

THE AGE OF THE CHURCH AT PHILADELPHIA

By Pastor Mike Taylor



1 “The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John

:
2 Who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw.

3 Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand.”
(Revelation 1:1-3)

The book of Revelation is to some a mystery that seems to confuse a lot of people. So most people don't even bother to read it's pages, because they think it's too confusing and the images horrify them with so much death and destruction described. They think that the average man/woman can't understand its message, due to all its symbols and metaphors, but is that true?

First the book of Revelation is written in Koine Greek and by definition means apokalypsis, or "unveiling" or "revelation". ... The Book of Revelation is the only apocalyptic document in the New Testament canon . The book is definitely not something you can't understand, or it would not be a book that “unveils or reveals” what is coming in our future.

Here our Lord comes to John in His glorified state as God and the description is way more than what John saw when Jesus was taken up out of His sight upon His ascension.

13 “And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle.

14 His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire;

15 And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters.

16 And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength.

17 And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last:

18 I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.

19 Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter;”
(Revelation 1:13-19)

I can relate, that if God showed Himself to me, I'm sure I would fall at His feet, either in worship, or total weakness at such power, as a dead man.

In the Book of the Revelation, Jesus instructed John to "Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter." (Revelation 1:19)

There is much to be learned from just this one verse. John is told to write down things he is seeing, which that is to say, that Jesus didn't dictate all of the Bible to John, but John wrote down what he saw and heard. The first three chapters, is red lettered in your Bible, as our Lord speaks and dictates what He wishes John to write. The rest, John writes in His own words as each event unfolds before his eyes. In this message I hope to cover the different ages of the church down through history and into our time that we are living in. And what is soon coming.

WHAT DOES JOHN SEE?

His vision covers his own timeline during what is known of the years he is living in, but then he is instructed to write what will be “hereafter” which covered the timeline of the Church Age, or the Age of Grace, all the way up to and including the Great White Throne judgment at the very end of time, just before eternity.

During the first part dictated to John by our Lord Jesus, it is the only part that Jesus speaks directly to John and to address His words to the seven churches that are in today's Asia Minor, or Turkey and are the things of “which are” in John's day.

As you read those first three chapters, Jesus our Lord outlines the strengths and weaknesses of each church that were in Asia, but it is believed that Jesus was talking about subsequent time periods of the Church down through the last 2000 years, or “epochs” coming up to and including our era or the end of this age, the Age of Grace that is fast coming to a conclusion. He used these churches as symbols of each era of church history.

Each church is expressed as a period of time beginning with the Age of the Apostles found in the Church at Ephesus:

- a. Church at Ephesus.....AD 30 to AD 100, as John wrote this in about AD 95
- b. church at SmyrnaAD 100 to AD 313 or the time of Roman persecution
- c. Church at Pergamum....AD 33 to AD 600, the Age of Constantine and beginning of the Catholic Church and its rule.
- d. Church at Thyatira, AD 600 to AD 1517, The Dark Ages of the “Holy Roman Empire”
- e. Church at Sardis...AD 1517 to AD. 1648, or the Reformation and the splitting of the Roman Church into Protestant branches.

Then we come to the sixth church and she stands out amongst all of the churches up to this age...The sixth letter was written to the Church of Philadelphia, often called, "the Missionary Church." Of the Church of Philadelphia, Jesus writes,

7 “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;

8 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.

9 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.” (Revelation 3:7-9)

Although some Bible scholars believe that the “Missionary Church” as that is what the church of Philadelphia is called, ended around AD. 1900 or the “Age of Enlightenment” but I have to disagree with this interpretation. The Church at Philadelphia is one of the final churches of the Church Age, and it concludes when the Church will be removed from this earth, by our Lord Jesus at the “catching away” of the saints at what some call “the Rapture”. In my mind, the Age of the Church of Laodicia had not started until the beginning of the 20th century. ..To compare the state of the church today in its modern falling away from the truth of the Gospel is tempting, but if we rightly divide the Word of God, the Bible says we are the members of God's Church, “Which has little strength”. But do they run concurrent on our age?

Note verse 8 for the above passage? “

8 “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.”

Despite Global efforts to eradicate Christianity, especially in the Middle East by the sword, and those of other countries by legislation, or judicial edicts, no man has been yet able to “shut the door” on the Gospel of Jesus

Christ. There is an ongoing attempt by global powers to outlaw Christianity and the powers that be, will not stop until they either stop its spread in truth, or substitute a counterfeit religion based on more politics than religion.

Even today, all over the world, there are brave men and women who have bravely keep the Word of God and proclaimed the Good News that salvation is by grace through faith.

Looking down through the ages of the church we just described, even the early church was looking for Jesus to return in their lifetime and Paul had to address a fear that engulfed the early Church at Thessalonica when somebody came in and started teaching that the Lord had already come and they were living in the time of God's Wrath...the people were sore afraid.

1 “Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him,

2 That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand.

3 Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition;

4 Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.

5 Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things?” (2nd Thessalonians 2:1-5)

These people were looking for that Blessed Hope's return, our Lord Jesus, and when somebody scared them to think they had missed His return, they were thinking they were entering the Tribulation, and Nero was the Anti-Christ...of course, they were wrong, because things have not happened according to scripture in their day and age, as it has happened in ours.

Although in every age of the church, believers have been looking up expectantly for the return of Jesus in the clouds, only to the Church of Philadelphia has the Lord promised them He would come quickly. Note that if the Age of Philadelphia had ended in 1900, as Bible scholars so think, then Jesus didn't tell the truth, because Jesus hasn't come yet, and here we are 117 years later from the end of that age, according to them. But we know that Jesus cannot lie, so what are they missing? ..If Jesus is going to come quickly, He also promises a special “crown” to the Philadelphia church.

"Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown." (Revelation 3:11)

There is only one 'crown' that fits the context; "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing." (2nd Timothy 4:8)

Notice also in v. 9 of the passage found in chp. 3 of Revelation, where Jesus makes this statement:

9Behold, 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.” (Revelation 3:7-9)

What a profound message to say that Jews of today and in John's day were of the synagogue of Satan, but in the end, they will come to those who are Kings and Priest of God and worship at their feet by paying homage to those who God has made rulers in this coming Millennial Age. Even after Jesus has redeemed those out of the Tribulation, they will not be Kings, as the Church is given rule over the renewed earth. Jesus expresses a love for His Church and will make it known to those who come after her.

WE ARE LIVING IN THE AGE OF THE PHILADELPHIA CHURCH

If you look at all the years that have gone by, since Jesus formed His church in the Apostolic Era called the Church at Ephesus, approximately 1917 years have passed since the end of that Church era. It has been a long wait for those who have patiently continued to proclaim the Lord's soon return, even in this age we live in, the end of the Age of Grace. There are still people preaching the Good News of the soon return of Jesus Christ, and as time goes by, and more and more events proclaimed by our Lord Jesus and the prophets in your Bible come to pass, we have proclaimed His Name and not denied it. We who are watching and waiting have prophecy staring

us right in the face, as events line up as dominos that only need a push, and all hell will break loose...I believe we are coming right up to the push that will start that time coming, I'll speak of in a minute.

The Lord promises a unique reward to those patient Philadelphians, which is what I believe we are living in right now:

"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." (Revelation 3:10)

Note that Jesus refers to the 'hour' of temptation that He will keep the Philadelphians from experiencing. The use of the word 'hour' is significant. It signifies a brief but intense period that will "try ALL them that dwell upon the earth."

But the Philadelphians, because they patiently waited and trusted in His Word, will be 'kept' from that 'hour'. The Apostle Paul describes the fulfillment of that ironclad promise, issued directly from Jesus, to the Philadelphia Church:

13 "But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.

14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.

15 For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep.

16 For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:

17 Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

18 Wherefore comfort one another with these words". (1st Thessalonians 4:13-18)

THE LAODICEAN CHURCH IN THE TRIBULATION

We have yet to talk about one church age, that I believe is still future in its entirety. But it is mingled with the true church much as the wheat and the tares grow up in the same field in a parable Jesus spoke of in Matthew. She has sprung up in the last 100 years and overlapped the Philadelphia church, coming after her, and continuing after the True church is gone. . The Church of Laodicea was the Church that Jesus had dire warnings for.

14 "And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God;

15 I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot.

16 So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.

17 Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked:

18 I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see.

19 As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent." (Revelation 3:14-19)

I believe this is the Church that goes through the fire of the Tribulation. It will be those who have warmed a pew, fallen asleep during services, or just wasn't interested what the preacher was speaking of...They have lived their life like there was no tomorrow. They have lived for their flesh, and have put on the false face of righteousness because they belong to the best church in town, give regularly to the building program, or volunteer for the Annual Church Bake off, they think they are just fine in God's eyes....Only when they have been left behind will the thought of their foolishness come crashing down upon them, and they will know they have missed the "catching away of the Church" They may have heard it all their life, and they have scoffed at the very idea and fallen for the age old trap of being sloven for the Lord:

3 "Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts,

4 And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.

5 For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water:

6 Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished:

7 But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.” (2nd Peter 3:3-7)

This is the Church that God will spew out of His mouth, into the horror of the coming Tribulation...Are they lost forever? Those who have been in earshot of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and were either too busy, or just didn't think they needed some preacher to tell them that they were living in sin, or were destined for hell, if they did not repent..will remember those words and will search desperately for an answer when million have been reported missing all over the planet.

I saw a video and it showed what it could be like, if those who have put off the decision that will affect their destination for eternity, sitting in a church service and the preacher is preaching his heart out..Bible in hand when suddenly a clap of thunder and his bible falls to the ground....suddenly the whole church is near empty save a few totally frightened members who look around in horror and they instantly know what has happened...Why? They have heard it all their life and refused to come to Jesus and repent. Now they have it staring at them, and they fall to the ground on their knees in anguish. Those are the ones who will be the first ones to beg Jesus for forgiveness and be the first born out of the Age of the Law and end of the Age of the Church of Laodicia. Oh, there will still be churches in the Tribulation, but if you're following Jesus Christ right now, you wouldn't want to be a member of them. But there still will be some who will be saved, as the world will hear the testimony of the 144,000 Jewish evangelist from the 12 tribes of Israel and the Two Witnesses will be prophesying at the newly rebuilt Jewish Temple for 3.5 years...

19As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.

20Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.

21To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.” (Revelation 3:19-21)

Many will be saved from their testimony and those who have missed the event of the coming of Jesus for His church, I believe will be first in line...but it will be a high price to pay for their beliefs.

4”And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and *I saw* the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received *his* mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.” (Revelation 20:4)

SUDDENLY THE TRIBULATON ARRIVES.

The Bible makes a quick change in focus from Jesus dealing with the Laodicean Church and immediately, beginning in chapter 4, John is in the Spirit and hears a voice say:

1 “After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter.

2 And immediately I was in the spirit: and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne” (Revelation 4:1-2)

So begins the time known as Jacob's troubles and as John is whisked away into the throne room of God, it is a picture of the removal of the saints from this planet...I spoke of earlier what would be the domino that starts the releasing of a literal hell on earth. When millions upon millions of people suddenly vanish from this planet, then the Laodicean Church will know, just like those in that video of church members being left behind, it will come without warning. They will know that the beginning of the Tribulation has begun. Will it come instantly, or will God wait for a few years to reveal what Jesus will reveal by breaking the 1st seal on the title deed for this planet as found in chapter 6 of this apocalyptic book. It is not revealed in a timeline but some feel God's wrath will fall on

that very day. And some feel it could be years before the Anti-Christ is revealed, as he is what is revealed in the very first seal opened by Jesus Christ.

I believe that it is very possible that the end of the Age of the Philadelphia church is very close. The Laodicean Church will be sorely judged and will be those who have entered the Tribulation and will be tried as Jesus said in Revelation 3:10b “hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth. “ But those who submit to the Lord's command will be saved:

16 “So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.

17 “Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked:

18 I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see.

19 As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.

20 Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.

21 To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.” (Revelation 3:17-21)

Jesus gives a prescription and commands that will save them from the coming evil age in v. 18...buy gold tried in the fire (the fire of Tribulation of your faith in Jesus Christ) and white raiment which is a sign of a saint of God). But it will come at a high price for their being saved until the end.

Repeating Revelation chapter 20:

4” And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and *I saw* the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received *his* mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.”

And as Jesus warned those who enter into this time of extreme suffering, demonic displays of depravity, and those will submit to the evil of the Beast power just to save their life, or their family members lives...many will fail to keep the faith in Jesus:

8 “All these are the beginning of sorrows.

9 Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake.

10 And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another.

11 And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many.

12 And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.

13 But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.” (Matthew 24:8-13)

The Age of Grace is quickly coming to an end. The Church of Philadelphia is about to meet her King and Lord. The Laodicean Church Age is mingled with the Philadelphia Church in these last days....The Philadelphia church is leaving, the Laodiceans church will stay and miss the calling of Jesus to “Come up hither” and will be thrown into the coming Tribulation.

Question? Which church do you belong to? In this day and age, you can belong to one or the other....will you hear a trumpet sound and be changed into immortal beings that meet Jesus in the air, or be looking around your church, or the streets for people you knew, sat close by with, or lived next door to? It won't be anything you can pinpoint when it will happen, as it will happen as a thief that comes in the night.

2 “For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night.

3For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.

(1st Thessalonians 5:1-3)

The wise man prepares for this coming age, the Age of the Law, or Jacob's Trouble which all stand for the coming Tribulation. How does anyone prepare?

57 “But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

58 Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.” (1st Corinthians 15:57-58)

“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him, should not perish, but have everlasting life.

God sent not His into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved” (John 3:16-17)

If you have been idle in the church of Laodicea, I urge you to come to the Church of Philadelphia, where Jesus arms are open wide to receive you, and as He proclaimed:

18 “I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eye salve, that thou mayest see.” Revelation 3:18) Look now to the Lord God, Jesus Christ...His salvation is as close as a prayer by faith....

This is pastor Mike Taylor, praying your find your way to the true church and be ready for the coming of our Lord. If you need counseling, prayer, or just a listening ear, email me at realteam1999@sbcglobal.net. Or visit me online at www.pastormiketaylor.blogspot.com, God bless you all

TIL WE MEET AT JESUS FEET