Therefore, go *and* make disciples in all nations...' " (vs 18-19). Going to the whole world: 'Go to the ends of the earth' (Acts 1). Of course, that's still going on, because of the writings of the apostles. Wherever the Word is preached; wherever the Word goes out—the message of the apostles, the message of the whole Bible. We need to realize that. We need to look at things the way that God does.

"...baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit... [that's *not* a Trinitarian formula] ...teaching them to

observe all things that I have commanded you. And lo, I am with you always, *even* until the completion of the age.' Amen" (vs 19-20). We're getting closer and closer and closer to the completion of the age. Just like every year we go through the Holy Days and every year we're that much closer. Every year we're growing in grace and knowledge.

Let's see something else concerning what Jesus said, Matthew 16, and see what happened concerning Jesus explaining about His Church, what He was going to do. Since Jesus has chosen to use men, the men that He has chosen need to be

- dedicated
- converted
- given wholly to Christ—completely to Christ

—so that they are doing the work of Christ, not doing *their* work apart from Christ. We need the Spirit *within* us! We need the Word of God *within* us! Notice what happened here when they came to Caesarea Philippi.

This is very revealing, Matthew 16:13: "Now, after coming into the parts of Caesarea Philippi, Jesus questioned His disciples, saying, 'Whom do men declare Me, the Son of man, to be?' And they said, 'Some *say* John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; and others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets.' He said to them, 'But you, whom do you declare Me to be?' Then Simon Peter answered *and* said, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God'" (vs 13-16).

The next verse is really important because we need to understand that the calling comes from God. Yes, we need to seek God, but once we seek God and God responds to us, then we need to respond to God and keep seeking God and keep responding to God and God responding to us day-by-day, month-by-month, year-by-year.

Verse 17: "And Jesus answered *and* said to him, 'Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jona [son of Jona], for flesh and blood did not reveal *it* to you, but My Father, Who *is* in heaven.'" Jesus came to reveal the Father, and the Father is the One Who draws us. He brings us to Christ and Christ brings us to the Father. Whatever we know about the Father has been revealed to us spiritually, because of and by ourselves—separate from the Word of God, separate from the Holy Spirit of God—we don't know Who God is, really. There's a Satan the devil out there who likes to interfere with the Church, just like right here with Peter.

This is a key, v 18: "'And I say also to you,

that you are Peter; but upon this Rock [Himself] I will build My church, and *the* gates of the grave shall not prevail against it.” We’ve got a footnote here in the Bible you can read, explaining about ‘petra’ and ‘petros’ and so forth. Peter was a small stone.

Verse 19: “‘And I will give to you the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven; and whatever you may bind on the earth will have already been bound in heaven; and whatever you may loose on the earth will have already been loosed in heaven.’”

- that’s concerning baptisms
- that’s concerning understanding
- that’s concerning judgments that need to be made

We can’t make arbitrary decisions like the pope says, ‘I am in the place of Christ and whatever I say is inspired of God, and what I say God is bound by.’ *NO!* It has to be based upon the Word of God, and the Word of God comes from God, and that comes from heaven. So, whatever is coming from heaven is what has been bound. When we make decisions where there is not a clear-cut Scripture to handle something, then that decision has to already have shown that the principle of it has been bound already in heaven. Otherwise, the decision is void.

Now, let’s see how quickly Satan likes to come along and get in the way. Just right after this something happened and Peter showed another side of him. This is why Jesus told Peter that He prayed for him, that his faith would not fail.

Let’s see what that is here, v 20: “Then He charged His disciples not to tell anyone that He was Jesus the Christ. From that time Jesus began to explain to His disciples that it was necessary for Him to go to Jerusalem, and to suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and to be killed, and to be raised the third day” (vs 20-21).

Notice what Peter did. This is why it’s so important, brethren, concerning the churches. We’re going to look at how the churches should be. There are seven weeks to the harvest. There are seven churches in Rev. 2 & 3, and it’s very important that we understand the message there, because the same thing that happened to Peter right here, we will see that Satan is right there trying to derail and confuse and cause problems within the Churches of God. That’s why the men that God has chosen to serve and to teach the brethren need to constantly be yielded to God the Father and Jesus Christ.

- no self-will
- no vanity
- no being lifted up
- no dictatorial edicts

but:

- the Word of God
- the love of God
- the Truth of God
- the knowledge of God

as we all yield to God and receive of the Holy Spirit of God. Notice what happened here with Peter; notice how Satan can interfere, v 22: “But after taking *Him* aside, Peter personally began to rebuke Him... [that is, Peter took Jesus aside and]: ...began to rebuke Him, saying, ‘*God will be* favorable to you, Lord. In no way shall this *happen* to You.’”

Think about that for a minute. Even the worst part of the prophecies of God, when they are going to take place, men cannot stop it. Satan is there to bring a good idea. ‘Oh, Lord, that won’t happen.’ Notice what Jesus did in v 23: “Then He turned and said to Peter, ‘Get behind Me, Satan!’” Right after God the Father revealed it to Peter that Jesus was the Christ, look at what happened. Satan was right there as the ‘prince of the power of the air’ to put it into Peter’s mind a ‘do-gooder’s’ sin: ‘Oh, we’re so good. Oh, Lord, that will never happen to You.’ Besides, later he said, ‘Lord, I’ll never deny You. I’ll even go to jail and death with You.’ And Jesus said, ‘You’re going to deny Me three times before this night is over, before the cock crows.’

This is a lesson for all minister, elders and teachers: ***Do not get self-willed in teaching and preaching the brethren!*** That’s important to understand and grasp! God doesn’t want that. We’ll see a little later about how the correction comes from God because men have done that. Notice what it is:

Verse 23: “...‘Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, because your thoughts are not *in accord* with the things of God, but the things of men.’” A truism:

- ***You cannot accomplish spiritual things by physical means!***
- ***You cannot correct spiritual problems by political means!***

Notice what He said next because this becomes very important, v 24: “And Jesus said to His disciples, ‘If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and let him take up his cross and follow Me.’” That’s incumbent upon all of us, but it’s doubly incumbent upon anyone who’s going to be teaching; anyone who’s going to be preaching the Gospel, baptizing, anointing, doing the things of God. We must deny ourselves, our ideas, our ways and grasp from the Word of God and the Spirit of God what we need to do. We will see,

- yes, it’s a harvest
- yes, there are difficulties
- yes, there are terrors

- yes, there's Satan the devil—just like it was here. That's why we are to deny ourselves, because Satan comes along and makes it a desire for you and of your will and your way to do, and Jesus said, 'No!' Then He also makes this statement:

Verse 25: “For whoever desires to save his life shall lose it; but whoever will lose his life for My sake shall find it.... [What we are doing, brethren, and for all those who are teaching—elders, deacons, all of us in the Church together—let's understand this, because it is the Church of God and Christ is the Head of it.] ...For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world, but loses his life? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his life? For the Son of man shall come in the glory of His Father with His angels; and then He shall render to everyone according to his doings [works]” (vs 25-27). We're going to see all the way through the seven churches, that's exactly what Jesus does.

Now, let's understand something here: God is calling a family; God is developing a church; we see in Ephesians, the first chapter, that Christ is the Head of the Church in ALL things. That's important to understand. Also, the government of God is *not* the ministry. What God did to the apostles and those who helped the apostles in developing the New Testament—because God has called us to be in His Family; God has called us to be His sons and daughters—it is called ‘the sonship of God.’ After the Gospels and the book of Acts all the rest of the writings of the New Testament are in epistles.

Epistles are personal letters, and the epistle form of writing is very important, because in it, it shows that it is not God just thundering things from on high like He did at Mt. Sinai. He gives us His Spirit *within* us and *we are the begotten sons and daughters of God*. So, He writes personal letters to us. And in these personal letters we find all the doctrine that we need. We find love, correction, inspiration, how we are to live our lives, all of it right there in personal letters inspired by God the Father and Jesus Christ. All power and authority have been given to Jesus Christ. He's chosen to use men, that's correct.

We have these loving epistles from God to us, to show us how much He loves us and what we need to do in our lives. Let's come to Ephesians 1, showing something concerning the Epistles of Paul so that we understand where they are coming from. Paul gives this introduction, very similar to this, in every one of his epistles to the seven churches. Isn't it interesting that Paul wrote to seven churches. Two of them had two epistles—Corinthians and Thessalonians. That makes a total of nine letters to seven churches. Then we have the general epistle of Hebrews, which goes to all the churches. Then we

have four pastoral epistles: two to Timothy, one to Titus and one to Philemon. That's a total of fourteen epistles that the Apostle Paul is responsible for. Then we have the seven general epistles, which were sent abroad to all the churches. That means we have a total of 21—doesn't it? *Yes, indeed!* Twenty-one epistles! Fourteen and seven is twenty-one. Then we have the Gospels and Acts which is a total of five, and that can be viewed as the New Testament Pentateuch, just like the Law is the old Testament Pentateuch. That brings us to twenty-six. But there's one more book—Revelation—so that brings us to twenty-seven.

We have 21 epistles—3 times 7. We have 27 books in the New Testament—3 times 9 or 3 times 3 times 3, which in itself is a complete number. All of those things become important, but what we need to realize is that God is the One Who is directing His Church, directing what is going on, and what we need to understand is:

- we need *not* let in the tares
- we need *not* let in Satan the devil
- we *need to take heed* to the Word of God

—we have it all today! Here's how Paul begins all of his epistles:

Ephesians 1:1: “Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints who are in Ephesus and to *the* faithful in Christ Jesus: Grace and peace *be* to you from God our Father and *the* Lord Jesus Christ. Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly *things* with Christ” (vs 1-3). Isn't that something?

- How much is the Holy Spirit worth to you?
- How much is the Word of God worth to you?
- *If you want eternal life, it's everything—* isn't it?

Here's another thing that's important for us to realize, and it applies to everyone who is called into the Church of God, v 4: “According as He has personally chosen us for Himself before *the* foundation of *the* world in order that we might be Holy and blameless before Him in love.”

That's the whole goal. As long as we keep our minds and our hearts focused on the goal, focused on what we are to do—and always have that in the forefront of our minds—then we're going to be doing the things that will please God; we will be doing the things that will lead to eternal life.

Verse 5: “Having predestinated us for sonship to Himself... [to God the Father personally. Remember, we're going to have His name in our forehead—aren't we? We are going to see Him face-to-face—aren't we? *Yes!*] ...through Jesus Christ,

according to the good pleasure of His own will.”

Now, let’s see how Paul wrote of this Romans, the eighth chapter. Let’s see what he says here concerning the sonship, concerning the Spirit of God. This is all important for us to understand and realize. Romans 8:9: “However, you are not in *the* flesh... [you do not stand before God as unconverted and carnal] ...but in *the* Spirit...” You have a spiritual relationship with God

- through grace
- through His love
- through faith in Jesus Christ

Also, with His Spirit within us—God the Father dwelling in us and Christ dwelling in us—They are leading us to *grow, change and overcome and develop Their character* in thought, mind, heart and attitude.

“...if *the* Spirit of God is indeed dwelling within you. But if anyone does not have *the* Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.... [There is a dividing line. That’s why God is upset with the Laodiceans. That’s why He’s upset and gives a strong message to all the seven churches.] ...But if Christ *be* within you, the body *is* indeed dead because of sin; however, the Spirit *is* life because of righteousness” (vs 9-10)—that we can put together the deeds of the flesh. That’s what He says, we grow, we change, we overcome.

That’s why every year starts out with the Passover and Unleavened Bread, so that we understand not only are we to put out sin, but we can’t put out sin without the sacrifice of Christ. We are to put in the ‘unleavened bread of sincerity and truth,’ which is the true, spiritual righteousness that comes from God.

Verse 10: “But if Christ *be* within you, the body *is* indeed dead because of sin; however, the Spirit *is* life because of righteousness. Now, if the Spirit of Him Who raised Jesus from *the* dead is dwelling within you, He Who raised Christ from *the* dead will also quicken your mortal bodies because of His Spirit that dwells within you.... [We need to understand this: This is why we can’t do like Peter did. This is why we cannot bring human devices into the Church.] ...So then, brethren, we are not debtors to the flesh, to live according to *the* flesh; because if you are living according to *the* flesh, you shall die; but if by *the* Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, **you shall live**” (vs 10-13); that means *live forever!*

Here’s the key, brethren. This is what is so important as to what God is doing, v 14: “**For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God.**” That’s why we look forward to tomorrow, to Pentecost. We know that pictures the first resurrection, the harvest of God—though He’s

chosen to use men; though He’s chosen to call us.

Verse 15: “Now you have not received a spirit of bondage again unto fear, but you have received **the Spirit of sonship**, whereby we call out, ‘Abba, Father.’” Direct access to God the Father! Remember where we started, where He said, ‘Blessed are you, Simon Bar Jona, because flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father Who is in heaven.’ The Spirit of the Father! We are the sons of God! The Spirit of sonship!

Verse 16: “The Spirit itself bears witness conjointly with our own spirit, *testifying* that we are *the* children of God.... [That’s the whole purpose of the Church.] ...Now if *we are* children, *we are* also heirs...” Just like you received your physical inheritance from your mother and father when you were conceived and then born; likewise, we receive an inheritance, spiritually through God’s Spirit, so when the resurrection comes we are truly the spirit sons and daughters of God! Then the inheritance beyond that, the things in the universe, the New Jerusalem, all of that. Brethren, it’s fantastic! God’s plan is so marvelous and great and Holy and true and perfect! Why would we want to do things the way men do it? Why would we want to accept doctrines which come from Satan the devil?

Notice, v 16: “...—truly, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ—if indeed we suffer together with Him, so that we may also be glorified together with Him.... [let’s understand that] ...For I reckon that the sufferings of the present time *are* not worthy *to be compared* with the glory that shall be revealed in us” (vs 16-17).

Let’s also understand something else, brethren; and I want you to realize how important we are not only to God, but to the world. I want you to look out and see all the things that are going on, all the sorrow, all the tornadoes, all the earthquakes, all the death and destruction, all the wars, famine and everything upside down, because the world is in turmoil because of sin. Yes, we are living in the ‘time of sorrows.’

But I want you to understand—very important—v 19: “For the earnest expectation of the creation itself...” I want you to think about that! All that God has created in heaven and earth! This is why God has called you. This is why God has called me. *This is why we are all to yield to God!* This is why those who are elders and teachers need to do as Jesus told Peter three times:

- Do you love Me? *Feed My sheep!*
- Do you love Me? *Feed My lambs!*
- Do you love Me? *Shepherd My sheep!*

We need to really keep that in mind, because: “...the creation itself is awaiting the manifestation of the sons of God... [that’s what tomorrow is all about

with the resurrection. That's what the world is waiting for! There's no hope for the world unless there is the resurrection of those whom God has called.] ...because the creation was subjected to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of Him who subjected *it* in hope, in order that the creation itself might be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God.... [That is us!] ...For we know that all the creation is groaning together and travailing together until now" (vs 19-22). ***Waiting for us!***

- Those who have the sonship of God!
- Those who are in the Church of God!

There is a work that God is doing in you, and that is the greatest work at there is. ***He is creating you in the image and after likeness of Christ! But,*** we have to yield ourselves to God! We have to use the Spirit of God!

Now, let's see some other things that shows what we need to be doing. Colossians, the first chapter, is really very important for us to realize, and it also shows why we are not to go back and do the things they way the world does, and why we're not to go back and bring in carnal devices within the Church.

- That's why God has given His Spirit.
- That's why God has given His laws.
- That's why God has given His commandments.
- That's why we have the New Testament.

—so we can have the spiritual application of everything that God wants us to do. It is not a matter of physical things; it's a matter of the will of God, the Spirit of God. Let's notice what He has done here. This is a tremendous chapter, brethren, and we need to understand this in its fullness:

Colossians 1:9: "For this cause we also, from the day that we heard *of it*, do not cease to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding." That's why, brethren, we pray everyday. We pray for each other. That's why if there's a family, you need family prayers. We need to be praying for one another. All of that and that we be "...filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding." I tell you what, today with the Bible and having all the knowledge of God that we do, we need to be using the time, putting forth the effort, to make sure that we're growing in that.

Verse 10: "That you may walk worthily of the Lord... [Not just having church once a week on the Sabbath and then the rest of the time you live like the rest of the world. If you're doing that, you're a full-fledged Laodicean.] ...walk worthily of the

Lord, unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work and growing in the knowledge of God.... [That's what we need day-by-day, week-by-week, month-by-month and year-by-year.] ...being strengthened with all power..." (vs 10-11). God wants us to use the Holy Spirit. God wants us to use that power that He has given us

- to change
- to grow
- to overcome
- to resist the way of the world
- to resist Satan the devil
 - ✓ put him out
 - ✓ put him away from us

He's going to come after us! Some of us may have to suffer martyrdom, but always remember this: You want Christ. Did He die for you? *Yes, He did!* What if God determines that we have to die for Him? Are we capable of doing that? God will give us strength for whatever it may be. But we have to have our minds made up and fixed—like it says there in the Psalms, 'My heart is fixed.' That's what we need, brethren!

"...according to the might of His glory, unto all endurance and long-suffering with joy; giving thanks to the Father... [Notice what the Father has done! All of this is the work of God the Father and Jesus Christ, brethren. Let's understand that!] ...Who has made us qualified for the share of the inheritance of the saints in the light" (vs 11-12). That's the sonship of God! Not in darkness. Not halfway in the world! Not halfway in the Church! Not using human devices to try and accomplish spiritual things. We will see that doesn't work!

Notice v 13, and I want you to think about this; I want you to pray about this verse, and I want you to see how you need to yield to God because of what He's done. All of us were out there in the world. All of us were out there deceived. All of us were out there walking in the vanity of our mind at one time and following Satan the devil, who is the 'prince of the power of the air'—is that not correct? *Yes!* The spirit that works in the sons of disobedience among whom we all had our conduct at one time—correct? *Yes!* Doing the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the lust of the mind. Willing, *by human will and Satan's inspiration*, to do the things of the world. But He's called us out of that now—right? *Yes!*

Verse 13: "Who has personally rescued us from the power of darkness..." Satan the devil! Are you grateful that God has rescued you? Most of the religious world and Christianity of this world thinks that they already have Christ. But, other than the name and a few things, they've got it all wrong. They have not yet been rescued from Satan the devil.

“...personally rescued us from the power of darkness and has transferred *us* unto the Kingdom of the Son of His love; in Whom we have redemption through His own blood, *even* the remission of sins... [That’s something! And how that it’s through Christ. Everything that there is, because Christ is the Head.] ...Who is *the* image of the invisible God, *the* firstborn of all creation” (vs 13-15). That means the firstborn of all those created through the process of the resurrection. Jesus was the firstborn in the flesh and the firstborn from the dead of all creation! We’re to follow, and that’s what the harvest is all about. That’s what the seven churches are all about!

Verse 16: “Because by Him were all things created, the things in heaven and the things on earth, the visible and the invisible, whether *they be* thrones, or lordships, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by Him and for Him. And He is before all, and by Him all things subsist” (vs 16-17)—by the very Word of His power! Remember where we started: All power, all authority in heaven and in earth has been given to Christ. There it is, right there.

Verse 18: “And He is the Head of the body, the Church; Who is *the* beginning, *the* firstborn from among the dead so that in all things He Himself might hold the preeminence. For it pleased *the Father* that in Him all the fullness should dwell” (vs 18-19). That’s why Christ is our Savior. That’s why He’s our Lord and Master.

Let’s see what else He’s going to do. Here’s what He did, and this becomes so important to realize, v 20: “And, having made peace through the blood of His cross, by Him to reconcile all things to Himself; by Him, whether the things on the earth, or the things in heaven. For you *were* once alienated and enemies in *your* minds by wicked works; but now He has reconciled *you* [to God the Father]” (vs 20-21). That’s something—*isn’t it?* This is what the Church is all about.

This is why it says, the most important thing, v 26: “*Even* the mystery that has been hidden from ages and from generations, but has now been revealed to His saints... [That’s why on the Passover night Jesus said, ‘I call you My friends, because I’ve made known to you what My Father is doing.’ Here it is right here, revealed to His saints—not to the world—to His Church, to His people!] ...to whom God did will...” (vs 26-27).

- God’s will
- God’s desire
- God’s plan
- God’s purpose

“...to make known what *is* the riches of the glory of this mystery... [the secret of God] ...among the Gentiles; **which is Christ in you, the hope of**

glory” (v 27). Isn’t that something?

Notice what this is to lead to, because men are involved in teaching and preaching to help us grow and change and overcome, v 28: “Whom we preach [Christ], admonishing every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, so that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.”

That’s why we go through the things that we do. That’s why we’re confronted with the difficulties, trials and challenges that are out there in our lives and in the world.

- that we can grow
- that we can overcome
- that we can yield to God

—and God has given us His Spirit to do so.

(go to the next track)

Let’s come to the book of Revelation, chapter two; here we have the message, a personal epistle from Jesus Christ to the seven churches. What are the seven churches? The seven churches were seven literal churches that were congregations at the time that the Apostle John was given the vision in the book of Revelation. So, they’re literal! Let’s stop and think about something else for us to know and understand:

- Has God given prophecy as to what is going to happen in the world? *Yes!*
- Has He given prophecies concerning different nations? *Yes!*
- Israel? Judah? Nations of the world? *Yes, He has!*
- Do you think that He would not give a prophecy of His Church and His people? *Of course, He would!*

Revelation 2 & 3 are also a prophetic depiction of His churches down through time—from the time that John wrote the book of Revelation. Then it also becomes an historical reference point for the Churches of God. This being from Jesus Christ is a message to show us the major things in our lives:

1. individually
2. within the Church
3. attitudinal

You can go through these seven churches and you can see that maybe in your life that the attitude of several of these churches could have applied to you, could have applied to me. If we heed the message that is there, from Jesus to us personally—**directly from Jesus**—and repent then that re-establishes us with Christ. That’s the key, important thing!

You look at the Churches of God today; forget about the corporate structure of the churches, because I want you to understand this: the corporate structure of churches has nothing to do with how

God looks at His churches. Christ is the Head and He looks at the churches on earth. Look at them around the world and, of course, there are churches we know nothing about—aren't there? *Yes, indeed!* But do they still belong to Christ? *Yes, they do!* At the end-time we may see, and in all likelihood they're out there, if we could take the time and know where all the Churches of God are, to analyze what they teach and preach and so forth. We would see that the attitudes, the doctrines and, yes, the interference of Satan the devil in those churches; plus the correction of God in those churches is alive and well, just exactly as Jesus said.

That's why we're always to repent! That's why we are to continually yield to God.

- Never be satisfied!
- Never rest on our laurels!
- Never say that we have done enough!
- Never say that we have it made!

I remember one very important man who said, 'Well, I've been at this so long that Satan has no more interest in me.' Guess what? BAM! Satan was right there and took him down! We need to realize that what God says, He means. What Jesus says is important. These are the words of life and this is why we need to study these seven churches.

I think it's interesting, Revelation 1:20: "The mystery of the seven stars that you saw in My right hand, and the seven golden lampstands, *is this*: the seven stars are *the* angels of the seven churches; and the seven lampstands that you saw are *the* seven churches." Christ is in the middle of His church, but He's given us free moral agency, plus His Holy Spirit. He's given us His Word, the instructions that we need to have, and we need to follow the lesson. All the way through here He says, '***The one who has an ear, let him hear.***'

We need to be willing to listen. The seven weeks to Pentecost are the harvest of the seven churches. You can go back and look at it there in Matt. 13, how that the world is like a field. There are difficulties and problems when people hear the Gospel. But there are also those where the seed falls in fertile ground, and *that seed is the begetting of God the Father in our hearts and minds*. If it falls in fertile ground it brings forth 30-fold, 60-fold, 100-fold. Then we also have the parable of the talents and the parable of the pounds showing how we are to grow, increase and overcome. Use the Word of God to grow and change. Use the assets that God send us to multiply the Word of God. Preach the Gospel because He said, where we began, 'Go into all the world.'

The Church of Ephesus

Revelation 2:1: "To the angel of the

Ephesian church, write: These things says He Who holds the seven stars in His right hand..." Christ knows what's going on in the Church. He knows what's going on in your life. He knows what you're doing. You can deceive yourself. I can deceive myself. We can be just like Peter, and we can deny what God wants us to do, because there is someone else inspiring it to be done. But if we're yielding to God, He'll show us what we need to do, and then we need to do it.

"...Who walks in *the* midst of the seven golden lampstands" (v 1). The most important work on earth today is what God is doing through His churches. But we need to respond to God. We need to yield to God. Let's see what they did; what they did not do:

Verse 2: "I know your works... [We all have our works—don't we? How is God going to judge us that we already saw? *According to our works!*] ...and your labor, and your endurance, and that you cannot bear those who are evil; and *that* you did test those who proclaim *themselves* to be apostles, but are not, and did find them liars." [We are to test the doctrines. We are to test the message. Believe me, brethren, there are a lot of those out there who profess to be ministers of God, ***but are not—teaching doctrines they ought not teach***, which are contrary to the Word of God and are leading brethren astray. It's all up to the brethren. Do you test them? Do you do like they did here?

Verse 3: "And *that* you have borne *much* and have endured, and for My name's sake have labored and have not grown weary.... [Constantly enthused! Constantly working! Constantly doing what God wants us to do!]...nevertheless, I have *this* against you, that you have left your first love" (vs 3-4). What does that mean? The first love is what? This means 'protos' from the Greek—*primary*. What is the primary love? *To God the Father and Jesus Christ!* How is that to be? *With all our heart, with all our mind, with all our soul, with all our being—correct? Yes!* Are you so involve in the world that you have become mundane toward God? *That's what happened here!*

Verse 5: "Therefore, remember from where you have fallen, and repent, and do the first works; for if *you do not*, I will come to you quickly; and I will remove your lampstand out of its place unless you repent." Those are strong words—aren't they? Everywhere through here there are problems and difficulties and false doctrines and things that we should not be doing. He says, "...repent!" Love God with all your heart, mind, soul and being! Love your neighbor as yourself! Love the brethren as Jesus loved us!

He commends them for one thing, which is

important to understand, v 6: “But this you have: that you hate the works of the Nicolaitanes, which I also hate.... [that is a dictatorial, hierarchy church government claiming that the ministry is the government of God—**which it is not!** Christ *in you* is the government of God! Didn’t we just read that? Christ *in us* is the hope of glory! *Yes! Think of that!* Every minister and elder out there, you’d better listen up very carefully!

If you are a dictator in your church, and you claim certain powers that God never gave you, understand that the judgment of God is coming, and He *hates* what you do! You need to think:

- What are you doing to the brethren?
- Is it false doctrine? Is it overbearing?
- Is it extracting money from people?

Some of those who profess to be the Church of Philadelphia—the church of love—the lead minister does not even let anyone in that group speak to anyone in their own family who does not belong to that group! That is a divisive man and God’s judgment is coming!

But at least the Ephesians hated the “...works of the Nicolaitanes, which I also hate. **The one who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches....** [to all seven churches. We all have to listen up! When it says): ...The one who has an ear, let him hear... [This means you hear, you listen, you act, you repent, you respond to God!] ...To the one who overcomes... [We have to overcome those things—right?] ...I will give *the right* to eat of the tree of life that is in *the* midst of the paradise of God” (vs 6-7). This is what we also need to continually keep in mind, brethren.

The Church of Smyrna

I have yet to see a Church of God call itself the Church at Smyrna. Why? *Because they had a bloody existence!*

Verse 8. “And to the angel of the church of *the* Smyrneans write: These things says the First and the Last, Who was dead but is alive. I know your works and tribulation and poverty (but you are rich), and the blasphemy of those who declare themselves to be Jews and are not, but *are* a synagogue of Satan” (vs 8-9).

Notice what do we have? *Losing the first love with Ephesus, then we have a synagogue of Satan.* We have great tribulations that they’re going through. Poverty! What does God say, because they were faithful. And of the two churches, there are only two—Smyrna and Philadelphia—who are not told that they have sins they have to repent of. Why? *Because they’re probably repenting everyday and yielding to God—right?* Here the Church at Smyrna is trusting in God, saying, ‘Ok, I don’t care what

comes along.’ But down through history, this was the beginning and the forming of what became the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church—synagogue of Satan!

Jesus said, v 10: “Do not fear any of the things that you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast *some* of you into prison, that you may be tried; and you shall have tribulation ten days. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you a crown of life.” Do we hear that? Do we have the same attitude? Regardless of the circumstances

- we follow God
- we do what God wants
- we follow Christ
- we listen to Him
- we receive of His Spirit
- we have strength from Him

You’re going to get a ‘crown of life.’

Verse 11: “**The one who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.** The one who overcomes shall not be hurt of the second death.” You’re going to live forever, be immortal! But everyone in their own lives has a different set of circumstances to overcome. Down in a historical sense, there is a preponderance of one church or the other. Then we see that these things develop.

Notice what develops after the church has been left, persecuted and chased down and suffered tribulation and martyrdom because of a synagogue of Satan coming after them. What’s next? Let’s see how it affected the third church:

The Church of Pergamos

The Church at Pergamos is very profound and something we really need to understand, because this tells us about what the synagogue of Satan develops. Here we have a church, which is right at the capital of Satan’s way. Living in that environment, they incorporated things that are not of God. Let’s read a warning to all the churches:

Verse 12: “And to the angel of the church in Pergamos, write: These things says He Who has the sharp two-edged sword.... [Which is His Word; just like a knife that cuts asunder. They think they can defy the Word of God!] ...I know your works and where you dwell, where the throne of Satan *is*; but you are holding fast My name, and did not deny My faith, even in the days in which Antipas *was* My faithful witness, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells” (vs 12-13). What happened after He died? *The Church gave into the world!* What did they incorporate?

- The doctrine of the Nicolaitanes!
- The hierarchy!
- And the beginning of the taking of the

sacrifice of the mass—something that is offered to an idol!

Verse 14: “But I have a few things against you because you have there *those* who hold the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit fornication.” That’s exactly what the Eucharist is—sacrifice to an idol. And the priests brag that they can call down the literal flesh and blood of Christ into the host and into the wine.

- How can that be when Jesus broke the bread and the host is a round sun disc (bread wafer of the Roman Catholic Eucharist)?
- How can that be when Christ no longer has any flesh and blood? *He’s an immortal, spirit being!*
- How can that be when the Scriptures say that Christ is not sacrificed many times since the creation of the world?

But this is bringing in the satanic religion, the false Christianity. In order to keep that heresy going here’s what they had to do, v 15: “Moreover, you also have *those* who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes, which thing I hate.” Notice how strong this is. Not quite as strong as Thyatira; Thyatira’s got a lot of problems.

Verse 16: “Repent! For if *you* do not *repent*, I will come to you quickly, and will make war against them with the sword of My mouth.” Isn’t that something? That God—Christ, the Head of His Church—has to fight against those within His own church for incorporating satanic doctrine into what they believe and practice and teach. Isn’t that something? So, just like where we began, right after Peter had it revealed that Jesus was the Christ, he listened to Satan the devil to try and stop what God was going to do, and what Christ was destined to do through the prophecies that were given that He would be the sacrifice for the sins of the world! And Jesus had to say, ‘Get you behind Me, Satan!’ There it is right in the middle of the Church. “...make war against them with the sword of My mouth.”

Any church that has that kind of hierarchy, any church that has these practices—Church of God. Now, if it’s out in the world, just like the Catholics, judgment is coming later. But for the Church of God, He says, v 17: “**The one who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.** To the one who overcomes I will give *the right* to eat of the hidden manna; and I will give him a white stone, and on the stone a new name written, which no one knows except the one who receives *it*.”

All the way through: Repent! Let’s go back and think about the model prayer (Matt. 6). We start

out honoring God the Father: ‘Our Father Who is heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come!’ We’re looking for the kingdom everyday. ‘Your will be done.’ Not ours! ‘On earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us’—or sin against us. We’re to repent daily, brethren, because of the human nature within us. We’re to be overcoming the law of sin and death within us. Yes, if we’re doing that before God the Father and Jesus Christ, there’s no condemnation.

- God is with us!
- God is for us!
- God loves us!
- Christ died for us!
- We have forgiveness of sin!

But, we need to yield to Him, not get caught up in the trap of churchianity. Notice how this evolved. I think it’s interesting that the Seventh Day Adventists trace their church back to Thyatira. They even put out a wonderful video called *Israel of the Alps*, and that’s quite a thing.

Let’s see what happens here, because this is also at a time when the Roman Catholic Church was gaining power and was infiltrating, was killing off those who were true Christians and bringing in the depths of satanic doctrine right into the Church. There is nothing that Satan the devil loves to do more than bring in false doctrine, and then he knows that Jesus has to correct His Church.

The Church of Thyatira

Verse 18: “And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write: These things says the Son of God, He Who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet *are* like fine brass. I know your works, and love, and service, and faith, and your endurance, and your works; and the last *are* more than the first. But I have a few things against you, because you allow the woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess...” (vs 18-20).

We need to think about that. Who was Jezebel? *The daughter of the priest of Baal!* Here they are introducing sun-worship. This is full blown Catholicism influencing the Church of God. Isn’t it interesting that the Seventh Day Adventist have more doctrines of the Roman Catholic Church than any other Sabbath-keeping church. I want you to think about that as we read the rest of it.

“...you allow the woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess to teach and to seduce My servants into committing fornication and eating things sacrificed to idols.” False doctrine, fornication and eating things sacrificed to idols—the mass. Notice how bad it got, and how God gave her a chance to repent.

Verse 21: “And I gave her time to repent of her fornication, but she did not repent. Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of their works” (vs 21-22). This is what happened throughout Europe when the Roman Catholic Church reigned in terror and slaughtered and killed; went after the true Christians.

Notice this phraseology, v 23: “And I will kill her children with death...” If you kill them, they’re dead—right? What does this mean, *kill them with death? The Lake of Fire!* That’s talking about the second death. That’s not talking about the first death. If you leave the Truth of God, the Spirit of God, the doctrines of God and go after Roman Catholicism and sun-worship, you’re going to commit the unpardonable sin unless you repent!

Notice what they got into, 23: “I will kill her children with death, and all the churches shall know that I am He Who searches *the* reins and hearts...” God is trying each one of us, brethren. You need to understand that! These are great lessons for us, because we don’t want to come through the seven weeks of the harvest and then not make it to Pentecost, to where then we receive eternal life. We don’t want to miss that! We need to stay true and faithful with God all the way through, all the time. When we sin—because we’re still fighting the law of sin and death—we need to repent!

- Don’t wait!
- Don’t put it off!
- Repent!

Verse 24: “But to you I say, and to *the* rest who *are* in Thyatira, as many as do not have this doctrine, and **who have not known the depths of Satan...**” Satanic doctrine took over the Churches of God at this time. Those who were faithful had to leave. Just like with Israel of the Alps. Those people who were faithful to God and had the Word of God had to get away. Finally, the Roman Catholic Church came and seduced them again. They began using human devices as a defense, and it didn’t work! It’s worked a little bit for a while.

“...as many as do not have this doctrine, and **who have not known the depths of Satan** as they speak... [There can be nothing greater than the depths of Satan the devil than what is in the Roman Catholic Church. All of the religions of the world combined with it.] (If you don’t that): ...I will not cast upon you any other burden, but hold fast what you have until I come” (vs 24-25).

Now, notice what He says here, v 26: “**And to the one who overcomes, and keeps My works unto the end...** [You have to keep the works of God unto the end! Isn’t that something? You have to overcome to the end!] ...I will give authority over

the nations; and he shall shepherd them with an iron rod, as vessels of pottery are broken in pieces; as I have also received from My Father; and I will give him the morning star... [resurrected from the dead in glory] ...**The one who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches**” (vs 26-29).

God does not want these things within His churches. That’s why there is this message. These are the letters from Jesus Christ to the seven churches, to all His people. And at the end-time these seven churches are in existence in the attitude and practices that we find here.

The Church of Sardis

After all of this the Church got all worn out because of tribulation, because of persecution and because of false doctrines. There came a time when the Church of God did have a name, that it lived, but it was almost dead. Sardis is alike a corpse with a plus. Notice what Jesus says to it. Let’s not be dead, because we have to again see the works. We have be doers of the Word. We have to be doers of what God wants us to do. That’s why these seven letters are important. That’s why before we come to the resurrection, we have to see through these seven churches how do we get to the resurrection.

Revelation 3:1: “And to the angel of the church in Sardis, write: These things says He Who has the seven spirits of God and the seven stars. I know your works, *and* that you have a name as if you are alive, but are dead.... [Then He admonishes them]: ...Be watchful, and strengthen the things that remain, which are about to die. For I have not found your works complete before God” (vs 1-2). Think about that! ‘Complete’ can also mean perfect.

Verse 3: “Therefore, remember what you have received and heard, and hold on *to this*, and **repent**.... [Every one of these things we need to repent, brethren.] ...Now then, if you will not watch, I will come upon you as a thief, and you shall by no means know what hour I will come upon you. You have a few names even in Sardis who have not defiled their garments, and they shall walk with Me in white because they are worthy. **The one who overcomes...** [All of these things are overcoming, changing, growing, yielding, responding!] ...shall be clothed in white garments; and I will not blot out his name from the book of Life, but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels. **The one who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches**” (vs 3-6). We need to listen! What is it that God wants for us? We need to listen!

The Church of Philadelphia

Everyone wants to be a Philadelphian. Can’t all be Philadelphians. But, if we repent we can use that as a model for what we need to do. He did not

correct them. Notice what He says:

Verse 8: “I know your works. Behold, I have set before you an open door, and no one has the power to shut it because you have a little strength, and have kept My Word, and have not denied My name.” We realize we’re weak. We realize we need to keep the Word of God. We do not deny the name of Jesus Christ by bringing in false doctrine; by bringing in those things that are devices of men and rulership of men, and listening to Satan the devil with his ‘swan song’ on how we need to be like the other churches of the world. No way!

Notice again, we encounter the synagogue of Satan, 9: “Behold, I will make those of the synagogue of Satan, who proclaim themselves to be Jews... [proclaiming themselves to be true Christians] ...and are not, but do lie—behold, I will cause them to come and worship before your feet, and to know that I have loved you.” What does that mean? Does that mean they’re going to bow down to worship God at our feet? *Very likely!* Does it mean they’re going to worship us? *That’s a question that we’ll have to wait and see!*

Notice why this church is commended, v 10: “Because you have kept the word of My patience, I also will keep you from the time of temptation which *is* about to come upon the **whole world**... [Here shows a prophetic and historical sequence of the Churches of God and what is taking place—right? *Yes, indeed!*] ...to try those who dwell **on the earth**.” The *whole world*, the **earth!** It’s a worldwide thing at the end. That probably has the reference to the *mark of the beast!* That is the greatest temptation. That temptation is not the Tribulation. The Tribulation is another thing and closely associated to the *temptation*.

Verse 11: “Behold, I am coming quickly; hold fast that which you have so that no one may take away your crown.” People can lose salvation! God doesn’t want that. That’s why these personal letters are from Jesus Christ directly to us.

- We all need to hear!
- We all need to fear!
- We all need the lesson! *Learn the lesson!*
- We all need to yield close to God!
- We all need to keep the Word of God!

We’ve got the Word of God as never before. Let’s not turn our backs on it. Let’s not allow the encroachment of the things from Satan the devil. Let’s not allow to happen to us, that which happened to Peter. We have to be on guard. Notice what He says here to the Church of Philadelphia:

Verse 12: “The one who overcomes will I make a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall not go out any more; and I will write upon him the

name of My God, and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which will come down out of heaven from My God; and *I will write upon him My new name.*” Three names:

1. Christ
2. The Father
3. New Jerusalem

Verse 13: “**The one who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.**” We need to listen, brethren. This is why:

The Church of Laodicea

We’ve covered a lot concerning the Laodiceans and we know what it says there. We know that we are not to let ourselves get into an attitude that we’re ‘rich and increased with goods’ and ‘Oh, look at what we have and how good we are and how much we have done.’ No! Then we deny Christ! We deny His Spirit! Therefore, He has to ‘spew us out of His mouth.’

So, the Laodiceans have to really repent! The Laodiceans have to determine in their minds. There are good Laodiceans, and the good Laodiceans are the ones who repent and open the door and let the Spirit of Christ come in and then do the works of God the way they need to be done. This is the prevalent attitude that we have in the world today:

We have more things, more gadgets, more devices, more money, more wealth than ever before. But the problem is that because of that God is going to take it all away. Spiritually speaking, this is why we need to repent.

Verse 18: “I counsel you to buy from Me gold purified by fire so that you may be rich; and white garments so that you may be clothed, and the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and to anoint your eyes with eye salve, so that you may see.” So you can see the reality of your spiritual condition. You can see the reality of your carnality and Satan the devil in there trying to get you to do like the world. You can see that you need to receive the Spirit of Christ. So He says, REPENT!

Verse 19: “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore, be zealous and repent.” So, the good Laodiceans are those who will repent and are zealous!

Brethren, let’s let that be us! That we’re repenting and yielding to God. We want to be there for what tomorrow pictures—the resurrection from the dead. We want to be in the Family of God. We want to receive the ‘crown of life.’ We want to receive eternal life. All those things are there.

Notice, we have to open the door of our minds through repentance and Christ will come in.

Let's see if we can do that, v 21: "To the one who overcomes will I give *authority* to sit with Me in My throne, even as I also overcame, and sat down with My Father in His throne. **The one who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches**" (vs 21-22).

- Do you have an ear?
- Are you going to hear the personal epistle—letter—from Jesus Christ to each one of us?
- How are we going to respond?

We need to yield to God with all our heart, mind, soul and being!

- To love Him!
- To serve Him!
- To praise Him
 - ✓ for His way!
 - ✓ for His Truth!
 - ✓ for His goodness!
 - ✓ for His calling!
 - ✓ that He has rescued us from Satan the devil!

That *we don't go back* and get involved in those things! That *we don't go back* and try and run things from a carnal point of view and physical means and satanic means! But that everything is done decently, in love and service, and loving each other, and loving God the Father! That's what it has to be, brethren. This is what the seven churches picture: ***What it means to be in the harvest of God!***

Come on back tomorrow and we'll see the lesson concerning Pentecost and the Spirit of God and the resurrection.

Scriptural References:

- 1) Matthew 28:18-20
- 2) Matthew 16:13-27
- 3) Ephesians 1:1-5
- 4) Romans 8:9-22
- 5) Colossians 1:9-21, 26-28
- 6) Revelation 1:20
- 7) Revelation 2:1-29
- 8) Revelation 3:1-6, 8-13, 18-19, 21-22

Scriptures referenced, not quoted:

- Acts 1
- Matthew 13; 6

Also referenced: DVD: *Israel of the Alps*
(produced by the Seventh Day Adventist Church)

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