

Understanding Revelation – Topic 6

Blind and naked but feeling fine!

**Laodicea -
the lukewarm church**

An exposition of Revelation Chapter 3:14-22

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Background

And to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write...

The meaning of Laodicea

The word *Laodicea* is composed of two words: *Laos*: meaning 'people' and *Dikaios*: meaning 'righteous', 'right', or 'lawful'.

Laodicea therefore means *the righteous people, the judged people* or *the justified people*.

According to the seventh and eighth chapters of Daniel the judging of God's people transpires prior to the Second Advent and commenced in 1844. This is a pre-advent judgment or, as it is often termed, *the investigative judgment*.¹ It would then seem reasonable to conclude, given that Laodicea is the final church representing the seven periods of the Christian faith that the period which involves Laodicea extends from 1844 until the Second Advent of Christ. This means that Laodicea should be associated with what Scripture describes as *the remnant* (Revelation 12:17): the community of saints, such as it may be by that point, at the End Time.

The term Laodicea also means *a just or righteous people*. This could apply very accurately to the final product of Laodicea² - a people ready for translation at the Second Advent of Christ.

The significance of Christ's titles

...These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God: v14

The Amen

This title is borrowed from the Old Testament prophet Isaiah.

So that he who blesses himself in the earth shall bless himself in the God of truth... Isaiah 65:16

The expression *God of truth* in the Hebrew is *The God of Amen*. This is a title for the Messiah, and represents Jesus Christ as the Truth. (John 14:6) This thought was frequently expressed by Jesus when He introduced his teachings by exclaiming *Verily, verily* or *truly, truly*.

For all the promises of God in Him are Yes and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us. 2 Corinthians 1:20

Christ is the source of all certainty and truth.

¹ A.P. Cooke, *Time No Longer* (Sydney: Self-published, 1985) 21.

² A.P. Cooke, *The 144,000* (Sydney: Self-published, 1985).

The Faithful and True Witness

This description echoes Revelation 1:5 where Jesus is described as the *faithful witness*.³ Likewise in Revelation 19:11 Jesus is described at the time of the Second Advent as *faithful and true*.⁴

Why are the above two titles applied to Christ when He is addressing Laodicea?

The Laodicean message is the most drastic of all the messages to the seven churches. The message is so strong in reproof that the charges laid could be regarded, by some, as an overstatement of the church's poor spiritual condition. However He who delivers the message is *the Amen* and *the faithful and true witness*. Therefore His messages must be nothing but the truth, containing not one iota of exaggeration.

The Beginning of the creation of God

This description of Jesus has been used by some to purport that Jesus was a created being, that He had a beginning - a genesis - like all such creations of God. However while it is true that Jesus was *begotten* as far as His humanity is concerned, numerous other scriptures clearly state that Jesus had no beginning; that He was God the Son; that He existed from eternity.

Further to this point, consider that the original Greek word for *beginning* is *arche*. What does this word mean? *Arche* can be understood in two ways. It may be translated as either *beginning* or *beginner* (see Appendix C). Its meaning is dependent on whether it is taken in its passive sense or active sense. The principle that should govern how one takes this word is: we must allow Scripture to interpret Scripture. Which meaning harmonizes with the rest of Scripture? The answer is – the active sense. This means that the word should be translated *beginner* not *beginning*.

Consider then, which other scriptures portray Christ as *the beginner of creation*, or *the beginning of creation*?

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God... All things were made through Him, (the Word) and without Him nothing was made that was made... And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us... John 1:1, 3, 14

He (Christ) is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn (or chief) over all creation (see Appendix D). For by him (Christ) all were things were created that are in heaven, and that are on earth ... All things were created through Him and for Him...and in Him all things consist. Colossians 1:15-17 (see Appendix A).

... in these last days (God has) spoken to us by His Son...through whom also He made the worlds. Hebrews 1:2

... Christ is the prime source of all of God's creation: Revelation 3:14 NEB.

³ A.P. Cooke, *Jesus Christ, the Alpha and Omega*, (Sydney: Self-published, 1985) 7.

⁴ A.P. Cooke, *Two Armies, Two Suppers, Two Destinies*, (Sydney: Self-published, 1985) 6-7.

Indisputably, in each of these passages, Christ is the *Beginner* of creation, involved in the creation of all things. He is both the Creator and the co-Creator along with His Father.

*The Beginner of all creation, its originating instrument.*⁵

Is there significance in the emphasis on Christ as Creator in the introduction to this final church? There is, for the following reasons:

Firstly, it is in this final age of history that man has rejected the truth of creation and accepted the alternative concept of evolution. It is therefore most relevant.

Secondly, if Christ is Creator, then He is also divine. The ability to create is the mark of deity, which means that Christ is all-knowing. He is God the Son.

Laodicea's problem

I know your works that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot ... because you are lukewarm... I will spew you out of my mouth. v15 -16

Of all the seven churches, Laodicea's need is the most desperate – so much so that if there is no recovery possible, complete rejection by God will be the church's fate. So how is this lukewarm condition manifested on the part of the Laodiceans?

Because you say, 'I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing' - ...

The Laodicean attitude is primarily one of spiritual self-satisfaction. Laodicean believers may not literally express it, but within their innermost being they feel assured of salvation. They believe that they have the truth and their ultimate destination is heaven. In other words they feel that they have achieved all they are required to be in the eyes of God: they have spiritually arrived. They neither feel nor sense any spiritual need, a sign, in reality, of spiritual debasement.

What should the mental attitude of a spiritually healthy believer be? Paul warns

...let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. 1 Corinthians 10:12

A true believer is to be continually aware that they are always in danger - in a spiritual sense. This awareness leads, to a realization of our own insufficiency and inability, and facilitates an attitude of watchfulness. Believers remain aware that unless Christ is within performing His sanctifying work they have no hope of achieving the requirements for citizenship in the Kingdom of heaven. We will always be conscious that there is a continual battle for supremacy within the human heart, that that the battle is with self and will not cease until either death or translation at End Time. There never will be a time in our experience when we have achieved all that is required.

The problem with the Laodicean believers is that they think that they have found the truth and that they are safe; that all is well with their souls and they are on the way to

⁵ Robert Jamieson et. al., Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1871), see Revelation 3:14.

heaven. Christ declares that such an attitude is symptomatic of spiritual wretchedness, misery, poverty, blindness and nakedness.

...and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked - v17

This is a shocking testimony and an unwelcome revelation. What makes it so serious is that anyone in this condition is totally unaware of their state. Observers would describe their condition as *hopeless*. In fact the Laodicean message has frequently been used as a weapon to attack the people of God; to condemn them as apostate. This scripture, however, does not indicate apostasy but rather a state of misguided spiritual self-satisfaction. The apostasy which is identified among God's people in End Time is identified elsewhere and does not pertain directly to the Laodicean message.

However care needs to be taken so that an incorrect conclusion is not drawn. Laodicea's condition is not as bleak as it would at first appear. In the stern rebuke to Laodicea Christ holds out the cure for her spiritual disease.

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. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent. v18-19

These two verses counter completely the idea that Laodicea is in a hopeless situation, or that it is apostate. This is a message of love. In this scripture and in other instances Christ has so often had to hurt in order to help His people. He rebukes and calls for repentance. Repentance, in its most basic sense, means to turn around completely, to turn back from a path of error. Here the way of repentance for His people is to buy from Christ three particular items which will make them acceptable for heaven.

Christ's solution

Gold tried in the fire

...buy from Me (Christ) gold refined in the fire...

Spiritual gold is gold in its purest form!

What is it that Scripture describes as being *refined by fire*? It is the believer's faith.

That the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honour and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ. 1 Peter 1:7

A tried and tested faith is spiritual gold. How is this faith recognized?

Faith that works by love. Galatians 5:6 (New King James version).

Faith active in love. (New English Bible, Moffatt's translation).

Faith which expresses itself in love. (J.B. Phillips' paraphrase, R. Knox translation).

Faith activated and energized and expressed and working through love (Amplified New Testament).⁶

The first, most serious lack among believers during the Laodicean period is a lack of faith, which always expresses itself through love. However note that it is not love alone which is needed, but love combined with faith, an active faith which is stimulated by love and expresses itself by evidence of that love. Note also that this is not a sentimental love; rather, it is a love which operates as a principle. In essence it is the renunciation of self: it is love that is both selfless and unselfish.

Yet no one can empty themselves of self: that is the great paradox. We can only *consent* to allow Christ to accomplish the work within...

...there needs to be a continual reaching out of the heart after God, a continual, earnest, heartbreaking confession of sin and humbling of the soul before Him. Only by constant renunciation of self and dependence on Christ can we walk safely.⁷

While this is the chief lack among God's people in the last days, care should be exercised not to make Christ's complaint apply universally. There are those among God's professed people who are earnestly involved in subduing self and looking to Christ for constant aid. Laodiceans must beware of the self-delusion that continues to whisper in their ears that all is well, that it is time to relax their faithful vigilance, to cease from spiritual struggle.

As one discerning Christian warns

Those whom heaven recognizes as holy ones are the last to parade their own goodness. Men who have lived nearest to God...have confessed the sinfulness of their own nature...At every advance step in Christian experience our repentance will deepen.⁸

Paul counseled

...work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure. Philippians 2:12 -13

The complaint against Laodicea is that there is too little fear and trembling evidenced in regard to their personal spiritual attitude. There are always some things that believers should be in fear of

Fear lest your will shall not be held in subjection to Christ's will; lest your hereditary and cultivated traits of character shall control your life.... Fear lest self shall interpose between your soul and the great Master Worker. Fear lest self-will shall mar the high purpose that through you God desires to accomplish. Fear to

⁶ Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons* (Washington, DC.: Review and Herald Publishing Assn., 1900), 158. "The gold tried in the fire is faith that works by love"

⁷ *Ibid.*, 160.

⁸ *Ibid.*

*trust to your own strength. Fear to withdraw your hand from the hand of Christ and attempt to walk life's pathway without His abiding presence.*⁹

Guarded by such an attitude, spiritual self-satisfaction and pride will never gain the ascendancy. Instead one may become spiritually *rich*.

White garments

...white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed...

Christ declares that in the sight of Heaven many Laodiceans are spiritually naked. The proclamation is designed to shock us out of our spiritual complacency. What is it then that can completely cover the Christian's spiritual nakedness?

The act of clothing is the righteousness of Christ which is received by faith – by believing that Christ died as our substitute and that the perfect obedience He demonstrated while on earth is placed to our credit and imputed to us. It constitutes even more than that - it is a righteousness that comes solely from Christ, and which alone fits the believer for the kingdom of heaven.

The white garments represent Christ's righteousness, imputed to the believer in justification and realized through sanctification.¹⁰

As the previous author so beautifully penned,

*By His perfect obedience He has made it possible for every human being to obey God's commandments. When we submit ourselves to Christ, the heart is united with His heart, the will is merged in His will, the mind becomes one with His mind, the thoughts are brought into captivity to Him; we live His life. This is what it means to be clothed with the garment of His righteousness.*¹¹

Is Christ suggesting that most Laodiceans don't trust or apply the righteousness of Christ to their lives? Does it mean that they have only a cerebral understanding of salvation rather than a heartfelt experience? If *self* is enthroned in the Laodicean's heart then the situation described will be a natural consequence.

Eye salve

...anoint your eyes with eye salve that you may see. v18

Christ states that those who are lukewarm in Laodicea are spiritually blind. These unfortunates cannot discern between good and evil, nor can they distinguish clearly between right and wrong. This is an extremely serious situation in light of the tremendous deceptions that are to beset the people of God in the End Time. More than human discernment will be needed to detect sin and deception, and to recognize the

⁹ Ibid., 161.

¹⁰ Robert Jamieson et. al., *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*. See Revelation 3:18.

¹¹ Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons*, 312.

correct course of action during the crisis. Therefore because of this coming conflict, spiritual eye-salve will be an essential requirement for the saints.

It is significant that unlike five of the previous church periods, there is no hint of opposition from without, or of heresies emanating from within, Laodicea. Satan has no need to attack the church, either from within or without, when it is in a lukewarm condition. He rejoices in such a church.

Christ's warning

As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous, and repent. v19

To *chasten* means to punish or discipline, with the end of reforming those who are the subjects of that chastisement.

To instruct by chastisement! Here is a prediction as to how Christ is to bring His church to repentance. He is to bring chastisement upon the church. The church is to receive punishment. The Lord must be cruel to be kind.

...when Your judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness. Isaiah 26:9¹²

As we have already stated, Laodicea is the last of God's churches. It must therefore be the church that exists at the time of Christ's return. This means that because Laodicea is in the woeful condition described by Christ, something exceptional will need to happen in order for God's people to turn their spiritual circumstances around. Is there evidence of some special experience that could prepare Laodicea for translation?

Other scriptures show that before the Second Advent there is to be a sorting out, a sifting, a dividing of the wheat and the tares within the church of God. This is referred to as *the shaking*. In the parable of *The Wheat and the Tares* (Matthew 13:24 -30) Jesus declared

Let both grow together until the harvest, and at the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, 'First gather together the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn'. Matthew 13:30.

Later Jesus explained that

...the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are the angels. Therefore as the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of this age.

The Son of Man...will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness... v39-40

These texts allude to a process during the period near the end of the world (*end of The Age*) when Christ purifies His church. The statements therefore must apply to the Laodicean church. The purifying process is described as a *gathering out* and a *gathering*

¹² A.P. Cooke, *Philadelphia or Laodicea?* (Sydney, Self-published, 1985), 19.

in (Matthew 13:30, 41). This process called *the shaking* divides and polarizes the entire Church of God.

How will the shaking be initiated? One of the instruments employed will be a proclamation within the Laodicean church of the Laodicean message. Other scriptures predict that a startling message is to be presented to believers in Laodicea to prepare them for the Second Advent. The prophet Joel, whose predictions now have an End Time application to spiritual Israel, predicted this special call within the church.

Blow the trumpet in Zion (the church), consecrate a fast (abstain from the normal way of life), call a sacred assembly; gather the people... let the priests, who minister to the Lord, weep between the porch and the altar (in repentance with their flock); let them say, 'Spare Your people, O Lord, and do not give Your heritage to reproach, that the nations (unsaved) should rule over them (oppress them).' Why should they (the unsaved) say among the people, 'Where is their (the saints) God?' Joel 2:15 -17.

The apostle James was also inspired to warn God's professed people, and this applies especially to those experiencing the Laodicean condition.

Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning (of repentance) and your joy to gloom (godly sorrow). Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up. James 4:8-10

This is the experience which those in the Laodicean condition need to pass through in order to be overcomers. Again the prophet Zephaniah reveals the experience that God's End Time people must endure:

Gather yourselves together, yes, gather together, O undesirable nation (spiritual Israel), before the decree is issued (probably the death decree), before the day passes like chaff (the day of salvation), before the Lord's fierce anger (the seven last plagues) comes upon you, before the day of the Lord's anger come upon you! (the close of probation and the Day of the Lord). Seek ye the Lord, all ye meek of the earth... Seek righteousness, seek humility. It may be you will be hidden in the day of the Lord's anger. Zephaniah 2:1-3

In the Hebrew *not desired* means *not longed for* or *not ashamed*, implying that:

- this people is unworthy of God's protection, which is true of Laodicea in its pre-repentant state, and
- they are not ashamed of their spiritual condition. They have no sense of awareness of their guilt.

How true this is of Laodicea!¹³ However, this scripture also forecasts a special call to God's End Time people to seek righteousness (*white raiment*) and meekness (the

¹³ F.D.Nichol, *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, (Washington DC, Review and Herald Publishing Assn., 1957), See Zephaniah 2:1-3.

opposite of spiritual pride) in order to be hidden and protected during the outpouring of God's wrath in the seven last plagues.

*Blow the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in My holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble; for the day of the Lord is coming, for it is at hand.
Joel 2:1*

This verse tells of an alarm which applies to a crisis involving the church itself. It may well relate to the sounding of the irresistible Laodicean message within the Laodicean church. There will be a powerful call to repentance and reformation which will result in a polarization within the fellowship. Those who reject the call to Laodicea to repent will remove themselves from Laodicea.¹⁴

Christ's message to Laodicea is

As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent. V19

This warning could well be God's effort, as outlined above, to bring Laodicea to repentance. There is clear evidence that it will be successful. Many of God's people within Laodicea will finally be cured of the curse of luke-warmness. And while some teach that true believers must leave Laodicea and join the church of Philadelphia, this is an incorrect claim and has been fully answered elsewhere.¹⁵

The Greek word *repent* in v19 is in the singular, implying that the call of Christ to Laodicea is a call to individuals. Repentance is a personal experience, and each individual believer must seek it if they are to be an overcomer.

Christ's call

Behold, I stand at the door and knock....

Which door is referred to in this passage? Is it the door of the Laodicean church as a corporate body? No, that is not the meaning. This is the door of each individual believer's heart.

... If anyone hears My voice and opens the door...

The church of Christ consists of individual believers: the only way Christ may dwell within His church is by dwelling in each member's heart. Thus Christ calls to everyone - every individual - to open the door to their heart (their mental faculties) and receive Christ.

An important truth is also revealed in this verse. Christ stands at the door of a person's heart and knocks: He in no way attempts to open the door. Christ never uses compulsion. He does not try to force the will. Nor does Christ ever threaten. Our Creator holds a sacred respect for the freedom of the will: never will He breach this principle. He knocks at the door and waits. He will only enter into a person's life at the personal invitation of that individual. This aspect is a revelation of the noble character of our God.

¹⁴ Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to the Church* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Assn., 1948), 1:179-184.

¹⁵ A.P. Cooke, *Philadelphia or Laodicea?* See whole document.

...I will come in to him...

The Greek may read *I will enter into him*. This represents a mystic union of Jesus and the believer. By the Holy Spirit, Christ enters into the believer and reigns upon the spiritual throne of his heart. This is *Christ in you, the hope of glory* (Colossians 1:27).

...and will dine with him... v20

This alludes to the spiritual Supper of the Lamb. It denotes the unique fellowship that the believer enjoys with Christ but which is incomprehensible to worldly understanding.

The ministry of Christ is likened in Scripture to the experience of human love, courtship and marriage. The Holy Spirit woos the sinner. If the sinner responds, there takes place a spiritual union, a marriage as follows:

- Christ becomes the spiritual husband and the believer becomes the bride.
- The bride takes her husband's name. She is now a Christ-ian, a Christian.
- The husband becomes responsible for his bride. He provides her with everything she needs.
- He supplies her garments – the robe of His own righteousness.
- He provides her food, which is the Word of God and which is likened to spiritual milk, bread and meat.
- He protects her by providing a spiritual bodyguard – guardian angels.
- He assures her that he will never leave her nor forsake her, provided she is faithful.

However the believer always retains freedom of will and is not under compulsion to continue the spiritual marriage relationship which is based on love and freedom of choice.

Promise to the overcomer

To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne... v21

This is the grandest of the promises to overcomers in the seven churches. It is the crowning promise. It shows that the Laodicean condition can be and will be overcome by a remnant at this time. God will have a people out of earth's last generation who will be fit for translation at the Second Advent. Their reward will be greater than those of any other period.

Compare the rewards of each of the seven church periods –

1. Ephesus - Eat of tree of life
2. Smyrna - Not hurt by the second death
3. Pergamos - Eat hidden manna, given a white stone and a new name
4. Thyatira - Power over the nations, will rule with rod of iron
5. Sardis - White raiment, name retained in the Book of Life
6. Philadelphia - A temple pillar, the name of God, New Jerusalem and Christ's new name
7. Laodicea - Sit with Christ on his throne, sharing his rule.

The overcomers from Laodicea share the eternal throne of Christ in the kingdom. What a privilege! What a reward! What an honour!

Why should those of Laodicea be granted a higher honour than those of any other church period? The reason is that this is the age of the greatest affluence, tolerance, compromise and enlightenment. While it is possible that it has never been easier to become a Christian than during the Laodicean period, on the other hand, it has never been so difficult to retain one's faith and zeal.

Some claim that the church awaiting translation is the church of Philadelphia. However that church had no defect in Christ's sight (Revelation 3:7-13). In contrast the church at the time of the Second Advent, is a church that must have separated from it *all things that offend and...those who practice lawlessness* (Matthew 13:41).

Those of the last generation pass through the final crisis of the Great Controversy. They are involved in the conflict with the Beast and his image and his mark.

A special preparation is required by them in order to endure the time of trouble and to stand finally ready for translation. The final remnant of Laodicea are those who are described in Revelation 7:13 -17 as

- *having come out of the great tribulation*
- *being before the throne of God* (or in the presence of the throne)
- *serving Him day and night in his temple.*

This same group is on Mount Zion with the Lamb and is the *one hundred and forty-four thousand* (Revelation 14:1). The final group of overcomers from Laodicea who comprise the 144,000 have the most to overcome: this may be why their reward is so much greater than that of any other church period.

...as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne. v21

Here Jesus Christ reminds His followers that because He overcame, so may the believer overcome. While He was on earth Jesus experienced life in exactly the same way as we do. In His humanity He possessed the same nature as we have. He had

access to divine power in exactly the same way as we do. He had no advantage over us: He demonstrated how to overcome.

... In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world. John 16:33

He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. v22

Appendices

Appendix A

Meaning of “firstborn”

The word *firstborn* in Colossians 1:15 should not be interpreted to mean that Jesus Christ was originally created, because this flagrantly contradicts many other scriptures. In the Old Testament the term is used to represent the dignity and office of the first or chief of the offspring of the family – the one who inherited special titles, responsibilities and property.

However, the *firstborn* was not necessarily the one who was born first. If the first to be born was a female, she was not ‘the firstborn’. Sometimes the first son to be born was not the ‘firstborn’ as such and did not receive the birthright. Example: Esau and Jacob (Genesis 25 and 26). The word *firstborn* signifies *chief* or *head*.

His is the primacy over all created beings. Colossians 1:15 NEB

Appendix B

Pioneers’ interpretations of the seven churches prophecy

How should we deal with interpretations of the seven churches taught by some of the pioneers around the 1844 period?

In the fundamental features of the faith the conclusions of the pioneers, when affirmed by the Spirit of Prophecy, were unquestionably correct.

However, in secondary aspects of truth, not confirmed by the Spirit of Prophecy, care should be taken. Further study on the topic of the seven churches has shown that some of the applications made by some of the pioneers were incorrect. Believers are to *grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18)*.

Appendix C

Major emphasis of the seven churches prophecy

How do we answer the claim that in six of the messages to the seven churches the truth of the Second Advent is emphasized?

This conclusion has been based on the expression *I will come*. However, when each of these expressions is examined it appears that the reference is to Christ coming in judgment. Notice the six occasions the term is used:

Ephesus

Repent... or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place – unless you repent. Revelation 2:5

Smyrna

There is no mention of Christ coming to this church in judgment. Perhaps this is because Christ finds no complaint with this church.

Pergamos

Repent, or else I will come to you quickly and will fight against them with the sword of My mouth. Revelation 2:16.

Thyatira

But hold fast what you have till I come. Revelation 2:25

Sardis

Hold fast, and repent. If therefore you will not watch, I will come upon you as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you. Revelation 3:3

Philadelphia

Behold, I come quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown. Revelation 3:11

Laodicea

Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If any one hears My voice and open the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me. Revelation 3:20

When the six expressions above are analyzed in context, it is doubtful whether any could apply to the Second Advent as a primary application. Even when used in regard to Laodicea, the church of the Advent, the expression clearly refers to Christ seeking entrance to the heart.

The statements made to the other five churches appear to be warnings that Christ could come in judgment. If they applied to the Second Advent it would only be in a secondary sense. The Spirit of Prophecy applies some of the above expressions in this manner and statements made to some of the previous six churches are also re-applied to the Laodicean church.

Appendix D

The seven churches summarized, representing the seven periods of the Christian era

Name	Ephesus	Smyrna	Pergamos	Thyatira	Sardis	Philadelphia	Laodicea
Meaning	Desirable	Sweet smelling	Elevated	Sweet savour of labour	That which remains	Brotherly love	Judging the people
Period	31 to 100AD Apostolic age	100 to 300 AD Pagan persecution	300 to 538 AD Popular – union with the State	538 to 1500 AD Church in the wilderness	1500 to 1750 AD Protestant reformation	1750 to 1844 Evangelical revival	1844 to 2 nd Advent During judgment of the saints
Christ's title	He who holds the seven stars	The First and the Last	He who has the sharp two-edged sword	Son of God – the Judge	He who has the seven spirits (omniscient)	He who is holy and true, with the key of David	Faithful and true witness
Condition of faithful during the period	Pure – zealous amid opposition	Fragrant amid martyrdom	Steadfast amid popularity	Patient amid tribulation	Loyal amid stagnation	Zealous amid unpopularity	Whole-hearted amid apathy
Approval	Patient labour, true to God, hatred of error	Faithful in poverty, trial and martyrdom	Steadfast under trial	Love, faith, patient ministry	Few not defiled	Patient and loyal	None
Reproof	Left first love	None	False teachers tolerated	Papal teachings received	Dead – formalism	None	Lukewarm, poor, naked, blind
Consequences of failure	Removal of candlestick	Suffer second death	Counted an enemy of Christ	Further tribulation	Unexpected judgment	No protection in hour of trial	Spewed out or rejected
Promise to overcomer	Eat of tree of life	Not be hurt by second death	New name, hidden manna	Power over nations in the judgment	White raiment, names confessed in judgment	As pillars in God's temple	Reign with Christ on His throne

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