

# "The Seven Church Harvest" #6

## Pentecost – 2000: Churches of Sardis & Philadelphia

Fred Coulter - May 28, 2000

I'll finish up a little bit here concerning Thyatira and concerning the things with that, then we'll move right on into Sardis. Let's read just a couple of things here again that we need to understand.

### The Abyss & the Depths of Satan:

Revelation 2:24: "But to you I say, and to *the* rest who *are* in Thyatira, as many as do not have this doctrine..."

That is the doctrine of Balaam through Jezebel, the doctrine of committing spiritual fornication, the doctrine of eating things sacrificed to idols.

"...and who have not known the depths of Satan..." (v 24)

—which means that there were some that went way beyond as we saw. The *depths of Satan* or the paternal depth, as we read from the book *Primitive Christianity in Crisis* by Alan Knight

"...as they speak; I will not cast upon you any other burden" (v 24).

We will see that Paul, even in the book of Romans was bringing out something that directly connects with the deep. Remember that the Gnostic teaching was, the secret teaching, it had to come as an emanating energy or angel to you and this would enlighten you. When we read Rom. 10 you're going to see that Paul is refuting that kind of thing along with the depth.

Romans 10:6: "But the righteousness *that comes* through faith speaks after this manner: 'Do not say in your heart, "Who shall ascend up to heaven?"'

(that is, to bring Christ down)."

That was the whole thing concerning Gnosticism. When you get into the philosophical religion of the pagan Greeks, what did they have? *They had the gods that went up into heaven to bring down to mankind!* This is a reference to the infiltration of this kind of thought into the Church, though this is quoted clear back in Deuteronomy.

Verse 7: "'Or, "Who shall descend into the abyss?"' ...."

The lord of darkness was the one who, when the sun set, would go into the abyss or the darkness to bring the sun back at sunrise the next day. What do we have about the abyss? We have a couple things concerning the abyss—don't we?

"...(that is, to bring Christ up from among *the* dead.)" (v 7).

That all ties in with the mythological thing of Isis, Osiris and Horus, the god of the dead, and you would have to be resurrected through Horus' powers.

Verse 8: "But what does it say? 'The Word is near to you, in your mouth and in your heart.' This is the Word of faith that we are proclaiming."

God has made this available for all human beings when you stop and consider the number of languages that the Bible has been translated into. It's pretty close to over 300 languages—the New Testament in about 1800 languages, and the Gospel of Mark into over 2000 languages. God has made it available in a language that's in your mouth and in your heart. It requires no special esoteric initiation or knowledge to get to it. It is available to you because you can think and you can read, and what has been preached has been preserved for us in His Word.

Let's talk a little bit about the abyss, the depths of Satan, the paternal depths.

Revelation 9:1: "And the fifth angel sounded *his* trumpet; and I saw a star *that* had fallen from heaven to the earth, and there was given to him the key to the bottomless abyss."

That's the same word in:

Romans 10:7: "Or, 'Who shall descend into the abyss?'...."

Well, He was already resurrected!

Revelation 9:2: "And he opened the bottomless abyss..."

What came out of the abyss? *Millions of demons, because there are demons in the abyss who are restrained and reserved for the last time!*

Verse 11 talks all about them, tells all about them down through v 10;

v 11: "And they have over them a king, the angel of the abyss; his name in Hebrew *is* Abaddon, but *the* name he has in Greek *is* Apollyon [Satan]."

He is the king of the abyss, or the paternal depths.

When people got into the deep things of Satan what they did was, they got into actual Satan-worship. What Christ is saying here in Rev. 2 is that He will have mercy upon those who did not get into the doctrine of spiritual fornication and eating things sacrificed to idols and did not get into the depths of Satan. This tells you that those three things can disqualify you from being in the Kingdom of Heaven or Kingdom of God, because if I say Kingdom of Heaven someone is going to say, 'Well, Fred Coulter is saying you are going to heaven.' I'm not saying that! That's what Matthew used to describe the Kingdom of God, which is the Kingdom of Heaven.

We also know from Rev. 20 that when Christ returns the very first thing that is going to happen after the Beast and False Prophet are killed:

Revelation 20:1: "Then I saw an angel descending from heaven, having the key of the abyss...

[there's an angel who's in charge of the abyss]

... and a great chain in his hand. And he took hold of the dragon, the ancient serpent, who is *the* Devil and Satan, and bound him *for* a thousand years. Then he cast him into the abyss, and locked him *up*, and sealed *the abyss* over him, so that he would not deceive the nations any longer until the thousand years were fulfilled; and after that it is ordained that he be loosed *for* a short time" (vs 1-3).

Any sermons I have on the Last Great Day, I go through and explain what that means.

### **Deep Things of God:**

Now then, let's look at the opposite of *the deep things* of Satan. Let's look at *the deep things of God*, because this is what we should desire. This is why vanity and carnality can never understand it.

1-Corinthians 2:9: "But according as it is written, '*The* eye has not seen, nor *the* ear heard, neither have entered into *the* heart of man, *the* things which God has prepared for those who love Him.'"

I might just interject here, in discussing the wedding feast and the guests and the bride and the groom, regardless of where we fit into that—and God is the One Who makes the decision anyway—we are going to have an inheritance so great and so marvelous that it can't even enter into our minds to fully comprehend it.

If you're not part of the bride but are a guest, don't feel slighted. I don't say that from the point of view that I necessarily think that I'm going to be part of the bride. I just want to be there in the first resurrection is what I want to be. Let God do all the deciding and be thankful for it.

If you love God, He's provided things that you cannot hear of, you cannot see of, and it doesn't enter into your mind because you love God. He's going to give you certain Scriptures which will give you an inkling of it and that's about all. Like Paul said, we view things through a glass darkly. Even this we view darkly.

Verse 10: "But God has revealed *them* to us by His Spirit, for the Spirit searches all things—even **the deep things of God.**"

What we need to understand here is this: ***God will reveal the deep things to us that are contained in His Word if we hunger for it, if we thirst for it!*** If we go to God with this attitude—and this is something we should continually pray about—God being so great, and

so marvelous, and His Word is so fantastic, and there are so many things put in there: 'line upon line and precept upon precept.'

Here's what David said; this was part of his prayer,

Psalm 119:18: "Open my eyes, so that I may behold wondrous things out of Your Law."

This is what we want out of God's Word, that we can behold wondrous things; we can understand it. We are living in the last generation before the return of Christ and we have *all* the Word of God. Think how much there is for us in the Word of God that we yet do not even understand.

Part of what we're going to cover today, I'm just going to have to tell you *I don't understand*. I do want to understand, but as of this point I don't understand. I hope to but God is going to have to reveal it, just like He says here, *by His Spirit*. Here's how we know that it's not by might nor by power but by God's Spirit. Therefore, we can say to understand these things:

- it's not by intellectual genius
- it's not by brain power
- it's not by cloistering yourself off in a monastery and all you do is pour over the Word of God

***No! It's revealed by His Spirit!***

1-Corinthians 2:11: "For who among men understands the things of man except *by* the spirit of man which *is* in him? In the same way also, the things of God no one understands except *by* the Spirit of God."

That's how we're going to understand these things. But we have to have that open, willing, yielded attitude to God, but at the same time have our guard set firm that we do not get involved in false doctrines and wrong thoughts and self-exaltation and vanity and things like that.

Now let's come back to Rev. 2 and see something else which right here in the middle of the seven churches, Thyatira is church #4, of which the Seventh Day Adventists allude to it in the DVD *Israel of the Alps*, that they are somehow connected with them. However, most Seventh Day Adventists today proclaim themselves to be Laodiceans. So, whether they are Thyatira or Laodicea I don't know, But the Seventh Day Adventists services I attended when our kids would graduate from the class, when we sent them to Seventh Day Adventist school, the services are just a bore. I'm sort of debating in my mind, are they even part of Sardis? I don't know.

Here's the thing, though we have the seven churches, doesn't all of this tell us that we should not judge who belongs in what category. Let God do the judging. It's all we can do to judge ourselves with the Word of God. If we find ourselves in any of the spiritual conditions of the churches where they are told to repent, *then let us be busy about repenting* instead of trying to categorize everyone and try and figure out in our minds who belongs where. Ultimately

God is going to make the decision. It's the same way with the place of safety. Everyone wants to go there. But if everyone got there, we would say, 'who's going to be in charge?'

Revelation 2:23: "And I will kill her children with death..."

These are all of the children of the spiritual fornication with Jezebel. How many that is, I do not know.

Here's a warning for all the churches right in the middle of the whole sequence of explaining about the seven churches.

"...and all the churches shall know..." (v 23).

This message, when you go through and read it, says over and over again, 'He that has an ear let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches...' which then tells us also that Christ is the One Who is doing the judging, and in particular we will find that out right here:

"...all the churches shall know that I am He Who searches *the* reins and hearts; and I will give to each of you according to your works" (v 23).

This means something very special here brethren, according to the reins that He searches the hearts. "...searches *the* reigns and the hearts..." Let's look at a couple of Scriptures in the Psalms and see how that works.

Psalms 7:8: "The LORD shall judge the people..."

There we go. Is that not judgment back there in Rev. 2:23? *Yes!*

"...judge me, O LORD, according to my righteousness, and according to my integrity within me" (v 8).

Which then is not his own really, but the righteousness that comes from God, and in particular for us who are under the New Covenant. The righteousness of Christ is imputed to us as a gift to inspire us to want to draw closer to God, not to give us license to sin. But you think of what a tremendous gift that is, that God imputes the righteousness of Christ to each one of us. Just think what an absolute sinful thing it would be to take that and turn that around and use it for license to sin. As Paul said, 'God forbid, or may it never be.'

Verse 9: "O let the evil of the wicked come to an end, but establish the righteous..."

Is this a prophecy toward the end-time? *Could very well be!* Who is the wicked one? *Satan the devil!* And the wickedness of the wicked come to an end—all the wicked.

"...for the righteous God tries the hearts and reins" (v 9).

That's why it's important that we have the heart of David and the *mind of Christ*. That's what God is trying. Here again we find in this particular case, though those in the first resurrection will constitute a group, there is no salvation by group because you belong to it. There is salvation individually because

- God has called you individually
- you grow in grace and knowledge individually
- God tries your heart and reins individually
- judges you upon your attitude and your conduct individually

But when the resurrection comes then we will be part of the group in the first resurrection. However, if you are in a particular organization, that does not guarantee salvation, nor does it guarantee you're going to go to a place of safety. It just means that you're affiliating with that organization at this particular time.

Psalm 16:7: "I will bless the LORD Who has given me counsel; my heart also instructs me in the nights."

So, your reins have to do with your thoughts, your mind and your attitude, coupled with God's Spirit. Since God's Spirit is in you God can know at any time what your thoughts, your heart, your mind and your attitude is. This is what it means that 'I try the reins and the heart to give to every man according as his work shall be.' Notice the attitude here of David, but also this blends right on in to the attitude of Christ:

Verse 8: "I have set the LORD always before me. Because He is at my right hand, I shall not be moved. Therefore, My heart is glad, and My glory rejoices; My flesh also shall rest in safety...."

[this right here is a direct prophecy of Christ]:

...for You will not abandon My soul to the grave; neither will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption....

[Then it goes right on into the resurrection]:

... You will make known to Me the path of life; in Your presence is fullness of joy. At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore"(vs 8-11).

That's what all of this trying the hearts and the reins is all about. Qualifying for the resurrection, it's the Father Who makes us qualified.

Psalm 26:1: "Judge me, O LORD, for I have walked in my integrity..."

God is always judging us. We need to be careful in it that when we ask God to judge us that we be sure and have repentance first. That's very important.

"...I have trusted also in the LORD without wavering. Examine me, O LORD, and prove me; try my reins and my heart" (vs 1-2)

—which God is constantly doing all the time. That's very important.

That's why I keep stressing, and have stressed over and over again, that ***God's way is a way of life! We walk in the way of the Lord!*** And we do so because *it's a way of life*. It's not

something we do on Sabbath, or something that we do on the Holy Days, but it's something that *runs through everything that we do in our life* all day long.

I know what it's like working out in the world. When I was doing real estate loans I had to plow back and forth, and up and down the roads, and in and out of real estate offices and interviewing people. I tell you when you first start out doing loans and you walk into real estate offices they can spot you just like that! Those real estate agents are used to that. Here you come with your little rate sheet in hand, and if you have been out there canvassing, and you are really striving to get a loan because you know your funds are really low, and you don't have much money and you only make it on commission, and you walk in the door and you have that hungry look. You can spot it. So, the real estate agents are very nice but they always have the test, which is this: they give you the crummiest loans possible. And if you can qualify these unqualified people and get them the loan, then they will start doing business with you.

But nevertheless, I had to learn the situation where all of you do in your work. When you go out in the world and are working, it takes effort to keep your mind on God's way. You have to take special time during the day, maybe five minutes here or ten minutes there, to be thinking on God's way and praying mentally and so forth. I did most of that as I was driving to and fro from place to place.

God will examine us and God will prove us, and try our reins and our hearts. That way then God is directly involved in our lives. It's not that Christ is way up there, which He is, in heaven, but through the power of His Holy Spirit in trying our reins and heart and examining us and with Christ in us then He is right here.

It's the same way when we gather together to study God's Word. We ask the blessing of God on what we study so that we understand His Word. God is the One Who can do that. If we're not in a right attitude then we end up like Mal. 2 where, because of sin, God says He's going to 'spread the dung of the feast upon the face of Levites.' We've sat in Holy Day services like that, too—haven't we? *Yes!* Here's the opposite of it.

Let's come back and finish up Thyatira of Revelation 2:25.

"but hold fast what you have..."

In other words, even the things that you have though they may not be perfect, you hold fast what you have.

"...till I come" (v 25).

Is this an indication that this church is going to be in existence when Christ returns? *Possibly!* But the Lord can come upon us at any time—can He not? We cannot necessarily say that it's just at the second return, though I would say that's what it means more than anything else.

Verse 26: "And to the one who overcomes, and keeps My works unto *the* end..."

There are two ends: your life and the return of Christ.



"...I will give authority over the nations; and he shall shepherd them with an iron rod, as vessels of pottery are broken in pieces; as I have also received from My Father; and I will give him the morning star....

[that is a type of the glory that you will have as a spirit being]

...The one who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches" (vs 26-29).

- **Church at Sardis:**

Revelation 3:1: "And to the angel of the Church in Sardis, write: "These things says He Who has the seven spirits of God..."

These are the seven spirits that go to and fro in the earth that keeps God in communication with what's going on.

Right here in this motel that I was staying in they had a little monitor section with four little screens on a big TV that monitored the front door, the back door, the side door and the gate that goes in and out. It's operated by an automatic lift that you have your little key card that you put in there to open it. So, you can be out there, like it happened to me, and my card didn't work to let me out, so I pushed the button and the clerk in there looked on the monitor, pushed the button, the arm raised and I got out of there.

Well, God has the same procedure with these seven spirits. They are constantly going to and fro in the earth, kind of like roving television eyes. They inform God as to what is going on. What He is saying here is that He knows exactly what's going on all the time.

"...and the seven stars. I know your works, *and* that you have a name as if you are alive, but are dead. Be watchful, and strengthen the things that remain, which are about to die....

[this is a pitiful case]

...For I have not found your works complete before God" (vs 1-2).

They have incomplete works.

Verse 3: "Therefore, remember what you have received and heard, and hold on *to this*, and repent. Now then, if you will not watch, I will come upon you as a thief, and you shall by no means know what hour I will come upon you. You have a few names even in Sardis who have not defiled their garments, and they shall walk with Me in white because they are worthy. The one who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments; and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life, but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels" (vs 3-5).



I tell you, that's really something— isn't it? This is a pitiful, *pitiful*, **pitiful** condition! I would have to say that I do agree that the Church of God 7th Day, in the main, does fit this description. However, I've seen an awful lot within other Churches of God who fit this description, so lest we label an organization, let's be fair and say that this can happen to anyone anywhere.

But look at it. They are in such a bad condition that He says: "...I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life...." Which means if they don't repent then He's going to blot the name out of the Book of Life. This thing of 'once saved, always saved,' is not true. The condition is not with God, because He's perfect. The condition resides *with us* because we are imperfect.

Here they came to the point that they had a name but they were dead. I've referred to this at times as a corpse with a pulse. Kind of like a body on life support. You can actually have someone who is brain dead, but keep them alive on life support. They do this to harvest the organs to sell. Did you know that they have bidding wars on hearts, lungs and livers, and all this sort of thing?

Verse 4. "You have a few names even in Sardis who have not defiled their garments..."

What does it mean to defile? What are the garments? *The white linen is the righteousness of the saints* (Rev. 19)! So, if you defile the garments *you are defiling the righteousness of God*, which means that they are so sloppy in their commandment keeping that it's all they can do to keep the remembrance of God in their lives. Otherwise, how could He say that they are dead?

Now let's see another category of Christians, which I have covered before but now is the time to read it in the record. I want us to understand in this that God gives us choices, and our choices are very important. God gives us free independent moral agency *to choose*. How we choose and how we work in relationship to those choices then builds our spiritual character with Christ in us. Sardisites are in such a condition that Christ is telling them, 'If you don't strengthen up just a few little things that remain, I'm going to have to blot your name out of the Book of Life.' In other words, they will become spiritually dead forever.

I Corinthians 3:11: "For no one is able to lay any other foundation besides that which has been laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now, if anyone builds upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay *or* stubble" (vs 11-12).

Here's a very good example that you cannot have a complete carryover, because in Rev. 2 & 3 there are seven churches. But here in 1-Cor. 3:11 there are only 6 categories. Which means that you can't go pick out these six and apply them to the seven. You would have to have seven categories and then maybe you could do it. But gold, silver, precious stone; wood, hay, or stubble; we'll concentrate on the wood, hay, or stubble here because those are problematic.

Verse 13: "The work of each one shall be manifested; for the day of *trial* will declare *it...*"

This *day* that declares it is the day of trial, not necessarily at the resurrection, because the resurrection is going to be the finality of it.

But as we saw with Thyatira, God is judging continuously, 'because it shall be revealed by fire...' And 1-Pet. 4:12 says it's the fiery trial that comes upon us:

- How many here have had fiery trials? *Every one of us!*
- How many have failed their fiery trials?
- How many have recovered from it?

If you fail temporarily, that's getting rid of the dross out of the gold, silver and precious stones. You may be geologically ugly on the outside as a precious stone. I say that because when I was up in Idaho we had someone in the Church who had a ranch and it went back up on the hills behind, and it was actually volcanic stone underneath. There were these rocks that spewed out—I don't know what they call them—I think they look like moon rocks, but they're like anywhere from the size of just a little stone to the size of an ostrich egg, and you cut them. On the outside they are ugly, and they have deep pot marks in it from the volcanic action. But you cut them and you open them up and there are beautiful crystals inside, because *the heat refines* the stone, *the heat refines* the silver and *the heat refines* the gold. So if you've been through fiery trial, and you've made it through and you figured that you had failed, but God lifted you up out of it; what He did, ***He purged away some of the dross.*** With the heat—with the precious stone—***He has created greater inner character,*** just like those rocks that came out of the volcano.

"...because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall prove what kind of work each one's is. If the work that anyone has built endures, he shall receive a reward. If the work of anyone is burned up, he shall suffer loss; but *he* himself shall be saved, yet, as through fire" (vs 13-15).

This comes the closest to describing the Sardisites—doesn't it? Those in Sardis who make it into the Kingdom of God, just make it to be saved.

Verse 16: "Don't you understand that you are God's temple, and *that* the Spirit of God is dwelling in you? If anyone defiles the temple of God, God shall destroy him..." (vs 16-17).

Doesn't that sound very close to the Sardisites? *That you have a few which have not defiled their garments*, which is telling us that *most of them* have defiled their garments, or they have defiled the Holy Spirit within their bodies because they are not clothed with the righteousness of Christ. Or they've taken the righteousness of Christ, which is even worse, and they have defiled it.

Now one of the defilements that you find in the Old Testament is because you have touched a dead body. So all of the analogies there concerning Sardis are really something. They undoubtedly have to be the worst Church of any of the seven. At least the others, they could repent and still retain something. Remember what He said to Thyatira, 'I will give you the

morning star.' They have glory! But here it's told of the Sardisites, 'You have a few who have not defiled your garments.' They're just going to make it by 'the skin of the garment.'

"...because the temple of God is Holy, which temple you are. Let no one deceive himself. If anyone among you thinks *himself* to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, so that he may be wise *in God's sight*. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God for it is written, 'He entraps the wise in their own craftiness.' And again, '*The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain*'" (vs 17-20).

That ties right in with what I said about all those who are seeking some great religious office, see. That's all vanity, and God is going to turn it into foolishness.

Verse 21: "Therefore, do not let anyone boast in men; for all things are yours."

Now let's look at some more concerning defilement. It's one thing to commit adultery and fornication as Pergamos and Thyatira did; it's another thing to get into the *depths of Satan*, which Thyatira did. It is still bad enough. Ephesus lost their first love, and it's terrible to be a Laodicean that you are lukewarm and claim to God you have need of nothing. But the worst case is the Sardisites who are nearly dead and have defiled the little bit that they had.

This may help us understand a little more of defiling, Ezekiel 36:16:

"And the Word of the LORD came to me, saying, 'Son of man, when the house of Israel dwelt in their own land, they defiled it by their own ways and by their doings...'"

How do you defile the garments of Christ? *By doing your own thing!* Obviously then, leaving Christ out of it because it's not a live work, it's a dead work.

"...even as the uncleanness of a woman's impurity was their way before Me" (vs 16-17).

You can't defile a garment personally any more than that. I mean, that's descriptive enough in itself.

Verse 18: "Therefore, I poured My fury upon them because of the blood that they had shed upon the land, and for their idols *by which* they defiled it."

When there is defilement, God is going to punish.

Let's see what else defiles. We saw that defiling is doing your own way and doing your own thing by ignoring God's way. When God has called you and put you in His way, when you go do your own thing then you're walking out of the way of the Lord. If you have been clothed with the righteousness of Christ then you are defiling those garments.

Mark 7 is talking about the defilement of eating with unwashed hands. Let me just interject right here, this has nothing to do with clean or unclean meats. This has to do with eating clean food though you have dirty hands and you get a speck of dirt on it and you eat it, it is

not going to defile you spiritually. The intestines will take care of it and it will purge it out into the draught, which is the sewer.

Mark 7:20: "And He said, 'That which springs forth from *within* a man, that defiles the man....

[spiritual defilement]

...For from within, out of the hearts of men..." (vs 20-21).

Isn't it interesting that concerning Thyatira Christ talks about judging the hearts and the reins, and then He says to Sardis that 'you have defiled your garments.' Then He shows what defiles them. So, the Sardisites are polluting their garments by their own thoughts and their own ways.

"...out of the hearts of men, go forth evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickednesses, guile, licentiousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness; all these evils go forth from within, and *these* defile a man" (vs 21-23).

We are not necessarily told that Sardis is in this particular condition of doing these grievous sins, but they are just so dead that what they are doing is like a walking corpse.

If you're dead, you have no life in you, which means the Holy Spirit is barely dwelling.

Proverbs 21:16: "The man who wanders out of the way of understanding..."

If you do your own thing and do your own ways, you're *wandering out of the way of understanding*, which then is the way of the Lord—is it not?

Notice what happens.

"...shall remain in the congregation of the dead" (v 16)

—and Sardis is the congregation of the dead.

Proverbs 15:10: "There *is* grievous correction for him who forsakes the way; he who hates reproof shall die."

That's why Christ told them, 'Look, the minimum you have to do is strengthen the few things that are left and I won't blot your name out of the Book of Life.' They are right on the verge of committing the unpardonable sin.

Matthew 25:1: "Then shall the Kingdom of Heaven be compared *to* ten virgins, who took their lamps *and* went out to meet the bridegroom"

There have been many, many interpretations of it, which is half of the Church will go to a place of safety, and half of the church will go into the Tribulation. It's not talking about that.

Verse 2: "And five of them were wise, and five *were* foolish."

Could we not say that those in Sardis were foolish? *Yes!*

Verse 3: "The ones who were foolish took their lamps, *but* they did not take oil with them....

[they thought they could just live on the little bit that they had]

...Took oil in their vessels *along* with their lamps" (vs 3-4).

The lamps were actually like little shallow seashells with a little V-lip to pour on one side. And you would put the oil in there and then you had a wick that would come out on the side. You would light the wick and then it would draw the oil out of this little reservoir in this little dish-like seashell thing. Obviously, it couldn't burn very brightly, and it couldn't burn very long, either. So, you had to have extra oil, and it's very obvious because you have just this little reservoir of oil in it. We can liken it unto the Holy Spirit and the light can be likened unto the Word of God; the lamp that lights my way. All of those other Scriptures are valid, and you can put them there. It's really foolish to expect it to last very long if that's all you have. This is what's it talking about here.

Verse 5: "Now, when the bridegroom was gone a long time, they all became drowsy and slept."

Showing that they all had their problems and their difficulties.

Verse 6: "But in *the* middle of *the* night there was a cry: 'Look, the bridegroom is coming! Go out to meet him.' Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps 'Give us *some* of your oil, because our lamps are going out.' But the wise answered, saying, '*No*, lest *there* not *be* enough for us and *for* you. But instead, go to those who sell, and buy for yourselves'" (vs 6-9).

Now, we have to come to Christ to buy without money;

'all you that thirst come, receive water and food without price' (Isa. 55).

Another thing is true: Whatever spiritual knowledge and understanding you have is of God's Spirit, which the oil is likened too, and the flame that is burning is your light because we're told to let our lights shine. That is then the Spirit of God working in you producing something likened unto the lamp that is burning. You cannot give to someone else of your Spirit that you have up here in your mind. *You cannot!*

When I go out and visit and I meet someone for the first time, I hear this over and over again: 'I have learned more,'—in whatever time they've been receiving the sermons and the Care Packages and so forth—'than I've ever learned in the years I've been in the Church.' This is why we send the Care Packages, because there's still time to buy. We send it free, and say, 'Here, this is a sample of what you have missed all these yon many years.' Some people are very overwhelmed when they first get the Care Package because there's a lot in it.

This is the one that I don't quite understand. I've heard many interpretations of it. I've heard many things given concerning it,

v 10: "While they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding feast, and the door was shut."

This tells us that only certain ones are going to be with the marriage, which ties in with Pentecost.

This is the thing that I don't understand. Let's see if we can understand it this time,

v 11: "And afterwards the other virgins also came, saying, 'Lord, Lord, open to us' But He answered *and* said, 'Truly I say to you, I do not know you.' Watch, Therefore, for you do not know the day nor the hour in which the Son of man is coming" (vs 11-13).

This is a little different than v 30:

"And cast the worthless servant into the outer darkness.' There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

These were cast into the Lake of Fire, the unprofitable servant. It says over here, the door was shut. It doesn't say that they are cut off from salvation, they are cut off from the marriage. It doesn't say that they committed fornication or adultery, they were five foolish virgins.

Is this telling us that Christ isn't going to marry foolishness? For those who are not zealous? He says, 'I don't know you.' Does it mean that He is casting them off forever? *I don't think so*, but I think He does not know them to be qualified to be the bride. Obviously they're not cut off from salvation, because it doesn't say that there's 'weeping and gnashing of teeth.' It just says that they are excluded from the wedding.

I think in just discussing it this way I have a little better understanding of it than I had before. It does not say that they have lost salvation. It says that they've lost out on the marriage.

Verse 13: "Watch, Therefore, for you do not know the day nor the hour in which the Son of man is coming."

Now, the next one talks about giving talents to different ones. He gave five talents to one, two talents to another; they both doubled them. Let's read the reward that they have:

Verse 21: "And his lord said to him, 'Well *done*, good and faithful servant! *Because* you were faithful over a few things, I will set you over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.'"

That's the one who received the five talents and doubled them. Here they received salvation, plus responsibility but they're not married to Christ—are they? *No!*

Remember, in Rev. 14, those that marry Christ—the 144,000—go with Him wherever He is. If these people are given responsibility over five cities or over two cities, then they are not

with Christ but they are working under Him—are they not? *Yes!* Same way with the one who received the two.

Now we come to the one who is dead, v 24:

"Then the one who had received the single talent also came to *him and* said, 'Lord, I knew that you are a hard man...'"

This is part of defiling your garments if you're accusing God of things, which He's not.

"...reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you did not scatter" (v 24).

Not realizing that the Holy Spirit would give the ability to reap where you have not sown and give you the ability to scatter where it has not been scattered.

Verse 25: "'And *because* I was afraid, I went and hid your talent in the earth. *Now* look, you have your own.' His lord answered *and* said to him, '*You* wicked and lazy servant! You knew that I reap where I did not sow, and gather what I did not scatter'" (vs 25-26).

See how different that is from the ten virgins. Just the door is shut. Here, wicked and slothful servant. The other ones, the foolish were just negligent.

Verse 27: "'Therefore, take the talent from him, and give *it* to the one who has ten talents. For to everyone who has, *more* shall be given, and *he* shall have abundance; on the other hand, *as for* the one who does not have, even that which he has shall be taken from him. And cast the worthless servant into the outer darkness.' There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (vs 27-30).

This sounds an awful lot like Sardis—doesn't it? *Yes it does!* You just have a few things and you need to take care of the few things. You only have a few in Sardis. This is the first time I've ever done a real in-depth analysis of Sardis.

Let's see something very similar. This follows right along the line with it. But suffice to say that the warning that Christ gives to Sardis is very similar to the warning that is given in the parable of the one who received the one talent. And the one talent is not receiving very much. The Sardisites are told that you have the few things; strengthen the few things that remain.

Luke 12:47: "And that servant who knew the will of his lord, but did not prepare...

[which the Sardisites didn't, the five virgins didn't, the unprofitable servant didn't]

...nor did according to his will, shall be beaten with many *stripes*"

—which can also show a variation in judgment depending on the individuals circumstances and attitudes, and so forth.

Verse 48: "But the one who did not know, and did *things* worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few. For to whomever much has been given, from him shall much be



required; and to whom much has been committed, from him they will demand the more"

Sardis was not in that group, unfortunately.

Now, let's finish Sardis here by giving the admonition of the Apostle Paul. There is still hope. If anyone is spiritually dead but they have just a little spark left, there is still hope if they can be stirred up by Christ and strengthen the things which remain. I think this fits the Sardisites just as well:

Ephesians 5:11: "And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness..."

If they have their works which were dead, are they unfruitful works? *Yes!* Unfruitful works of the self, then which is darkness just like the five virgins the lamps were going out.

"...but rather expose *them*; for it is shameful even to mention the things being done by them in secret. But all of these things being exposed by the light are openly revealed." (vs 11-13).

Christ is the Light, and the Holy Spirit is the Light.

Verse 14: "Therefore, He says ...

[and we can put in to the Sardisites]

...'You who are sleeping—wake up...'

Kind of applies to the five foolish virgins too—doesn't it?

"...and arise from the dead! And Christ shall shine upon you.' So then, take heed that you walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as those who are wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil" (vs 14-16).

For the Sardisites, he better redeem the time because the evil days are coming and he doesn't have much time because he is nearly dead, and he's ready to have his name blotted out of the Book of Life. So, that takes care of Sardis. As I said, I've never gone through and studied Sardis in depth before, and we've always done what we always did. We have said, 'That's got to be the Church of God 7th Day.' Well, maybe that applies to a lot of them, but maybe some of the people we knew in Worldwide Church of God are in the condition of dying and could apply to them, by doing their own way and doing their own thing. Just like we discuss wherever we go: Where did they all go? *Thousands!*

I'm glad God is the Judge and knows the heart. We don't know how many are at home, maybe even some we don't even know of, who maybe have moved and we don't know where they are. Maybe they're faithfully keeping the Sabbath, maybe they're just doing things on their own. Maybe there is hope for them.

You know if we can come in with some of the things that we can do, kind of like the paramedics when they come up upon someone who's ready to die? *They can give them mouth-to-mouth resuscitation!* They can give them heart thumps. They can get these electrodes and zap them and their heart gets going again. Or they can give them, in rare extreme cases, a shot of adrenaline right directly in the heart muscle and it will start beating again. Maybe there are some out there in that condition. If we can help them, that'd be something we need to pray about, that they would have just enough life maybe to ask for some help and we can help them. That would be something if we could do that.

- **Church at Philadelphia:**

This is the Church that everyone wants to be. Why? *Because it is the Church that is the purest of all!* How many churches have said that they are the Philadelphians? We even have one Church of God labeled the Philadelphian Church of God, but it's anything but that!

Let's not look for ourselves in the Bible and say that we are Philadelphians. But let's look at the lesson of the Philadelphians and see if we can conform our lives to that. If we happen to fall into any of the other categories, looking to what Philadelphia has done and is doing, that is a pattern for all of the rest to follow in their repentance. All the rest are told to repent except Smyrna and Philadelphia. So let's look at that.

Revelation 3:7: "And to the angel of the Church in Philadelphia, write: 'These things says the Holy One, the One Who *is* true; the One Who has the key of David, Who opens and no one shuts, and Who shuts and no one opens.'"

- Who is this? *Christ!*
- What does this tell us? *He's fully in charge!*
- What does this also tell us about the Philadelphians? *They are looking to Christ always!*

Understand that He is the One. {Note sermons on *Key of David*} and the key of David is actually the understanding or the heart of David, if we could put it that way. And also the tabernacle of David, which is referred to as the Church by James in Acts 15.

Verse 8, "I know your works...."

It's a little different than the other ones:

- I have a few things against you.
- I have somewhat against you.
- Your works are not perfect.

Here it says,

v 8: "I know your works. Behold, I have set before you an open door..."

And we know that means a means of preaching the Gospel. But also an open door can mean *understanding the Scriptures*, too. Open my eyes that I may see wondrous things out of Your Law.' God reveals them by His Spirit. So, it can mean that, as well.

"...and no one has the power to shut it because you have a little strength, and have kept My word, and have not denied My name, Behold, I will make those of the synagogue of Satan, who proclaim themselves to be Jews and are not, but do lie..." (vs 8-9).

They are confronted with exactly the same system that Smyrna was, the synagogue of Satan. In this case with the Philadelphians, they are not martyred like the Smyrneans. So the confrontation is a little different.

"...—behold, I will cause them to come and worship before your feet, and to know that I have loved you" (vs 9).

There are some people who say that that doesn't mean worship; that means only homage. But if you are as Christ is in the resurrection, then God is going to make them come and worship before you. That's not to take away worship from God the Father or Christ. But that is to acknowledge that those of the synagogue of Satan who sought to set up Satan's system, which we're in confrontation with today, they did not have their mission from God.

But those who were faithful to God in this way, which also means that the Philadelphians did not take upon themselves to try and politically correct the synagogue of Satan's system in the world. That's why so many people who are getting involved in these things, and the sovereignist movement, and all of those things, they are trying to change it by physical means. We understand you cannot change it by physical means, or political means, **but only by the Spirit of God and Christ is the only One to do that**, so rather than be unfaithful to Christ to go out and do His work to try and change it, we remain faithful to Christ and always keep His Word.

This is the blessing everyone wants,

v 10: "Because you have kept the word of My patience, I also will keep you from the time of temptation which *is* about to come upon the whole world to try those who dwell on the earth."

A lot of people think this is the Tribulation. This is not! I have a sermon that I did on it quite a while ago, went through the Greek and showed it's different than Tribulation, which I will not do at this point; I will just summarize it.

"...upon the whole world to try those who dwell on the earth."

What is that temptation? *Worshipping the image of the Beast and receiving the mark of the Beast!* That temptation is going to come upon us before there is any fleeing to a place of safety. The misinterpretation of this has caused people to think, 'Boy, if I'm a Philadelphian and I call myself a Philadelphian I'm going to escape the Tribulation.'

We'll talk a little bit about escaping the Tribulation, but suffice to say that—I've also given some things concerning the place of safety—there will be a place of safety. But just please understand this, ***even if it is Petra***—all of the foolish of men trying to go over there and buy shares in a motel so that they'll have a comfortable place to stay, or go over there and help clean out the caves so they won't have to live in centuries of dung, all of that sort of thing—***none of that's going to work because the angels of God are going to be those who will take you to a place of safety***, just like Lot was taken out of Sodom.

Suffice to say, if you know where the place of safety is and you don't get there did the knowledge do you any good? *No!* If you don't know where it is and you get there you will find out where it is when you arrive. Which means that ***in order to go to a place of safety it's a matter of faith and trust in God!*** And if you don't go you're still Christ's. You have a different mission to fulfill, and maybe that is to give your life as a witness against this world's system.

- Did Christ die as a martyr? *Yes!*
- Did the apostles die as martyrs, except John? *Yes!*

They tried to martyr him by throwing him in boiling oil, but he didn't burn. Apparently an angel just booted him right out of the boiling oil cauldron. Can you imagine the executioner standing there watching this happen? So again, let's not take judgment into our hands, which alone comes from God.

But in the book of Revelation we need to understand something very important, like where in it says here,

"...keep you from the time of temptation which *is* about to come upon the **whole** world..." (v 10).

That's why we are living in the age of globalization.

Watch your televisions and you watch how many things there are concerning globalization: in economics, in education, and in religion. It's everywhere! When it says 'all the world' it means that!

"...to try those who dwell on the earth.." (v 10).

Is there any restriction to that? *None!* That's the whole world.

Verse 11. "Behold, I am coming quickly; hold fast that which you have so that no one may take away your crown."

We lived in a time when there were a lot of people doing 'crown stealing'—right? *Yes!* And it's a man! Don't let *any man*. And who would be a man who would come and steal your crown? *A false prophet who appears to be a true prophet!* And people have gone after them—haven't they? *We all need to be like the Bereans!* 'Search the Scriptures whether these things may be so or not.'

If it sounds phony, it probably is. We need to just label a lot of those men that are going around doing this as vanity-filled false prophets who are ravening wolves within, coming around in sheep's clothing so they can steal crowns. That's the attitude that we need to take toward them. Now granted, that is not very ecumenical, but ***we are called to be separate. Come out from among them and be you separate and touch not the unclean!***

Verse 12: "The one who overcomes will I make a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall not go out any more; and I will write upon him the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God, the new Jerusalem, which will come down out of heaven from My God; and *I will write upon him* My new name. The one who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches" (vs 12-13).

Let's go back and let's focus in on the thing concerning *a little strength* because this is very important. You can liken that to a little strength *physically* because obviously spiritually they have a lot of strength—don't they? Also, *little strength* means that you don't have political power, you don't have notoriety in the world; ***your strength comes from God!***

2-Corinthians 12 tells us if they have a little strength and are succeeding what is it that they are relying upon for their strength?

2-Corinthians 12:7: "But in order that I might not be exalted by the abundance of the revelations, *there* was given to me a thorn in the flesh, **an angel** of Satan to buffet me..."

This is not a disease. this is an 'angelos.'

God said, 'All right, I'm going to make sure you stay humble,' because he's going to be afflicted by this demon from time to time, which would come around and cause him great distress. How many of the Jews were stirred up wherever Paul went, and so forth. This is all part of that.

"...to buffet me, so that I might not be exalted. I besought the Lord three times for this, that it might depart from me; but He said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you...' (vs 7-9).

What happens when you have trials come upon you and you see all your weaknesses? *You turn to God!* But if you have a lot of strength and have a lot of notoriety, and if you're a great personality and you're all these great *physical* things the last thing you're going to do is go to God. ***If you're weak the first thing you're going to do is go to God because you know His strength is in Him and not in you!***

Verse 9: "But He said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you..."

[which shows that the Philadelphians are relying on the grace of God continually]

... for My power is made perfect in weakness' ...."

Even John the Baptist said to the Sadducees and Pharisees, 'Don't say we've got Abraham for our Father, because God is able to raise up unto Abraham children of these stones.'

So, when you're weak then ***the power of Christ in you can make you strong*** through the grace. That's what it's talking about, and the Philadelphians have to be strong. Otherwise, how can they resist the synagogue of Satan? It's a spiritual battle.

"...Therefore, most gladly will I boast in my weaknesses that the power of Christ may dwell in me" (vs 9).

Let's look at our calling; *the Philadelphians understand their calling*. Whereas, perhaps maybe the Laodiceans in their own smugness pretty well think, 'Well, I'm so good God had to call me.; There's a vast difference in attitude here!

Verse 26: "For you see your calling, brethren, that *there are* not many who are wise according to the flesh, not many who are powerful, not many who are highborn *among you*."

Why? *Because God takes the things that are nothing in the eyes of the world and makes something out of them through His Spirit!* That's why God called Abraham at 75-years-old and put him through 25 years of trials before Isaac was born for him to understand that it's not by flesh, it's not by power, it's not by physical things, '*but by My Spirit*.' By the time Isaac was conceived Sarah and Abraham both understood that.

Here's what God has called. This is why, brethren, we have so much trouble in the Church; I mean trouble with each other; that's not doctrinal problems.

Verse 27: "Rather, God has chosen the foolish things of the world, so that He might put to shame those who are wise; and God has chosen the weak things of the world so that He might put to shame the strong things. And the lowborn of the world, and the despised has God chosen—*even* the things that are counted as nothing—in order that He might bring to nothing the things that are" (vs 27-28).

So, lots of times when our carnality comes out in it's grandest glorious weakest form, and we offend because we are foolish, or we offend because we are weak, or we cross each other's paths in a way because we are stumbling around without the guidance of the Spirit that we really need, we can cause problems within the Church.

But with the love of God and the Spirit of God we can overcome that and have brotherly love, which is what Philadelphia means. If we understand our calling, that God is going to do something great.

But can you imagine when Christ says, 'Hmm, Prince Philip, Prince Charles...'—and Prince Charles may be King Charles by that time—'...I want you to come before these people and bow down and worship them.' *But Lord, these were the nothing and the off scouring of those that we destined to death. And we wanted nothing to do with them but merchandise them, and take from them, and deceive them.*

God is going to say, 'You either bow and worship or I'm going to break your legs.' Now you think of that! Because of that, let's not get all lifted up. But God has *called us*. We are nothing! God is the One Who gives us the strength. We rely on

- His strength
- His way
- His ability

more than anything else!

All Scriptures from *The Holy Bible in Its Original Order, A Faithful Version* by Fred R. Coulter

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