

## **Exploring Revelation 07:**

### **Philadelphia Or Laodicea?**

An Exposition of Revelation 3:14-22.

The messages to the Seven Churches of Revelation were originally given to seven local congregations. Why seven congregations? Undoubtedly there were hundreds of other Christian churches in Asia Minor at that time. The reason is that those seven churches, in their names and situations, were fitting parallels, or illustrations, of the experiences of God's people in various periods down through the Christian era.

The Historical school of interpretation has held that the Seven Churches of Revelation represent the entire Christian Church, the seven periods of the Church, from the first to the second advent of Christ. Before the writer are the conclusions of forty-four known biblical scholars of the past who have held this position. ('Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers.' Dr. Leroy E. Froom.)

The view that the Seven Seals represent the apostate church is the historic Seventh-day Adventist view. Today other interpretations are taught by many Seventh-day Adventists but in the exposition of Revelation 4-6 we show that the historic position is the only one that stands up under close investigation.

The apostle Paul was inspired to write to seven churches and his messages have a universal application to all Christians. Likewise, John wrote to seven churches and his messages apply to all Christians of every age. The messages to the seven churches represent, in advance, a history of God's people. They do not refer to any one religious organization, as such, but to the true Christian church, in general.

When we analyze the second outline of prophecy in Revelation, the Seven Seals, they present to us, in advance, a history of the apostate church. It is important to notice this, because it is claimed today that the Laodicean Church is the apostate church. But the prediction of the apostate church is in the Seven Seals, not in the Seven Churches. The Seven Churches represent the history in advance of the true Church of God through the ages.

Is it important for us to study these particular prophecies of Revelation? The prophet declares: "The solemn messages that have been given in their order in the Revelation are to occupy the first place in the minds of God's people. Nothing else is to be allowed to engross our attention." 8 Testimonies, page 302. The prophet then records the messages to the three final churches: Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea, indicating that these messages are also for us in the end time.

It is also claimed today by some divergent groups that the book of Revelation in its great lines of prophecy, applies only to the last days, the "end time". According to the prophet, this is a mistake. It obscures rather than clarifies our understanding of the book of Revelation. It is claimed that the historic interpretation of Revelation in the past was all right for that day, but it is now out of date. This is unfortunate. Notice what the prophet declares of the prophecies of Revelation:

"They are addressed to those living in the last days of this earth's history, as well as to those living in the days of John. Some of the scenes depicted in these prophecies are in the past; some are now taking place, some bring to view the close of the great conflict between the powers of darkness and the

Prince of heaven, and some reveal the triumphs and joys of the redeemed in the earth made new.” Acts of Apostles, page 584.

This completely refutes the position as held by some who are interpreting Revelation contrary to the historical position of Seventh-day Adventists. In reviewing the prophecy of the seven churches let us notice the relation of Jesus Christ Himself to the seven churches. This is significant.

**“I turned to see the voice that spoke with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks; And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man.” Revelation 1:12-13.**

Jesus is amid the candlesticks, and the candlesticks represent the seven churches (Verse 20). Jesus is in the midst of His church. And why is He so pictured? This is an assurance that the people of God are being cared for by Christ. “Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world.” He is with His church, even the church of Laodicea. He is working for it to save it, to preserve it. The church of God will not be overcome. **“On this Rock I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” (Matthew 16.)** It may be embattled, but the church of Christ will not be overcome. The church is built on Christ, protected by Christ, cared for by Christ. It will be saved by Christ and delivered by Christ. The church of God survives. Not one of the seven churches will be lost. Some members of each church period may be lost, but in every one of the seven churches, there are overcomers, conquerors, survivors. What then is the purpose of these messages to the Seven Churches? Are they to condemn? No! They are to warn, to guide, to reprove and to save. They are “love” messages.

“This revelation was given for the guidance and comfort of the church throughout the Christian dispensation. The church was defective and in need of stern reproof and chastisement.” John was inspired to record messages of warning and reproof and entreaty to those who,, losing sight of the fundamental principles of the gospel, should imperil their hope of salvation; but always the words of rebuke that God finds it necessary to send are spoken in tender love and with promise of peace to every penitent believer: Behold I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.” Acts of Apostles, page 583, 587.

This then is the purpose of the seven letters. They are not to indicate that the church is apostate in any one period. These messages were sent to preserve the church, no matter what period it is. When we examine the churches, we find that two receive unqualified praise: Smyrna and Philadelphia; two receive unqualified blame: Sardis and Laodicea and the remaining three receive both praise and blame: Ephesus, Pergamos and Thyatira.

Does the message to each church apply only to its peculiar period? “The names of the churches are symbolic of the periods, and the symbols used reveal the condition of the church at different periods, and the messages extend to the end of time.” ‘The Acts of the Apostles.’ page 585. What Christ says to one period may also apply to another. For instance, notice the complaint against the first church period of Ephesus: “You have left your first love.” (Revelation 2:4) Could not that apply to Christians in other periods? Notice the message to Smyrna - the period of pagan persecution: “Be thou faithful unto death.” (Revelation 2:10) Could not that apply to other church periods? What of the complaint concerning Pergamos? “Thou hast also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans.” (Revelation 2:15) What was the doctrine of the Nicolaitans?

“Those who are teaching this doctrine today have much to say in regard to the faith and righteousness of Christ; but they pervert the truth and make it serve the cause of error. They declare that they have

only to believe on Christ and that faith is all-sufficient; that the righteousness of Christ is to be the sinner's credentials; that this imputed righteousness fulfills the law for us and that we are under no obligation to obey the law of God. Such teaching is a gross deception. They regard faith as a substitute for obedience. Virtually, they teach both by precept and example that Christ, by His death, saves men *in* their transgressions, instead of *from* their transgressions." Signs Times, February 15, 1897.

Today this doctrine is right in the midst of the Remnant Church. It is a part of the so-called "new theology". Notice God's attitude toward this doctrine: "which thing I hate." (Revelation 2:15)

Let us also note the complaint concerning Thyatira. This was the church of the "Dark Ages" under papal persecution, the church in the wilderness. God says to the believers in this period: "You suffered that woman Jezebel to teach and to seduce my servants." (Revelation 2:20) Who does Jezebel represent? In prophecy a woman represents "a church". What church would this be? Without question the Church of Rome. Christ complains that believers were allowing the Church of Rome to teach and to spiritually seduce God's servants.

Could this complaint apply also today when the ecumenical spirit is pervading the Remnant, and we are playing down the truth in regard to the Papacy, "the man of sin" the anti-Christ? It surely could. In the message to Sardis, the church of the Reformation, Christ says: "Strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die." (Revelation 3:2) Truth was dying in the Reformation churches. After the mighty awakening under the Protestant Reformers, the churches became creed bound and spiritually dead. Is such a situation prevalent in some areas of our church today? Are some things dying? Is there a need for a revival? Scores of times, the Spirit of Prophecy takes passages from the previous six churches of Revelation and applies them to us today, the Laodicean church. This is a principle of interpreting the messages of the Seven Churches of Revelation, they have a universal application as well as applying to each particular church period.

Does each period of the Seven Churches represent a particular church organization of that period? Not necessarily. The Seven Churches represent the church in general, all those who are true believers. Frequently in the past, God has used church organizations to His glory, but, generally, those church organizations ultimately become a hindrance to the cause of God. By refusing to advance in light and truth and becoming intolerant, they fall from grace. Therefore, in that condition, they would not form a part of the Seven Churches, the true church. They could be classed under the apostate church. The Seven Churches refer to the universal church on earth. They represent the true believers wherever they are.

There are five statements from the Spirit of Prophecy that describe the true church of God. These will help us to understand what the church of God really is: "God has a people upon the earth. Who are they? They are those who will purify their souls by obeying the truth as it is in Jesus." Ellen White, General Conference Bulletin April 20, 1901. Again, "The Church on earth composed of those who are loyal to God, is the true tabernacle whereof the Redeemer is the minister." 7 Bible Commentary, 931.

"God has a people on the earth who in faith and holy hope are tracing down the roll of fast fulfilling prophecy and are seeking to purify their souls by obeying the truth, that they may not be found without the wedding garment when Christ shall appear." 4 Testimonies, page 307. "God has a church. It is not the great cathedral, neither is it the national establishment; neither is it the various denominations. It is the people who love God and keep His commandments. 'Where two or three are

gathered together in My name, there I am in the midst of them.”

“Where Christ is, even among the humble few, this is Christ’s church, for the presence of the High and Holy One Who inhabits Eternity, can alone constitute a church.” Upward Look, page 315. This means, that if a church organization becomes oppressive to true believers it is not really a part of the church of God. “The church is God’s fortress, His city of refuge, which He holds in a revolted world. Any betrayal of the church is treachery to Him, who has bought mankind with the blood of His only begotten Son. From the beginning, faithful souls have constituted the church on earth.” Acts Apostles, page 11.

The messages to the Seven Churches, then, are to true believers; to those who are endeavoring to be faithful, but who are imperfect. Christ sends them messages of reproof, counsel and comfort, in order to purify and preserve them and take them through to the Kingdom.

What of the church of Laodicea? Is Laodicea the church of apostasy as is often taught today? What is the significance of the Laodicean message? There has been great confusion through the years in regard to this. One of the chief weapons used to lead Seventh-day Adventists out of the church is the Laodicean message. It is claimed that Laodicea is apostate and is therefore a part of Babylon.

Let us examine this question very closely. Is Laodicea an apostate church? Is Laodicea the Seventh-day Adventist Church? Do the Seven Churches of Revelation represent the true church of the Christian era, or do only six? What were the views of the pioneers on the question of Laodicea and Philadelphia, and were they correct? What does the Spirit of Prophecy declare on this question? Is it possible to migrate from Laodicea to Philadelphia? If I remain in Laodicea, can I be made ready for translation?

Let us consider the first question: “Is Laodicea an apostate church?” What does “Laodicea” mean? “Laodicea” means “a just people”, or “the judging of the people”. (‘Outline Studies in Revelation.’ Dr. E. Thiele page 69. ‘Daniel and Revelation.’ Uriah Smith page 391. ‘Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary.’ Volume 7 page 760.). This is very significant. It is the period of the judging of the people. This is the period of the pre-advent, the investigative judgment, when “judgment begins at the house of God,” when God’s people are judged. This judgment commenced in 1844, and closes before the Second Advent.

Today, the term “Laodicea” is used rather loosely to represent half warmness, a very sad and unfortunate condition, but it does not necessarily mean that. A Laodicean means one who is “a true believer” in the last days, in the final or seventh period of the church.

This leads to the question: Do the Seven Churches represent the true church, or do only six of the Seven Churches represent the true church? If it were true, as is claimed, that the Laodicean church represents apostasy, then it cannot represent the true church. That means that only six churches represent the true church. This is contrary to reason and conflicts with the Spirit of Prophecy.

“The names of the seven churches are symbolic of the church in different periods of the Christian era. the number seven indicates completeness, and is symbolic of the fact that the messages extend to the end of time.” Acts of Apostles, page 585.

Laodicea is the seventh period of the true church. Seeing it is designated as being involved with the judging of the people it is logical to define its period from 1844 until the second advent. Philadelphia is the sixth period of the true church. Its period must conclude in 1844 when the period of Laodicea must begin. This means that Philadelphia exists no more. The Philadelphia period is past. It ended in 1844,

when the seventh period and the judgment commenced. However, the counsel that God gave to the church of Philadelphia applies to us just as the messages to all the churches apply today. We are to emulate the conditions of the Philadelphian church but we cannot migrate to Philadelphia. Other details concerning Philadelphia will be discussed later.

The messages to the Seven Churches, the Spirit of Prophecy indicates, extend to the end of time. This means that the Laodicean message is for God's people at the end of time. They have a very special need and so there is a special message for them, the most alarming message of all the seven.

What were the views of the pioneers concerning the Seven Churches, particularly of Laodicea and Philadelphia, and were they correct? In 1854 James White declared: "Now just as sure as the Philadelphia church is the true church of the last days, just so sure the 144,000 are sealed just before the coming of the Lord." Again, "The 144,000 and the Philadelphia church are identical." Review & Herald, May 9, 1854.

Was James White correct? Undoubtedly he was not. Remember, he lived at the transitional period from Philadelphia to Laodicea, and he expected the advent in a very short time and therefore he could have drawn incorrect conclusions. We now know, as a result of further study and further light that has come to us, that James White, in his conclusions, was incorrect.

Likewise, Milton Wilcox wrote: "Laodicea represents the last phase of apostasy in the Church. It is the waxing cold of a part of the remnant church because of abounding iniquity. God has not one good thing to say to those in Laodicea. Their case is wretched indeed." 'The Seven Churches and The Seven Seals.' Page 9.

Our pioneers believed that both Sardis and Laodicea were hopeless cases, but was this correct? When Ellen White wrote the book, "Acts of the Apostles", in 1911, which was after the time of the pioneers she corrected their views on this subject and indicated very clearly that the Laodicean or seventh period, is the church of the end time, the last church. She never speaks of Laodicea as the apostate church.

Now because the pioneers were mistaken on this detail concerning Laodicea we do not infer that all the pioneers' views should be rejected. On the fundamental aspects of the Advent message they had the truth but in some secondary areas as a result of further study some of their conclusions have had to be modified. This brings us to the objection that is raised in the message to Philadelphia. It describes how those of the "synagogue of Satan" will worship at the feet of the saints:

**"Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not but do lie; behold I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee." Revelation 3:7,** It is claimed that those who worship at the saint's feet will be Seventh-day Adventists, and therefore we should be leaving the Seventh-day Adventist Church and joining the Philadelphians. Let us examine this assertion.

The term "synagogue of Satan" is first used in connection with the church of Smyrna. It speaks "of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are of the synagogue of Satan." (Revelation 2:9) Were there any Seventh-day Adventists during the Smyrna period, when the pagan emperors of Rome persecuted the early church? No! The "synagogue of Satan" cannot, therefore, apply to Seventh-day Adventists in Smyrna. What about the church of Philadelphia? It is claimed that the Spirit of Prophecy

applies this prediction to Seventh-day Adventists, who will worship at the feet of the Philadelphians.

Let us examine the Spirit of Prophecy statement. In speaking of the saints of God who have gone through the time of Jacob's trouble, and who are now delivered by the voice of God, it says, quoting Revelation 3:9: "This class were professed Adventists who had fallen and crucified to themselves the Son of God afresh." 'Word to the Little Flock,' page 12.

This is a description of ex-Adventists who had willfully sinned against Christ. It refers to apostate Adventists "who had fallen away". To use such a statement to try to prove that S.D.A.'s will finally admit that they have been in error is a blatant misuse of the Spirit of Prophecy. This practice seems to be done repeatedly by many who separate from Seventh-day Adventists.

The Spirit of Prophecy is very clear what the "synagogue of Satan" represents. "Christ speaks of the church over which Satan presides as The Synagogue of Satan. Its members are the children of disobedience. They are those who choose to sin, who labor to make void the holy law of God. It is Satan's work to mingle evil with good and to have the distinction between good and evil. Christ would have a church that labors to separate the evil from the good, whose members will not willingly tolerate wrong doing, but will expel it from the heart and life." (Review & Herald, December 4, 1900) 7 Bible Commentary, page 958.

It is crystal clear that the above description of the "synagogue of Satan" applies to the church or churches that reject the law of God. This cannot apply to the Seventh-day Adventist church. In fact the S.D.A. church, when it experiences the second phase of the shaking will fulfill the description given above of the church that God would have. This we will prove further on.

The Spirit of Prophecy is so clear that those who will be on the Lord's side in the final conflict will be Seventh-day Adventists, not Philadelphians etc. "The whole world is to be stirred with enmity against Seventh day Adventists, because they will not pay homage to the Papacy by honoring Sunday." Testimonies to Ministers, page 37. In the light of this statement, seeing the S.D.A. church is classed as Laodicea it is apparent that there are those of Laodicea who will be saved.

If the Laodicean church is apostate as is claimed, if it is rejected, if there is no hope for it, why the counsel to those in Laodicea to buy gold, white raiment and eye salve [Revelation 3:18] This indicates that they are not hopeless cases. Why call to repent, if they are rejected already? Why this love message, as the Laodicean message is described by the prophet? Why the knock on the heart's door with the call to every man to open the door, that Christ might come in? This is significant.

It is not to a church as an organization that the Laodicean message is given. It is to individual believers, and the Spirit of Prophecy emphasizes this: "Individuals are tested and proved a length of time to see if they will sacrifice their idols and heed the counsel of the True Witness." 1 Testimony, page 187. "Every individual needs to have a decided interest in the invitation of Christ," referring to Laodicea.

"Let us make an application of the words of Christ to our own individual cases. Are we poor and blind and miserable?" 7 Bible Commentary, page 964, 966.

The messages to the Seven Churches are to individual believers not to a church organization. Another important aspect of the Laodicean message needs to be noted: "It is not the design of the message to lead a brother to sit in judgment over his brother, but for an individual to search his own heart and attend to his own individual work." 7 Bible Commentary, page 962.

What could be clearer than that? This is a death blow to those who take the Laodicean message and teach from it that believers must come out of Laodicea, the church of the last days, which they claim is the Seventh-day Adventist church. Such a claim is a mistake. It is a misunderstanding of Scripture and a misreading of the Spirit of Prophecy.

Does the Laodicean church involve only Seventh-day Adventists? "The names of the Seven Churches are symbolic of the church in different periods of the Christian era." (Acts of Apostles, page 585). We have already read what the true church is. The church comprises those who are true believers in Jesus Christ. Where are the majority of true believers? The Spirit of Prophecy states, and we have believed through the years, that the majority of believers are in other churches. This being so, the message to Laodicea must be for those in other churches as well as for Seventh-day Adventists.

"The warning for the last church also must be proclaimed to all who claim to be Christians. It is our work to proclaim this message. Are we putting forth every effort that the churches may be warned? We have a work to do for the ministers of other churches. God wants them to be saved." 6 Testimonies, page 77.

Is not this significant? Sometimes this statement has been used as, counsel to the ministry to cooperate with non S.D.A, ministers. But the significance of the statement is that we are to present to them the Laodicean message. The Laodicean message is for all who claim to be Christians. It is not to the S.D.A. organization, as such, or to Seventh-day Adventists alone. We do not include here the church organizations that comprise Babylon, but to God's people that still remain in those organizations. The Laodicean message applies also to them.

"The Laodicean message has been sounding. Take this message in all its phases and sound it forth to the people wherever Providence opens the way. Justification by faith and the righteousness of Christ are the themes to be presented to a perishing world." 7 Bible Commentary, page 964.

The Laodicean message involves "justification by faith" and is for all people wherever they are. It is a message of hope, of salvation. The Laodicean message is not a message to tear down one particular church organization, even though that organization may have come to a place where many are voicing grave questions concerning it.

"When men form a hollow square and turn the weapons of warfare against the church militant, be afraid of them. They do not bear the divine credentials. They would tear down that which God would restore by the Laodicean message." Testimonies to Ministers, page 22-23.

The Laodicean message is to restore, not tear down. "The Lord lays on no man a message that discourages or disheartens the church." Page 23.

Today, the preaching of the New Theology is discouraging many in the church. There is a great need for messages of rebuke of falsehood, apostasy and deception. Such rebukes are given in order to protect the church. This must be the motive if we are to expose apostasy. On the other hand there are those at the other extreme, who use the Laodicean message, falsely, to tear down the S.D.A. church. But the Spirit of Prophecy condemns this application. "He reproveth, He rebukes, He chastens, but it is only that He may restore and approve at last." Page 23.

How powerfully relevant is this statement for this particular time. This is the principle that we, as individual Christians, should pursue as faithful servants. It is clear that the Laodicean message does not

apply to one organization, as such, in order to tear it down. Notice how the Spirit of Prophecy includes Seventh-day Adventists in Laodicea. "The message to the Laodicean church is highly applicable to us as a people."

"The Laodicean message is applicable to the church at this time." (i.e. the Adventist church.) "The Laodicean message reveals our condition as a people; that we are lukewarm." But it includes other Christians. "The Laodicean message is applicable to all who have received great light and many opportunities, and have not appreciated them."

"It applies to all who profess to keep the law of God and yet are not doers of it." (That includes Adventists and non-Adventists.) "It applies most decidedly to those whose religious experience is insipid, who do not bear decided witness in favor of the truth."

"It is for those who live for self." "For those who exalt self." "It is for half-hearted Christians." 7 Bible Commentary, page 961-963.

Contrary to popular belief, the Laodicean message is really a message of encouragement and hope. This is exactly the opposite from what is being claimed today by those who separate from us.

"The counsel of the True Witness does not represent those who are lukewarm, as in a hopeless case. The Laodicean message is full of encouragement, for the back-sliding church may yet buy of gold. There is hope for our churches if they will heed the message that is given to the Laodiceans."

Again: "I saw that this call to the Laodicean church would affect souls," (i.e. it will bring results.) "The case of those who are rebuked is not a hopeless one." 7 Bible Commentary, page 966.

"Some, I saw, would gladly return. Others will not let this message to the Laodicean church have its weight upon them. They will glide along, much after the same manner as before, and will be spewed out of the mouth of the Lord. Those only who zealously repent will have favor with God." 1 Testimonies, page 144.

This shows that the Laodicean message is to find a response. On the same page, in the same setting, notice this message: "We can overcome. Yes; fully, entirely. Jesus died to make a way of escape for us, that we might overcome every evil temper, every sin, every temptation, and sit down at last with Him." This beautiful but remarkable statement encourages us to press on, to stick to our faith, because God will help us to overcome, and this involves overcoming the Laodicean condition. We can overcome, and many in Laodicea will.

"God's servants must, by laboring together with Christ, roll away the curse that has made the church so Lukewarm. The chastening reveals a hope of reform." 7 Bible Commentary, page 966. What is the curse? It is the lukewarm Laodicean condition. It is possible to roll it away. God's servants are to labor to do this. Thus the Laodicean Church is not a rejected church. It is not an apostate church, nor is the Laodicean message a call for people 'to come out of Laodicea'. It is a call to roll away the curse from the church.

The Spirit of Prophecy also informs us that the Laodicean message is especially for 'idlers in the vineyard' and 'it is to rid the church of fanaticism'. Finally, and chiefly, the Laodicean message is to bring about the shaking, in particular, the second phase of the shaking, for the shaking has three phases. The first phase is now in progress, brought about by the introduction of false theories.



The second phase of the shaking will come as a result of the proclamation within the church of the Laodicean message. "I asked the meaning of the shaking I had seen, and was shown that it would be caused by the straight testimony called forth by the counsel of the True Witness to the Laodiceans. This will have its effect upon the heart of the receiver, and will lead him to exalt the standard and pour forth the straight truth. Some will not bear this straight testimony. They will rise up against it, and this will cause a shaking among God's people." 1 Testimonies, page 181.

Very soon, God is to raise up instruments who will proclaim with tremendous power the Laodicean message within the church, and it will bring about the second phase of the shaking. "This will have its effect upon the heart of the receiver, and will lead him to exalt the standard and pour forth the straight truth."

Notice: "It will lead him to exalt the standard." Does this not indicate that the standard has dropped, as we are witnessing today? Those who receive the Laodicean message will be led to exalt the standard and pour forth the straight truth themselves. Here is a message of hope for God's people today. When the church appears in a hopeless condition, God causes a shaking, and what will the shaking do? It is to purify the church. This is the future prospect for God's church, the Laodicean church.

In the Laodicean message God reveals His church as being lukewarm, in a fearful condition, that Christ is outside the door seeking entrance. Is it possible to change this condition of the church? The Spirit of Prophecy clearly shows that the Laodicean message is a message of hope and will have a tremendous effect.

Notice these statements that indicate the need for the church to be purified. There are so many among us who feel that there is nothing wrong with the church and that anyone who tries to warn concerning it, is a critic, but the Spirit of Prophecy says differently. "As Jesus views the state of His professed followers today, He sees base ingratitude, hollow formalism, hypocritical insincerity, pharisaical pride and apostasy." 5 Testimonies, page 72.

Let us not deny these things. This is what Christ sees among His professed people. "The rapidly swelling figures show that the time for God's visitation has about come. Although loath to punish, nevertheless He will punish, and that speedily." 5 Testimonies, page 209.

The time is coming when God is to intervene in His church. He is going to do something to cleanse it. And isn't this the question among those who are conscious of the condition of the church today and who "sigh and cry"? They ask: "when is God going to do something? What is going to happen?"

"The work is really retrograding instead of advancing as God designs it should." 6 Testimonies, page 420.

"In some respects the work has deteriorated. While it has grown in extent and facilities, it has waned in piety." 7 Testimonies, page 217.

This is the exact truth. We have grown in extent and facilities, but has there been growth in piety? Decidedly not, and in the light of this fact we need to individually examine ourselves to make sure that we are not wanting. The church is in need of purification. God alone can do it, and He promises that He will.

"The camp needs purging." 3 Testimonies, page 476. (Referring to the church). Who will dispute it? Anyone who does is naive, or has buried his head in the sand.

“The days of purification of the church are hastening on apace. God will have a people pure and true. In the mighty sifting soon to take place we shall better be able to measure the strength of Israel.” 5 Testimonies, page 80.

“The signs reveal that the time is near when the Lord will manifest that His fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly purge His floor.” 5 Testimonies, page 80. “He will have a clean and holy church.” 1 Testimonies, page 99.

“The gold will be separated from the dross in the church.” 5 Testimonies, page 81. “He will purify His church even as He purified the temple at the beginning and close of His ministry on earth.” 9 Testimonies, page 228.

These are startling statements, but they are full of hope. There is hope for Laodicea, the church of God. “As we near the judgment, all will manifest their true character, and it will be made plain to what company they belong. The sieve is moving, (referring to the shaking), Let us not say: ‘Stay thy hand, O God.’ The church must be purged, and it will be.” 1 Testimonies, page 100. What a statement! It’s a promise! There is a purging coming, a purging of the church.

“All who assume the ornaments of the sanctuary, but are not clothed with Christ’s righteousness, will appear in the shame of their own nakedness.” 5 Testimonies, page 81.

This indicates that those who are false leaders among us are going to be exposed. The church is to be cleansed. “When purification shall take place in our ranks, we shall no longer rest at ease, boasting of being rich and increased with goods, in need of nothing.” 8 Testimonies, page 250.

When God intervenes, when God begins to work, the Laodicean condition will be taken away. No longer will God’s people be in the Laodicean state. Those who have refused to receive the Laodicean message will be shaken out. “Oh, that every lukewarm professor could realize the clean mark that God is about to make among His professed people!” 1 Testimonies, page 190.

“The purging and cleansing will surely pass through every church in our land, that has had great opportunities and have passed them by.” Testimonies Ministers, Page 414.

“When the overflowing scourge shall pass through the earth, when the fan is purging Jehovah’s floor.” 5 Testimonies, page 82.

Judgments are coming on the church, as well as upon the world, and these will cleanse the church. “Unless they repent, the Lord will surely repeat His judgments. The Lord will send His judgements and will not pardon their persistent determination to be like the people of the world.” Series B, Number 2. “God’s people will be sifted, even as corn is sifted in a sieve, until all the chaff is removed from the pure kernels of grain,” 1 Testimonies, page 431.

Before the latter rain falls, before the Loud Cry sounds, before the final conflict, a special work will be accomplished within the church by the proclamation of the Laodicean message: “My attention was then turned to the company I had seen, who were mightily shaken.” Early Writings, page 271.

“The Lord will work to purge His church. Just how soon this refining process will begin, I cannot say, but it will not be long deferred. He whose fan is in His hand will cleanse His temple of moral defilement. He will thoroughly purge His floor.” Testimonies Ministers, page 373.

The Laodicean message is not to call us out of the church. It is not a message of rejection. It is a

message that is to purify. "What a day is before us! What a sifting there will be among those who claim to be the children of God." Testimonies Ministers, page 163.

"The Spirit of God must do its work upon the heart. All who have not experienced its regenerating power are chaff among the wheat." In other words, if we are not converted, if we have not surrendered to Jesus Christ, if we have had no change of heart, if we have not experienced growth in grace, if we are not walking in the light, we are counted as chaff among the wheat. "The Lord has His fan in His hand, and He will thoroughly purge His floor." 5 Testimonies, page 227.

Finally; "There is a limit beyond which the judgments of Jehovah can no longer be delayed." Prophets Kings, page 417.

Many ask: "How long before the Lord is going to intervene? In the light of the condition of our church today, with its apostasy, and even corruption in some places, we suggest that the Lord will not intervene until His people realize the situation, so that when the Laodicean message sounds, they will be able to make an intelligent decision. The Lord will call for us to either receive or reject the Laodicean message. As the condition of the church deepens in apostasy, the more evident will it be that something is amiss, and this will help prepare God's people for the coming Laodicean message. And when it sounds it will shake our church to its foundations.

"God has given time for the message to do its work. This fearful message will do its work." 1 Testimonies page 186. There is no escape. The Laodicean message is coming and it will be "fearful" "It is designed to arouse the people of God, to discover to them their back-sliding."

The Laodicean message, when it comes, will rudely awaken God's people to a realization of what has happened to them, and many will be led "to zealous repentance, that they may be favored with the presence of Jesus, and be fitted for the loud cry of the third angel." 1 Testimonies, page 186.

We are accused today of not having God in our midst; that Jesus is at the door knocking, that His presence is not with us. This could be correct. But notice that when the Laodicean message is received, we will "be favored with the presence of Jesus and be fitted for the loud cry of the third angel. This is marvelous news! There is hope. The Laodicean church is going through all right, but first of all it goes through the mill. It will be purified.

"Those who come up to every point, and stand every test, and overcome, be the price what it may, and have heeded the counsel of the True Witness, they will receive the latter rain, and thus be fitted for translation." 1 Testimonies, page 187.

Mark well what is required before the latter rain comes. The church must be purified, and this will be brought about by a special proclamation within the church by chosen instruments. They will be so empowered, that they will be irresistible. They will proclaim the Laodicean message within the church and it will have its effect.

This means then that true and faithful Seventh-day Adventists, those who have overcome the Laodicean condition will be involved in the final conflict. The people who will stand on the side of truth in the final crisis will still be "Seventh-day Adventists", not Philadelphians or any other man made title.

"The whole world is to be stirred with enmity against Seventh-day Adventists, because they will not pay homage to the Papacy by honoring Sunday." Testimonies Ministers, page 37

What a tremendous statement! Seventh-day Adventists will continue as the people of God. As a result of the Laodicean message, they will be purified and receive the "latter rain". They will present the "loud cry" to the world and the reaction will be the issuance of Sunday laws and persecution. Thus in this light, the church goes through, but it will be a church that has been purified. It will be a church that has been cleansed of its apostasy; a church from which has been shaken out the apostates and the corrupt, whether they are ministry or laity, and the faithful will go through as a pure church. They will accomplish the work that God has designed them to do.

The Laodicean message therefore does not denote rejection, or a call-out from the S.D.A. church. It is a message that will cause the disobedient to leave it. It will prepare true Seventh-day Adventists for the "latter rain", for the "loud cry", for translation. The Spirit of Prophecy on the question of Laodicea, has been misapplied, willfully by some, and because of this we urge those who do this, to heed the warning of the prophet.

"There are those who pick out from the Word of God and also from the 'Testimonies' detached paragraphs and sentences that may be interpreted to suit their ideas, and they dwell upon these and build themselves up in their own positions, when God is not leading them. Here is your danger. You will take passages in the 'Testimonies' that speak of the close of probation, of the shaking among God's people, and you will talk of a coming out from among this people, of a purer, holier people that will arise. Now all this pleases the enemy." "Notebook Leaflets" under 'Methods', Number 4, page 2.

This is exactly what we are hearing today and it is by seemingly sincere, good people. Our appeal to you who are doing this, is to take a second look at the true Laodicean message, and understand its correct significance. The Lord is calling us to the true battleground. Christ calls us to come on side and to fight in the battle where the real issue is; to oppose apostasy, to expose error and by obedient lives, and faithfulness to Christ, bear a testimony to others to help them resist apostasy. In the light of all the instruction from the Spirit of Prophecy, may God help us to understand aright, and to respond to, the Laodicean message.