

STRAIGHTWAY

And straightway they forsook their nets, and followed him [Mark 1:18].

CHRISTIAN PURITIES FELLOWSHIP

The Witness Outreach of Foundations Bible College
P.O. Box 1166 · Dunn, North Carolina 28335

VOLUME 38

MAY/JUNE 2010

NUMBER 3

Post Fundamentalism—Part One **The End-time Church and Its Rejection of Jesus Christ**

Dr. H. T. Spence

For the next several issues of *Straightway*, we will be unfolding aspects concerning the End-time Church, where it is headed, and how its assimilation of Fundamentalism will be a necessity. We have observed in previous articles the philosophical presupposition of “Postmodernism,” a philosophy beyond “modernism” or “reason.” Postmodernism is built upon the premise of existential experience to the point of denouncing reason and absoluteness of truth. This philosophy arises within the institutional Church across the world mainly under the title of the

Emergent Church or the *Emerging Church*. Postmodernism has even made its way into the political world of our country under the label of “Post America,” which has been thrust upon us by the “Obamanation” of Washington. Nevertheless, there has been the true, historic Christian faith that has stood outside the trends and changes of time; it has ever based its belief upon the absoluteness of God’s Word, the Bible.

In order for Fundamentalism to inevitably become a tragedian part of the Neo-Christianity of our times, it must enter into a postmodernism of its own which

This edition includes a second article

Post Fundamentalism—Part Two
The End-time Church and Its Rejection of Jesus Christ

we are calling *Post Fundamentalism*. It is our prayer that these articles will be a spiritual call for a biblical awakening to take place among the puritan remnant remaining within Fundamentalism today. True Fundamentalism in its public voice is basically dead; for all practical purposes Fundamentalism has become Neo-Evangelicalism, maintaining little or no distinction between the two. In order to understand the changes that have taken place to bring us to Post Fundamentalism, it is imperative that we view the larger picture found in the End-time Institutional Church. This will be the burden of these first two articles.

Where Are We in Church History?

The Books of Daniel and Revelation are apocalyptic. *Apocalyptic* means “to unveil” or “to uncover” and thus “to reveal” something which has been beforehand veiled, covered, or hidden. Apocalyptic books are usually written in times of great trouble and distress for God’s

people. The Book of Revelation gives evidence that persecution and trouble were already threatening the early Church. Both without and within, serious problems were present.

Chapter nine of Daniel speaks of “seventy weeks” of years (490 yrs.) that are to follow the seventy years of the Babylonian Captivity. These appointed weeks of years not only speak of the trouble that will come to the Jews and Jerusalem but also reveal God’s appointed time of the rule of the Gentiles. The first sixty-nine weeks of years (483 yrs.) conclude at the Jewish nation’s rejection and cutting off of Christ the Messiah. There still remains the final seventieth week of years (7 yrs.) to come.

In this context for the Jews, Daniel does not inform us of what takes place between the sixty-ninth and seventieth week, although we know that there is a final week against the Jews and Jerusalem. It has been almost two thousand years since the fulfillment of the sixty-ninth week, yet the seventieth week has not come. Could it be that the seven churches that are mentioned in Revelation 2 and 3 also represent time periods, and that these time periods are to be found in the prophetic Word for the time between the sixty-ninth and the seventieth week? We dare not minimize the literality of the seven churches chosen by the Lord from Asia Minor; it is obvious that many churches were located in the well over five hundred districts of Asia Minor.

STRAIGHTWAY

O. Talmadge Spence, Founder

H. T. Spence, Editor
President

Foundations Bible College
P. O. Box 1166
Dunn, NC 28335-1166
800-849-8761

www.straightwayonline.org

Provided free of charge but
contributions are welcome to assist
with postage and printing.

Nevertheless, God divinely chose seven churches and seven churches only; He did not send messages to other churches that conceivably might have been more important.

In Revelation 2 and 3, the geographical order of presentation of the churches is as follows: beginning at Ephesus, moving north to Smyrna, then farther north to Pergamos, then east to Thyatira, south to Sardis, then east to Philadelphia, and southeast to Laodicea. Did these seven churches represent the full range of characteristics that marked all of the churches in existence at that time? Each church needed a particular message, and the spiritual state of each church corresponded precisely to the exhortation which was given. The selection of these churches was also governed by the fact that each church was in some way normative, able to illustrate conditions that were common to local churches of that time as well as conditions to unfold throughout the history of the Church.

These seven churches teach the decline of the Church on earth. The professing Church, instead of increasing in spiritual and world converting powers declines to lukewarmness, faithlessness, and Christlessness. Just as we can view the decline of Israel in the Old Testament, we can also see an obvious decline in the visible Church within the epistles of the New Testament.

In Romans 11:15–27, the apostle Paul gives a parable of two olive trees.

He shows how the “natural branches” of the “good olive tree” (Israel) were broken off because of “unbelief,” that the “wild olive tree” of the Gentile Church might be “grafted in,” which in turn, because of unbelief, would be displaced that the “natural branches” might be “grafted back again.” This clearly indicates that the Church does not take the place of Israel permanently; it merely fills up the gap between Israel’s “casting off” and “restoration of divine favor.” This is the Gentile Church period. Could we presently be at the time of the transition of the Gentile Church into unbelief and the prelude of Israel’s return to belief?

The Seventh Church Period

“If” chapters 2 and 3 of Revelation are viewed from a prophetic-historic perspective of seven periods of the Church, it would mean that the Laodicean period closes the “Church Age” as the “fulness of the Gentiles be come in” (Romans 11:25b). This phrase in Romans 11 is different from the “times of the Gentiles be fulfilled” of Luke 21:24. The former is dealing with the Gentile Church period while the latter is referring to the Gentile political government of world rulership. The former “fulness of the Gentiles” will consummate at the rapture of the saints out of the last Church Age, after which God will begin bringing the Jews to that spiritual relationship with Him. The latter “times of the Gentiles be fulfilled” will consummate with the

kingdom of Antichrist, and its final overthrow at the Second Coming of Christ. The former concludes at the *secret advent* of the Second Coming and the latter concludes at the *open advent* of the Second Coming. The former concludes the Gentile Church Age; the latter concludes the Gentile government age.

The “times of the Gentiles” clearly began with Nebuchadnezzar, while the “fulness of the Gentiles” began (it seems) in Acts 13 at the sending forth of Barnabas and Paul unto the Gentiles. In that calling, God did not specify where He was sending them; it was simply declared, “Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them” (Acts 13:2). The rest of the Book of Acts records predominately Gentile churches being established, not Jewish churches. During these chapters the Gentiles spiritually came to the forefront.

Two thousand years have passed, and it is evident by the way Church history has unfolded that the Gentile Church has come to the same end as did the nation of Israel. The Jewish nation rejected the First Coming of Christ; we the Church are rejecting Christ as well, and particularly His Second Coming. We must realize that much was said of the Jews as to the First Coming of Messiah. Oh, the details they knew of His coming, even to the very little town in which He would be born (Matt. 2:4–6); however, only a few knew Him when He came.

Much is said and written about the Second Coming today, but only a *few* will truly know Him. Are we coming to the end of the “fulness of the Gentiles” when God will turn us over to apostasy as He did Israel? As there are seven Gentile empires mentioned by Daniel and John (beginning with Egypt and culminating with the worst, that of Antichrist), are there also seven periods of the kingdom of heaven on earth ending with its worst?

Each of the seven churches appears to have a distinguishing characteristic. 1. *Ephesus*, meaning, “to relax,” seems to cover Christianity from A.D. 70 (the destruction of the Jewish city and temple) to A.D. 170 (the end of the Apostolic Fathers). It was a time of a backsliding Church. The final epistles to have been written in the New Testament warned of such an impending reality of the present church then.

2. *Smyrna* (meaning “myrrh” or that which is identified with death) was a persecuted church. God took His earthly Church through great crucibles of persecution, especially from around A.D. 170 to A.D. 313 (when the Edict of Milan was passed to legalize Christianity).

3. *Pergamos* (meaning “a marriage”) was a very licentious church resulting from the union of the world’s government and the church’s congregations (a marriage between the two). This seems to have spanned from A.D. 313 to A.D. 606 (the height of Gregory I, who vastly influenced every aspect

of the Church from theology and preaching to living).

4. *Thyatira* (meaning “feminine oppression”) brought the rise of the Roman Catholic Church and the beginning powers of the papal system, covering the years from A.D. 606 to A.D. 1517 (the beginning of the Reformation).

5. *Sardis* (meaning “escaping one” or “coming out” one) is addressed at the opening of Revelation 3. It had a name that it was alive, but it was dead; and sad to say, the Reformation ended up in Rationalism (by A.D. 1600) and the Enlightenment Period. In the latter part of this Church Age which covered from A.D. 1517 to A.D. 1750, the powers of reason made vast inroads into the institutional Church.

6. *Philadelphia* (meaning “brotherly love”) brought a great stirring to dead Christendom. It was the era of mighty revivals and awakenings on both sides of the Atlantic from A.D. 1750 to A.D. 1900. This Church Age also brought a fresh burden for missions, which had almost died in the Church. There has been no move of God like this time period in the Church. It was a time of revival of life and fraternity among the Christians. As they had kept His Word and had not denied His Name, there was the promise to be kept from the Tribulation to come (3:8–10). Yes, this truly was a great spiritual move of God before the coming final collapse of the Church. Moreover, it was also the time of the awakening

and the cry “Behold the Bridegroom cometh!” Thus, it was during this time period we see the doctrine of the Second Coming of Christ being revived within the Church; deeper insights into the Books of Daniel and Revelation appeared, whereas heretofore understanding of these books had been limited.

7. Finally we arrive at the last church mentioned by the Lord Jesus Christ: the Church of *Laodicea* (A.D. 1900 to the present).

In contrast to this Church Age, it is interesting to read of the men of God during the Philadelphia time of history. Spirituality marked the lives of these men, no matter what their theological system was. “Perfection” was a term that became prominent throughout Europe as men longed for perfection in every aspect of life: architecture, art, drama; even the “Classical” period of music brought the longing for “perfection” in both law and sound. This human pursuit prompted the question in the Philadelphia Church period, “Is it possible to have a *Christian* perfection?” The word *perfection* (in the Greek *teleios*) simply speaks of Christian *maturity*, or coming to maturity in the walk and life with God that is easily defined as “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.” Yes, the Great Commandment became the hope of Christian living, of Christian perfection, of coming to “maturity,”

and thus, the need of being ready for the coming of Christ in a secret rapture of the “true” church.

Joseph A. Seiss (1823-1904) lived during the time of this explosion of insight concerning the Second Coming of Christ. He wrote his classic commentary on the Book of Revelation called *The Apocalypse* in the 1870s. After viewing the six churches from a similar historical perspective, he wrote this concerning Laodicea:

There is yet one other phase. Shall I say that it is yet future, or that we have already entered it? [referring to the Laodicean Church Age] There are still some whom Christ loves, mostly suffering ones, under the rebukes and chastenings of their gracious Lord. But the body of Christendom is quite apostate, with Christ outside, and knocking for admission into his own professed church. Paul prophesied of the Church that in the last period, men would be mere ‘lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce-breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying the power thereof.’ (II Tim. 3:1-5). This is a fearful picture, almost as dark as that which he gave of the heathen world before Christianity touched it presented in Romans 1. But it answers precisely to the Saviour’s portraiture of the characteristics of the Church in its last phase.

Although Seiss was not sure whether he had entered into the last Church phase (Laodicea) or if it was yet to come, he saw what it meant and the beginnings of its powers already invading the institutional Church of his time.

Oh dear reader, is this the last phase of the Church’s history? When did it start? Many place it at the turn of the so-called “Christianity century,” the twentieth century. The Philadelphia Church Age gave the initial cry of the Second coming of Christ, but the worst apostasy of the Church since its beginning has arisen in that of the Laodicean Church Age. If this age began in 1900, then we are well into its mature powers and influences.

The word *Laodicea* means the “popular judgment” or “the will of the people.” This spirit is the extreme opposite of the Nicolaitans found in the first and third Church ages culminating in the fourth. Instead of a church of domineering clericals, this is the Church of the domineering mob, the laity, in which nothing may be safely preached except what the people are pleased to hear. It is the Church in which the teachings of the pulpit are fashioned to the tastes of the pew, and the feelings of the individual override the authority of God’s Word. It is the Church in which the people are in control (congregational government), when they become more powerful than the authority of an honorable pastor and

the pulpit.

Christ described the Laodicean Church as “lukewarm.” Nothing is decided, partly hot and partly cold, divided between Christ and the world, not willing to give up the pretense and claim to being a Christian and going to heaven while clinging close to the world! Having too much conscience to cast off the name of Christ and yet too much love for the world to take a firm and honest stand entirely on Christ’s Word, it is self-satisfied, boastful, and empty. Having come down to the world’s tastes and gained the world’s praise and patronage, the Laodiceans think they are “rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing.”

Laodicea boasts of splendid and expensive churches with congregations of great influence and intelligence. Their preachers are possessors of all kinds of degrees, magnanimous in personality and international persuasion. Their so-called worship services are admirable in the world’s eyes, with the best of musicians, and yes, the “moving” of the music. The Church has become an excellently manned and endowed institution. It has missionaries all over the world, short-term and long-term. It has compassed the globe with the gospel, with radio and TV stations and with its multi-million dollar edifices. Even millions and millions of dollars are given for charitable causes! Such an array in all the attributes of greatness and power!

What more could be said?! What more could be desired?! The Church has reached the cry in Christianity: “I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing!”

It is evident by the words of the Head of the Church, that as the nations are weighed in the balance and found wanting, the institutional Church is found wanting as well! What the “outward” appearance of the Church declares is not what the corrupt heart of the Church declares; it does not know that it is “wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.” Churchmen talk of the Church as if it is destined by God to glorious triumph, as if it is commissioned of God to convert the world! Nevertheless, the “AMEN” hath spoken! The Faithful and True Witness has declared, “I will spue thee out of my mouth.” The Greek is strong here: “I am about to spue thee out of my mouth!” “I am on the verge, at the point, of doing so!” (When will this spewing take place? And how? We have yet to know.)

What is found in the seven declarations of these two chapters of Revelation is *Christ’s own history of His Church!* They are Christ’s own criticisms upon all its characteristic features and doings for some two thousand years. These seven are epistles of Christ Jesus. They declare that the history of the Church on earth is a sadder story than that of the fall of Israel. Is the tendency of Christendom toward improvement

and perfection? No, like everything else with which fallen man has to do, it is earthward, deathward, and hellward. It must be understood that the promise of Matthew 16:18, “And upon this rock I will build my church: and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it,” is only addressed to the true Church, not the institutional Church! Christ is building the true Church; man is building the institutional Church. The gates of “hell” or “Hades” or death *have* prevailed against the Roman Catholic Church, the Episcopal Church, the United Methodist Church, and many others. They are dead! And Christ is outside the world-wide institutional Church. When will Fundamentalism be seen as part of the Laodicean Church? When will the final “joining-up” take place?

Conclusion

Will the true flock of God ever be anything else in this segment of history, in this present age, other than a feeble, depressed, and hated minority? We have come to an hour when the remnant is being hated and despised and pressed down by the public Christianity. As the Church is growing more and more in world renown, it seems to be in labor to get rid of those who preach against the Church’s backslidings and apostasies. It despises being called into question about its contemporary music, having to give an account for the obvious changes taking place, and its departure from the spiritual legacy of the forefathers.

As we view the horizontal accomplishments and earthly glory of the Church increasing, may God help us to see that she has refused to see herself as Christ sees her. Are we in the final phase of the Church? Is this the last period of time? Are we in an awakening or in an apostasy? Every Christian must answer these questions in the light of the times in which he lives. [S]

Foundations Web Sites

[www.foundations.edu](http://wwwFOUNDATIONS.edu)

The official web site for Foundations Bible College and Ministries.

www.straightwayonline.org

Straightway is the bimonthly publication of the Christian Purities Fellowship, the outreach arm of Foundations Bible College.

www.straightwayonline.org/es

The *Straightway* publication is also available in Spanish.

www.forwardingthefaitH.org

Forwarding the Faith is a fifteen-minute radio broadcast dedicated to the proclamation of the Word of God and the glory of Jesus Christ.

www.fbcradio.org

The FBC web radio began on January 15, 2007, bringing classical, sacred Christian music, Bible preaching, and programs for the family 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

BOOKSTORE SPECIAL

(through August 31st)

The Canon of Scripture

The Canon of Scripture is a survey study including outlines, themes, and major truths presented in each of the sixty-six books of the Bible.

240 pages, 8.5x11 format (softback, 2010)

by Dr. H. T. Spence

\$12.95

Crucial Truths for Crucial Days

These three volumes are a compilation of articles taken from "Straightway," the published voice of the Christian Purities Fellowship, an outreach arm of Foundations Bible College.

Volume One - 227 pages (softback, 2003)

Volume Two - 266 pages (softback, 2006)

Volume Three - 262 pages (softback, 2009)

by Dr. H. T. Spence

\$10.00 each

Foundations Bible Commentary The Pentateuch

A thorough presentation of the first five books of the Bible.

657 pages (hardback, 1977)

by Dr. O. Talmadge Spence

\$15.00

With the purchase of one or more of these books,
you will receive a *free* copy of *The Divine Interlude*
by Dr. O. Talmadge Spence

1-800-849-8761

[www.FOUNDATIONS.EDU](http://wwwFOUNDATIONS.EDU) — fbc.bookstore@FOUNDATIONS.EDU

S&H

\$5.01-20.00, \$4.00

\$20.01-55.00, \$6.00

over \$55.01, 11% of Order

New Publication from the Foundations Ministries

Fruit of the Hands

A Cookbook

Presented by

The Katharina Society of
Foundations Bible Collegiate Church

A Collection of Recipes including

Appetizers & Beverages

Soups & Salads

Vegetables and Side Dishes

Main Dishes

Breads & Rolls

Desserts

Cookies & Candy

This & That

\$15.00 + S&H

To purchase a copy:

1-800-849-8761

www.foundations.edu

fbc.bookstore@foundations.edu

S&H - 1 copy, \$4.00; 2-3 copies, \$6.00

NINTH ANNUAL FOUNDATIONS MARRIAGE CONFERENCE

July 31st

9:00 AM to 8:00 PM

Four messages to be given on marriage by
Dr. H. T. Spence with seasons of prayer
for the married couples and
a formal dinner and concert.



*“A Special Day Dedicated to
the Preservation of the Sanctity of Marriage”*

For the marriage conference, a fee of \$20 per couple will provide the lunch and evening meal. A full day of activities is planned for the youth of the parents attending. The children's meals will be \$5 per child.

The meetings and provisions are free of charge
for the Ladies Prayer Fellowship.

Registration can be made through the mail or by calling 800-849-8761.

ELEVENTH ANNUAL LADIES PRAYER FELLOWSHIP



August 13-14

12:00 noon Friday to 12:00 noon Saturday

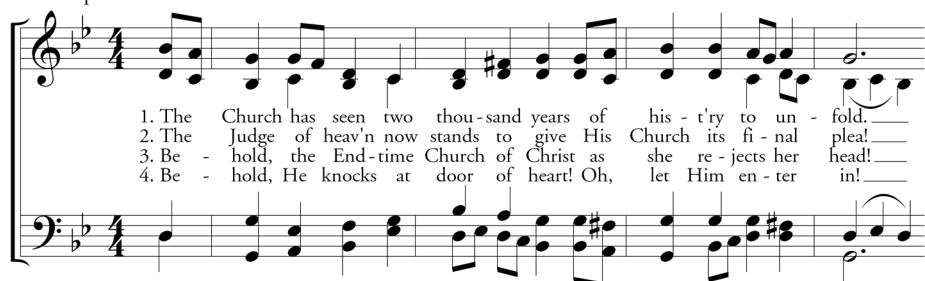
Dr. and Mrs. Spence will each be speaking
twice along with seasons of prayer, testimonies,
and fellowship. Lodging provided on campus
for out-of-town guests.

BEHOLD, CHRIST STANDS AT THE DOOR

28th Men's Prayer Conference, 2010
 "Christ's Final Plea to the Final Church Age" — Revelation 3:20

H. T. Spence

Robert Wilson



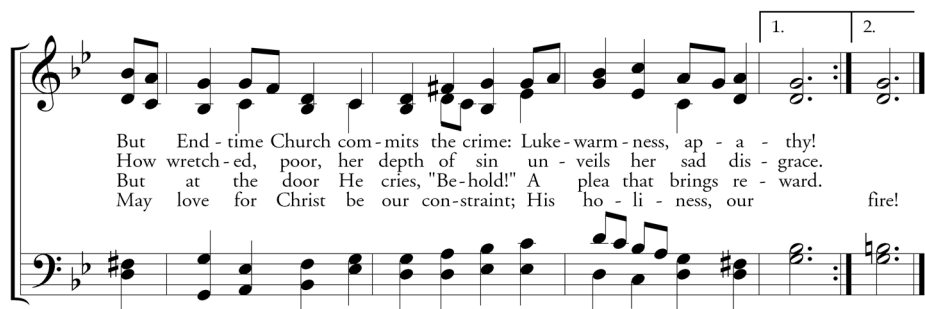
1. The Church has seen two thou-sand years of his - t'ry to un - fold.
 2. The Judge of heav'n now stands to give His Church its fi - nal plea!
 3. Be - hold, the End-time Church of Christ as she re - jects her head!
 4. Be - hold, He knocks at door of heart! Oh, let Him en - ter in!



Her a - ges rip - en: end is near! That end God's Word fore - told.
 She boasts of be - ing lu - cra - tive, with much pros - per - i - ty!
 There is no love for the true Christ; its love for self in - stead.
 To share His sup - per as a part of liv - ing free from sin!



God's pro - vi - dence has giv - en time to bring ma - tu - ri - ty.
 She sees her glo - ry all with - in; no need of Christ and grace!
 She is not hot, nor is she cold; luke - warm-ness, to her Lord!
 Luke warm-ness gone! Let pas - sion reign! Christ's com - ing, our de - sire!



But End - time Church com - mits the crime: Luke - warm - ness, ap - a - thy!
 How wretch - ed, poor, her depth of sin un - veils her sad dis - grace.
 But at the door He cries, "Be - hold!" A plea that brings re - ward.
 May love for Christ be our con - straint; His ho - li - ness, our fire!

Post Fundamentalism—Part Two

The End-time Church and Its Rejection of Jesus Christ

Dr. H. T. Spence

In speaking of the seven short epistles of Revelation chapters 2 and 3, it is important to carefully acknowledge that the epistles are addressed not to the churches but to the “angel” of each church. The word *angel* literally means “messenger.” These messengers are the seven stars in Christ’s right hand according to Revelation 1:16, 20; 2:1. When Revelation 1:11 states, “What thou seest, write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia,” the churches are mentioned as the recipients of these messages. Christ makes a distinction between the churches (the candlesticks) and the messengers to those churches (the stars in His right hand). Note that in each of the salutations to the epistles, it is stipulated, “Unto the angel of the church of . . .” Following the salutation, Christ proceeds to declare, “I know thy works,” etc. It is as if He is writing specifically to the pastor of that church rather than to the church itself. Were the pastors the problem that led to the problems of that particular church? Was the burden from the Head of the Church only addressed to the pastor, a declaration of his personal life and ministry? Was it addressed to the true messenger and the message that he was to preach to his church? Or was it addressed also to that pastor’s Church Age?

The democratic approach to church government centers all power within the congregational membership making the ministerial position nothing more than another member of the church body. In contrast, the Bible reveals that ministers do have a relation to Christ and to the Church which ordinary church members do not have. They partake directly of Christ’s authority, are responsible directly to Him, and are upheld by His right hand, beyond the power of men or spirit angels to displace them. Christ holds them as precious, as most esteemed. They are His messengers! They will speak what is needed for their generation! They are part of a group of stars who over the centuries have been voices to the Church Age of their contemporary! Yes, dear preacher! This is *your* Church Age! This is *my* Church Age! Just as God has appointed me the messenger to this church (Foundations Bible Collegiate Church), He has appointed me as a messenger to *this* Church Age, and so has He appointed you for your local church and Church Age.

This is the last Church Age; Christ is standing outside the door (the heart); but, He is also standing *outside* the Church. There is soon to be another door opened; it is the door that leads to the air, the rapture. I cannot be deceived by my contemporary Age, and I cannot be deceived by my Church Age! Things outwardly are looking good and prosperous with radio, TV, internet, satellites,

missionaries, and money abounding to buy, to purchase, to build, to teach, to live, to grow. *Nevertheless*, inwardly, the Church is in the most pitiable state ever in its existence. It is in its most wretched state, its greatest hour of poverty, and as a faithful messenger, I *must* see it and declare it! How often good churches are led away from Truth into the contemporary because of a pastor-teacher who has fallen in love with the contemporary. Over time, the church of this pastor becomes what he is. If he is lukewarm, the church eventually becomes lukewarm. My earthly father, Dr. O. Talmadge Spence, often told his students that a church never rises any higher spiritually than its pastor.

The Powers of Lukewarmness

In Revelation 3:16, Christ declared the last church to be “lukewarm.” The Greek word for *lukewarm* appears only this one time in the New Testament. This Greek word *chliaros* refers to “tepid water.” Christ in this verse refers to three different spiritual states: a state of *coldness*, a state of *hotness* or fervency, and a state of *lukewarmness*.

There are many in the world who are cold to the things of Christ; that is, the Gospel leaves them totally unmoved, stirring no interest or spiritual fervor. This was our state before we were won to Christ through the Gospel. In our previously cold state, we had no evidence of grace or of salvation. By contrast, those who are described as hot are those who show genuine spiritual fervor and leave no question as to the presence of eternal life, the sanctifying power of Christ, and the presence of the Holy Spirit; these truly have a fervent testimony.

The normal transition for a true conversion is from a state of coldness immediately to a state of spiritual warmth. The apostle Paul was a man who immediately went from cold to hot in his passions about Christ. The man of Gadara was another example; after being delivered from the many demons, he was found healed, clothed, in his right mind at the feet of Jesus, with a desire to follow Him in His ministry. This is the way it should always be in a real work of God: from cold to hot.

This third state of lukewarmness is what characterizes the Church of Laodicea. This state refers to those who have manifested some interest in the things of God. They may be professing Christians who attend church, yet these have fallen far short of a true testimony for Christ; their attitudes and actions raise questions concerning the reality of a true spiritual life. This lukewarmness could be manifested in their attitude and spirit, their dress, their prayers, their lack of Bible reading, etc. There simply is not the fervency for God that should be there. They have been touched by some concept of the Gospel, but there is no clarity as to whether they really belong to Christ. We

must realize that lukewarmness is not a transition; it is a final state. It is for this reason our Lord has such great abhorrence for it.

Christ declares, "I am about to spue thee out of my mouth." This is not a picture of the Roman Catholic Church or the cults; this is the closest thing to Christianity identified as the Church. The tendency of the Laodiceans is toward a policy of compromise, of toleration and allowance. There is something about the intermediate state of being lukewarm that is utterly obnoxious to God. Far more hopeful is the state of one, who has been touched by the Gospel yet has made no pretense of trusting Jesus Christ, than the one who makes a profession while his life illustrates he is not really honoring the Christ whose Gospel he has heard and professed.

How many within the churches of Fundamentalism have satisfied their own hearts and have been lulled into a sense of false security? They shout loudly about their prominent doctrine of Eternal Security, yet without abiding in Christ, without believing, and without being accountable to God and His Word. They want some kind of security that requires no spiritual life; they want the world as well as an assurance they will go to heaven no matter how they have lived. Such individuals are the hardest to reach for Christ. They are quite satisfied with the measure of their devotion to God and with the moments when they feel they have acted religiously. Yes, they are quite satisfied with the way they are in their walk with God. It is far easier to win the harlots and publicans than the lukewarm. Perhaps, the more descriptive term embodied in the spirit of lukewarmness is *indifference*. What these individuals do not know extends to their conviction respecting the central doctrines of the Christian Faith, such as the necessity of being born again and of the dramatic change in life and perspective that is required of a true Christian. How sad but true is the assumption that membership into a certain religious organization or the label and tag of identification of Church is greater today than being in the Body of Christ. Are the churches' modern labels the security of the lukewarm?

It is interesting to note that none of the sins named in the preceding six churches of Revelation 2 and 3 are mentioned as being at Laodicea. Similarly, no works of Laodicea are commended. Certainly it must be noted how the institutional Church today is filled with works! Religious leaders tell us today that we are in the greatest revival period in Church history. In contrast, Christ declares we are so blind, wretched, naked, and spiritually impoverished!

It is evident that the pride the Laodiceans had in their wealth was carried into their spiritual life. The statement in Revelation 3:17 reads in the Greek, "I, I am rich, and I have gotten riches." Its understanding is, "I (emphatically) am rich, and therefore I have gotten riches (or increased with goods)." This

spirit declares, “Since I am rich physically, it is the evidence that I am rich spiritually.” The physical becomes the commentary of the spiritual to the Laodicean Church. Oh, dear reader, we must never take the view that the wealth and seeming well-being of our churches is the commentary of our spiritual relationship with God. It is rare that a person with a lot of money is spiritual; nevertheless, there have been a few individuals in history whose lives rose above their wealth. Paul in I Timothy 6:9–11 warns of the power that riches and money have over men. According to Matthew 13:22 riches produce blindness; they have a way of lulling both an individual and a church into spiritual sleep.

In Revelation 3:17 the Head of the Church declares with emphatic words in the Greek, “Thou art the one wretched,” or “Thou, thou that boastest, you are the one miserable, you are poor (absolute spiritual poverty), you are blind!” *This lack of insight and discernment of their condition is because of self-complacency.* The Church observing the other things (the riches and what the riches produced) convinces itself that these things (wretchedness, misery, poverty, blindness, nakedness) do not exist in their personal lives or in the life of the church.

The Need of an Ear to Hear

The Lord calls to the churches, “He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches.” The expression or variation of “He that hath ears to hear, let him hear” occurs eight times in the Synoptic Gospels but not in the Gospel of John. It is also found seven times in Revelation 2 and 3. The ears contain structures for both the sense of *hearing* and the sense of *balance*. The eighth cranial nerve (the nerve made up of the auditory and vestibular nerves) carries electrical impulses from the ear to the brain. God has provided the ability for the ear to hear frequencies from about 16–20 Hz (cycles per second) to about 20,000–30,000 Hz. The intensity or volume of the sound is measured in decibels (dB).

The physical organ of hearing was considered of peculiar importance to the Jew because it was the chief instrument by which man received information and commandments. The Bible reveals that God has made the soul with abilities similar to that of the body. The soul can eat (tasting of this world, tasting of the Lord, feeding off the Word); it has sensitivity; it can be asleep; it has a heart which is the seat of its affections and desires; and it can hear. The soul’s ear can become deaf to the things of God. Through thoughts and influences, the soul can be cultivated to an intensity for right or wrong.

Both the inward man and the outward man can hear. The oldest sin of man is found in Romans 5:19 and is linked to this matter of hearing: “For by

one man's *disobedience*." God gave commandments to Adam and he disobeyed, or as the Greek states, he *failed to hear*. For this very reason the right ear of the priest had to be specially sanctified, the tip of the right ear being touched with sacrificial blood at the consecration (Leviticus 8:23), symbolizing the blood covering the hearing ear. Similarly, the ear of the cleansed leper was rededicated to the service of God in hearing, as blood then oil was applied (Leviticus 14).

In the New Testament we read in Luke 8:12–15 of the Word of God coming to the soil or the soul; it heareth the word. Yes, the ear of the soul must be cultivated. A person may be physically deaf but still "hear" the Word of God. "Faith cometh by *hearing*, and hearing by the Word of God." It is the ear of the soul that must hear the Word, and the heart must believe that Word. As a Christian goes deeper with God, the ear is cultivated to the sensitivity of God's Word, yea, His very whispers. As with the love slave of Exodus 21, the ear becomes crucified through sanctification, and it obeys the Master with delight (Psalm 40:6–8). Stephen condemned the Jews of his day by declaring in Acts 7:51, "Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye." If the inner ear, the organ of spiritual perception, listens, then the heart will willingly submit. More often, the spiritual ear is hardened (Isa. 6:10) or becomes heavy (Deut. 29:4) either by self-seeking obstinacy or by the judgment of an insulted God.

The End-Time Ear

The apostle Paul warned Timothy of the end-time reaction against the preaching of the Word of God: "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears" (II Tim. 4:3). The season has arrived that the true preaching of the Word is no longer desired; sound or spiritually healthy teachings are being rejected, as the "new" is being intensely desired by the people. The "people" are governing the pulpits now, and after their own lustful desires with "itching ears" the congregations are heaping or accumulating to themselves teachers that will teach what they want to hear. This type of ear belongs to those that have become tired of the sound of oft-repeated truth. They long for new thoughts, new interpretations of the Scriptures, new experiences—all coming through deceitful teachings. Paul continues to say "they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables." "They" or the people will become tired of hearing the truth and will instead desire myths and false teachings. How can this be?

We are meeting more and more Fundamentalists who do not see the falling away; they do not see the direction in which their churches are leaning; they

just do not see! It is evident that God is giving them over to the blindness; He has not given them an eye to see nor an ear to hear.

Years ago I could not understand why people could not see what obviously seemed to be failures in their church, their school, or even themselves. I believe I understand now. The first reason some do not see is that they may not even be saved, for according to John 3:3, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Is this true of many churchgoers today? They simply are not saved? If so, they *cannot* see anything spiritual (I Cor. 2:14). A second reason for lack of sight is that many are like the healed blind man of Mark 8. This man initially saw "men as trees" walking; he could not see them clearly. There are those, because of carnality and worldliness ruling their professing Christian lives, that have a distorted view of spiritual things, though they may have been saved. Remember, lukewarmness produces blindness (Rev. 3:17). Their sight is perverted because of only seeing things close up; those things at a distance they are unable to see clearly.

Whatever the reason for lack of discernment, it must always be understood that "the hearing ear, and the seeing eye, the Lord hath made even both of them" (Prov. 20:12). To see this Church Age is a gift from God; to hear the clarity of the Word of God now is a gift from God! Sadly, this is not the norm! Even those who once heard and saw are not hearing or seeing any more. Are we hearing what the Spirit is saying to the churches today? To *this* Church Age? We are hearing what Benny Hinn and Joel Osteen and others are saying. Interestingly, *we are hearing* what the Neo-Evangelicals are saying and singing, but are we hearing what the Spirit is saying to the churches? Is part of the spewing out of His mouth to be seen in God giving this Church Age over to a delusion because they love not the truth? (II Thess. 2:10, 11). Are we being turned over to myths and fables because we no longer want to hear the truth?

Conclusion

As messengers and as laymen of the Church, we must pray, "Oh God, give me an ear to hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches and an eye to see my age and the Word of God!" Such seeing and hearing people will be the only ones to make up the remnant in the end time. Such a remnant will be hated by the institutional, public Church. What happened to Christ by Israel as He was taken outside the camp and suffered crucifixion will happen to the remnant; the Church will put such individuals outside. We will have to yield to this, going "outside the camp" bearing His reproach. There is no other way to survive in these final days before the coming of the Lord.

As a woman in travail, the public Church is trying to get rid of the true saints within her. Such saints are a hindrance to progress, to peace, to harmony,

and to ecumenicity. The public evangelical Church will not be able to endure much longer the preaching of such remnant preachers, their exhortation of standards, and their constant pressing for the Bible to be invoked for the church, the pulpit, and the people. The Church and school leaders of today are the product of what the people want, and they in turn feed the people with what they want to hear. The remnant preacher is being squeezed out; there are fewer places for him to preach, fewer invitations, fewer conferences, fewer appointments of teaching. The people do not want a voice against the contemporary music, the carnal and the worldly, and the inappropriate dress. The Church today does not have a heart for it; therefore, it does not have an ear for it! As a result of such rejection, it is heaping unto itself teachers to satisfy the “tired-of-the-truth-and-living-it” heart. The Church will find in abundance those individuals who will tell them and preach to them what they want to hear. Such leaders will permit the music the people want as well as the absence of dress standards and holiness of life and heart.

Oh God! Give me an ear to hear and an eye to see! It will only come by my yielding to your Word in obedience! May I as a preacher not only pray for anointing, but also pray for a hearing ear and a seeing eye in this deaf and blind Church Age! May I as a layman long for a preacher who will declare Thy Word, not to my fancy, but as “the Spirit saith unto the churches.” S

MAY/JUNE **“SERMONS OF THE MONTH”**

SERMONS FROM THE FOUNDATIONS PULPIT
FOUNDATIONS BIBLE COLLEGIATE CHURCH
DR. H. T. SPENCE, PASTOR

(June 2010)

Twenty-eighth Men's Prayer Conference
“Christ's Final Plea to the Final Church Age” (Rev. 3:20)

This set includes:

Six Sermons by Dr. H. T. Spence

Four Heart Meditations by Dr. Dennis Lowery

A Postscript by Dr. H. T. Spence

The Sunday Morning and Evening Sermons following the Prayer Conference

Sermon Set (Audio CD): \$34.00 ppd.; (MP-3) \$26.00 ppd.

Foundations Ministries • P.O. Box 1166 • Dunn, NC 28335
frecordings@foundations.edu • 800-849-8761 • www.foundations.edu