

# The First Church of Self

## Revelation 3:14-22

<sup>14</sup>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;

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

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

<sup>17</sup>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:

<sup>18</sup>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.

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

<sup>20</sup>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.

<sup>21</sup>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.

<sup>22</sup>He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

## Review

At the turn of the century, the established churches sensed a need for change within their ranks. In 1896, Charles Sheldon wrote the book *In His Steps*, a call to churches to care for the needy in their communities, to show them the love of Christ, and thus be agents of social change. Although all these works were good in and of themselves, none of them replaced true repentance of sin and regeneration by the power of the Holy Ghost!

Just ten years later, in 1906, the Lord poured out the Holy Ghost at a little mission on Azusa Street in California, and *this* was the open door out of the cycle of Nicolaitanism.

**As time is winding down, God provides an emergency exit from the cage of denomination. He provides an open door so believers wouldn't have to get trapped in the denominations that arose after the Wesleyan revivals.**

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107 Now, now, watch the--the time coming now, after the great missionary move that swept across the nations of brotherly love, to take what they had. Nothing against it, of literature and whatevermore, into the different parts of the world. **Now, the church denomination had gone back to education, works again (See?), gone back.**

**After the great denomination had been set up, Jesus set an open door.** After the Wesleyan age had come in, and the Methodist church had been established in the earth, taken roots, growing, making a great church which it is today, one of the greatest among the Protestant churches, and that time, **the thing that took place then was Jesus set an open door for the church before they entered into the Laodicean age.**

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93 Now close, listen, don't miss this now. See, first thing, when they consulted the priests, consulted the dignitaries, consulted the military, consulted all the congregation, the neighborhood, to get together for this great meeting to come, they failed to do it right. They didn't consult God. And, by doing so, not going back and see what time it was!

94 **Oh, brother, listen. What time are we living in? What's the age? What's the hour that we're in? It's not time for these things that they're talking about.** That's passed. Judgment is on hand now. You can see it breaking. You remember the rock up on the mountain? Judgment hour! You remember the revelation, or the vision of the Bride? Just keep Her in step. Don't let Her get out of step.

Notice, "Upon the shoulders of the priests!"

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95 And David and all the priests, that really ought to have knowed better, but what was it? The priests should a knowed better. The scribes, theologians, should a knowed better, because the Word said not to do that.

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140 Our big crusades, billions and millions has made confessions. And I doubt whether there would be a hundred of them, of all of it. See, hasn't been a thing.

Then look at the Word promise.

141 You'll think that that's failed, and we know it's failed. Some of our greatest of--of revivalists in the land today say that it's utterly failed. The church knows it's failed. Everybody knows it's failed. Well, why is it? Why did it fail?

**It was for a good purpose. It was to bring people in the Presence of God, great crusades. And millions of people spent their money, and put in great crusades. And churches all went together, great auditoriums, and great things, and great things taken place. Why did it fail? Is because they never knowed the hour they were living.**

### Isaiah 40:31

*But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.*

## The Busy Church

**Christ says He knows their works, but He doesn't say He knows them personally! In fact, this church seems so busy and self-absorbed they don't even notice Christ's absence from their midst. He's standing knocking at their door, but it's questionable whether anyone will even hear Him.**

### A.W. Tozer on the modern church

"If the Holy Spirit was withdrawn from the church today, 95 percent of what we do would go on and no one would know the difference. If the Holy Spirit had been withdrawn from the New Testament church, 95 percent of what they did would stop, and everybody would know the difference."

→ **This is precisely the predicament described in Revelation 3:20!**

#### Cf. Matthew 7:21-23

<sup>21</sup>Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.

<sup>22</sup>Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?

<sup>23</sup>And then will I profess unto them, **I never knew you:** depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

## The Lukewarm Church

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Now He has cried out to this last age, "You have the Word. **You have more Bibles than ever, but you are not doing anything about the Word except dividing and hacking it into pieces, taking what you want and leaving out what you don't want. You are not interested in LIVING it, but debating it.** I would sooner you were cold or hot. If you were cold and rejected it, I could stand that. If you would get white hot to know its truth and live it, I would praise you for that. But when you simply take My Word and don't honor it, I in return must refuse to honor you. I will spue you out for you nauseate Me."

This is a church that enjoys discussing truth more than walking in it. Questions can be a way of showing off one's own knowledge, or downplaying the significance of truth. In the latter case, debating by just questioning is a sure-fire way never to be wrong, because you posit hardly anything, just question everything.

The current pope is a posterchild for lukewarmness. He'll discuss everything, but stands for very little ... except saving the world from climate change. Conservatives within the Church are very wary of Francis. One of them wrote the following after a recent synod in the Vatican:

“No man will give his life for a question mark; he will for an exclamation point. **Question marks litter the landscape; certainty appears to be the problem, not the solution.** Without [Truth], we're left only with our own conclusions, which aren't truths worth dying for and thus aren't truths worth living for.” – Priest Raymond de Souza in the Wall Street Journal

## The Talking Church

Not only is this church too busy to notice Christ's absence, they're monopolizing the conversation. Even were Christ inside the church, He wouldn't be able to get a word in edgewise.

Exposition of the 7 Church Ages, p.390

The church is no longer the "mouthpiece" of God. It is its own mouthpiece.

Exposition of the 7 Church Ages, p.391

Now look at the first phrase of this verse, "because thou sayest". See, they were speaking. They were talking as the mouthpiece of God.

And their conversation is embarrassingly self-absorbed and self-referential. ***"I am rich! I am increased with goods! I have need of nothing!"*** The church is speaking of its own works rather than of Christ's all-atoning work at Calvary; of its own programs more than Christ's power.

## This church may be talking, but it's not praying!

This is a church totally bereft of prayer, for it senses no need. And without a need, there is no drive to prayer. Furthermore, there's no real praise, for the church is glorying in its own works rather than Christ's!

## The De-sensitized Church

*Try peeling an orange with oven mitts on and you'll soon discover how important our senses are!*

When a person loses his ability to hear the voice of God—as this Laodicean church has—it's like silencing your home's smoke alarms because you don't want your sleep disturbed at night. You may certainly sleep better, but you and yours also may never wake up.

**Pain is a very inconvenient sensation, but it is one of our greatest blessings.** Some children are born unable to feel pain (congenital insensitivity to pain). Though this may sound wonderful, it's actually very dangerous!

People with this condition can feel the difference between sharp and dull and hot and cold, but cannot sense, for example, that a hot beverage is burning their tongue. This condition, which is present from birth, can lead to an accumulation of wounds, bruises, broken bones, and other health issues that may go undetected over time and can lead to a reduction in life expectancy. Young children with congenital insensitivity to pain may have mouth or finger wounds due to self-biting and may also experience multiple burn-related injuries. Many people with this condition also have a complete loss of the sense of smell (anosmia).[1] In cases of congenital insensitivity to pain caused by mutations in the *PRDM12* gene, the patients have a normal sense of smell, predisposition to infections and a greater incidence of corneal abrasions due to a lack of tear production.

Leprosy is a disease that haunted the ancient world, and is still with us today, though it is less mysterious because doctors understand how it works. Leprosy is proved to be a disease of the nervous system. Lepers accumulated hideous wounds as an *indirect* result of leprosy. Leprosy attacked nerves in a particular part of the body, and because the leper lost his sense of pain, he would injure himself *without realizing it*. And by continuing to use that injured body part, his injury would get worse and worse.

### Old Testament example of spiritual leprosy at work, on scale of Laodicea

MALACHI 1:2-3

**I have loved you, saith the LORD. Yet ye say, Wherein hast thou loved us?** [Was] not Esau Jacob's brother? saith the LORD: yet I loved Jacob, And I hated Esau, and laid his mountains and his heritage waste for the dragons of the wilderness.

MALACHI 1:7-8

**Ye offer polluted bread upon mine altar; and ye say, Wherein have we polluted thee?** In that ye say, The table of the LORD [is] contemptible. And if ye offer the blind for sacrifice, [is it] not evil? and if ye offer the lame and sick, [is it] not evil? offer it now unto thy governor; will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy person? saith the LORD of hosts.

MALACHI 2:17

**Ye have wearied the LORD with your words. Yet ye say, Wherein have we wearied [him]?** When ye say, Every one that doeth evil [is] good in the sight of the LORD, and he delighteth in them; or, Where [is] the God of judgment?

MALACHI 3:7

Even from the days of your fathers ye are gone away from mine ordinances, and have not kept [them]. **Return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith the LORD of hosts. But ye said, Wherein shall we return?**

MALACHI 3:8

Will a man rob God? **Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee?** In tithes and offerings.

MALACHI 3:13

**Your words have been stout against me, saith the LORD. Yet ye say, What have we spoken [so much] against thee?**

“God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, **but shouts in our pains**: it is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world.” - C.S. Lewis

→ And the devil does everything he can so we won't hear God's messages in both pleasures and pains!

In the Bible, leprosy is a type of sin. Like leprosy, sin also has a long incubation period. It may take years before infection actually becomes apparent. The little, seemingly inconsequential decisions we make every day, have a large impact over time.

Thoughts→Words→Actions→Habits→Character→Destiny

**How could a church get into such a condition that although they are poor, blind and naked, they are exalting themselves for their riches and prosperity? *How does this happen?* It happens because they are no longer hearing the voice of God. They are unable to be protected by their sense of spiritual pain, and they go on living in the pleasures of sin, not realizing those pleasures are killing them.**

Bro. Branham tackles this question in a sermon called “And Knoweth It Not.”

AND.KNOWETH.IT.NOT\_ JEFF.IN V-2 N-10 SUNDAY\_ 65-0815

62 Now, the question is, here. I was thinking that, see, now why the Lord was bringing me back. "And know it, knowest... Know it not; thou art naked, miserable, wretched, blind, and know it not."

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But when it's directed from the inside, it throws all the rest of it together. That's the guidepost. That's the control tower, the inside of the inside. **The soul controls the spirit, the spirit controls the body.**

210 So an outside whitewash don't make any difference. Them religious people back there, that Paul called "whited-walls," and so forth, they were (outward) just every way the... a believer, and they had prophesies among them, and everything else but the inside of the inside ("the soul that disbelieveth").

211 That's the reason I say people can jump up and down, and speak in tongues, people can shout, lay hands on the sick, and heal the sick and so forth, by faith; all these great things there by the Spirit, still be lost. Anointed ones.

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126 And now the reason that people today... Now, don't forget this now, and you'll--you'll see what the Holy... what the initial evidence of the Holy Ghost is. See?

127 Now, people can live in this spirit, and they dance in the spirit. They shout in the spirit. They go to church in the spirit, and they can absolutely have the real Spirit of God anointed on that spirit, but still be lost and just as devil-possessed as they can be, with that spirit.

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152 Why? You say, "These are good people. What makes them..." **Because, one thing, their tie post is on a church.** And in here... You remember last Sunday's, a week ago; how many was here and heard the sermon on The Anointed Ones In The Last Days? I think all of you. See, they are anointed. Their spirits are anointed, in this second realm.

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158 Now look, I want to ask you something. Why can't that woman see it? Why can't she? As far as being in adultery physically, to her husband, she's not guilty; she has nothing to confess. She's as clean as she was the day she was born; no man has touched her.

159 I'm speaking parallel now, to the woman, to the church. She's as clean as she was born. Well, that's exactly what the church is, as she was born, but she was "born in sin, shaped in iniquity, come..." See what I mean?

160 Now you tell her that it's wrong for her to cut her hair; the Bible said so. It's wrong for her to wear them shorts; the Bible said so. She would say, "Nonsense." Why? Her ultimate is not down here, in that third man, the soul that's predestinated and sent from God. But her ultimate is on an organization out here, that some man has organized outside of This. See?

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171 Looky here. Here's a little lady twisting herself down the street; here's a young fellow, his eyes catches it. He's a member of the church. He's a Pentecostal. He's whatever he is. But the first thing you know, there's no hold post in there. She'll say, "Hello." He's got curly hair, and kind of nice-looking, straight-shouldered young man; maybe tried to live right. She start walking up to him, even a preacher. The first thing you know...

172 What is it? This out here, the flesh desire; and the spirit down here, yet anointed, saying, "Don't do it, don't do it." But what will it do? It'll move right around, there hold, there it goes. First thing you know, he's trying to make a date with her. He is guilty of committing adultery, whether he touches her or not.

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173 But, a genuine, born-again son of God! Amen! You can't do it yourself. It's totally impossible for a--a red-blooded male to walk before a female like that, without something taking place. **But when there is Something on the inside; that little born-again Something here!**

174 Though that man might have shouted, spoke in tongues, jumped, danced, everything else, anointed with the Spirit; done all the signs and wonders that God said in there, by His Spirit! Jesus said, "Many will come to Me in that day, say, 'Lord, haven't I prophesied in Your Name? Haven't I cast out devils in Your Name? Have not... ' He said, 'Depart from Me, you that work iniquity.'" What is iniquity? Something that you know to do, and don't do it. "'Depart from Me, you that work iniquity; I didn't even know you.'"

175 **But down on the inside of that man, if that little tie post is in there, that Seed of God that was predestinated before the foundation of the world; I don't care what takes place, it holds him. It's there to stay.**

AND.KNOWETH.IT.NOT\_ JEFF.IN V-2 N-10 SUNDAY\_ 65-0815

279 Just watch! Stay close to Christ. Let me warn you now, as a minister of the Gospel, of this. Don't take any foolishness. Don't imagine anything. Stay right there until this inside of the inside is anchored to the Word, that you're right in Christ, 'cause that's the only thing that's going to... Cause, we're in the most deceiving age that we ever lived in. "It would deceive the very Elected if it was possible," because they have anointing, they can do anything like the rest of them.