

Bible study

JUST WHAT DO YOU MEAN "LAODICEAN CHURCH"?

(the 'dumbing down' of the Church of God and compromising with
'political correctness')

For years speculation has been rife on how this church may emerge. Is it with us alongside the Philadelphians within the one Church, yet future or a separate identifiable group in existence right now?

Has the Synagogue of Satan taken over the Philadelphia Church and the Laodicean Church yet to emerge, tainted by the carnality of that evil Synagogue? Only history can give us the amazing answers!



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Opening Statement

Many of us have wondered and waited for this prophesied event to occur. Some have thought that this era would exist alongside Philadelphians within the one Church until the Tribulation when a separation would occur. Is this the case?

Others have toiled at attempting to make the Laodicean Era into a vile, evil "synagogue of Satan" ruled by the "man of sin". Is this scenario Biblical?

The purpose of this article is to attempt to make plain the incredible present and future history of this particular era of God's Church.

So let us ask the inevitable question: "Are the Laodiceans people of God?"

Firstly, let us discuss what Laodiceans are not.

Let me state at the outset that they are very definitely the people of God and cannot be remotely considered a people of the devil - they are not a Church of Satan. For anyone to make such an assumption is almost beyond belief! Where is the Biblical connection between the "man of sin" and the Laodicean Church? Search the Scriptures like the Bereans and you'll find none! (Acts 17:11)

Perhaps when one looks upon the Laodicean Church today and sees various trends, we automatically react to them as if these people were somehow satanic. But they are not, for they are very definitely God's people. **What if one were to view Laodicea from a Philadelphian perspective? Would we not see a dramatic watering down process?** Would we not also find ourselves bewildered at the rapid deterioration in doctrine, policy, means of preaching the Word as well as values and moral decay? Not to mention the denunciation of the new truths which came into this era (so in one sense the Laodiceans go back to Sardis. The Sardis Era consists of God's people who have His Spirit, but whose Work is dead and which produces few converts for Christ).

But what we see with Philadelphia is unique : it has understandings not known to any great degree by other eras as well as having performed a big Work due to the relative freedoms and modern technology available this century. So when we criticise Laodicea, we see them through Philadelphian eyes. What we should be doing is be looking at them in the context of almost 2,000 years of the history of God's True Church.

A Scattered Little Flock

Let us understand that the Church of God has never been perfect. A casual reading of Rev 2 and 3 reveal that clearly - "he that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches". Each era commenced with a high hand, only to be infiltrated by false ideas and practices by the influence of the world, misunderstandings, false ministers, tares or a Synagogue of Satan-type of conspiracy, not unlike that promulgated by the Canaanite/Babylonian Simon Magus and his followers in the first century.

The Church had its many problems and often mixed truth with error. In addition, seldom did it accomplish a really big Work. A further trait is that all members of the Body of Christ were almost never found within the one group. For God's Church is comprised of all those within whom the Holy Spirit resides wherever they may meet (Rom 8:9).

But has the body of Christ existed as one organised group? Or has it been likened to a vine (John 15 & Is 5)? Ignored by most histories, despised by the great churches of this world and hounded by the authorities, the True Church has been a scattered people for centuries (see Acts 8:1; Mark 14:27; Dan 12:7; 7:21. Cp Matt 9:36; 12:30; Is 56:8). In other words, they simply branched out all over the valleys and mountains of Europe, each with different 'administrations' (see ICor 12). But they have never been a popular nor a large church. They have been a very small group, hated and despised by the world (Luke 12:32; John 17:14).

In the latter years of the first century many of the brethren fled to Pella. Others joined with the Qumran community while some scattered elsewhere.

Centuries later in Europe, persecuted and hated by the world, residing in fear in the vales and hills of Europe, Christ's little church found sanctuary for a time. But not for long. Satan, their most fearsome adversary attacked them relentlessly, hating them with such venom that the most vile and horrible tortures awaited them at the hands of his Great False Church, masquerading as 'Christian', yet whose doctrines were utterly Babylonian.

Thus an argument cannot be sustained for one, physically united group staying together since the first century. Such would have been impossible in conditions of persecution, poverty, lack of communications and so forth which people of that time had to endure. We should not attempt to view or judge our brethren of other eras through the eyes and with the understanding, scholarship and technological superiority of this century. Further, where various eras were alongside one another during times of overlapping periods, God's people were found in different branches, with different leaders, and even with a few minor doctrinal differences. And some would have had greater breadth and depth of Scriptural understanding than others. Yet they all recognised each other visiting each other's church and fellowshiping in Christian love. They were not exclusivists nor filled with disdain for one another. They realised that Christ's body was not limited to any one group.

We live in a unique age where the Church does not suffer persecution and with communications and a sense of organisation, held together in unity, the likes of which have not been seen since the times of the Apostles. Only in this day and age have we seen a real big Work by the Philadelphia Era of God's Church. But this does not mean that there were no branches of the Church representing the Sardis or Thyatira eras. Indeed there are. Ephesus, Smyrna and the

Pergamos eras are no longer extant. But Christ stated categorically that there would be remnant branches of the Thyatira era at His coming (Rev 2:25. These are probably the East European brethren although one might also argue for a Thyatiran presence among the SDAs); similarly with Sardis (3:3b), Philadelphia (3:11a) and Laodicea (3:20). True, at any one time only one branch does a big Work, but the others are still very much a part of His body.

Today there has been a scattering and many remain for the moment within the Laodicean Era. But Christ brings them under one shepherd (see Matt 9:36; 12:30; Is 56:8; John 10:16; 11:52; Ezek 34:1-10). Then with this reconstituted group, He will proclaim the True Gospel of the World Tomorrow and the Ezekiel Message of warning to the House of Israel in the most blistering fashion. It will also be fishers of men.

But how could such unity be sustained? Merely by the Holy Spirit as the Protestants and others surmise, or by organisation - a structure given to service and love in similitude to the examples clearly revealed in scripture (God's Government in the heavenly places via the angels, 24 elders etc; Old Testament hierarchy; New Testament hierarchy and finally Government to be established at Christ's coming). There is simply no other way to keep the unity of the faith and to undertake a large Work.

Today we are exceedingly fortunate to not only have the lack of persecution but to have the education and also the restoration of much knowledge to the people of God (Dan 12:4). We should therefore be grateful that Christ has revealed these truths to us, and not be critical and hurtful of our brethren in other eras, administrations or 'branches' of the vine.



The Mysterious Synagogue of Satan

Gradually, in the latter years of the Ephesus Era during the leadership of John the Apostle, the attitude and focus changed. Among the people of God, the Smyrna Era began to slowly arise, overlapping with the Ephesus Era.

The Ephesus era, unlike all others with the exception of Philadelphia, had reached a higher state of doctrinal purity and understanding. The Philadelphia Era has come to a depth of doctrinal knowledge and understanding unknown since the first century. Their doctrinal sophistication stands out in almost 1,900 years of True Church history. Their humility and Berean attitude is honoured by God and resulted in their expansive Biblical understanding and knowledge of associated topics.

However, a sinister conspiracy was lurking within the Ephesian body. Like a horrible cancer within the bride of Christ lived an organised, neo-Babylonian Synagogue of Satan (which came to fruition during the life of Peter's successor, John the Apostle who led the latter years of the Ephesus Era as it overlapped with the succeeding era). This evil group impacted upon the Smyrna Era and, apparently, affected that era's doctrines as well as, externally, becoming the mainstream churches.

But the Synagogue of Satan was not the Smyrna Era. Similarly, the Laodicean Era is *not* the Synagogue of Satan in our day, although some make such audacious claims.

Let us understand that. It is vital that we do!

The Synagogue of Satan refers not just to this world's churches, but in a more dramatic fashion, it also refers to the conspiratorial tools in the Devil's clasp within the True Church. This clique would primarily have been wolf-like ministers, clever deceivers who had either infiltrated the Church or whose attitudes and doctrine would have been contaminated by the impurities of the Babylonian Mysteries, which they either deliberately or blindly passed on to the lay-members. **This Synagogue is guilty of sanctioning intercourse with the non-Christian world** (L Thompson, *The Book of Revelation. Apocalypse and Empire*, p 174). They abuse the members claiming to be "as Christ before you ... sitting on the throne of Christ". They set up God's children, are exceedingly jealous of those who strive to please God (Prov 27:4), spread lies about them, rule with fear in their local congregations and cast the faithful out of the Church (Ezek 34:1-8; Jer 23:1-2).

But it quickly wilted under pressure of apostasy. A synagogue of Satan once again grew up within God's Church and led the people into apostasy. Note what the WCG traditionally taught:

"The **synagogue of Satan refers to the great apostasy** that occurred at the close of the apostolic age, the apostasy which gave rise to the host of denominations we have today—a great mother church and her daughter churches (Rev. 17)." (AD Letter 938, Radio Church of God, 1956) [emphasis mine]

The *Abingdon Bible Commentary* concurs:

“Perhaps the synagogue that claimed to be the synagogue of Jehovah but was really the synagogue of Satan (Rev. 3, v. 9; cf. 2:9) had excommunicated the Philadelphian Christians.” (*The Abingdon Bible Commentary*, 1929, p. 1376)

In their *Commentary on the Whole Bible*, Jamieson, Fausset and Brown note:

“The 'Jews' who might have been 'the church of God,' had now, by their opposition and unbelief, become the synagogue of Satan.” (p. 1533)

How applicable to the Worldwide Church of God in the 21st century. While Herman L Hoeh wrote:

“Whenever they were able to influence a majority in a local church...false ministers began to expel the true Christians.”

“In the letter of the apostle John to Gaius, we read: 'I wrote unto the church, but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the pre-eminence among them, receiveth us not. Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, AND CASTETH THEM OUT OF THE CHURCH' (III John 9 and 10).”

“The true Christians, who alone comprised the true Church, were being put out of the visible, organized congregations.” “But that did not mean the scattered individuals were not part of the Church. They were the Church because they were joined to Christ through the Holy Spirit. **Those who drove them out became the false church—the church of the god of this world—the synagogue of Satan’.**”

“**This synagogue of Satan is the great apostate church** which developed after 80 A.D. and ultimately became recognized as the State Religion of the Roman Empire. That Church has had many Protestant daughters which are also Satan’s churches (Rev. 17).” (H. L. Hoeh, *A True History of the True Church*, pp. 7-8, 17)¹

While Bob Fahey wrote:

“God reserves His strongest condemnation for those who claim to be speaking for Him, but are actually leading people away from the true God.”

“Behold, I am against the prophets, saith the Lord, that use their tongues, and say, He saith. Behold, I am against them that prophesy false dreams...and cause my people to err by their lies, and by their lightness; yet I sent them not, nor commanded them: therefore they shall not profit this people at all...for ye have perverted the words of the living God, of the Lord of hosts, our God...’ (Jer. 23).”

¹ The synagoge of Satan is also referred to in Rev. 2:9. Of this, Thompson (1990:173) wrote: “Slander (blasphemia) is strong language, for elsewhere in the Book of Revelation the term is reserved for activity of the beast and the Whore (see 13:1, 5, 6, 17:3)

“Not all false prophets come from outside the Church. Some were formerly faithful servants of God, but swerved from the ‘straight and narrow’ path.”

“Faithful pastors protect the flock from those who would spoil them. But some of those called and ordained in God’s true Church would covet Christ’s sheep. So they would turn from the teachings and the teachers they had originally acknowledged.”

“Why does God allow wolves to have access to His flock? Why doesn’t He expose them before they do any harm? He has his reasons!”

“The first and most basic scripture about false prophets explains why. ‘If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or a wonder, And the sign or the wonder come to pass, whereof he spake unto thee, saying, Let us go after other gods, which thou hast not known, and let us serve them; Thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams: for the Lord your God proveth you, to know whether ye love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul’ (Deut. 13:1-3).”

“God wants his flock to stay with Him and the truth no matter what. The flock of God is certain to encounter many trials and tests—false prophets and treasonous pastors among them. But the true sheep of His pasture, who seek His leadership and His will, won’t be led astray and devoured. Thankfully, it is just not possible. **Christ’s sheep will see the fake fleece and run!**” (Robert E. Fahey, “Beware of False Prophets,” *Good News* magazine, May 1979). [emphasis mine]

Finally, Herbert W Armstrong wrote similarly:

“First, remember this Church was never large, never politically powerful, or a world-known organization of men. It is a spiritual organism, not a political organization. It is composed of all whose hearts and lives have been changed by the Spirit of God, whether visibly together, or individually scattered.”

Under the lash of continual persecution and opposition from the organized forces of this world, it is difficult for such a people to remain united and organized together.

Even in Paul’s day, many among those attending at Antioch, at Jerusalem, at Ephesus, at Corinth, and other places, began to apostatize and turn away from the truth. Divisions sprang up. Those individuals, unconverted or turned from God’s truth and way of life, were no part of God’s true Church, though visibly assembling with those who were.

The ‘mystery of iniquity’ was already working within these visible churches. This apostasy increased! By the year A.D. 125 the majority in most churches, especially those Gentile-born, were continuing in many of their old pagan beliefs

and practices, though professing to be Christian! **Gradually, a smaller and smaller portion of the visible churches going by the name 'Christian' remained truly yielded to God and His truth, and led of His Spirit.** After Constantine took virtual control of the visible, professing Church in the early fourth century, this visible organization became almost wholly pagan, and began excommunicating and persecuting all who held to the true Word of God!

Finally, it became necessary for real Christians, who, even as a scattered people, alone composed the true Christian Church, to flee from the jurisdiction of Rome in order truly to worship God! Thus, the visible, organized Church which rose to power was the FALSE Church—the 'Great Whore' of Revelation 17." (*The Plain Truth About Easter* (1973), pp.11) [emphasis mine]

So here we have Satan's 'sleeper cells' – agents of evil waiting for their time. They are evidently within each Church Era, but are paramount within the Smyrna and Philadelphia Eras.

In one of his works, concerning *The Seven Churches* (published in the early years of the twentieth century), Greenberry G Rupert (who seems to be a precursor of HWA in many ways) noted:

"Verse 9 shows there is a great apostacy during the history of the Philadelphia church. Yet there are some few in that age that have kept his word ... How truly all this history is fulfilled before the eyes of those who can see, having eyes anointed to discern truth ... **Now is the time to not be ashamed of his truth and proclaim it.**" (pages 19-20) [emphasis mine]

Rupert had predicted the apostasy of the Philadelphia era about 80 years or so prior to it occurring by understanding what verse 9 indicated:

"And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: He who is set-apart, He who is true, He who has the key of David, He who opens and no one shuts; and shuts and no one opens, says these things:

I know your works. Behold, I have given before you an open door, and no one can shut it. For you have a little strength and have kept My Word and have not denied My name. **[first phase – undertaking a Work]**

Behold, I give out of those of the synagogue of Satan, those saying themselves to be Jews and are not, but lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before your feet, and to know that I have loved you. [why? Because they caused the apostasy] **[second phase – apostasy]**

Because you have kept the Word of My patience, I also will keep you from the hour of temptation which will come upon all the habitable world, to try those who dwell upon the earth. [why? Because they resisted apostasy] **[third phase – keeping His Word – including a revived Work and then Great Tribulation]**

Behold, I come quickly. Hold fast to that which you have, so that no one may take your crown. **[fourth phase – Christ's return]**

Him who overcomes I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he will go out no 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 comes down out of Heaven from My God, and My new name." **[finally – the granting of rewards in His Kingdom]**

It would appear that the Philadelphia Era contains 4 phases and that we are in phase 3 at the present time, enduring the impact of the Synagogue of Satan. How long it will continue and how extensive the end-time Work will be remains to be seen. Cooperation between groups and extending the hand of friendship to demonstrate a brotherly love is needed now more than ever.

The evil Synagogue of Satan has taken control of the WCG and is plotting and planning to take over other Churches of God. They cunningly lay low for a long time – like political ‘sleepers’ – waiting for the right moment to take over. Such immoral and unethical behaviour!



Ruins at the city of Philadelphia

Philadelphia was often wracked by earthquakes with large segments of the population living outside of the city from time-to-time. So severe were the quakes that it came close to utter destruction on several occasions.²

It was named after Philadelphus, the surname for King Attalus of Pergamum (159-138BC) . His surname was reference to his loyalty to his brother Eumenes. Today it is known as both the “Red City” and “City of Allah”.

To complete this section allow me to quote from Cicero who wrote the following of fifth column traitors within during 42 BC:

"A nation [read Church] can survive its fools and even the ambitious. But it cannot survive treason from within. An enemy at the gates is less formidable, for he is

² "The area was subject to frequent earthquakes. A sever one in AD17 destroyed the city; and as the shocks continued intermittently the people took to living outside the city." (*New Bible Dictionary*, 2nd ed, art. "Philadelphia"). The *New Bible Commentary* similarly states: "Philadelphia, owing to is frequent earthquakes, had a small population" (p. 1286). And "The church was evidently small (v.8), but of good quality ... for there is no mention of heresy of factiousness ... This church had not embraced heretical teaching ... Evidently there had been persecution of some sort, but the people of Philadelphia had stood firm. For those with little strength they had a noteworthy achievement." (Morris 1987:77-78)

known and he carries his banners openly. But the traitor moves among those within the gate freely, his sly whispers rustling through all the alleys, heard in the very halls of government itself. **For the traitor appears not traitor!** He speaks in the accent familiar to his victims and he appeals to the baseness that lies deep in the hearts of all men. He rots the soul of a nation. He works secretly and unknown in the night to undermine the pillars of a city; He infects the body politic so that it can no longer resist. A murderer is less to be feared”.

And so it was with the infiltrators and apostates into the Philadelphia Era.

Signs of the True Church & The Temple Analogy

Study the New Testament and you will be struck by the major signs of the remnant Church: They were always called (at least among themselves) the Church of God. The True Church always kept the seventh day Sabbath, the Ten Commandments and, in many cases most or all of the Holy Days. The seventh-day Sabbath itself is the major sign between God and His people (Ex 31:12-18).

Even in their depleted and scattered states, without the type of education we are accustomed to, the branches of the vine always preached the basic gospel, taught water baptism, were conditionalists (maintained that man was mortal) and practised what they knew of the Civil Law (eg clean & unclean meats). God's Church was not doctrinally pure after the original Apostles died. Of course, they all practised basic Christian living, good works, developed the fruits of the Spirit and the beatitudes in their lives and had faith in Christ. But if one resides in an era with superior understanding, should one be condemning of those in another era of His Church? God forbid! But where we should, we must warn. And remember, to whom much is given, much is required.

However, when major impurities did appear from time-to-time, Christ tested them severely through the terrors of tribulation. More on this later.



The piped water to Laodicea was lukewarm. It was so rich with calcium that the pipes would block up. So the engineers covered the vents with stones that were removed from time-to-time to permit cleaning.

A close examination of the wording of Revelation 2 and 3 together with other scriptures shows that each Era represented a part of the Temple structure. For example, the Ephesus era represented the foundations (Eph 2:20).

Strongly connected to the Ephesus Era is the Philadelphian Era for it is represented by the pillars which fit directly into the foundations (Rev 3:12). The Laodiceans on the other hand are represented by the outer court, cast out by Christ due to their liberalism (Rev 11:2).

Further, the Philadelphian analogy used in the book of Revelation includes reference to the 'crown'. This represents not only literal crowns but also the crown of the pillars in Solomon's temple which were crowned with double capitols. They also had an open door to preach the gospel and warning message. In addition, God opened the doors of understanding to them and knowledge of His ways and His laws washed over this Church like a veritable tidal wave (cp 2Chron 28:29:2-3).

Further, these people had a key to open the doors (Is 22:22). Anciently there probably was a literal key of David used to open the doors of the temple located between the two pillars. Symbolically it refers to the key of knowledge (Luke 11:52) and in particular to the great key to understanding the prophecies - the true identity of the peoples of Anglo-Saxon-Keltic origin.

The insidious Synagogue of Satan was to worship at their feet; again this is in reference to the feet of the pillars (cp Ps 132:7; Is 60:13). Nowhere do we find such complimentary statements made of Laodicea. In fact, Christ is shut outside of the sanctuary and knocks to be let in (Rev 3:20; Luke 12:35-36). This analogy has clear references to the prophetic aspects of the Song of Solomon in chapter 5:2-8 according to C Hemer, *The Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia in their Local Setting*, p209.

One might write further concerning the incredible analogy between the seven stages of Old Testament Israel and the seven Church eras. The parallels between Sardis and Saul for example are plenteous as there are between David and Philadelphia and the immensely wealthy Solomon and Laodicea. Or the parallels between the seven tribes which first inherited the land and the seven churches. But rather than get into these areas of research at this time, let us explore the historical background to Laodicea.

With the above in mind, let us consider the ancient city of Laodicea and what it might teach us about the prophetic message.

The name of the city of Laodicea derived from the name of the wife of Antiochus II, Laodice, after he rebuilt it. Later, she poisoned him. It was previously known as Diopolis and was often called the metropolis as it was the county seat for twenty-five other cities. It was located in an earthquake zone (metaphorically extant in upset, perilous times of imminent danger like today) on a mail route circuitously winding its way between the towns of Asia Minor and lay at the junction of the valley of the Lycus and the Meander. It commanded the approaches to Phrygia by its strategic location at the intersection of three important roads. In population it increased much, possibly indicative of the future numerical potential of this era.

On a Laodicean coin we find the inscription "**To Laodicea a mother-city of Canaan**" (U Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis*). Apparently it was settled by Canaanites (Babylonians) centuries before Christ, who mixed with other peoples in the vicinity and who left a legacy of idolatry and pagan ideas. This should tell us at least something about the worldly influences upon ancient Laodicea, not unlike the liberal, pagan and worldly influences upon the Laodicean era today. As explained previously, they are influenced by, and reflect the world to some degree (whether positively or negatively, just like every other era previous to it).³

³ Archaeologists and historians know that Mystery religions and especially the cult of Isis were heavily extant in Laodicea (*International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, vol 3, p 73). It is admitted by many that the Grand Orient variation of Free Masonry was originally founded upon the Mysteries of the Egyptian Isis, the goddess-mother or wife of Osiris (A Hislop, *The Two Babylons*, p 43). This form of Masonry has a liberal interpretation of politics. In contrast, other variations of the Mysteries were very conservative. To this day the

But the Laodicean era is not only overcome by the world's political correctness and arises during a time of increasing gentile dominance (Philadelphia arises during a time of the peak of the Israelitish powers), it also rejects truths once understood by the Philadelphian era. Thus, unlike the Sardis era which did not have these truths originally, they had these truths during the first few years of the new era, but rejected it and behaved like unbelievers - like the followers of Simon Magus in the first century by casting out Philadelphians who hold to the truths restored by Christ in the twentieth century compare 2John 9-10.

We know from history and archaeology that Laodicea was "one of the richest commercial centres in the world, so that we have a picture here of the church in an affluent society" (*The Tyndale Commentary*, pp 80-81). It was famous for its banking, the basis of Babylonian-type economies (according to Dummelow's *Commentary*, p1077), fashion (in particular the manufacture of clothing from black wool) and it boasted of its medical profession and its famous medical school. Laodicea also produced some famous sceptic philosophers (L Briggs, *What Became of the Church Jesus Built?*, p 298). It was also a famous pleasure resort for the physically strong and prosperous, and a health resort for the sick and boasted a circus and three stately theatres. It was therefore consumed by the worldliness and entertainment. To them, the Bible is boring and they therefore water down true doctrine.

It was also an assize town which would have as a result been fraught with judicial corruption, including weighted decisions and sentences and the proverbial kangaroo court! Thus it was highly politicised.



Watering-down and political correctness – attributes of Laodicea

The aforementioned *Commentary* has this sorry tale to tell: "in John's day the condition of the Church in this city had deteriorated sadly. This church receives the severest condemnation of all the seven to whom letters are sent" (emphasis mine). Obviously this church goes off the track very quickly after the Philadelphian Church had handed over the baton. And, while Israelites particularly of the tribes of Judah and Levi dominated Philadelphia, so some people with

liberal-left Grand Orient Masons and the conservative Catholic Church have been engaged in their secret battle between each other for world domination.

This reminds the author of the conspiracy within the priesthood revealed in Ezekiel 8:13-18. Read it for yourself. This prophecy is for our day now! These wicked priests are practicing paganism : firstly the description here is "precisely what is done in a Masonic lodge and as an act of worship" (E Ronayne, *The Masters Carpet*, p 363). But in another sense, this prophecy is dual. Thus, secondly, it also refers to Easter sunrise services and the belief that Christ rose on Sunday morning. So here we have a people adopting the liberal political stance of this world, plus various pagan doctrines.

Canaanite and Edomite blood attempt to wrest control of Laodicea from the remnants of Israelite Philadelphians within her midst.

Laodicea was such a proud, haughty and self-reliant city that it refused help to rebuild itself after the earthquake of AD 60. Tacitus stated that it "without any relief from us, recovered itself by its own resources" (Ann. xiv.27). Such arrogance; such pride! See also the section in the marvellous *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* on this great Church (vol 3, p 73).

Laodicea was also famous for the Zenonid dynasty, the great Laodicean family which became the greatest in Asia Minor.

Problems with Laodicea

Christ rebukes those whom He loves. So He sarcastically draws allusions to the earthly wealth and pride of Laodicea : "in this, like Jezebel in the fourth letter, it foreshadows the harlot Babylon. **The Church is threatened with total rejection: in its complacency it is insulated from Christ ... it must be ... blind to his true nature**" (J Sweet, *Revelation*, p104).

Of course Laodicea is not the harlot and not a Jezebel per se, but it is on the way back into this Babylonian world with all of its pagan customs and doctrines to such a degree that it is hardly recognisable as a Church of God. Yet it is! It still has a large component of Spirit-begotten children of God who are trying to develop the fruits of the Spirit in their lives. But they are luke-warm and deceived by a Canaanite-like doctrinal infiltration which appears to be similar to the infiltration of the Church in the latter years of the first century and early second century when the Smyrna Era was beginning to emerge.

Sweet continues : "Laodicea, under its self-satisfaction, ... wears the mark of the beast" (p 107). In other words it blurs the truth with error to such a degree, that it is even worse than the latter years of the Thyatira Era which Christ sent into great Tribulation to purge them. Perhaps, Laodicea even begins keeping some of the Babylonian customs and days of so-called Christianity, not unlike Thyatira.

Notice now how the Devil so deceives, with subtleness, this era, that it receives Christ's strongest condemnation. Through his craftiness, the Devil progressively deceives God's people into accepting political correctness and to water-down the prophetic message and other doctrines and practices. Once this process begins it soon takes on an exponential nature. These people are so insipid and weak spiritually that many even lose what little love of the truth they once had.

"The church at Laodicea is wealthy and at peace with the world. As far as John was concerned, too much at peace [today we would say it was compromising with political correctness and social liberalism]. John did not see Laodicea's successful integration into pagan society as evidence of God's blessing, for he reminds them that whom the Lord love he chastises (3:19)." (Young in "Separation or Participation")

They are affected by the liberal moral and politically correct trends of this world which are far worse than centuries past when other eras were affected by their world. Is not this world liberal on the sanctity of marriage, pagan holidays, astrology, homosexuality, feminism, abortion and the roles of males and females, wearing of crosses and having pagan idols (such as Buddahs in one's home) and so forth? And if so, would not also the Laodicean era, so eager to be part of Babylon, this world, become likewise affected by it? Like Laodicea of old, their talk is on fashion and trivia, not God's Word (T G Bunch in his *The Seven Epistles of Christ*, states that the city was extravagant in fashions and fine apparel - he claimed that it was the Paris of its day).

Also, they are clever manipulators, constantly giving the impression of advancement. Note what Gaius Petronius Arbiter, Pro-Consul at Bithynia in the time of Nero, AD 65, is attributed to have written

"We trained hard, but it seemed every time

we were beginning to form teams we would be reorganised. I was to learn later in life that we tend to meet every situation by reorganising, and a wonderful method it can be for creating the illusion of progress while producing confusion, inefficiency and demoralisation”.

The insidiousness of Satan and his demons in their infiltration and infections of the doctrinal state of the church is of paramount concern to Christ. The Devil is very clever and far more cunning than any of us. How do his servants operate? Do they make a public announcement of the change in doctrine as soon as it is established? Or do they set up God's people first by withdrawing the old literature, dropping hints and comments ("testing the waters"), make leading announcements, and when they finally decide to make an announcement of the change, it is couched as an answer to a question or as no change at all. The new teaching is offered as mere 'clarification' rather than a 180 degree turn from old understanding. It is presented in such a way as to minimise 'political damage' and to de-emphasise the radical difference between the old and new teaching. In this way the full-blown new doctrine may be gradually introduced later.



Small changes lead to even more, larger changes. These changes are merely 'the tip of the iceberg'

How like the Japanese term "nashikuzushi". It means that you do not suddenly announce any important change of policy. Instead you utilise a policy of gradualism by pretending that the original policy is still intact, but subject it to so many constant minor changes and amendments that eventually it ceases to exist and has been replaced by the policy you wanted all along! (we would term it death by a thousand cuts - gradualism). Is not this the attitude and tactics of Satan? It certainly is not Biblical!

Laodicea's spiritual nightmare

But Laodicea, unlike other eras, is blinded, almost as badly as the spiritual state of this world. Yet Christ in His mercy keeps on working with it and even calls new members into it - those who could not cope with the level of knowledge or the doctrinal sophistication of Philadelphia. Perhaps they are people He calls into this era who would not have survived Philadelphia. He works on them to adopt the most simple and basic truths concerning real Christian living and later refines them in the fires of Tribulation to see where they stand. It may be that Laodicea is like a hospitable for cripples and sick people who seek refuge from the world (eg ex-homosexuals; abused women; ex-drug addicts; people from broken families or converts from eastern religions). It is possible that some are not converts and are tares - tools of Satan. For example, a person may claim to have overcome, but could fool the minister at counselling. He may continue his evil ways and be used by the Devil against God's people within the congregation (eg by spreading rumours, slander, gossip, jealousies, lies etc).

This era starts off on what appears to be the right path. Even some of their changes appear minor or "clarifications" at first. But later, the liberal course they are on veers off into a shocking state which, if not cured by Tribulation, would lead to their total rejection by Christ - a total apostasy and paganisation (eg Sunday observance). They are a group who are led into almost total apostasy and it goes without saying that many of their members and ministers (perhaps half) go straight into complete apostasy and are thus rejected by Christ. While other eras took decades or centuries to reach such a state, this era, due to the influences of the mass media and the speed of communications, the influence of peers, teachers, modern theological works and seminaries, the liberal-left environment, rock stars etc, speedily descends into the pit of doctrinal perversion. But there is little excuse, for they have had the glowing example of a wonderful, loving (but much maligned, slandered and hated) Apostle through whom God restored much doctrine and truth.

The New Bible Commentary describes the Laodiceans as **“these all but apostate Christians”** (p 1287). So here we have a Church which, more than any other era, not only compromises with this left-liberal world, but also seemingly adopts a host of incorrect doctrines and customs. It, like each preceding era, mirrors the world to some degree. This is due to the influence of mass media, Western Government and big business philosophy (political correctness and anti-discrimination laws) but also many new members carrying in their almost ‘acceptable’ sins from the world (eg like the Canaanite/Babylonians). Woe if you inadvertently uncovered their sins! They would rage wildly and run with lies to their local minister pleading discrimination, exaggerations and lack of tolerance and mercy.

C Hemer claims that the evidence presented by research suggests that Laodiceans were

“closely assimilated to the character of pagan society ... [and] ... easy integration of the church here with its surroundings ... compromising with pagan standards ... evidently open to ... syncretistic influences” (ibid, p 209).

In fact, they become so spiritually degenerate, that many (perhaps half?) could even be persuaded by the False Prophet! (see Matt 24:12, 24; 2Thess 2:3-11; Dan 11:32b; Matt 10:16-22; John 16:2). As one commentator states, **their “whole position at that period will be reduced to the very simple issue of allegiance to Christ or Antichrist”** (E W Bullinger, *Commentary*

on Revelation, p 205). Should they decide to worship this False Prophet and accept Sunday observance (the Mark of the Beast), their lives will be spared; but should they decide not to, they will be severely martyred yet gain eternal life.



One researcher predicted in his thesis the following:

"How can they be deceived? **They are a product of this modern affluent society, just as their ancient forerunners were of theirs ... society shapes the modern Laodiceans. They will be too close to the ways and false gods of this world to get really 'shook up' about God's truth till it is too late!**" (Briggs, *ibid*).

Yet another researcher, A E Harvey, noted that this church "**had identified itself with the city's fame and prosperity, and so had lost hold of its own distinctive values ... [it had] symptoms of accommodation to the secular world**" (*The New English Bible Companion to the New Testament*, p800).

As we have seen, they destroy the knowledge they once knew. Note the poem of F.R.A. Glover of England, 1861:

"When a Land [read Church] rejects its legends,
Sees but falsehoods in the past,
And its People [read Church members] view their sires
[read the Apostle]
In the light of fools and liars,
'Tis a sign of its decline,
And its splendours cannot last.
Branches that but blight their roots,
Yield no sap for lasting fruits".

Christ's Love Letter to His Laodicean Church

It may be difficult to see it as such, but this is a letter of outgoing concern and love to a part of His affianced Bride! Christ chastens those whom He loves (Heb 12:6-9; Rev 3:19; Jer 10:24; Ps 38:1-2; Deut 7:8) - this is for their own good. Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour, only does that which is good for us and which would assist us on the road to salvation. He is a good God Who is exceedingly concerned about us as individuals, families and churches. We can rest assured that He will only do that which would ultimately lead to salvation.

Laodicea literally means 'judgement of the people' (ie in Tribulation) or 'judgement by the people' (ie the self-righteous ones - the ones who think they are right). How like the Pharisees who were very liberal in doctrine, but oppressive in their administration of justice. They were more like sepulchres daubed with whitewash (see Matt 23:27; Ezek 13:10-15; 22:28. The Heb. for 'daubed' is '**Tuwach**', meaning to smear, especially with lime, to overlay or plaster - Strong's # 2902. A related word is '**Tiyach**', meaning mortar or plaster - Strong's # 2915).



Promoter of apostasy and destroyer of the Philadelphia Era (Rev 3:9)

Let us now closely examine this letter (which is written in love) from Christ to His beloved. Turn now to Revelation chapter 3, verse 14:

"And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; 'These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the beginning of the creation of God'".

Now why did Christ say this? Sweet answers the question by noting that a true witness "was lacking in Laodicea" (ibid, p 107). This is true of modern Laodicea which refuses to reach the world with a true witness of the gospel and warning message of the future slavery of the Anglo-Saxon-Keltic peoples (Matt 24:14). Note that the word 'Amen' is used prominently at the outset of this chapter. It is interesting that it is used in conjunction with various curses which come upon those who undercut others and break the Law in the Old Testament (see Deut 27:14-26 and a prophecy about the behaviour of an end-time Daughter of Zion mentioned in Jer 9:1-9). They seemed so bored or indifferent about warning the world.

In the very following verse, Christ maintains His righteous criticism of a people He loves dearly, but has to reluctantly chasten :

“I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot” and in verse 16 He laments: “So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of My mouth”. Such condemnation! Such righteous anger! Yet He is so merciful that He is giving them all a chance to repent, even during the Great Tribulation, just prior to His coming. Fortunate indeed are they and hopefully many will show Him gratitude for this merciful gesture.

Being spued out of God’s mouth is no small thing. In the book of Leviticus, the former inhabitants of the land of Canaan were said to have been spued out (Lev 18:28; 20:22). Bullinger explains that Christ is warning them here that should they not repent, they would be utterly rejected, and their candlestick removed.

Later, Israel herself warranted such rejection. It may be that the first seven tribes which were allocated allotments in the Holy Land may have paralleled the seven churches. H Palmer, in his *The Algebra of the Bible* states “... those of the Church of the Laodiceans are the ones to be rejected or ‘spued out’, in the same manner that Dan (as a serpent) was dissatisfied with his allocation of land ... the people classified as **the Laodiceans are shown to exhibit similar characteristics to their counter-part, Dan; and as a result, prove unacceptable**” (pp64, 145). A study of the tribe of Dan shows that they ended up in Ireland. But most are now in the USA (some 40 to 50 million Americans claim Irish descent). As in Israel where the Eagle later replaced the Serpent symbolism, so the tribe of Manasseh replaced Dan as a leading tribe even to this day.

Who is the 'Daughter of Zion' in Prophecy?

Now notice verse 17: "Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increase with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked". Never had Christ spoken so severely about a Church in the book of Revelation. Compare this scripture with what God predicted about Israel and Ephraim (perhaps as a type of the Church) in Hos 2:7-13; 11:7-8; Zech 11:5; Jer 13:25-26; 5:26-28. R Trench, author of the famous Commentary of the Epistles to the Seven Churches in Asia claims that this scripture sets the Laodiceans "as in certain peril of eternal death".

Why are they described as 'naked'? It may have several applications:

- they are spiritually stripped and laying bare as in open shame (cf 2Sam 10:4; Is 20:4; Ezek 16:37,39; Hos 2:3,9; Nah 3:5);
- they preach about, but in practice have not "put on Christ", nor the clothing of righteousness. In other words they are said to be full of sin (Ps 119:172; 32:1; Rev 19:8; Eccl 9:8; Job 29:14; Ps 32:1; Lam 1:8);
- "nakedness" is an Hebraism for being morally loose - sexual immorality and thus spiritually committing immoral union with the gods of this world (ie Satan and the demons as expressed by their false doctrines and practices). See Lev 18:12-19,25,28; Jer 3:6,8; 13:24-27; Ezek 15:16; Hos 2:2; Num 25:3; Ps 106:28; Rev 2:20.

We should all be familiar with the concept of the Old Testament types of the New Testament Church. Israel was a type of the Church, and in particular the Daughter of Zion in Prophecy. Just as the Daughter of Babylon is the Great False Church of this world, associated closely with political Babylon, so the Daughter of Zion is the True Church, associated very closely with Zion or Israel, for it is fundamentally an Israelitish Church, based in Israelitish lands. This Daughter of Zion makes for a fascinating study as it is applicable for the True Church through all eras up to, and especially at the very end.

In addition, the terms "My People and, "Thy People", or "those called by Thy name" and "those called by My name" (ie the Church of God), "House of the Lord", "Temple" etc oftentimes refers to both Israel and the Church. This also makes for a special and fulfilling Bible Study.

In verse 18 Christ exhorts Laodicea: "I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see". Obviously from this scripture they are spiritually blind to both their condition and their heretical doctrines.

In verse 19 Christ sternly warns a stubborn Church "as many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent". Here we have proof that the members of this era will not escape the Great Tribulation. They will go into captivity with the House of Israel and suffer the unspeakable terrors and tortures to come upon our rebellious peoples (Amos 6:7; Jer 65:15; 8:12). They will either give their lives for Jesus Christ or accept the easy option - conversion to the Babylonian Mystery Religion (including Sunday observance) and finally turning their backs upon Christ completely. This may not be too difficult for many who had already compromised with this world's Christianity'. Many will not be strong enough spiritually to hold out in the face of being

hunted down or being forced under the pain of the horrors of torture, to convert to the Devil's false religion along with the rest of Israel.

What a time of tremendous persecution and martyrdom for these people. They will have to give their lives for Christ and His true doctrines, or turn their back on what little of the truth they have kept. Christ will stop their apostatising in its tracks by the Great Tribulation. Should events have continued any longer by, say, just a few years, they would have become utterly Protestant and even have switched to Sunday-observance.



Laodiceans will suffer the Great Tribulation

This great false religion will be drunk with the blood of God's people:

“And I saw the woman [Satan's Church] drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus” (Rev 17:6). God's True Church, yes even the Laodicean Church, like their similar predecessors, the Thyatira Church, is deemed ready for destruction (compare Zech 11:4-11, 15-17). Notice Rev 6:9-11:

“I saw under the alter the souls of them that were slain for the word of God [the Thyatira Church during the Middle Ages], and for the testimony which they held: And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?”

“And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellowservants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled”.

Here is clear reference to another great martyrdom just a few decades hence, when God will completely withdraw his protection from Israel and this wayward, almost totally apostate church. Other Scriptures on this horrific martyrdom may be found in: Rev 7:9, 13-15; 11:1; 13:7, 10, 15; 16:6; 17:6; 18:24; Dan 12:7, 10; 11:35; 8:8-13, 17, 24; 7:21; 11:31; Is 1:5-9; 9:16; 3:12; 33:13-14; Jer 5:31; 9:7, 19; Is 4:3-4; Mal 3:2-3; Hos 4:6-12; Amos 8:3; 9:1; Ezek 5:3-4; 6:8-9; 7:16; 9:1-6; 11:16; 12:15-16; John 15:17-16:4. The Third Book of Psalms contains prophecies about these events, especially Ps 74:3-9; 79:1-3, 10. This is no small martyrdom! It would appear that there will be hundreds of thousands of true Christians that will be murdered in the most chilling, blood-curdling manner possible.

This would indicate that the Laodicean Church includes the main Church of God Sabbatarian group, some of its offshoots and perhaps many of those who have not acted upon their calling by seeking membership in the Church of God. The main Laodicean Church will probably start growing after the present economic crisis is over and become very great indeed due to their evangelism efforts.



Laodiceans will experience the full evils of concentration camps

Near to the end of the letter, Christ inspired a further important matter for Laodicea: “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” (verse 20). The wonderful *Commentary of Revelation* by EW Bullinger shows very clearly that this scripture is fulfilled in Luke 12:35-40 while Trench thinks that it exactly corresponds with Song of Solomon 5:2-8.

Sweet sees a parallel between this verse and Matt 25:1-10 (p109). It is interesting that Matt 25:1-10 follows on directly from Matt 24:40-51 and one wonders if there should be a chapter break as it would appear to be a continuation of the same subject - off-the-track Christians. It refers to the sleepy history of the True Church over the centuries as well, it would seem, to the history of the Laodicean era. Additionally, it would also have a personal application.

For instance the lamps refer to the light of God's Law in a Christian's life (Prov 6:23; Luke 12:34-40; Ps 119:105), the oil to the Holy Spirit, sleep to spiritual laziness, a don't care, not fired up attitude (Matt 24:44; Prov 6:9; Rom 13:12; IThess 5:6) and the midnight cry to the time of Christ's intervention in world affairs (Job 34:20; Ex 12:29; Rev 11:15).

Also, the bridegroom represents Christ and the virgins the Church. The virgins, in that day, performed duties similar to bridesmaids today. But they escorted the bridegroom to the banquet, not the bride. If or when the banquet was at night, the torches or lamps were carried by the bridesmaids to light the way of the bridal party. The torches burned brightly for they were wrapped around the top with oil-soaked cloth. A flask of oil was brought with the bridesmaids to ensure the torch flame was kept alive for the duration of the procession. The foolish virgins did not carry the supply of oil with them.

However, a casual reading of Matt 25 should tell us that it has prime reference to the sleepy, lack-lustre, lethargic and lukewarm end-time Church of God. From the context it is clear that half

of the Laodicean Church will wake up to their shocking state, but only at the time of the Tribulation, while the other half will be shut out of the Kingdom. Why shut out? Could it be that fully half will descend into total apostasy and adopt Sunday observance etc? Could we yet see a split in the Laodicean Church like there was after Solomon died? (see IKings 11:30-37; 12:19-30).

The Spiritually Sleepy Church – Repent or Perish!

What does all this mean? Geographically, Laodicea had one major impediment - it lacked a sufficient and permanent supply of good water (*New Bible Dictionary*, 2nd ed, art "Laodicea"). Spiritually they need a good supply of the Holy Spirit, which evidently, they do not have (compare Matt 25:1-13). Also, water is useful hot or cold, but Laodicea's supply came piped from hot springs but arrived lukewarm - a horrible taste and not at all of very much use but rather quite nauseating and caused laziness as well as sleepiness.

The Church of God today has gone asleep (compare Is 29:9-10)!

The Apostle Paul warns us :”Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch, and be sober” (IThess 5:2-6). The message is quite clear, is it not? IT IS TIME TO WAKE UP!

The time is coming that a cry will go out to God's people for them to rise from their sleep, take on the whole armour of God and fight their enemy Satan, lest he kills them.

Once again Paul warns all Church eras: "... now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed" (Rom 13:11). They then need to wash themselves clean of the jealousies, strife, bitterness, slander, politicking, running with lies to the ministry, cliquishness and a host of other evident problems and sins. If one was to be too close to these people, a spiritual corruption of the caring brotherliness of the Philadelphian nature may occur. Do you really want the false doctrines, infighting, the many spots and unsightly blemishes as well as the terrible spiritual warts and diseases of these people? This church seems to be on its death-bed. They are about to die unless cleansed by the Great Tribulation - what a merciful God we have!

Matthew Henry's Commentary, written in the 18th century has an excellent message for us in this regarded:

“Lukewarmness or indifference in religion is the worst temper in the world. If [true] religion is a real thing, it is the most excellent thing, and therefore we should be in good earnest in it ... If religion is worth anything, it is worth every thing; an indifference here is inexcusable: Why halt you between two opinions? If God be God, follow him; if Baal (be God), follow him ... Christ expects that men should declare themselves in earnest either for him or against him” (*A Commentary on the Whole Bible*, vol 6, p 1135).

There is a terrible crisis upon us. We have a Church era - a people with the Holy Spirit - who are corrupting themselves doctrinally. They water down much of God's truth. This can best be described in today's language as 'dumbing down.'

I often wonder much about this era and have been left with little choice than to be abhorred with its destruction of so much restored truth. They are not merely returning to the Sardis level of doctrinal understanding as some may have felt - and that was bad enough (they may decide to keep only a watered-down version of the Holy Days and different form of Church Government as the only difference.). Though they started by watering-down truth it did not take long before they

began adopting Protestant and pagan doctrines as well as left-liberal politically correct positions and a soft approach toward abortion, race, homosexuality, euthanasia etc.

The virtual wanton opposition to the highest standards of doctrinal understanding, including the ultimate in restored truths since the passing of the original Apostles, is a rush toward apostasy so rapid, that its degeneration is indeed exponentially faster than previous eras.



The ruins of Laodicea

What makes the situation even more serious is the flagrant opposition to any correction and the unfair treatment of those still committed to the teachings of the man whom Christ used to raise up the Philadelphia era.

Perhaps the reader may reject the facts heretofore presented. Perhaps, because we are looking at the situation from the inside, instead of from the outside it is difficult for the reader to comprehend. Further, we are looking at current fulfilment of a difficult prophecy and extrapolating into the medium future what may or may not occur.

Please accept these thoughts as an attempt of sorts to both combine intuition and cognition and to get at the root of the present crisis.

Before long Christ will decide that the Laodicean Era will do with a bit of cleaning up during a terrible period of national captivity ... surely it will come, and Christ's prophecy will once again, as always, be completely fulfilled.

Dare any man deny that these prophecies are coming to pass? It is up to you to believe God's Word.

Now remember. They are God's people. They keep to the most basic and simple Biblical doctrines and teachings: Sabbath, probably the Holy Days, 10 Commandments (though watered-down), baptism, conditionalism (ie mortality of the human soul), fruits of the Spirit and other Christian beliefs such as the literal second coming of Christ. Notice again Rev 12:17b where we are told that they "keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ". They keep God's Law to the degree they understand them. But they also compromise with the world's 'political correctness. In addition they water-down certain doctrines and seem to hold to a

mixture of true, false and half true doctrines – shall we say that this era is guilty of ‘dumbing down’ from the level of knowledge and understanding of the previous era.

Finally, can we now identify by the honest use of God’s Word, sheer logic and rational thinking, identify the Laodicean Church? Can YOU dear reader? If so, if the hat fits, then one must wear it!

APPENDIX ONE

Warnings of HWA and Early WCG material concerning identifying signs of the Laodicean Church (and even outright apostasy)



Following is a list of writings by the WCG on the Laodicean Era. Some writings suggest an apostasy which is not necessarily the same thing, but they could be overlapping concepts:

- Leroy Neff “*What is the Laodicean Church?*”, **Good News**, Aug 1959. Some highlights: “The Church of Laodicea would not be ... a split from the Philadelphia Church ... Zech 13:7 ... this verse can also refer to a leader in the Church of Laodicea ... Remember individuals and local congregations may at any time be like any of these seven Churches. They all existed locally in the apostolic age! ... if you are found in the Church of Laodicea, you probably don’t know it”.
- Herman L Hoeh in ***A True History of the True Church*** warns of the Laodicean Era: “This frightful condition lies now ahead of us. Just as the remnants of the Sardis era of the Church exist side by side with the Philadelphia Era, so we will continue our work to the very ‘end time’ when another group will appear - a group not accounted worthy to escape the coming tribulation. Another separate work [from Philadelphia] is yet to arise made up of begotten individuals who are spiritually lukewarm! Woe to any of us if we take part in such a work ... It is time to wake up! if you become complacent, **lacking in zeal**, looking upon the church as a social club, instead of having your heart in the gospel, you, too, may find yourself in the ‘Church of Laodicea’ left to suffer the impending, horrifying tribulation” (p31).
- The ***Ambassador College Correspondence Course (lesson 53, pp13-14)***:
The Laodicean Church
Notice what has happened, since 69 A.D., to the preaching of the true message of God’s coming kingdom. Instead of proclaiming that message worldwide, the Church as a whole went to SLEEP! Only briefly, as during the days of Peter Waldo, the Church stirred in her slumber, but did not fully awaken to do the Work of God.

The parable in Matthew 25 EXPLAINS this long slumber. Turn to it and read through the first 13 verses. The "virgins" represent the members of God's Church through the ages. The Apostolic Age expected Christ's return momentarily (I Thes. 4:15). But when He did not immediately appear, they grew drowsy, lost their first love (Rev. 2:4) and went to sleep on the job.

For nearly 1900 years God's Church continued to slumber and sleep. Then in 1934, a voice on the radio began to proclaim that the intervention of Christ in the affairs of this world is near (Matt. 25: 6). The Philadelphia Era of the Church of God began to zealously DO Christ's Work! (Verse 7.)

1. But at the end of the Work of "Philadelphia," will many lack a sufficient supply of "oil" (the Holy Spirit)? Matt. 25:8.

2. Are the five unprepared "virgins" told to go and figuratively BUY a supply of the Holy Spirit? Matt. 25:9. Does Revelation 3:17-18 show that the typical Laodicean also belongs in this category?

COMMENT: These members of God's Church can still be born of God if they do as Christ instructs. **But they will have to PROVE their spiritual dedication to God by overcoming in the midst of the Great Tribulation -- very likely through martyrdom!** Matthew 25:10-12 indicates that SOME of the end-time "foolish virgins" will not yet be "ready" when Christ arrives.

3. In spite of Christ's warning and the constant repetition of the message by the Philadelphia Work over a period of years, is the spiritual condition of the "Laodiceans" just LUKEWARM -- neither hot nor cold, not really stirred up about overcoming? Rev. 3:15.

COMMENT: The name LAODICEA is Greek. It means "the (self-) righteous people." It is significant that the ancient city of Laodicea lies a great ruin today -- and like Sardis it is COMPLETELY DEAD! (It is recommended at this point that you go back and review your notes over page 10 of Lesson 44.)

4. WHY will the Laodiceans find themselves in such a pitiable state? Rev. 3:17.

COMMENT: They will have been self-deceived. They "know not" that they themselves are "the ones pitiable and beggarly and blind and naked" (according to the original Greek). They THOUGHT they HAD made proper preparation for the return of Christ. They will say, "I HAVE BECOME rich (physically and spiritually) ... and have need of NOTHING."

The ancient city of Laodicea was famous for its money transactions and its soft wool. Laodicea was **almost a synonym for soft, luxurious living**. Not far from the city was a pagan temple with a great MEDICAL school.

Naturally, Laodicea produced some famous SKEPTIC philosophers!

The MODERN "Laodiceans" will be products of this **MODERN age of skepticism, unbelief, creature comforts**, medicine and **permissiveness**. They are too close to the ways and false gods of this world to get really "shook up" about God's truth until finally shaken out of their **lukewarmness** by having to suffer in the Great Tribulation!

5. Will Christ be showing LOVE to these people by allowing them to suffer so? Rev. 3:19 and Heb. 12:6-11.

COMMENT: The Laodiceans actually have been begotten of God's Spirit. Their lamps are lit (Matt. 25:8), but are "going out" (see margin of your Bible) because the supply of "oil" (the Holy Spirit) has not been continually replenished and increased.

Christ does NOT WANT to cast off these people. Revelation 3:16 should be translated "I AM ABOUT TO spue thee out," NOT "I WILL spue thee out." He stands ever ready to receive the OVERCOMERS -- to give them eternal life and rulership with Him (verses 20-21).

6. How might a "Laodicean" recognize his spiritual condition in advance of the Tribulation? Luke 6:26. But will the world HATE whoever is a dedicated believer in, and doer of, God's Work? John 15:19-20. What else does Christ say, through the Apostle Paul? I Cor. 10:12 and II Cor. 13:5.

- In the **Good News** (January 1960, p8) HWA wrote: "But some of those in the Church today will grow weary with well-doing. They will brag about being the true Church - thinking they are spiritually rich, when they are, in fact, almost spiritually destitute. Because they are indifferent to the real Work of God, lukewarm, **lacking in zeal**, Christ will spew them out of His mouth. They shall lose the very salvation they boast of having unless they repent! God help *you* never to drift into the Laodicean church!"
- In the same **Good News** (pp 1-2) Roderick Meredith wrote the following concerning Matthew 25: "Jesus here refers to Christians as "virgins" - those who have kept themselves pure from the spiritual fornication of fellowship with false churches. They thought that just knowing the truth, coming out of the world, and fellowshiping with God's church was *enough*. They had not grown *spiritually as had the other virgins*. Perhaps they thought that they would just naturally get into God's kingdom because they were in the fellowship and love of the brethren who *were* spiritually alive. **Just knowing the truth and having fellowship with God's Church is not enough!**"
- Herbert W. Armstrong in the **Plain Truth** series on his Autobiography (June 1963, p13) writes: "The very last of these seven successive Churches is to be the self-sufficient, lukewarm, Laodicean group. But just before it is the Church which carries this end-time vital Message! It is small. It is weak. But it is faithful, as few have been, with God's Word".
- GTA wrote in 1976 that "Matthew 25 [indicates] that fully half of God's own people will be so sleepy and inattentive to world affairs that they will not see the rapidly moving events plunging this world toward the beginning of the great tribulation" (**Coworker Letter**, 15 September).
- "Search the Scriptures concerning the condition of God's Church during the most crucial time in all the world's history, and you will find prophecies that approximately half of the church are sound asleep! Christ's parable of the virgins in Matthew 25 [is] the prophecy concerning the Laodicean condition of God's Church ..." (GTA, **Coworker Letter**, 7 February, 1977).
- "... In the past few weeks Jesus Christ, Living Head of God's Church, has moved dynamically to set God's Church and Work back on the track ... [GTA] demoted the men highest and older in service -- such as Dr. Roderick C. Meredith, Dr. Herman Hoeh, Mr. Raymond McNair ... Dibar Apartian ... [he] demoted and removed to minor positions the top ranking ministers, senior in years of service -- those men he knew would be loyal to the church under God's Apostle ... in their minor positions of demotion, these men were threatened with being fired entirely if they communicated at all with me! ... We had been tending to forget GOD, **letting Laodicean lukewarmness leaven us**" (HWA, **Coworker Letter**, 28 June 1978).

- HWA wrote the following month: “Men like Dr. Herman Hoeh, Dibar Apartian, Dr Roderick C. Meredith were demoted to meagre preaching positions. The ‘coup’ had become complete. Satan’s conspiracy had made Ambassador College truly one of this world’s educational institutions ... **the Worldwide Church of God was becoming Laodiceanic, secular**. God’s Spirit was on the way out!” (**Good News**, 17 July 1978, p5).
- “God’s Church was in need of a spiritual re-awakening ... We are shaking off the Laodicean lukewarmness that was beginning to **drug us to sleep**” (HWA, **Coworker Letter**, 23 October, 1978).
- “... the Laodicean condition described in the last era just prior to Christ’s second coming, [is] predominant just before Christ’s coming” (HWA, **Good News**, 6 November, 1978, p3).
- HWA wrote “I am working on many articles for **The Plain Truth**, and **The Good News**. One is on the Laodicean era of the Church. When will it come? How will it come? Many other articles vital to your life NOW -- and to your ETERNITY!” (**Good News**, 28 November, 1978). [Nothing has been seen of it. Could it be that this article has been destroyed?]
- In the **Good News**, 4 December 1978, p9 HWA wrote: “I have always said, and still affirm, that these seven messages to the seven churches are picturing in advance the seven **CONDITIONS** to be found in the one continuing True Church ... the Laodicean condition outstanding in the same true Church at about the time of the great tribulation and climaxing with Christ’s second coming. To expound that fully requires more space than I have here. It will be covered later.” [but it was not. Were his notes on this subject destroyed after his death? Or did God prevent him from publishing it so that it would not be so obvious? Perhaps God wants us to research this and prove it for ourselves, rather than having it all laid out plainly for us by the Apostle].
- “... most who have gone back doctrinally afield will today ... not be willing to change back from error and **watered-down doctrines** to God’s truth! ... Other **liberals** have had to go ... they produced what they called a Systematic Theology Project, changing and watering down - making more liberal - many doctrines ... these ‘intellectual **liberals**’ began trying to compromise and water down ... under their false influence a **Laodicean lukewarmness and indifference, losing the love of God’s truth**, found root in the Church” (HWA, **Good News**, 19 February, 1979).
- In the aforementioned **Good News**, HWA published an excellent article “What is a Liberal?”, which, if analysed carefully, which may indicate what he thought a Laodicean attitude was.
- In the **Good News** August 1979, HWA wrote “This Church was drifting into a Laodicean condition. **Incidentally, both the Sardis and the Laodicean eras of the Church were God’s churches - NOT SATAN’S! Someone spread the false rumour that I have said these others were or will be Satan’s churches** ... The Laodicean church will be characterized by spiritual lukewarmness - half of its membership (Matt 25:1-13) will be shut out of the Kingdom of God. But, the bad news, as it appears today, my dear brethren, is that we, **undoubtedly of the Philadelphia era ... are in serious danger of becoming also the Laodicean era. I am personally much concerned about that. If you are not concerned, then indeed we are in mortal DANGER**”.

- “ ... Revelation 12:17: Satan shall be full of wrath against the remnant - the last remaining generation of the Church - the “Laodicean” Church, and will terribly persecute her. But Matthew 25 shows that though that final generation of the Church shall be lukewarm - not less emotional, but **more “liberal”, more secular and less spiritual - less biblical** - yet half of them shall be saved at Christ’s coming, though half shall be spewed out of Christ’s mouth (Revelation 3:16) ... Satan’s wrath, and the final persecution of the very last generation of the Church - the Laodicean era [will eventuate]” (HWA, “Personal From”, **Plain Truth**, September 1980, p2).
- “Satan in his mad wrath will ... make war with the Remnant Church. This has to be the Laodicean Era of the Church ... **Remember, it, too, is God’s Church** ... that era of the Church is pictured in Matthew 25 ... It could happen to you or me” (HWA, **Coworker Letter**, 20 January, 1981).
- One of the most famous, and certainly prophetic articles HWA ever wrote was the “Recent History of the Philadelphia Era of the Worldwide Church of God”, **Worldwide News** insert, 24 June 1985 : “Those of higher rank, but subject to the one in day-to-day executive administration at Pasadena, who were steadfastly loyal to the Church and its true teachings, were suppressed or gradually removed from Pasadena and sent ‘into the field’, pastoring single churches in other locations ... the Church was actually travelling into controversy, liberalising and either Protestantism or total secularism ... **I want you, brethren, to think about and understand what happened to God’s Church in the 1970s lest history repeat itself !** ... If Christ should remove me, He will direct the Advisory Council of Elders to select one of them to continue leading you until the coming of Jesus Christ in power and in glory”.
- Prior to his death, HWA wrote: “Perhaps WE OURSELVES have been holding the march of events up ... Perhaps you and I are holding this world condition back ... I call on you in Jesus’ name to pray as never before that God’s Church will heed and draw closer to Him. **Have we not been becoming lukewarm? Read the last part of Revelation 3. If we are lukewarm we shall be spewed out of Christ’s mouth.**” (**Coworker Letter**, 15 July 1985). [A reading of the wonderful **Coworker Letter** of 25 August 1985 would be most helpful. HWA shows how we, ourselves (the WCG), had been holding back the march of world events. Why so? Perhaps because the Laodicean element was gradually becoming the majority toward the end of his life? Was there a transition period of 19 years from the death of his wife in early 1967 until his death in early 1986? Who knows?]
- “ ... it is certainly possible for us to *hold back* the Work’s progress if we allow ourselves to drift into a lax or careless spiritual condition ... The Laodiceans are characterised as thinking they are rich, but actually unaware of their serious spiritual condition” (JWT, **Worldwide News**, 3 August, 1987, p1).
- “And I tell you now, that ... we are living in the day when the Laodicean spirit is beginning to take root within God’s Church. And it won’t be long before the Laodicean Church and the Philadelphian Church are going to be side-by-side and in outward appearance you won’t be able to tell” (JWT, sermon, 26 December 1987, Sydney, Australia).

From the above we can summarise the following pointers concerning Laodicea or apostasy:

- **Liberalism**
- **Leaving aside much of the knowledge of God (ie the 'dumbing down' of the Church)**
- **conspiracy from within**
- **ridiculing and shanghaiing away the older, loyal ministers**
- **watering-down or changing the doctrines**
- **throwing out HWA's books and booklets**
- **neo-Protestant approach and direction**
- **compromising with the world - liberalism to conform with this world (ie 'political correctness' - eg abortions, interracial marriages, feminism, euthanasia, a lax attitude toward homosexuality and a left-liberal stance on political and social issues)**

My personal and sermon notes from the late 1970s and early 1980s said that the Laodicean Era would throw out or greatly water-down church eras, truth about Israel, the truth about our destiny in the God Family, place of safety etc.

APPENDIX TWO

Laodicea



www.holylandphotos.org/browse.asp?s=1,3,7,23,107

Laodicea is a very large mound located to the north of Denizli. It was founded by Seleucid kings during the third century B.C. By the New Testament era it was a very large and very important city. It had evidently replaced both nearby Hierapolis and Colossae as the most important city in the area.

It was located near good water sources although an aqueduct brought water to the city from the south. Most importantly it was located at a key road junction. The major road coming from the east (Syria, Mesopotamia, Arabia, India, China) came to Laodicea and from there one could continue west, 112 mi. [180 km.], to the port city of Ephesus, or head northwest towards Philadelphia from where roads headed either west to Smyrna, or continued northwest to Pergamum. From Laodicea, one could also travel southeast to Attalia, a port on the Mediterranean Sea.

It is probable that Epaphras was instrumental in establishing the church at Laodicea, and Paul **writes that his letter to the church at Colossae (only 8 mi. [13 km.] distant) should be read by the believers at Laodicea (Col 2:1). Paul also wrote a letter to the church at Laodicea (Col 4:16). This letter has not been discovered, although many scholars speculate that the book called "Ephesians" was originally addressed to the church at Laodicea.**⁴

⁴ This indeed may have been the case: "The 'letter from Laodicea' (Col 4:16) is often thought to have been a copy of our Ephesians which had been received in Laodicea." (*New Bible Dictionary*, 2nd ed, art. "Laodicea")

Laodicea is the last of the seven churches addressed in the book of Revelation (1:11; 3:14-22). In the letter there may be a number of allusions to the local setting of Laodicea: the lukewarm water, riches, gold, white garments, and eye salve! (see *The Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia in their Local Setting* by Colin J. Hemer; [click here](#) to view for purchase from amazon.com).

A convenient source for information on Laodicea is, the unfortunately now out of print, Yamauchi, E. *The Archaeology of the New Testament Cities in Western Asia Minor*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1980.

(emphasis mine)

APPENDIX THREE

“The Bible and Archaeology. The Book of Revelation: History and Prophecy”, *The Good News*, July-August 2001

by Mario Seiglie

Faithfulness in Philadelphia

About 25 miles southeast of Sardis lay the city of Philadelphia, newest of the seven cities. An imperial road passed through it from Rome to the east, so it became known as "the gateway to the East."

Christ says to this church: "These things says He who is holy, He who is true . . . Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown. He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more" (Revelation 3:7, 11-12).

Christ emphasizes His loyalty to His true followers and reminds them to be equally faithful to Him. If they persevere in His Word, He will give them a crown that they may rule with Him in His Kingdom.

We find a definite theme of brotherly fidelity in this section. The Philadelphian brethren could well identify with this admonition.

Philadelphia means "brotherly love." The city was named after the love the king who founded the city held for his brother. The city was established by Attalus II (159-138 B.C.), who was called Philadelphus ("brother lover") in honor of his loyal affection toward his brother, King Eumenes II of Pergamos. During his brother's lifetime Attalus II was his most loyal assistant. He successfully commanded his brother's forces in several wars and later became the trusted ambassador to their ally, Rome. There he won respect and admiration from the Romans for his brotherly fidelity.

The *New Bible Dictionary* comments: "As Philadelphus was renowned for his loyalty to his brother, so the church, the true Philadelphia, inherits and fulfills his character by its steadfast loyalty to Christ" (1982, "Philadelphia," p. 926).

Laodicea: Warning to repent

The last city on the route was Laodicea, 45 miles southeast of Philadelphia. With three main roads crossing it, **the city was one of the richest commercial centers in the world**. The Laodiceans were famous for producing shiny, black wool clothing and boasted of an outstanding medical center that specialized in eye ointments. With the wealth amassed, it had also become the banking center of the region.

Christ says to this church: "I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth. Because you say, 'I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing'—and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked—I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you

may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see" (verses 15-18).

Archaeologists have discovered the main aqueduct going to Laodicea, and several miles of it can still be traced. The water piped in from the south had so many minerals that the Roman engineers had covers installed so they could remove the mineral deposits before the pipes clogged.

"For all its wealth, the city had poor water," says *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*. "The water either came from the nearby hot springs and was cooled to lukewarm or came from a cooler source and warmed up in the aqueduct on the way" (notes on Revelation 3, Zondervan software).

Christ uses the Laodiceans' lukewarm and distasteful water to point out that their poor spiritual state is equally offensive to Him. He warns them that, if they do not rapidly improve their spiritual condition, He will reject them. **He detests the Laodicean attitude of compromising with God's laws. By contrast, He later describes those who are faithful to Him as "those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus"** (Revelation 14:12).

Further, even if their clothing were world renowned, Christ tells them their "spiritual garments" were in pitiful condition. He recommends they focus instead on buying from Him the spiritual clothing of true righteousness that He later describes as "fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints" (Revelation 19:8).

Jesus next tells those brethren, who were blind to their true spiritual condition, that the "Phrygian powder" concocted in their medical center as an eye ointment was useless. Instead, He advised them to use His true spiritual eye salve so they can clearly see and repent of their compromising attitudes.

Lastly, **Christ warns them not to put their trust in their physical wealth but in Him**, who can develop the true gold that comes from overcoming trials and building righteous spiritual character. This solid advice is of lasting value to the entirety of the Church at any time in its history.

(emphasis mine)

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Suggested Reading

HRP	<i>A Chronological Overview of the Doctrinal Changes 1986-1995.</i>
HRP	<i>Amazing Temple Symbolism found in Revelation Chapter 3.</i>
HRP	<i>Herbert W Armstrong. Man of God!</i>
HRP	<i>Just what do you mean – ‘Ezekiel’s Message’?</i>
HRP	<i>Seven Restorations of the Work.</i>
HRP	<i>Should we ‘move on’ from the old Doctrines which came into the WCG? Or should we have continuity?</i>
HRP	<i>The Seven Eras of Ancient Israel – Type of the Eras of the True Church?</i>

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Laodicea, Asia Minor

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