

Pentwater Bible Church

Revelation Message 12

November 12, 2023



Laodicean temple ruins https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Laodicea_on_the_Lycus

Daniel E. Woodhead – Pastor Teacher

Pentwater Bible Church

Revelation Message Eleven

THE CHURCH AT LAODICEA PART II

November 12, 2023

Daniel E. Woodhead

THE CHURCH OF THE APOSTASY (A.D. 1900-PRESENT DAY)

Revelation 3:14-22

¹⁴And 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; ¹⁵I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. ¹⁶So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. ¹⁷Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: ¹⁸I 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. ¹⁹As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent. ²⁰Behold, 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. ²¹To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne. ²²He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches (KJV).

The destination of the letter, in verse 14a is Laodicea, which means “people ruling.” The wealthy city of Laodicea was located on the road to Colosse about 40 miles southeast of Philadelphia. About 35 years before this letter was written, Laodicea was destroyed by an earthquake, but it had the wealth and ability to rebuild. Its main industry was wool cloth. There is no record that Paul ever visited this city, but he was concerned about it (Colossians 2:1–2; 4:16). This is set in contrast to God’s ruling in the church. It is a church entirely ruled by men, for the Holy Spirit is not present and doing His ministry of guiding.

The Graf, Wellhausen documentary hypothesis caused the erosion of the church in America. One event that demonstrates this is the inauguration as president into Union Theological Seminary of Charles Augustus Briggs. Union is a seminary in New York City. At that time, it was part of the United Presbyterian Church. In his speech on January 20, 1891 Briggs made some points, which can only be classified as destructive heresies. Union was a seminary that was devoted to training ministers for Presbyterian pulpits.

Briggs made six points, which caused the beginning of a serious split in American churches.

1. He asserted that there are three great fountains of truth: The Bible, the church and reason. So, reason and mankind became equal with the revealed Word.
2. Some Old Testament prophecies were fulfilled and some were reversed.

3. He questioned the Mosaic authorship of the first five books of the Bible.
4. He questioned the unity of the book of Isaiah.
5. Those unsaved who died would have a second chance at eternal life.
6. Sanctification is not complete at death.

This was the first public affirmation of what is known as Modernism in a theological seminary in the United States. The New York Presbytery brought Charges against Briggs on two occasions (1891 and 1893), but the charges were dropped, to preserve unity of the church rather than to deal with what was actually said.

TRUTH MUST NEVER BE SACRIFICED FOR PEACE. IT NEVER WORKS!

When the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church put Briggs on trial in 1893, he was suspended from the Presbyterian Church. As a result, Briggs became an Episcopalian and the Union Theological Seminary withdrew from the Presbyterian Church and became independent. They still continued to train ministers for Presbyterian pulpits. This began the development of the course the apostasy would take in the twentieth century. Apostasy would first begin in a denominational school and thus affect the training of ministers who were to fill the pulpits of the churches for those denominations. Eventually, more and more liberals took over the pulpits, and more and more churches became liberal themselves. This was such a noteworthy event the encyclopedia Britannica covered in an article in their volumes.¹

So, throughout the first two decades of the twentieth century, apostasy took over the schools and trained ministers for the denominational churches. In an effort to stem the tide, in 1910 the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church issued the Five Fundamentals of the Faith, which included:

1. The inspiration of the Scriptures.
2. The Virgin Birth.
3. The Substitutionary Atonement.
4. The resurrection of Jesus.
5. The miracles of Jesus.

Those who subscribed to these five points were labeled “Fundamentalists,” and so a new word was coined. Those who denied these fundamentals were called Modernists or Liberals. The General Assembly issued these in 1910 and reaffirmed them in 1916 and in 1923.

The decade of the 1920’s was characterized by the great Modernist-Fundamentalist battles. There were many attempts to fight Modernism within the church. But toward the end of the decade, it was apparent that the Modernists were firmly in control of both the denominational church positions (this included all the major denominations except the Southern Baptist Convention) and their schools.

This led to the separatist movement of the 1930’s as the Fundamentalists pulled out of the denominations and started their own denominations or independent churches. Emerging from the

¹ Encyclopedia Britannica Eleventh Edition, *Charles Augustus Briggs*, The Encyclopedia Britannica Co. Publisher, NY, NY 1910 Vol 4 pg. 500

United Presbyterian Church of the United States of America was a group led by J. Gresham Machen, which unfortunately split into three separate denominations (Orthodox Presbyterians, Bible Presbyterians and the Evangelical Presbyterians) due to internal struggles. Out of the American Baptist Convention came the General Association of Regular Baptists (GARB). Out of the United Methodist Church came the Evangelical Methodists.

THE SCHISMS THAT THE BIBLE PREDICTED WOULD OCCUR AS A RESULT OF THE APOSTASY, BEGAN TO OCCUR IN THE SEPARISTS MOVEMENTS OF THE 1930'S

Jude 1:17-19

¹⁷But ye, beloved, remember ye the words which have been spoken before by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ; ¹⁸That they said to you, In the last time there shall be mockers, walking after their own ungodly lusts. ¹⁹These are they who make separations, sensual, having not the Spirit. (ASV 1901)

Ecumenical movements have characterized the 1940's to the present day. In 1948, the World Council of Churches was organized on two principles: First, the unity of all the Churches in the basis of liberal tenets; and second, the unity of all religions. In 1950, the old Federal Council of Churches was reorganized into the National Council of Churches, again attempting to unify all churches in the United States along liberal tenets. Consequently, the visible church is primarily apostate today. Even among conservative denominations, some can already see the threat of apostasy in the taking over of the schools and the supplying of liberal ministers for the pulpit. The Southern Baptist Convention has not fully escaped this trend but in the decade of the ninety's there was a reversal.

In more recent times the apostasy has entered a whole new phase. The old phase was characterized by destructive denials. The new phase claims to affirm the fundamentals of the faith, but they have made a paradigm shift in that the Bible is no longer the final authority in determining divine truth, but experience is equally valid. In actual practice the experience takes priority over Scripture. If the Bible contradicts the practice, then the practice is justified as a "new move of the Spirit" and, therefore, what the text of the Scripture actually says can be contradicted by a new experience. This is a far more spiritual way of denying the truth of God and, therefore, far more deceptive.

THE HOLY SPIRIT NEVER ACTS IN A MANNER CONTRARY TO SCRIPTURE.

The old apostasy was marked by verbal "destructive denials." The new apostasy is marked by practical "destructive denials." This in turn has led to many strange and diverse doctrines, causing many to be truly tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine and resulting in total spiritual instability, as Paul warned would happen in Ephesians 4:8-16. They may affirm the authority and inspiration of Scripture but it is only their experience that determines the meaning of the text in particular and truth in general. The new apostasy has produced the same fruit as the old apostasy. They mock those who will not join the "new wave" (or is it being caught in the undertow?) and they have caused schisms dividing both churches and families.

Union made the news in 2019 by entering a whole new phase of theology where they began worshipping plants in their chapel time. Students at Union Theological Seminary in New York City prayed to a collection of potted plants set up in the school's chapel. Unashamed of its pagan idolatry, the nation's oldest independent seminary itself tweeted out the news:

"Today in chapel, we confessed to plants. Together, we held our grief, joy, regret, hope, guilt and sorrow in prayer; offering them to the beings who sustain us but whose gift we too often fail to honor. Then they asked the question to those who would read their Tweet. "What do you confess to the plants in your life?"²

The proper way of determining truth is to go to the Word of God first and not rely on the experiences of other people. Furthermore, the Bible must be the final and only authority on all matters of both faith (what we believe) and practice (actions and experiences, etc.). Unfortunately, what has happened in recent years is that a new experience or phenomenon breaks out in some part of the church, and then people simply try to find verses to justify the activity rather than be willing to admit that the experience-no matter how wonderful or supernatural it felt-was simply not of God. Most of the proponents defend the practice not on the basis of Scripture but on the basis of their own experience. The most common evidence is that the experience makes them happy. Satan would not be a very good deceiver if he made one feel badly, would he? The apostle Paul gave evidence of relying on the authority of Scripture which Dr. Luke records in the book of Acts.

Acts 17:11

¹⁰ And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea: who coming thither went into the synagogue of the Jews. ¹¹ These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so (KJV).

Some other examples are: The Toronto blessing, slaying in the spirit, health and wealth gospel, psychologizing the faith, unity of the faith, predicting the future and healing. The Toronto Blessing is a supposed outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the people of the Toronto Airport Christian Fellowship Church, formerly the Toronto Airport Vineyard Church. On January 20, 1994, a Pentecostal pastor named Randy Clark spoke at the church and gave his testimony of how he would get "drunk" in the Spirit and laugh uncontrollably. In response to this testimony, the congregation erupted in pandemonium with people laughing, growling, dancing, shaking, barking like dogs, and even being stuck in positions of paralysis. These experiences were attributed to the Holy Spirit entering people's bodies. The pastor of the church, John Arnott, referred to it as a big Holy Spirit party. The moniker "Toronto Blessing" was given, and the church was soon in the international spotlight.

When this "blessing" is held to the light of Scripture, it cannot be called a movement of the Holy Spirit. Absolutely nowhere in Scripture is there a precedent for what was happening at the Toronto Airport church. The nearest that Scripture comes to describing the paralysis and bizarre behavior prompted by the Toronto Blessing are its documented effects of demonic possession (Mark 9:18).

² <https://www.fulcrum7.com/news/2019/9/19/union-theological-seminary-class-worships-plants>

Today many groups give credence to experience and extra biblical decrees over Scripture. The two following charts show how the Charismatic and Roman fellowships treat their definition of truth.

Seoifield Biblical Institute
A General Introduction to the Bible and Theology
Charismatic Epistemology

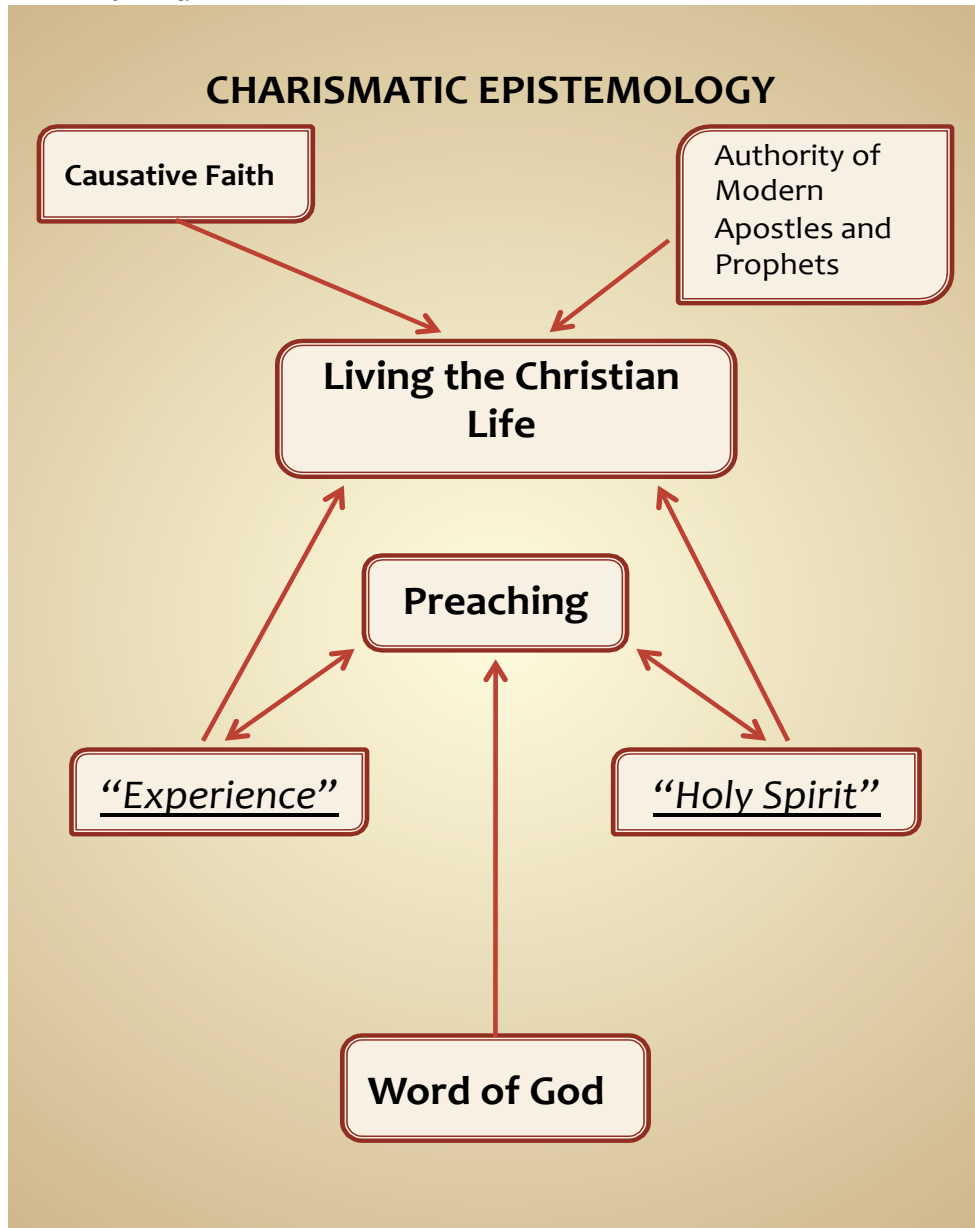


Chart Drawn by Cathy Bateson



Chart Drawn by Cathy Bateson

Isaiah 8:16, 19-20

¹⁶Bind up the testimony, seal the law among my disciples. ¹⁹And when they shall say unto you, Seek unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto wizards that peep, and that mutter: should not a people seek unto their God? for the living to the dead? ²⁰To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, [it is] because [there is] no light in them (ASV, 1901).

One of the motifs of the Book of Isaiah is the contrast between the Remnant (Jews who believe) and the non-Remnant (Jews who do not believe). In verse 16, one crucial difference between the two groups is the place that the Scriptures have in their lives. The law here referenced is the Law of Moses, and the testimony is the words of the Prophets. What distinguishes the Remnant is that they believe that which Moses and the Prophets declared: that is the foundation of their faith, and this is also their authority. The non-Remnant rejects the Scriptures as the final authority and seeks to make God more “real in their experience” by going toward idolatry and looking at gods and goddesses that they could see, feel, and touch, creating a more visual picture while they worship. In verse 19 Isaiah issues a warning that they are not to go after counterfeit spirits and teachers that chirp and that mutter. In other words, Isaiah is warning people not to pursue supernatural things that cause them to make strange sounds of chirping and muttering. Scripture is quite clear the Holy Spirit will never express Himself in this crazy manner. These are expressions driven by the occult.

THE NEW EVANGELICALISM:

This is perhaps the most insidious of all the apostasies. It is characterized by catering to the desires of the people. Instead of being inculcated with God’s Word and having our personal world view and behavior be patterned after God’s Word, The New Evangelicalism gives the people what they want. One NT passage clearly predicts this reversal of worship of God to worshipping man.

Romans 1:25

²⁵Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen (KJV).

He further warned us that to serve the people with unbiblical doctrine is not serving God.

Galatians 1:8–10

⁹As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed. ¹⁰For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ (KJV).

The idea with this new wave of apostasy is soft-selling the Bible and salvation. It is not attempting to save anybody from the fires of Hell but from an aimless and meaningless life here on earth. Our experiences and quality of life here are more important than the total service to God and the blessed assurance that He will soon come to lift us out of this sinful decaying world. Salvation is given lip service and evangelism with real confrontation is thought to be too divisive. This apostasy does not want to upset anybody. There is never any mention of Hell and the outcome of an unsaved life. They may say that they believe strongly but, their actions differ sharply from what they say.

Usually, their Bible teaching is characterized by an over emphasis on application. This of course is the middle of the road approach. They avoid sound biblical doctrine as too divisive.

Paul warned us that the end times would be characterized as a departure from sound doctrine and a departure from the truth.

II Timothy 4:3-4

³For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; ⁴And they shall turn away [their] ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables (KJV).

With the divisiveness they believe that they will lose members of their congregation and therefore funds. Or they are concerned with money and man-made approaches to self-help. A total dependence on God for their resources is abandoned for “sound business” practices or “fundamental marketing techniques.” Total reliance on God by elders through prayer and patience is exchanged for parliamentary procedure and schemes for man-made self-advancement and career goals. The pastor is considered as a CEO, not the teacher of God’s Word. Mission statements and strategic plans are formulated to accommodate personal plans. The Bible is subordinated to man’s desires.

The thought of prophecy is anathema to the New Evangelical for they say it causes division. This division of course is between those non-literal Bible expositors and the literal Biblical expositors. Some have characterized the New Evangelical as being seduced by the world spirit of this present age.

You can see it in the leaders who are popularized. Usually, they have a high degree of prominence in the government or sports and their testimonies are sought after for paid speaking engagements and book endorsements.

You will never see a Sunday school teacher or poor inner-city pastor held up by them as pillars of the faith. Christ went to the lowest members of society to bring the truth to the world. He did not go to the popular and prominent.

This is a spirit of disobedience and a mood of compromise. It is a rejection of many of the negative aspects of New Testament Christianity. It is an attitude of positivism. They would rather be diplomats not fighters, positive rather than militant, infiltrators rather than separatists. They would not be restricted by a separationist mentality. The New Evangelical would rather pursue dialog, intellectualism, and appeasement than Biblical Militantism. Psychology is fast becoming their guide.

The use of psychology is rapidly becoming the norm in Christian Schools and churches.

Our culture has become deeply and extensively psychological. The weakness and carnality of the church in recent decades has allowed this psychological mind-set of the world to flow into the church. This process has brought about a redefining of many foundational matters of the Christian faith. Prior to the apostasy Christianity correctly understood that man's problem was sin and God's remedy was His saving and transforming grace (Romans 5:12, 17). Now, the trouble is the disorder of codependency, and the solution is group therapy. Formerly, we understood that man tended to

stray from God to follow his own self-willed path (Isaiah 53:6), and that he needed to deny himself, take up his cross, and follow Christ (Luke 9:23). Now, we think that man must esteem himself, affirm himself, and actualize himself. All of this new thinking is coming from psychological theory, which is primarily a philosophy of life. We are strongly warned in the word of the Lord not to be guided by the philosophy of the world.

Colossians 2:8

⁸"Beware lest anyone take you captive through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ" (KJV).

Chief among the proponents is James Dobson. He readily admits that the men whose writings he studied in graduate school at USC were God haters and thought self was more important than sin and repentance. Yet he continues to inject this into the Christian church.

Beware of the levin of the new-evangelicals.

ECUMENISM:

This is a concept that the liberal church espouses. It is an attempt to further water down the gospel by trying to find common ground among various denominations. The goal is unity at all cost. The problem is that most of them don't believe the gospel any more or the authority of Scripture and want us to agree with them and fellowship with them. Scripture warns us against this.

II Corinthians 6:14

¹⁴Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness (KJV)?

I Corinthians 15:33

³³Be not deceived: Evil companionships corrupt good morals (KJV).

NEXT WEEK: REVELATION MSG. XIII

Please call or e-mail with any questions or comments

pentwaterbiblechurch@scofieldinstitute.org Toll Free 877-706-2479