

Seven Churches—Church Wars II

Fred Coulter—January 8, 2011

Let's go back to 2-Chronicles 32, because here is an example of how God *causes* things to happen, which is not just *allowing*. What do I mean by that? *God takes a certain action to see how we will react!* Now this is the case of King Hezekiah. God performed a tremendous miracle destroying the whole army of 180,000 of the Assyrians and rescued the Jews in Jerusalem. Then the Babylonian ambassadors came over to find out what had happened.

He told them and then he showed them all the wealth that all the kings of Israel had gathered together since the time of David, plus all of the trophies, all of the spoil from the Assyrian army after they had plundered the various countries and just plundered Egypt when they came back set to conquer Judea. Now that was a grave mistake, because all of those treasures belong to God.

Let's pick it up here in 2-Chronicles 32:24: "In those days Hezekiah was sick unto death and prayed to the LORD. And He spoke to him, and He gave him a sign.... [That was the sundial going back and he lived. But, now notice this, this is very important in our behavior as individuals and also as an assembly or Church of God]: ...But Hezekiah responded not again according to the good *done* to him... [When we receive blessings from God, we're to respond back to Him.] ...for his heart was lifted up...." (vs 24-25).

Now we will see what God did and I think you will see something very similar happening as we come back to Rev. 2 & 3, and what is happening in the Church. And why I say that it is the hand of God, but not necessarily that He is out there with His hand doing something. Rather, that His hand has been withdrawn to see what the different ones will do.

"Therefore, there was wrath upon him and upon Judah and Jerusalem. Notwithstanding, Hezekiah humbled himself for the pride of his heart..." (vs 25-26). So he did repent. But remember when the sentence came from Isaiah—do you remember what the sentence was? *Isaiah came and he said, God says, 'All this that you showed the ambassadors is going to Babylon. Everything that you worked for, because you betrayed Me, is going to Babylon, but it won't happen in your day.'*

And what was Hezekiah's response? *I'll just paraphrase it, perfect Laodicean response: 'Well, I'll have peace in my day, that's good.'* So what happened after that? Who succeeded him? *His son Manasseh*, the worst one of the kings of Israel and Judah!

This is how God causes things to be done by withdrawing His hand. This becomes very important. We never individually want to get ourselves in this situation. So with what's going on in the churches today, we need to:

- make sure that we are close to God
- make sure that we don't get into this condition
- make sure that we don't enter into a fight that is not ours to enter into
 - To stand for the Truth? *Yes!*
 - To believe what is right? *Yes!*
 - To help others who are in trouble? *Yes!*

Here's how God does it, v 31: "Nevertheless, in *the business of* the ambassadors of the princes of Babylon, who sent to him to ask about the wonder that was done in the land, **God left him in order to try him, to know all that was in his heart.**"

This is an important thing to understand. There comes a time when God will pull back, not leave you alone and destitute, but pull back because He wants to know what choice are you going to make? Will you always choose God the Father and Jesus Christ under all circumstances, or what is it that you will do?

Now we will see how this applies to the other churches in Rev. 2 & 3. I know in the *Fourteen Things in Prophecy to Watch For* that I started last week, what I'm going to do, because in the fourteen things I have point number ten Laodiceans and point number eleven Philadelphians, I'm going to replace point ten and eleven with the two sermons that I'm giving today, which then is the *Seven Churches—The Church Wars*, where is it fitting into prophecy, because it does.

Church at Thyatira

Now let's look at Thyatira. How many have seen *Israel of the Alps* (DVD) put out by the Seventh Day Adventists? That's very good. I think it's interesting that the Seventh Day Adventists identify themselves with *Israel of the Alps*. That's very interesting, because in talking to John, the other SDA minister who was here this morning, I mentioned to him that I thought that the fulfillment of Thyatira today could very well be the SDA's.

There was the literal Church of Thyatira there, but how does it fit in the end-time? As we've noted, there were the literal churches, there were the seven churches down through time, and then at the

end as God views His churches, do we have seven categories of Churches as God looks at them? Not the corporate name, but as God views them. And if so, then we have those who fit into the Thyatira era here.

Revelation 2:18: “And to the angel of the Church in Thyatira write: These things says the Son of God, He Who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet are like fine brass. I know your works... [God knows the works of every one of us.] ...and love... [so, they have love] ...and service, and faith, and your endurance, and your works; and the last *are* more than the first.... [They’re busy, they’re active, they’re doing things.] (But here’s their problem, and this is so really, really true): ...But I have a few things against you, because you allow the woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce My servants into committing fornication and eating things sacrificed to idols” (vs 18-20).

Who was Jezebel, the literal woman? *Wife of Ahab*, who was the daughter of the priest of Baal. And the Christian succession of the priest of the Baal is the Roman Catholic Church. How many have seen *The Jesuit Agenda?* (DVD) What they have done to the Seventh Day Adventist Church in filtering in, bringing doctrines, bringing in things like the trinity, bringing in things like the immortal soul. Also, they do not keep the Passover. They keep the Lord’s Supper, first Sabbath every quarter, is that what most of them do? And remember, when, if you are God’s people, you are not keeping the Passover properly, you set yourself apart from God’s blessing to a certain degree.

Another thing happens when you start down that road, then you don’t understand the teachings, whether they are from God or whether they are counterfeits coming in. We’ve also seen that in Pasadena, haven’t we? Did they bring in Catholic doctrines? *Yes, beginning with the hierarchy!* Did they bring in other teachings that caused them to shift from the Sabbath and Holy Days over to Sunday and the holidays? *Yes!* What did God do to it? *He left them alone and it disintegrated!*

Notice here historically, and this ties right in with the *Israel of the Alps*. “And I gave her time to repent of her fornication, but she did not repent” (v 21). So even with the Catholic Church, God gave time to repent. What was the time of repentance for the Roman Catholic Church? *It was the Protestant Reformation and the Council of Trent!*

Now the Council of Trent ran for forty-some years. Believe it or not there were a large number of priests and cardinals and bishops that wanted to go ‘sola scriptura’—*Scriptures only*. And they were divided. That’s why it took forty years for the

Council of Trent to go. The Protestants—and this also happened to the Church of Thyatira for a time—they accepted Sunday by saying that it was church tradition. So, in the final session of the Council of Trent it was decided—because they were arguing back and forth between Scriptures only and tradition and Scriptures—the one who was leading the final session, I forget his name, but I’ll paraphrase what he said: ‘The Protestants have said Scriptures and Scriptures only. We say Scriptures and tradition. However, the Protestants really do not practice what they preach, because they have said that Sunday was established by the church, which was established by us—the Roman Catholic Church—and they follow the tradition of the church. Therefore, the Protestants follow Scripture and tradition, just like we do.’ That ended the Council of Trent.

So they had their opportunity to repent, the Protestants have had their opportunity, many opportunities to repent. And with every generation, there’s an opportunity to repent—right? How many times have you heard us discuss about repentance where we have concluded this: ***Where there’s life, there’s hope!*** As long as you’re alive, you can still repent— isn’t that correct? *Yes!* God looks at it that way, too. Go back and look what happened to Manasseh, who was the worst king of Israel. He did the most evil things and for 55 years. Think of that! How would you like to have Bill Clinton or Barak Obama for 55 years? But what happened? When the king of Assyria carried him off to Babylon, that’s when the time the Babylonians were conquered by the Assyrians, he put him in prison there—and what happened to Manasseh? *He repented!* Quite an amazing thing— isn’t it?

How bad was he? *The worst king possible!* But what happened after he repented? God gave him grace and favor in the eyes of the king of Assyria. He lifted him out of his captivity from the dungeon, sent him back to Jerusalem to be the vassal king under him—and what did he do? *He cleaned out the temple, he got rid of all the idols, he got rid of all the priests right there in Jerusalem!* He didn’t cleanse the whole land. So there’s a good example of how someone can really repent. Likewise with this: In every generation there’s an opportunity for repentance. ***As long as there’s life, there’s hope!***

But if you don’t repent, notice this very carefully, v 22. She did not repent. “Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation...” Now is that the Great Tribulation at the end? *It could mean great tribulation at the particular time that this judgment came down*, but it also could indicate at the end as well. So if the SDA’s trace their roots back to Israel of the Alps and Thyatira, it’s talking about today.

“...unless they repent of their works. And I will kill her children with death... [If you kill someone, they’re dead—right? How do you kill someone so there’s no death? *You don’t!* So what is this talking about? *With the lack of repentance, the Lake of Fire!* Kill with the death.] ...and **all** the churches... [See how this applies to everyone?] ...and all the churches shall know that I am He Who searches *the* reins and hearts...” (vs 22-23). God is always doing that, testing us. That’s why you’ve heard it said how many times:

- prayer
- Bible study
- relationship with God
- loving God

—and all these things. That’s an ongoing thing that you need to have daily with God. That keeps you in contact with God and God with you.

“...Who searches *the* reins and hearts; and I will give to each of you according to your works. 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, as they speak; I will not cast upon you any other burden” (vs 23-24).

They had their trials. Have we had our trials? Have we had this similar in our experience? *Yes!* It’s like you think you’re standing on firm ground, but you’re really on a carpet and someone comes along and jerks that carpet right out from underneath you, and you tumble and fall down and wonder: What happened? What happened? And then you look around and see everything is upside down, everything is in turmoil. Remember when it first started? Even the leading evangelists’ were down there in supposedly the house of God on the campus and they were actually fist-fighting each other, slugging each other. God withdrew His hand to see what they would do. In those kinds of fights, you don’t want to get into those.

- you stay right with God
- you stand firm with the Truth
- you keep the love of God

—and pray for them that God will bring them to repentance. We should take no joy at all in any of the problems and difficulties within the Church of God or within Seventh Day Adventist, or even the churches of the world. God is dealing with them, too. Pray that they’ll repent. Pray that they’ll yield to God.

Verse 26: “And to the one who overcomes... [we just discussed how to overcome] ...and keeps My works unto *the* end... [What are the works that God has given us to do? That’s in our daily lives and

that’s what we do together.] ...I will give authority over the nations.” *Keep your mind on the goal!* God is going to give us authority over the nations

- if we *yield to Him*
- if we’re *faithful to Him*
- if we *stand for the Truth*
- if we *love Him*

“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” (vs 27-28). Now what is the morning star? *The morning star is eternal life!*

I call your attention to Dan. 12. What does it say there? *Those who turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars forever and ever*—right? So the morning star is *eternal life with glory!*

Let’s see what Jesus says. We need Scriptures like these to inspire us. If someone is down in the dumps and someone is discouraged and depressed; we all get that way—don’t we? We all have those things. But how is it you come into church and minister stands up there and says, ‘A lot of you are down at the mouth, a lot of you are discouraged and depressed. Now you ought to get out of that.’ *Yeah, that makes you feel real good*—doesn’t it? *No!* God wants you to be inspired out of it, because of what He is going to give us. That’s why we are to keep our minds on the goal.

Notice what He says here, Matthew 13:43: “Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father...” The sun is a star— isn’t it? *Yes, indeed!*

- Are we going to be in the family of God? *Yes!*
- Are we going to see Christ as He is? *Yes!* Are we going to see the Father face to face? *Yes!*

So when you get down and discouraged, don’t let it pull you down into the dumps. But you let the Spirit of God and the Word of God *lift* you out of that and be inspired. That’s how you overcome. You don’t overcome by being beaten with a whip. You overcome by seeing God the Father and Jesus Christ and what He is doing and His whole plan. And then you’re inspired to overcome and change—right? *Yes!* So that’s what God wants us to do.

Revelation 2:29: “The one who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.” This is to *all*. This is why, in talking about the difficulties within the Church, don’t get involved in a fight that is not yours. What you have to do is this: ***Discern the truth and where you stand before God in your life.*** God is going to hold you responsible for

your decisions, for how you love Him and how you serve Him. Step aside and let things fall where they may. Let God handle it! That's His fight!

Church at Sardis

After you go through all of chapter two and you come to the time of what a lot of people like to say the Church in Sardis. I've talked to different Sardis ministers. There are even some of them that keep the Holy Days. Here's a good one, maybe a lot of you didn't know: Remember when HWA went to Dugger and Dodd about the Holy Days back in the early 1930s; He wrote of that in his autobiography. Well, I'll give you a little fill-in on the history here. When I was in Eugene as a ministerial assistant, the father of the Cole brothers—Raymond, Wayne, and Leroy—was a deacon in the Church that HWA was in when it was Church of God Seventh Day; then when it became independent.

When I would go out and visit, he would come with me and for hours we would talk about what had gone on in the transition period of what took place and it was very, very interesting, because there were some of Sardis—and you always heard they were 'dead.' They always pointed to Stanberry, Missouri, which was abandoned as a headquarters and it was in West Virginia and it was in Denver. And at the time that they were accused of being 'dead,' guess how many people were in Church of God Seventh Day out of Denver, with all their conferences? *70,000!* Well, they're not quite 'dead.' They still have a pulse.

Otis Cole's father was an elder in Church of God Seventh Day and Otis Cole's father in 1917, before Herbert Armstrong ever came in contact with the Church of God Seventh Day—which is where he got all of his doctrine, by the way—Otis Cole's father went to Dugger and Dodd and guess what he brought up? *The Holy Days and Israel in prophecy!* Irony of ironies, Dugger moved his headquarters to Jerusalem and when he got to Jerusalem he began keeping the Holy Days and preaching the Holy Days. So there are a lot of things that we don't know anything about. This just gives you kind of a little sampling that we need to trust God and what He's doing and we need to look to God to do what we need to do and understand it's one small part of what God is doing in carrying out His work.

So here is the Church at Sardis and they were anything but totally dead. I think some of them you could say were Philadelphia, some of them were of Sardis that they were dead, some of them in the various categories of the seven churches just like in going through today we can relate to all the problems in all the seven churches with what we've experienced—correct? *Yes!*

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.... [After you go through so much you just kind of sit back and you're just exhausted and you say, 'Hey, no more.'] ...Be watchful, and strengthen the things that remain, which are about to die.... [There are some people that's about all they can do—hold on to the little bit that they have, don't let that go out.] ...For I have not found your works complete before God. Therefore, remember what you have received and heard, and hold on *to this*, and repent...." (vs 1-3). Even when they're is as close to spiritual death as this, God says '*Repent!*' That's the whole key for all of us. We're to repent.

"...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.... [That can refer directly to judgment at any time. That does not necessarily mean the second return, although it can include that.] ...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 shall be clothed in white garments... [the righteousness of the saints] ...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" (vs 3-5).

So here, even those that have been looked down upon and disdained by other Churches of God, God is there saying, 'Look, repent! I love you! I want you! You just have to understand the things that you need to change.' So then again He says, He says this all the way through to all seven churches:

"The one who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches" (v 6). So that means we need to be willing to listen to all the Word of God, what He has to say.

I've been recently reading in the book of Jeremiah and boy, there are some tough things in the book of Jeremiah. Man, even Jeremiah said, 'Oh, God, you sent me out to do this and everybody's against me and everybody hates me. Why did You send me to these people who won't hear, who won't listen?' So He virtually said, 'Now, now, Jeremiah, I'll take care of you. It's going to be tough, so I'm going to make you like a brass wall and I'm going to make you like iron and no one is going to be able to come against you and take you down.' We need to realize that we can trust God for the same thing in this day as the very same punishments are coming upon this nation.

X. Church at Laodicea

I'm going to jump ahead to the Laodiceans. You've heard many sermons about the Laodiceans. Let's understand this: *God loves the Laodiceans!* But He wants their full cooperation with Him. I think as I've said many times before, that all of us in this experience in this age—the one we're living in today—we're all Laodiceans because we have so many physical things.

And even the poorest of us have more than people have had down through history. For example, those who are considered in poverty in the United States generally live in a house; have a television; have a car, maybe two cars; they have electricity; they have a lot of amenities—these are the ones that are in poverty.

You go to Pakistan or you go to Southeast Asia or you go to Africa and you look at their poverty, far different than ours. So even the ones who are in poverty here—viewed from those in those lands that I just mentioned—they're rich and increased with goods. Here is the difficulty. When God blesses us with physical things, which He does, *don't look upon those blessings as verification that you are spiritually right with God.* The way you're spiritually right with God is with your heart and with your mind and with your attitude. So let's read the Laodiceans here first. Now we're going to be kind to you. We won't beat you up, we'll just nail you to the wall, that's all (said with humor).

Revelation 3:14: “And to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans, write: These things says the Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the Beginner of the creation of God. I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot... [Isn't that something, we're lukewarm.] ...I would *that* you be *either* cold or hot” (vs 14-15).

God can deal with you if you're unconverted. God can deal with you if you're on fire for Him. But the in-betweeners, or the tweeners, are those hard to deal with, because you're neither/nor. You know about God's way.

- You know you ought to pray, *but don't!*
- You know you ought to study, *but don't!*
- You know you ought to keep the Sabbath the way that God wants you to, *but you don't!*

It's like what they call in supply today, which is 'on-time inventory.' In other words you never keep a big inventory, but the shipment comes in just in time. The problem is if you do that spiritually and you're not going to God, the spiritual shipment from God doesn't come in. Then you're going to find yourself saying, 'What'll I do?' When

you're lukewarm and a trial comes upon you, you don't know how to handle it.

So here's what happened here. Here's where God does where we started off (in 2-Chro. 32); v 16: “So then, because you are lukewarm, and *are* neither cold nor hot, I will spew you out of My mouth.” Now when God spews the Church out of His mouth—which may be what we're seeing happen again today; it's happened many times, because there's more than one generation of Laodiceans, here's why.

“For you say, ‘I am rich, and have become wealthy...’” (v 17). That means there was a time when you weren't rich and there was a time when you weren't wealthy. We look back on the history as we view it, through the WCG. There was a time when they were small, when they were right with God, when everyone was zealous, when everyone was doing what they should be doing. Then gradually, in rather a short fashion, all of these tremendous blessings came. At one time, the height of the income was \$140-million in one year. ‘Whooo, God is blessing us, look at all that money.’ BANG!

So since we live here, and I do this every once in a while when I come down, I drive around the campus and I look at that and take it as a warning. And I say to myself, ‘Fred, don't ever let this happen to you’—be spewed out of the mouth of God.

“For you say, ‘I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing’; and you do not understand that you are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked” (v 17). Without prayer, without study, without staying close to God, you can't see yourself as you are. And if you get in the midst of a church war and you're fighting for this person or that person or this person against that person, then you're ending up in carnality and God is backing away from you even further. You become more blind and you can't see what you're doing, where you're going. We shouldn't be involved in that either.

(go to the next track)

Let's come to 1-Corinthians 4 and let's see something that Paul said for us not to get into. So in the church problems and church wars that go on, don't get into this, because they had little mini church wars in Corinth. One wanted to follow Apollos, another one wanted to follow Paul, another one wanted to follow Cephas, and others said, ‘Well, we're better than you all, we're going to follow Christ.’

What they were doing—and they had these fights back and forth within the congregation and Paul said, ‘Where do divisions and things come among you, is it not that you’re carnal?’ He said, ‘I tried to talk to you as spiritual, but I couldn’t do it.’ So he follows up with this.

1-Corinthians 4:1: “So then, let *every* man regard us... [Paul, Apollos, Cephas, world, life, death, and so forth (1-Cor. 3:23).] ...as ministers of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God.” Now this is important for every minister to understand, everyone who’s teaching or an elder is this: ***You have not been granted a position above the brethren!***

We all need to understand: What is a steward? Today we don’t think much of it, but *a steward was a position of trust*. You were given sole authority over another person’s possessions to make them grow and increase. None of it belonged to the steward. As we saw earlier what Peter wrote, you’re not to rule over the brethren as if they are your possessions. They don’t belong to any minister. They don’t belong to a corporate church that they attend to. That’s just where they happen to meet. They belong to God the Father and Jesus Christ.

So, we need to view this as God’s possession, God’s heritage. And He’s chosen men to do the teaching. He’s chosen men to lead them, to teach them—for what? *That we can all become like Christ!* Isn’t that true? *‘It’s sufficient that the disciple become as the teacher’*—right?

So in church wars, all of that’s thrown out the windows and Paul is trying to bring them back to their senses here. “...and steward of the mysteries of God. Beyond that, it is required of stewards that one be found faithful. But to me it is an insignificant matter that I am judged by you, or by man’s standard; and neither do I judge myself.... [He did by God’s Word, but he himself didn’t judge himself.] ...Now I am not conscious of anything against myself, yet I am not justified by this; for the one Who is judging me is *the* Lord. Therefore, do not judge anything before *the* time...” (vs 1-5). That’s what happens when you get into church wars. You’ve got to judge this, you’ve got to judge that. Where do you stand for here, where do you stand for that?

Well, it’s like we were discussing about the Mayan calendar during lunch. Everybody’s going to get all excited in 2012 and the Mayan calendar. Gil, who’s doing some translating into Spanish for us, said he was talking to some brethren in Mexico and they were all excited about the Mayan calendar and they said the Mayans quit counting at 2012. You know what his answer was? ‘Jesus hasn’t quit

counting.’ We don’t judge things before the time. Don’t get caught up into who’s right and who’s wrong, pray for them that everyone of us will get right with Christ. Isn’t that the whole goal? *Yes!* So it’s a shame that these things have to happen.

“Therefore, do not judge anything before *the* time; *wait* until the Lord comes, Who will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the motives of *all* hearts; and then shall each one receive praise from God. Now these things, brethren, I have applied to Apollos and myself for your sakes; that in us you may learn not to think *of men* beyond what is written... [don’t get exalted in personality] ...so that no one among you is puffed up on behalf of one *of us* against the other.... [God doesn’t want that. That’s what was happening there in Corinth.] ...For what makes you superior *to others*? And what do you have that you did not receive?.... [Everything in life we have comes from God—all the physical, all the spiritual, everything.] ...But if you also received *it*, why are you boasting as if you did not receive *it*?” (vs 5-7).

Now notice how this fits in with the Laodiceans, v 8: “Now you are satiated. Now you have been enriched. You have reigned without us.... [You’ve already made it into the kingdom. No, that’s not true.] ...And I would that you did reign, so that we might also reign with you.... [notice what he says about the apostles]: ...For I suppose that God made us apostles last, as it were appointed to death; for we have become a spectacle to the world, both to angels and to men” (vs 8-9). So that gives us an insight on what we need to do here.

Let’s come back to the Laodiceans, Rev. 3. Whenever we get puffed up concerning anything, then we start walking down the road of trouble. Now my wife Dolores has burned in my brain one little spot back here—because she said we’ve lived through enough of the vanity of ministers strutting back and forth and we don’t need that any longer—so she always tells me, ‘Fred, just talk—just talk.’ Because people can be instructed and we can all learn.

The whole thing is we are all to be uplifted with the Spirit of God, built on Christ. We want to have everyone built so that they have the character of God that is like gold. Isn’t that what we want? That’s the best thing? *Yes!* And you can’t do it on vanity. And you can’t do it by thinking how good you are. And you can’t do it by thinking how wealthy you are. You can’t do it like Hezekiah did and said, ‘Well, look, boy, all of this happened. Now I’m going to show them everything that there is.’ God says that’s being puffed up. Well, Laodiceans are puffed up.

So here's what God is telling us when we have the troubles, Rev. 3:18. Some of what is going on in addition to what we've covered with the church wars, is God is *spewing them out of His mouth*, doing to them exactly what He did to Hezekiah. Put them out there on his own to see what he would do. Well, Hezekiah humbled himself. That's what's happening today. 'Put them out there, let them fight among themselves, and let's see who comes to Me and let's see who humbles him or herself.' That's what it's all about. God loves them. God wants them, but there are lessons we all need to learn. So pray for them.

- ask God to help them
- ask God to help bring those who rule with an iron fist over the brethren to repentance
- ask for those who add to the Word of God to repent

The whole thing is repentance and our relationship with God! That's what He's saying here to the Laodiceans.

Revelation 3:18: "I counsel you to buy from Me gold purified by fire so that you may be rich; and white garments... [the righteousness of the saints] ...so that you may be clothed, and the same of your nakedness may not be revealed... [Isn't this all nonsense that's going on? *Yes!*] ...and to anoint your eyes with eye salve, so that you may see."

That requires repentance and getting close to God. 'God, help me to see,' because when we get carried away with our vanity and we get carried away in personalities, and we get carried away in justifying of the self, we get carried away in fighting back and forth, and memos and letters and 'you didn't do this, you didn't do that'—what happens? *We get all puffed up* and God says, 'Hey, I'm going to back off and let you work it out, see what you're going to do.' So we all need eye salve to see correctly.

"...So that you may see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore, be zealous and repent" (vs 18-19). This is what we need to do.

- come back to Christ
- receive of His Spirit
- humble yourself before God

Now, here's the sad thing of it, v 20: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock.... [the door of your mind] ...If anyone hears My voice... [you have to make yourself to hear] ...and opens the door..." You have to come back to Christ and say, 'Oh, God, here I am, forgive me for my foolishness and my laziness and all the things for being rich and increased with goods and thinking that this made me spiritual, fighting one person against another, taking

sides here, rejecting over there,' and all of this sort of thing.

Open the door and let Christ come in. He says, v 20: "...I will come in to him and will sup with him, and he with me." Now I can also take that and say this applies to the Protestants—right? Isn't God working in the churches of the Protestants to tear it down? *Yes! So that they may seek God! So He's there knocking on the door.*

- Why are you keeping Sunday?
- Why are you keeping the holidays?
- Why are you doing away with the Word of God?

To bring them back to Him!

Remember where we started, 'Let everyone who names the name of Christ, depart from unrighteousness'—correct? Do the Protestants name the name of Christ? *Sure they do!* Has God rejected them? *As long as there's life, there's hope!* Can they repent? *Yes!* Does God want them to repent? *Yes!* Will they repent? *That's their choice!* Same way with the Churches of God.

Verse 21: "To the one who overcomes will I give authority to sit with Me in My throne, even as I also overcame, and sat down with My Father in His throne.... [Isn't that something? Jesus had to overcome; He can help us to overcome.] ...The one who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches" (vs 21-22).

Now during the break Ryan came up and brought a couple Scriptures to me, which I think fit in real fine right here. Let's come to Isaiah 58. One of these days I'm going to give a New Testament sermon from Isaiah. Remember what Paul told Timothy? 'That you have known the Holy Writings'—which are the Old Testament—'from a child which are able to make you wise unto salvation through Jesus Christ.' So I'll bring that one of these days. This applies to:

- the people of God, *all the Israelites*
- the people who name the name of Christ and think they're Christian
- the Churches of God

It's very broad and it does apply very directly to the Laodiceans.

Isaiah 58:1: "Cry aloud, do not spare, lift up your voice like a ram's horn, and show My people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins." That has to be part of the Gospel that we preach.

And oh, by the way, with Church at Home we have what, 106 or 107 online now. Randy has

been really improving and getting the editing up and really running good. We went over some of them yesterday. We want to reach out to those who are wondering in the world, ‘Lord, what should I do?’

How many saw that latest ad about Doritos chips? The non-denominational minister and he’s sitting there at the desk and his assistant comes in and he says, ‘Oh, look at all these bills. We don’t know what to do and how to pay for them.’ He says, ‘I got an idea.’ So for communion services, instead of just a little bread, they had a bag of Doritos, and a lot of people came in, Doritos are good. One man said, ‘Where is the other bread?’

God wants them to repent, too, v 2: “Yet they seek Me daily, and seem eager to know My ways, as a nation that did righteousness, and one that did not forget the ordinance of their God. They ask of Me the ordinances of justice; they seem eager to draw near to God.... [But how? *Their way!* *Has to be God’s way!* Remember where we started, ‘lest you add to the Word of God and you are found to be a liar.’] ...*They say*, ‘Why have we fasted, and You do not see? Why have we afflicted our soul and You take no knowledge?’ Behold, in the day of your fast you pursue your business and exploit all your workers. Behold, you fast for strife and debate, and to strike with the fist of wickedness; you cannot fast as *you do* this day, and expect to make your voice to be heard on high” (vs 2-4). *You have to come to God with repentance!*

That’s why all the way through Rev. 2 & 3 He says what? *Repent!* “*Is* not this, *rather*, the fast that I have chosen—to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed ones go free, and that you break every yoke?” (v 6). You can apply that in many ways. You can apply that to

- the government
- churches
- dictatorial governments within the Church of God

—and everything like that as well.

“*Is it* not to give of your bread to the hungry, and that you should bring home the wandering poor? When will you see the naked and cover him; and not hide yourself from your own flesh?” (v 7). Now, if you do that, notice what he’s encouraging in all of these things. *Repentance!* That’s what He says to the Laodiceans. ‘*Repent, I love you, open the door, I will come in.*’

Notice what happens, v 8: “Then shall your light break out as the dawn, and your health shall spring out quickly; and your righteousness shall go before you; the glory of the LORD shall be your rear guard. Then you shall call, and the LORD shall

answer; you shall cry, and He shall say, ‘Here I am.’ If you take the yoke away from among you, the pointing of the finger, and speaking malice... [Does that not describe church wars? *Yes, indeed!*] ...*And if* you draw out your soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul; then shall your light rise in darkness, and your gloom *shall be* as the noonday. And the LORD shall always guide you and satisfy your soul in dry places...” (vs 8-11)—etc., etc., etc. Then it gets down to how do you do it? *You start keeping the Sabbath the way that it should be kept!*

XI. Church at Philadelphia

Let’s come back to where everyone likes to go to and let’s see that this is the goal that all the churches need to aim at. Now we’re ready to talk about the Philadelphians. This shows us what we need to be doing and shows us that we are living in the end-times when these things are going to develop.

Revelation 3:7: “And to the angel of the Church in Philadelphia, write: These things says the Holy One, the one Who is true; the one Who has the key of David...” And *the key of David is the understanding of the Word of God because you have a right relationship with God*. Remember what happened when David sinned? God had to punish him after that.

“...Who opens and no one shuts, and Who shuts and no one opens” (v 7). God is going to make it possible to do what He wants us to do. God doesn’t want us running down the road saying, ‘Oh, this is the work of God. You’ve got to bless it because I say it’s the work of God.’ God may look down here and say, ‘Who are you? Did I send you?’ *No!*

Let’s just expand a little bit on the key of David. Let’s put it this way: *The key of David is a right heart toward God, which then gives understanding for the Word of God*. That would be the best summary I could make of it here. And as a result of that, then God opens and no man shuts and God shuts and no man opens.

Verse 8: “I know your works.... [Every one of us has 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... [We understand who we are. We’re no big mucky-mucks, we’re just the people of God.] ...and have kept My Word... [That’s the important thing—keeping the Word of God, keeping the sayings of Jesus Christ, keeping all the things that God tells us we need to do.] ...and have not denied My name.” How do you deny the name of Christ?

Titus 1:5: “For this cause I left you in Crete, so that you might set in order the things that needed to be done, and might ordain elders in every city, as I commanded you: If any man be blameless, *the* husband of one wife, having faithful children, not accused of debauchery or rebellion. For it is obligatory that as God’s steward an overseer be blameless, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not given to wine, not a bully, not greedy for material gain; but hospitable, a lover of good, sound-minded, just, holy, self-controlled” (vs 5-8).

If anyone wants to be an elder or teacher, start looking at the qualifications here. And if you already are, then make sure you’re living up to the standards. This is for the start, but it’s also all the way through your whole life—is it not? *Yes!*

“But hospitable, a lover of good, sound-minded, just, Holy, self-controlled. Holding steadfastly to the faithful Word... [And that’s what the Philadelphians do. *They keep the Word of God and they hold fast faithfully to the Word.*] ...according to the teachings of *Jesus Christ*, so that he may be able both to encourage with sound doctrine and to convict those who are gainsayers. For there are many rebellious and vain talkers and deceivers, especially those from *the* circumcision party, Whose mouths must be stopped; who are subverting whole households, teaching things which *they* ought not, for the sake of selfish gain. One from among them, *even one* of their own prophets, said, ‘Cretans *are* always liars, *and* evil, wild beasts, *and* lazy gluttons’” (vs 8-12). These are really big-time Laodiceans here.

“This testimony is true. For this reason you *must* rebuke them severely, that they may be sound in the faith; not paying attention to Jewish myths and commandments of men, which turn away from the truth. To the pure, all things *are* pure; but to those who are defiled and unbelieving, nothing *is* pure; rather, both their minds and consciences are defiled. They personally profess to know God, but in *their* works they deny Him... [It’s not the profession, *it’s how do you live.* It’s not what you think, *it’s how you do.*] ...they deny Him, being abominable and disobedient, and reprobate unto every good work” (vs 13-16).

What did Jesus say to all the churches? ‘*I know your works*’—correct? *Yes!* So it says back here to the Philadelphians, Revelation 3:8 “...and have not denied My name.... [That means not only verbally, but that means *in action*, that means *in deed*. This is very interesting—isn’t it?] ...Behold, I will make those of the synagogue of Satan, who proclaim themselves to be Jews... [they are the ones who have the insight to God] ...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” (vs 8-9).

That doesn’t necessarily mean they’re going to worship us, but they will come before our feet and worship God. Who are these people? *Says there the synagogue of Satan!* These are the super international elite today and that’s their god. These are the ones who are formulating all things leading to the world government. Can you imagine this: George Soros, ‘Uncle’ Ben Bernanke, Rockefeller, Geithner, whoever you want to put in there, whoever is over in Europe, whoever’s over in China, or whatever nation they’re in—because they’re in all nations—they’re going to come before us and they’re going to have access to God through us. Isn’t that something?

We—the ones who were despised; *we*—the ones who were rejected; *we*—the little pawns of the world whom they used to lift themselves up to their high positions. Isn’t that going to be something? So, don’t feel oppressed by the elite. Remember this, their day is coming. Christ knows all about it. He’ll take care of it. We stay right with God. You don’t get mad and run off like people do and say, ‘Well, we’ve got to get rid of these people, we have to get rid of those people, we have to get rid of the other people.’ Christ has to take care of it. He will when He returns. So the answer is: We be faithful and we’ll be there to do it.

Now notice what He says here, the reason this is going to happen is so *they will know*: “...**that I have loved you**” (v 9). God loves us. Remember that. You get up in the morning, your hair all in a frazzle, your eyes hardly open, and you look in the mirror and you say, ‘Is that me?’ The older you get the more often you say that—right? *God loves you!* Now you have to clean up and all that sort of thing, you do, but God loves you regardless. So remember that. Never ever, *ever, ever* get down and think there’s no hope; get down and think that God doesn’t care for you; get down and think that God has rejected you. Maybe you’re going through a trial, but He hasn’t rejected you. Just remember *He loves you!*

- You pray to Him and ask for a way out.
- You pray to Him and you ask God,
 - ✓ Help me!
 - ✓ Give me direction!
 - ✓ Show me what I need to do!
 - ✓ Help me to think, help me to do what I need to do!

God will! He’ll answer that prayer, because He loves us.

Our response to God, v 10: “Because you have kept the Word of My patience... [always keeping the Word of God continually] ...I will also keep you from the time of temptation which *is* about to come upon the whole world to try those who dwell on the earth.”

This is a worldwide event. And what is that going to be? *That will be the mark of the beast, not the Tribulation!* The mark of the beast comes right at the beginning of the Tribulation. But God is going to keep us from that. Exactly how He’s going to do it, we don’t know, but He’s going to.

Verse 11: “Behold, I am coming quickly; hold fast that which you have so that no one may take away your crown.” There are men out there who are not working for God, who are pretenders, who want to come and take your crown. That’s why not to get involved in church wars. Let God take care of it! Let Christ take care of it! He is the Head of the Church! ***He will do it!***

“Behold, I am coming quickly; hold fast that which you have so that no one may take away your crown. The one who overcomes... [notice this blessing; notice how great this is going to be] ...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...” (vs 11-12). Rather than the *name of the beast* and the *number of the beast*, and so forth, there’s a direct parallel here. There are three things with the *mark of the beast*:

1. you have to have *the mark*
2. you have to have *the number*
3. you have to have *the name*

Three things—right? Notice three things here, v 12: “...I will write upon him

1. **the name** of My God
2. the **name of the city** of My God, the new Jerusalem, which will come down out of heaven from My God, and
3. My **new name.**”

Those three things, that’s what God wants to do. So when we look about and we see all the things that are going on, ***let’s remember the message to the seven churches.*** When we are looking at prophecy what is yet to be fulfilled, ***remember the seven churches***

- so that we can take all of the admonitions to change and correct and repent
- so we can take all of the encouragement so we can draw close to God so we can be faithful in everything we do.

Then at the resurrection, because a lot of us there’s going to be more time, and a lot of us are going to

find our places of safety in the grave. Either way, when the resurrection comes, what do we want to hear? ***‘Well, done, good and faithful servants. Enter into the joy of your Lord.’***

Scriptural References:

- 1) 2-Chronicles 32:24-26, 31
- 2) Revelation 2:18-28
- 3) Matthew 13:43
- 4) Revelation 2:29
- 5) Revelation 3:1-6, 14-17
- 6) 1-Corinthians 4:1-9
- 7) Revelation 3:18-22
- 8) Isaiah 58:1-4, 6-11
- 9) Revelation 3:7-8
- 10) Titus 1:5-16
- 11) Revelation 3:8-12

Scriptures referenced, not quoted:

- Daniel 12
- 1 Corinthians 3:23

Also referenced:

DVDs:

- *Israel of the Alps* (produced by The Seventh Day Adventist Church)
- *Jesuit Agenda* (produced by The Seventh Day Adventist Church)