

THE STATE OF THE CHURCH 2022
REVELATION 2-3

Introduction

In the 2nd and 3rd Chapters of the Book of Revelation the Apostle John records a personal message from the Lord Jesus Christ to each one of seven different Churches of Asia Minor.

These messages were very personal and very direct in nature. Now we know in our individual lives, the Bible reveals to us that God doesn't just look at our outward appearance, but rather **He looks at the condition of our hearts.**

In the same way, Jesus didn't just look at the outward appearance of these 7 Churches. He peeled back a few layers and **examined their overall spiritual health.** And with the exception of the Churches at Smyrna and Philadelphia, what He discovered was very troubling.

But lest we think that the message to these Churches were messages SOLELY directed to them, we find this phrase reiterated over and over again in these two Chapters:

“He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches.”

I. WHAT JESUS SAW IN THE CHURCHES IN ASIA.

We could simply it by saying...**HE SAW IT ALL!!!**

He saw **THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE UGLY!!!**

He saw **THE POSITIVES...He saw THE NEGATIVES!!!**

***Hebrews 4:13**—“Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.”*

As we look at so called “*Bible-Believing Churches*” in general today and our Church specifically, there are three of these Churches that I personally feel stand out more than the rest with some of the same characteristics that we see today.

A. The First Is The Church At Ephesus. (*Revelation 2:1-7*)

He speaks favorably of their **works**, their **labour**, their **patience** and their **stand against evil.** But having said all that, **He rebuked them because they had forsaken their First Love.**

THE STATE OF THE CHURCH 2022
REVELATION 2-3

Paul had once commended this Church for its love for God and others.

***Ephesians 1:15-16**—“Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints, 16 Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers;”*

But by this point in the life of this Church, many of its founders had died, and the new generation of Believers had lost their zeal for God!

Now understand that this Church at Ephesus was a **busy Church**, but their **motive was all wrong!**

They had replaced their **personal love relationship with Jesus Christ** with a bunch of spiritual activities! **i.e. They got the cart before the horse! Our spiritual activities should FLOW out of our love relationship with Jesus Christ, not replace it!**

1 Corinthians 13:1-3

Jesus warned them to remember from where they had fallen, repent, and get back to where they should be, or else there would be dire consequences.

The consequences in this case were that He would remove their candlestick out of his place—i.e. meaning they would lose their effectiveness as a Church!

So, do we have an ear Church? Are we listening? Can we hear and understand what the Lord Jesus Christ said by His Holy Spirit unto the Church at Ephesus?

If so, WHAT WOULD JESUS SAY ABOUT OUR WORKS, OUR LABOR, OUR PATIENCE, OUR STAND AGAINST EVIL? (Are they up to par?)

THE STATE OF THE CHURCH 2022
REVELATION 2-3

But primarily, **WHAT WOULD HE SAY OF OUR LOVE FOR HIM?**

- B. The Second Is The Church At Sardis. (Revelation 3:1-6)**
Jesus condemned the Church at Sardis for **having a name (or reputation) that they were alive**, but being lifeless (dead).

i.e. They were going through the motions of being a Church, there may have been a lot of activity in the name of the Lord and there may have been a lot of fleshly excitement, but in reality, the Holy Spirit was not **in** what they were doing! Why? Because of SIN!!!

While *verse 4* says there were a few in this Church that were undefiled, by and large most of its members seemed to have had a **sin problem!**

Does that not describe what we see in most Churches today! Though there may be a small faithful remnant of the Lord who live right and follow the Lord, most people are just playing Church!

There are way too many in Churches today who want to hang on to their sin and the Lord too! **IT DOESN'T WORK!**

- 1. He Told Them To Be Watchful And To Strengthen The Things That Remained, That Were Ready To Die! (Vs 2)**
To be *“watchful”* means *“to keep awake.”*
The implication here is that they got to where they were by not being watchful.

To *“strengthen”* means *“to set fast, to turn resolutely in a certain direction, and to confirm.”*
- 2. He Told Them To Get Back To The Basics (i.e. The Fundamentals) Of Their Faith! (Vs 3)**

THE STATE OF THE CHURCH 2022
REVELATION 2-3

We must **NEVER** let go of the **FUNDAMENTALS!**
And if we have let go of some of them, we must get back to them!

By *“fundamentals”* we mean *that which forms a foundation or basis; the basics; the essentials.*
Psalm 11:3–“If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?”

- a. The Verbal Inspiration Of The Scriptures!**
- b. The Vileness Of Mankind!**
- c. The Virgin Birth Of The Saviour!**
- d. The Virtuous Life Of The Saviour!**
- e. The Vital Deity Of The Saviour!**
- f. The Vicarious Suffering Of The Saviour!**
- g. The Victorious Resurrection Of The Saviour!**
- h. The Visible (And Imminent) Return Of The Saviour!**

He urged them to **hold on to the truth they had and return to the truth they had left!**

He told them that if they failed to watch, He would be coming to them like a thief in the night! (*i.e. they'd be caught off guard!*)

I'm afraid that the **coming of the Lord** is going to catch many people in even the best of Churches today by surprise! Our time at the **Judgment Seat of Christ** is closer than we think!

So, do we have an ear Church? Are we listening?

THE STATE OF THE CHURCH 2022
REVELATION 2-3

Can we hear and understand what the **Lord Jesus Christ** said by **His Holy Spirit** unto the **Church at Sardis**?
Is some of the rebuke and exhortation to us also?

C. The Third Church At Laodicea. (Revelation 3:13-22)

Perhaps the **LORD'S** harshest rebuke was given to the **CHURCH** at **LAODICEA**.

1. The Production.

JESUS told them that their **WORKS** made **HIM** sick to **HIS** stomach like drinking lukewarm water.
Being cold would be like the unsaved - Clearly uninterested!

Being hot is: Being Excited; being Passionate about God and living His Word; Being hungry for things that are true, and right, and clean, and eternal!

Being lukewarm is:

- a. **Compromising** – not wanting to be controversial!
- b. **Ecumenical** –trying to get along with everybody – even the devil!
- c. **Apathetic** – not really caring about the things of Christ as they should!

2. The Problem.

- a. **They Were Self-Deceived. (Vs 17)**
“Because thou sayest...and knowest not.”
This Church thought they had arrived, they thought they had it all together and didn't need anyone or anything.
- b. **They Were Self-Absorbed. (Vs 17)**
“Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing...”

THE STATE OF THE CHURCH 2022
REVELATION 2-3

- c. **They Were Self-Sufficient. (Vs 17)**
“Because thou sayest, I...have need of nothing.”

3. The Pertinence.

How does this pertain to us? Again, do we have an ear Church? Are we listening? Can we hear and understand what the Lord Jesus Christ said by His Holy Spirit unto the Church at Laodicea?

How can we know if we are Lukewarm?

- a. **When our pursuit of goods and pleasure have overtaken the pursuit of God in our life!**
Matthew 6:33–“But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.”
- b. **When we are only concerned with the things of this world.**
Colossians 3:1-3–“If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. 2 Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. 3 For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.”
- c. **When we are more concerned with living the satisfied life than the crucified life.**
Matthew 10:37-39–“He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. 38 And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. 39 He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.”
- d. **We are more concerned with “fitting in” with the worldly crowd instead of staying in good with Jesus.**

**THE STATE OF THE CHURCH 2022
REVELATION 2-3**

1 John 2:15-17—“Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

16 For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.

17 And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.”

So, that’s WHAT JESUS SAW IN THE CHURCHES...

II. WHAT DOES JESUS SEE IN US?

Again, HE SEES IT ALL! The GOOD, The BAD, and, The UGLY!

If Central Baptist Church in Orange Park, Florida, received a letter from the Lord, what do you think it would say? Think about that!

What would He say about our Church in general and about our part in particular as being members of this Church?

You see in reality it doesn’t matter what you and I think or believe. What really matters is what the Lord KNOWS to be true!

A. Would There Be Words Of Commendation?

The Lord knows ALL the things that we HAVE or HAVE NOT done for Him through the years as well as what we ARE or ARE NOT doing NOW!

1. Our Stand For The Truth.

2. Our Support For World-Wide Missions.

B. Would There Be Words Of Criticism?

While I do believe there would be words of Commendation, I also believe there would be words of Criticism.

1. How Would He Address Our Love For Him?

Is our love for Him really fervent like it should be?

**THE STATE OF THE CHURCH 2022
REVELATION 2-3**

Or have we become like the Church at Ephesus and are settling for religious activities rather than an intimate personal love relationship with Christ?

2. How Would He Address Our Reality Before Him?

Is our worship real, or are we like the Church at Sardis, just going through the motions fooling ourselves into thinking what we are doing is acceptable before him?

3. How Would He Address Our Faithfulness To Him?

a. Faithfulness In Our Walk.

b. Faithfulness In Our Giving.

c. Faithfulness In Serving.

4. How Would He Address Our Temperature Before Him? Are we hot, cold, or lukewarm?

C. What Should We Do?

1. Be Real!

There is no room for us to be self-deceived, self-absorbed, and self-sufficient like the Laodiceans!

2. In The Things We Know The Lord Would Commend In Us:

a. Be Watchful!

b. Hold Fast!

c. Remain Faithful!

3. In The Things We Know The Lord Would Criticize In Us:

a. Remember From Where We’ve Fallen!

b. Repent!

c. Do The First Works Again!