

Revival and Reformation

Revival: Our Great Need

Lesson #1 for July 6, 2013

Scriptures: Revelation 3:14-21; Hebrews 12:7-11; Matthew 25:1-13; Zechariah 3:1-5; Song of Solomon 5:2-5.

1. This series of lessons will be a discussion of what needs to happen among God's final chosen people, the church of Laodicea, before Jesus can come again.
2. Read Revelation 3:14-21. If you were God, what would you do with a group of people described by these words? For those of us who believe in the historical chronological interpretation of the book of Revelation and who believe that God has the power to predict the future, the Laodicean church fits the group of people who claim to be God's true people after the year 1844. Does that include all Christians? Or, just Seventh-day Adventists?
3. Laodicea was a city founded by Antiochus II between 261-246 B.C. He named it after his wife. When crowned by well-built fortifications, the hill on which Laodicea stood must have appeared formidable when viewed from the lower valley; and it constituted an admirably strong line of defense. However, it did have one serious weakness: It was entirely dependent for its water supply on an aqueduct bringing water from springs about six miles to the south. The aqueduct was mostly underground but could hardly have remained unknown to a besieging army or be guarded along its full length against an attack. If the aqueduct was cut, the city was helpless; this weakness ruined the character of the city as a strong fortress and must have prevented people from ever feeling secure when threatened with attack.
4. Laodicea was located on the main east-west highway established by the Roman Empire. The city was famous for its school of medicine, its banking, exchange, and manufacturing. It produced a valuable wool which was soft in texture and glossy black in color. The black wool from Laodicea was especially prized because of its glossy appearance.
5. Between Laodicea and the "Gate of Phrygia" through the mountain pass, lay a famous temple, the home of the Phrygian god, *Men Karou*. In connection with that temple, there grew up a famous school of medicine. But, the center of the school was located in Laodicea not at the temple. Laodicea minted its own coins bearing the serpent-encircled staff of Asclepius or the figure of Zeus. The school of medicine there was famous for two medicines: 1) An ointment for strengthening the ears made from the spice, nard; and 2) A medicine for the eyes made from Phrygian stone. It was sometimes sold in powder form to be applied to the eye. The Phrygian school of medicine at Laodicea became so famous that the names Phrygia and Laodicea were often interchanged.
6. A large Jewish population lived in and around Laodicea. The temple tax of 2 drachmas annually was to be paid by Jewish males. Even in 62 B.C., that amounted to 15,000 drachmas, suggesting there were some 7500 adult Jewish freeman in that district, not counting women and children. In John's day, the number must have been considerably more.
7. The hot water springing out of the ground some five or six miles up the river from Laodicea was carried through aqueducts, mostly underground until it reached Laodicea at which time it was lukewarm. That lukewarm condition was used by God through the angel to the prophet John to describe the self-complacent, apathetic, and spiritually-indifferent church in the final days of this earth's history. (For more details see <http://philologos.org/eb-ltsc/chap29.htm>)
8. While the accusations against the Laodicean church are very blunt, nevertheless, God promises great things to His final end-time church. Read Revelation 3:14,15. Why do you think Jesus called Himself "the Amen," "the faithful and true Witness," and "the Beginning of the creation of God"? Was Jesus trying to tell us that just as He created all things in the

beginning, He can revive us and create us as new creatures in the image of God?

9. Read Revelation 3:15,16. What is God trying to tell us about our spiritual condition?

The message to the Laodicean church applies most decidedly to those whose religious experience is insipid, who do not bear decided witness in favor of the truth.—Ellen White, *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 962.2 (*Ltr.* 98, 1901)

The Laodicean message must be given with earnestness and power, as a message from heaven. If it be ignored, the Lord will certainly cast away from Him those whose spiritual condition is so objectionable. Christ declares that **pretentious piety is nauseating to Him**. To the ones so full of self-sufficiency He says, "I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot." Their works are opposed to the holy principles of God's word. (*Special Testimonies, Series B*, No. 2, p. 20.1)

10. As you look around in the church to which you belong, do you think God would describe it as lukewarm, insipid, even "pretentiously pious" and nauseating to Him? Could that be us?
11. Read Hebrews 12:7-11; Psalm 94:12; Proverbs 29:15,17. Does the church of Laodicea need discipline? How do you think God should go about disciplining His children? Do we need a boot camp? Hebrews suggests that if we are not disciplined properly, we are illegitimate children. How can we follow the advice of Hosea 6:1, *NKJV*: "Come, and let us return to the Lord; for he has torn, but he will heal us; he has stricken, but he will bind us up"?
12. Read Revelation 3:17. How do you think it is possible for human beings claiming to be Christians to be so wrong in their evaluation of their spiritual condition? Do you think there is any possibility that you or your church or your Sabbath School class could be described as poor, blind, and naked? How could Jesus describe the religious leaders of the Jews in His day as Bible-reading, Sabbath-keeping, tithe-paying adventists (they were looking for the coming of the Messiah) and still say that they were descendants of their father the Devil? (John 8:44)
13. Read Matthew 25:1-13. Once again, we see Jesus describing a group of people who pretended to be prepared for the coming of the Bridegroom—although they were all sleeping. Worse than that, half of them had no extra oil for their lamps. What do we need to do to make sure these words do not describe us? What steps can and should we take to make sure that we are not asleep and ill-prepared? All we all asleep? Do we have extra oil?
14. Read Revelation 3:18,19. How can we take advantage of these remedies that Jesus was suggesting for us? What kind of people are sealed by the Holy Spirit?

Just as soon as the people of God are sealed in their foreheads—it is not any seal or mark that can be seen, but **a settling into the truth, both intellectually and spiritually, so they cannot be moved—just as soon as God's people are sealed and prepared for the shaking, it will come**. Indeed, it has begun already; the judgments of God are now upon the land, to give us warning, that we may know what is coming (*MS* 173, 1902). *S.D.A. Bible Commentary* Vol. 4, p. 1161.6; *LDE* 219.4; *Maranatha* 200.2; *FLB* 287.7; *OFC* 83.6; 328.2; *1MR* 249.2-250.0; *10MR* 252.1

15. Are there reasons why we do not want Jesus to enter our lives? Are there sins which we would prefer to keep hidden? What stands between us and a true faith relationship with God?
16. Read Revelation 3:20. Compare Song of Solomon 5:2-5. Does God really want to have an intimate, personal relationship with us—something similar to what is described in Song of Solomon? What would it be like to have an intimate relationship with the infinite God?
17. Jesus pictured Himself as standing at the door and knocking; He wants to eat with us, but He will never force His way in. In the setting of the Middle Eastern culture, the evening meal is

very important. It is a family gathering where often there are several generations who sit down together and talk and counsel and plan. It is a time of great fellowship.

18. Read Revelation 3:21. Do you think it is possible that we will actually sit down beside God on His throne? What is implied by that idea? God has hundreds of millions of angels waiting to do His every bidding. They have never rebelled against Him. Why would He ask us former-sinners to sit down beside Him while He is on His throne? Will we displace the angels?
19. Why do you think He wants to spend the rest of eternity in close association with us? With such a prospect before us, what could possibly hold us back from responding positively? In order for us to participate with God in that grand and glorious reunion in heaven, we must experience a true revival and reformation. What more could God offer us?

God calls for a spiritual revival and a spiritual reformation. Unless this takes place, those who are lukewarm will continue to grow more abhorrent to the Lord, until He will refuse to acknowledge them as His children.

A revival and a reformation must take place, under the ministration of the Holy Spirit. Revival and reformation are two different things. **Revival** signifies a renewal of spiritual life, a quickening of the powers of mind and heart, a resurrection from spiritual death. **Reformation** signifies a reorganization, a change in ideas and theories, habits and practices. Reformation will not bring forth the good fruit of righteousness unless it is connected with the revival of the Spirit. Revival and reformation are to do their appointed work, and in doing this work they must blend. (*RH*, February 25, 1902 par. 7,8)

20. One of the surprising things about the Laodicean message is that God suggested He would rather have us be cold than be lukewarm. How could that possibly be? What group of people are more comfortable in their present situation: 1) Those who are lukewarm? Or, 2) Those who are cold? Which group is more likely to seek a change? One of the problems that is well known among Seventh-day Adventists in the more developed countries of the world is the fact that even when we convince people to join the church, we find that before long they often leave. Many do. Careful studies have been done to try to determine why some people stay and why others leave. This research has demonstrated that there are three things that tend to keep people in the church long-term: 1) A firm belief and conviction about the truths taught by the church; 2) Getting involved in church activities and responsibilities; and 3) Developing a close personal relationship/friendship with some group of their new fellow Christians. New believers must come to experience at least two of these three things if they are going to remain in the church for more than a short period of time.
21. Are we doing our best to reach out and put our spiritual arms around new believers, showing them that we want to be their friends and encouraging them to become a part of the church and become active in the church?
22. One of the special challenges to revival in our church is the question of how to approach our young people. Is it really possible for a young person to become more interested in Bible study than in the latest movie? Or, perhaps Internet games? Or, even more intimately, one's favorite sin? How can we make the religious experience of those in our church more than just a few-hours-a-week-on-Sabbath-morning kind of experience?
23. Ultimately, there is only one criteria that God will look at to determine who will be allowed to enter the kingdom of heaven. And that one criteria is: Would we be a safe neighbor to live next door to for the rest of eternity? Someone who puts God first. Would you feel comfortable living next door to a Pharisee? What about the Samaritan woman who had five husbands and was now living with a sixth man? (John 4) Would you dare to live next door to the two former demoniacs? (Matthew 8:28-34)
24. What would happen if Jesus Himself appeared as a human being and delivered the

Laodicean message to your church one Sabbath morning? How would you respond? Is our spiritual condition and the condition of our fellow church members such that we need disciplining—even a rebuke—at times? Some even think they are called to do that!

25. Many Seventh-day Adventists are waiting for the latter rain to prepare them for the second coming. Do we have any information about how the church has responded to an outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the past within the Seventh-day Adventist Church? (Read Acts 2.)

“The law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith” (Galatians 3:24). In this scripture, the Holy Spirit through the apostle is speaking especially of the moral law. The law reveals sin to us, and causes us to feel our need of Christ and to flee unto Him for pardon and peace by exercising repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.

An unwillingness to yield up preconceived opinions, and to accept this truth, lay at the foundation of a large share of the opposition manifested at Minneapolis against the Lord’s message through Brethren [E. J.] Waggoner and [A. T.] Jones. **By exciting that opposition Satan succeeded [235] in shutting away from our people, in a great measure, the special power of the Holy Spirit that God longed to impart to them. [The Latter Rain?] The enemy prevented them from obtaining that efficiency which might have been theirs in carrying the truth to the world, as the apostles proclaimed it after the day of Pentecost. The light that is to lighten the whole earth with its glory was resisted, and by the action of our own brethren has been in a great degree kept away from the world. (1 Selected Messages 234,235)**

26. Is it really possible that our General Conference Committee in session at Minneapolis in 1888 stopped the outpouring of the latter rain? Could that happen again? We are still here?
27. Read Galatians 5:6. What is a faith that works by love? God pleads with us to buy of Him gold tried in the fire, white linen, and eye salve. Revelation 19:8 *NKJV* tells us that the “fine linen, clean and bright . . . is the righteous acts of the saints.” Laodicea was a banking center. They believed that they were rich and did not need any help. Spiritually, don’t we believe that we have the truth? Shouldn’t that make us spiritually rich? What are we still lacking?
28. Read Matthew 22:1-14. (Compare *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, pp. 88,89) When ancient Middle Eastern kings put on a wedding feasts for their sons, they would provide wedding garments for all the attendees. Why was this guest not wearing the provided garment? How do we as Christians “accept” and “put on” Christ’s righteousness?
29. There is only one way that we can come to be like Jesus. Through Bible study, prayer, and sharing, we can come to be better acquainted with Him as our best Friend. And by beholding—getting to know Him better—we will become changed. (*Great Controversy* 555)
30. Don’t we believe that the Seventh-day Adventist Church is God’s final last-day church? Will the Seventh-day Adventist Church be able to survive as an organization when there is a national and later an international Sunday law forbidding worship on the Sabbath? What will become of our church organization at that time?
31. How would you describe your personal relationship with Jesus Christ? Do you long for a deeper, closer relationship every day? Or, are you hoping for just enough of a relationship to squeak into heaven? Is that a safe attitude to have?

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