

Laodicea or Philadelphia?

Recently, by the prompting of an email I received recently, I've been studying the last two of the seven churches listed in **Revelation chapter 3** and I thought there were enough interesting and important points in this study to share these things with you.

As I studied about Laodicea and Philadelphia I had to ask myself the question, and I ask you this same question; Which of these two churches represent the Seventh-day Adventist Church today? Or could both of these churches represent two different groups within Adventism?

But before we go any further let's pray.

James White explains that the Philadelphia Church applies to the period of the great disappointment in 1844 when the sanctuary message was just then being understood, and this was also the consensus of other thought leaders during that time.

Here's what James wrote in ***Volume 1 of The Second Advent Review and Sabbath Herald, July 9, 1851***, “Behold I set before thee an open door.’ This door Christ opens, while He shuts another. As the Philadelphia church applies to no other period than the time of the termination of the 2300 days, when Christ closed His work for the world in the Holy, and opened the door of the Holiest of all, the conclusion seems irresistible that the open and shut door of Revelation 3:7, 8, refers to the change in the position and work of our great High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary.”

Now, let's read what the apostle John wrote about the church of Philadelphia, the sixth of the seven churches mentioned. **Revelation 3:7-13**, “And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write; These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth,

and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth; I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name. Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee. Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth. Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown. Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out **[Now pay special attention to the rest of this sentence]:** and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.”

This implies that those who hear will do so with understanding. This goes right along with what Solomon said in **Proverbs 4:7** when he wrote, “Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding.” In other words, there's something important here, so pay close attention.

In speaking of those who have all the characteristics of Philadelphia, along with the three things just mentioned in the above text, Ellen White identifies the church of Philadelphia as the church of the 144,000. Notice carefully what she says in **Early Writings, page 15**: “The 144,000 were all sealed and perfectly united. **[Oh, I long for that day, don't you? That will be a time when all of God's people will be speaking the same thing]** On their foreheads was written, God, New Jerusalem, and a glorious star containing Jesus' new name. At our happy, holy state the wicked were enraged, and

would rush violently up to lay hands on us to thrust us into prison, when we would stretch forth the hand in the name of the Lord, and they would fall helpless to the ground. Then it was that the synagogue of Satan knew that God had loved us who could wash one another's feet and salute the brethren with a holy kiss, and they [**the synagogue of Satan**] worshiped at our feet."

Because this is an important point, I want you to notice once again the similarities between what the Bible says about the church of Philadelphia and how Ellen White describes the 144,000.

The Bible says those in Philadelphia would have God's name written upon them, the city of God, which is new Jerusalem written upon them, and Jesus' new name written upon them, and the quote we just read from **Early Writings** says these same three things will be written upon the 144,000. This is conclusive evidence that those who have the characteristics of those mentioned in the church of Philadelphia and the 144,000 are the same.

In a September 1850 article by the Advent Review Publishing Committee, which was composed of Hiram Edson, David Arnold, George W. Holt, Samuel W. Rhodes, and James White, and if you're familiar with the names of the pioneers you will recognize these men as leading men in the movement early on. These men left a permanent record of what their stand was on God's true last day church, because the article states the following: "Now just as sure as the Philadelphia church is the true church of the last days, just so sure the 144,000 are sealed, just before the coming of the Lord."

You can find this statement and the previous information about the publishing committee in ***The Advent Review, volume 1, 1850***.

Well that's fine, someone says, but does the Spirit of Prophecy agree with

the publishing committee on this point? Yes indeed! After quoting **Revelation 14:1-5**, which is a description of the 144,000, Ellen White says, "This Scripture represents the character of the people of God for these last days." (*Manuscript Releases, Vol. 18, pg. 28*) So that's pretty clear, isn't it?

Now, speaking of the literal church at Laodicea that the apostle Paul taught and admonished in his day, Sister White says the following in *Manuscript Releases, Vol. 16, pg. 12*, "Much excellent labor was bestowed upon the Laodicean church. To them was given the exhortation, 'be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.' But the church did not follow up the work begun by God's messengers. They heard, but they failed to appropriate the truth to themselves, and to carry out the instruction given them. The result that followed is the result always sure to follow the rejection of the Lord's warnings and entreaties."

Then on **page 13** of the same article Sister White mentions what "the results" will be, not only of Laodicea anciently, but what the results were of the church in her day, which was definitely in a Laodicean condition in 1903 when she wrote the following: "Because of this, **[that is, because "the church did not follow up the work begun by God's messengers"]** there exists an inferior piety, by which the church is enfeebled and its usefulness impaired."

I don't think it's a coincidence that the church today that claims to be the Laodicean church has had the same labor bestowed, the same exhortation given, and unfortunately with the same results. And it's interesting to me that Ellen White nowhere refers to the Laodicean church as the last day church. Only to those with the characteristics of Philadelphia does she designate as such.

Since it's clear that the characteristics of the Philadelphia church and the

144,000 are the same, we will now see that the Laodicean Church is actually composed of the Synagogue of Satan, who will one day worship at the feet of the 144,000.

Now I realize this may be a shocking statement to you if you've always been told and believe that the Seventh-day Adventist church is represented by the Laodicean church, but it's absolutely true that Laodicea and the Synagogue of Satan are one and the same. And besides this, as we'll see in a moment, the Spirit of Prophecy also says the Synagogue of Satan is composed of nominal and/or professed Adventists.

According to **Revelation 3:20**, Jesus stands at the door of the Laodicean church and knocks, and He doesn't say even one good thing about that church, and we notice also that Jesus is not within the Laodicean church, but stands outside. The quote we just read a moment ago from *Early Writings* says those of the Synagogue of Satan will come and worship at the feet of the 144,000, or those that have the characteristics of Philadelphia, the true last day church. It also says the Synagogue of Satan will say they are Jews, that is to say, they will say they are God's people; they will say they are spiritual Israel or God's last day church, but they are not.

So it's evident that what we've read so far indicates clearly that God's true church in these last days is made up of those that fit the mold of the church of Philadelphia and not Laodicea. We should also understand, if we have ears to hear, that Laodiceans are never hot or cold, but always lukewarm. You can search the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy from beginning to end, but you'll never find a statement referring to Laodicea as anything but lukewarm, and those that are lukewarm are lost, plain and simple! The moment someone within Laodicea opens the door at Jesus' invitation, they are no longer lukewarm Laodiceans, but become hot Philadelphians. That being true, we will now notice that God showed Sister White that those

“which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie,” are actually professed Adventists.

Writing to a brother Curtis, with whom she disagreed on some points, Sister White says the following in ***A Word to the Little Flock, page 12***, "You think, that those who worship before the saint's feet, (Rev 3:9), will at last be saved. Here I must differ with you; for God shewed me that this class were professed Adventists, who had fallen away, and crucified to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put Him to an open shame. And in the hour of temptation, which is yet to come, to show out every one's true character, they will know that they are forever lost; and overwhelmed with anguish of spirit, they will bow at the saint's feet."

Did you catch that? Those Jews who say they are and are not, are actually professed Adventists, the Synagogue of Satan. Here she also refers to “the hour of temptation”, otherwise known as the time of trouble, which she says “is yet to come.” So when she says those who worship at the saint's feet are professed Adventists, she's not referring to the professed Adventists of her day, but to professed Adventists in the last days. Those who say they are Jews and are not refers to professed Adventists as opposed to those Adventists that have God's name, His city, and Jesus' new name written on their foreheads.

Have you ever thought about what it means for nominal Adventists, or professed Adventists, or Laodicean Adventists to come and bow down and worship at the feet of Philadelphian Adventists? To bow down and worship at the feet of the 144,000 Philadelphian Adventists is an acknowledgement by Laodicean Adventists that Philadelphian Adventists make up the true church of God, and that Laodicean Adventists have been wrong all along.

Bowing down is an admission that Laodicean Adventists were wrong when

they persecuted Philadelphian Adventists by suing them in the civil courts over the denominational name and paying a Catholic lawyer tithe money for doing so; wrong when they said they were being too dramatic by sighing and crying over all the abominations being done in the church; wrong when they taught salvation in sin; wrong when they celebrated in their worship services instead of afflicting their souls during the great antitypical day of atonement; wrong when they left the blueprint given by inspiration regarding the educational, medical, and ministerial work; wrong when they claimed we shouldn't call the church Babylon; wrong when they claimed the church was going through to the kingdom no matter how deep the apostasy becomes; wrong when they taught that Jesus had an unfallen human nature; wrong when they taught their ministers to practice neuro-linguistic programming; wrong when they adopted the Jesuit teaching of spiritual formation; wrong when they gave the Pope a gold medal; wrong when they said perfection of character is not possible in this life; wrong when they allowed the ordination of women as elders and pastors; wrong when they allowed Seventh-gay Adventists (yes that's with a "G") Seventh-gay Adventists to not only have membership but leading positions in the church; wrong when they told Philadelphian Adventists that they apostatized when they left the church when it was they themselves who were apostates; but you know what? They were right when they called themselves the Laodicean church.

And here's something important to keep in mind. The purpose of the Synagogue of Satan, or Laodicean Adventists, is to convince Philadelphian Adventists that what they know in their hearts is really not so in order to keep them in their lukewarm church that will be spewed out.

Still not convinced that the Synagogue of Satan is composed of nominal, professed, Laodicean Adventists? ***Early Writings, page 261***, "I saw that God

has honest children among the nominal Adventists and the fallen churches, and before the plagues shall be poured out **[in other words, just before probation closes]**, ministers and people will be called out from these churches **[the nominal Adventist churches and the fallen Sunday churches]** and will gladly receive the truth. Satan knows this; and before the loud cry of the third angel is given, he raises an excitement in these religious bodies, that those who have rejected the truth may think that God is with them. He hopes to deceive the honest and lead them to think that God is still working for the churches. But the light will shine, and all who are honest will leave the fallen churches, and take their stand with the remnant." And who are the remnant? The remnant are those that have the characteristics of the church of Philadelphia, the last day church.

Friends, it's time to get our heads out of the sand and get the oil in our lamps so we can see this as it really is! Let me speak plainly so no one misunderstands. Today the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists admits they are the Laodicean church, and with that admission they are acknowledging that they are the Synagogue of Satan without realizing it. Why do we not take them at their word with a clear understanding of what this means?

Notice what they themselves admit in their own official church publication, the ***Adventist Review, August 28, 2008, p 5***: "Today we hesitate to claim we're the remnant **[and that's a good thing, because they're not]**; but as for Laodicea, that's us! Us alone!...No other Christian group vies with us for the dubious privilege of being identified with it....claiming exclusive rights to Laodicea is not politically incorrect. So, unchallenged, we've become anchored in the view that Seventh-day Adventists are the sole group envisioned in the apocalyptic concept of that term."

And here are a couple more quotes from an earlier date, which means

they've had this understanding for a very long time, in fact before most of us were even born.

Advent Review, November 9, 1939 “The last church [Laodicea] will not be spewed out; it will not be rejected; it will go through triumphantly.”

Advent Review, November 30, 1939 “The Laodicean Church is the translation church...this is the very church that will be translated into the Kingdom of God.”

Could these three previous statements be any more contradictory to the word of God? Without a doubt, the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists is absolutely sure of who they are. They are Laodicea, and they are unchallenged about this. And not only that, but we should understand that when anything is written in any of the church's official publications, it's an admission that it is sanctioned by the church.

The following is a quote from ***Ministry, December, 1948, page 23***, “When the finished product carries the stamp of a standard publishing house, it bears denominational approval. It is then a denominational, not a private, publication. It has a measure of authority and dignity not otherwise possible.”

That's quite an admission, isn't it? But I'm more concerned about what the Spirit of Prophecy says in regard to the Laodicean Church, aren't you?

Notebook Leaflets, page 99, “Those who claim to believe the truth do not possess that power that God would bestow upon them if they really believed, and were striving for conformity to His image. The church is in the Laodicean state. The presence of God is not in her midst.”

Now wait just a minute. “The presence of God is not in her midst”? What

does that mean for the Laodicean Adventist church?

Notice also what it says in ***Acts of the Apostles, p. 55***, “To the end of time, the presence of the Spirit is to abide with the true church.”

But since the Spirit is not with the Laodicean church, how then can it be God’s last day church? The presence of God, according to what we just read, will never leave the true church. If the Seventh-day Adventist church structure is Laodicea and the presence of God is not in Laodicea, then the only conclusion we can come to is that the General Conference and all its structure churches cannot possibly compose God’s true church. So then, in what church can we find the “presence of God”?

The Upward Look, p. 315 “God has a church. It is not the great cathedral, neither is it the national establishment, neither is it the various denominations; it is the people who love God and keep His commandments. ‘Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them’ (Matt. 18:20). Where Christ is even among the humble few, this is Christ’s church, for the **presence** of the High and Holy One who inhabiteth eternity can alone constitute a church.”

Do Laodiceans love God and keep His commandments? If they did they wouldn’t be lukewarm, would they? No, the “humble few” who truly “love God and keep His commandments” are those that are characterized as Philadelphia Adventists.

If the presence of God dwells in His true church and His presence alone can constitute a church, that means that since God’s presence isn’t in Laodicea and that it's not the true church, then it must therefore be a counterfeit of the true church. It must be a church that claims to be the true church, but a church that's being directed by another power. How can it be otherwise?

Notice what else the Spirit of Prophecy says about Laodicea and the Seventh-day Adventist Church: ***Manuscript Releases, volume 19, page 176, 1898***, “If the church of God becomes lukewarm [**that's Laodicea**], it does not stand in favor with God any more than do the churches that are represented as having fallen and become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and the cage of every unclean and hateful bird [**That's a description of Babylon in Revelation 18:2, by the way**]. Those who have had opportunities to hear and receive the truth and who have united with the Seventh-day Adventist church, calling themselves the commandment-keeping people of God, and yet possess no more vitality and consecration to God than do the nominal churches, will receive of the plagues of God just as verily as the churches who oppose the law of God.”

And who receives the plagues of God according to **Revelation 18:4**? Right again, Babylon! You see, we've got to get the idea out of our heads that Laodicean Adventists can hold God hostage by simply denying that the term Babylon doesn't apply to themselves, but only to the Sunday churches. It's clear from inspiration that it can and does apply to the Seventh-day Adventist General Conference Corporation as well, because it unquestionably fits the mold today, and plainly admits that they are represented by a lukewarm Laodicean church that will, contrary to what they believe, be spewed out of God's mouth, and spewed out doesn't mean going through to the kingdom of God.

It might be a good idea at this point to read a statement that tells us exactly how we should come to proper conclusions about subjects such as we're studying today.

In ***Selected Messages, Book 1, page 42*** it says this, “The testimonies themselves will be the key that will explain the messages given, as scripture

is explained by scripture.” And that's exactly what we've been doing for the past hour; letting the Testimonies themselves explain their own meaning rather than putting a human construction on them, or trying to convince ourselves that they don't mean what they plainly say.

In *Early Writings, page 96* it says, “I was shown that the truth once published now, will stand, for it is the truth for the last days; it will live, and less need be said upon it in future. Numberless words need not be put upon paper to justify what speaks for itself and shines in its clearness. Truth is straight, plain, clear, and stands out boldly in its own defense; but it is not so with error. It is so winding and twisting that it needs a multitude of words to explain it in its crooked form.”

In order to convince us that the Laodicean church is the translation church and that it's not going to be rejected and spewed out, contrary to the plain testimony of Scripture and the Spirit of Prophecy, the Synagogue of Satan has written many books over the years with winding and twisting words and has used a multitude of words in their preaching to destroy the truth for these last days that the plain truth has become so obscure to the minds of the great multitudes of professed Adventists that it's very difficult for them to discern a straight, plain, clear message any more. That's why Jesus says, “He that has ear to hear, let him hear.”

Now let's look at this subject from another angle, because God always gives more than one proof when He wants people to take hold of present truth. That's one of the reasons why many of the prophecies in the Bible are repeated from several different perspectives, but all teach the same lesson, and it's also the same way with many of the parables Jesus told, because God wants us to get the point.

In the *Review and Herald, August 19, 1890* it says, “The state of the church represented by the foolish virgins is also spoken of as the Laodicean state.”

Now let me ask you a question. According to the parable, do the foolish virgins make it through the open door before it closes? No. They were part of the procession, but went to someone other than God to purchase their oil. The oil the wise virgins had represents the Holy Spirit, which means the oil the foolish received represents the wrong spirit.

Jesus said there were ten virgins waiting for the bridegroom, but how many are ultimately saved? Only five. Now that doesn't mean that half of those that profess to be Christians will be saved in the end, because we know the majority will be lost. So why did Jesus split the two groups in half? Well, I don't have any inspired statements to back this up so take it for what it's worth, but I think Jesus wanted us to know that everyone has an equal opportunity to make it to His kingdom. Just as all are invited and have the opportunity to make a right choice, so He says five will be saved and five lost. God is fair, and He wants us to know that we can be in either one of these two groups if we so choose.

The fact that all ten are said to be virgins suggests that they were all part of a pure church at the beginning, but something happened while they waited for Jesus to show up. A division takes place and the five foolish virgins never make it to the marriage and are represented as Laodiceans. They finally do make it to the place they're supposed to be, but when they get there they find that the door is shut, probation has closed and Jesus says “I don't know you” when they knock at the door.

Now, there are some who say that because the seven churches represent seven time periods during the Christian era, which they do, you would have

to have a time machine to travel back to the time represented by the church of Philadelphia, and so they believe we're stuck in the Laodicean time period whether we like it or not, and that's why they're proud to be Laodiceans and think that that church will ultimately be saved.

But you know what? There are no statements in the Spirit of Prophecy that would suggest that the time period represented by Philadelphia, and Laodicea for that matter, come to an end, at least not until the Lord comes. To the contrary, the Spirit of Prophecy repeatedly refers to the 144,000 Philadelphians as the last day church and that it's that church that will go through to the end and be saved. And those leading men, like James White who we heard from earlier, were very clear that the Philadelphia church is the last day church, and we also read that Ellen White confirms that. So if Philadelphia is the last day church, how then can Laodicea also be the last day church? Something doesn't make sense here, does it? Because God does not have two churches! He has "A" church as we read earlier.

There are always two groups, the saved and the lost, but not two churches. From the beginning God has only had one church, but there have always been two distinct groups that make it to the end; however, ultimately each one has a different destination as the ten-virgin parable teaches. One is Christ's true church, represented by the five wise virgins; those who have the characteristics of the church of Philadelphia, and the other five are represented by the foolish; or those who have the characteristics of Laodicea, the Synagogue of Satan.

In fact, Ellen White prophesied of these two groups as those who were once one in their profession of Christ, but became separated in the end. After quoting **Isaiah 8:11-16**, and I'll let you read that for yourself when you get the time, she says the following in ***The Review and Herald, July 18, 1907,***

and titled it, ***“A Message to the Churches”***, and that's Adventist churches, and the context is these last days. “In this representation of the prophet **[the prophet Isaiah in chapter 8 verses 11-16]**, we see that Satan is at work not only with worldlings, who have not the fear and love of God before them, but also with those who profess faith in Christ. Here are plainly represented two distinct parties, formed from a company that was once united. The members of one of these parties are in resistance to the will of God **[that would be Laodiceans]**. They have taken themselves from the side of the loyal and true **[or from the side of Philadelphians]**, and are now resisting the warnings of the Spirit of God.”

And friends, it's up to each one of us individually to “rightly divide the word of truth” so we can determine which one of these two parties we want to be in.

Notice what it says in ***Selected Messages, Book 2, page 66***, “The message to the Laodiceans is applicable to Seventh-day Adventists who have had great light and have not walked in the light. **[They would be “resisting the warnings of the Spirit of God” as the previous statement says, wouldn't they?]** It is those who have made great profession, but have not kept in step with their Leader, that will be spewed out of His mouth unless they repent.”

According to this statement, Laodiceans are not walking in the light and have not kept in step with Jesus and they're going to be lost unless they repent, but if they repent and begin walking in the light and keep in step with the Saviour they will not remain lukewarm, will they? No! They will then have the characteristics of Philadelphia. They will have left the ranks of the foolish because they have joined the wise.

So the question is, as an Adventist, where do you fit in? What church are

you a member of? As the church of Philadelphia represents the 144,000 and we're supposed to strive to be among that number, and the church of Laodicea represents the Synagogue of Satan, which we should escape from, that question shouldn't be too hard to figure out. Soon human probation will close and those who are Laodicean Adventists, believing that God is with them, when in fact He isn't, will bow down and worship at the feet of the 144,000 Philadelphian Adventists who truly have the presence of the High and Holy One in their midst.

Will you find yourself bowing at the feet of the 144,000, or will you be standing before those who bow? The choice is yours, and may I suggest that if you find yourself in the wrong crowd that you choose to escape Laodicea today and become part of the Philadelphia church by opening the door of your heart and allowing Jesus to enter before it's too late. The invitation is open right now, but no one can tell how much longer it will last. May the Holy Spirit give you the conviction and the strength to do what you know is right while probation lingers.