

Lifting Up The STANDARD

“When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the LORD shall lift up a standard against him” (Isaiah 59:19).



Challenging And Encouraging God's Remnant To Remain Faithful

Monday, September 21, 2015

The Rich Pastor

“I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, but thou art rich...” (Revelation 2:9)

Seven Churches

There are four basic interpretations of the messages to the seven churches.

- **First**, these churches did exist historically.
- **Second**, these churches represent all churches through all ages.
- **Third**, there will be seven different churches at the end of the age.
- **Fourth**, these seven churches represent seven consecutive eras of local church history extending from the first century to the end of the age.

Seven Pastors

It seems in all the discussions the fact is overlooked that the seven letters were written to seven pastors. All seven letters were written to the “angel” (translated “messenger seven times).

1. “Unto the angel (messenger) of the church” (Revelation 2:1).
2. “Unto the angel (messenger) of the church” (Revelation 2:8).
3. “Unto the angel (messenger) of the church” (Revelation 2:12).
4. “Unto the angel (messenger) of the church” (Revelation 2:18).
5. “Unto the angel (messenger) of the church” (Revelation 3:1).
6. “Unto the angel (messenger) of the church” (Revelation 3:7).
7. “Unto the angel (messenger) of the church” (Revelation 3:4).

**ISRAEL’S FUNDAMENTAL
APOSTATE**

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It was to the pastor Christ said,

- **Revelation 2:2**, “I know thy works...”
- **Revelation 2:9**, “I know thy works...”
- **Revelation 2:13**, “I know thy works...”
- **Revelation 2:19**, “I know thy works...”
- **Revelation 3:1**, “I know thy works...”
- **Revelation 3:8**, “I know thy works...”
- **Revelation 3:15**, “I know thy works...”

It was to the pastor Christ said,

- **Revelation 2:5**, “Repent...or else...”
- **Revelation 2:5**, “Except thou repent.”
- **Revelation 2:16**, “Repent; or else...”
- **Revelation 3:3**, “Hold fast, and repent.”
- **Revelation 3:19**, “Be zealous therefore, and repent.”

It was to the pastor Christ said,

Revelation 3:16, “So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.”

As mentioned in a previous article, John, the only remaining apostle, was nearly one hundred years old. The Temple and the city of Jerusalem lay in ruins, the Jews had been dispersed for over twenty-five years and the local church dispensation was underway. John was to write about the condition of the seven pastors and their churches in Asia.

SMYRNA was about thirty-five miles north of Ephesus. It had a population of 200,000. Today it is called Ismir. It has a population of 335,000. Smyrna was a centre of Emperor worship with a temple

honoring Tiberius. Emperor worship was compulsory. Under the threat of death, everyone had to publicly worship Caesar saying, "Caesar is Lord."

Obviously, true believers of Christ refused and they suffered for their stand. The church at Smyrna was a persecuted church, however, the more persecution, the greater the church became. Those faithful believers were burned at the stake as they quoted Scriptures, sang Psalms, and they gave their lives for their Lord. The pastor at Smyrna had taught the people well.

It was not a popular church with insincere so-called Believers. Persecution is not a way of life for hypocritical Christians. When a local church is faithful to the doctrines of God's Word it will not be popular with those who are unfaithful. The pastor at Smyrna did not have the fancy buildings we so long for today. It was a poor church in the eyes of the people, however, Jesus said to the pastor, **"I know thy...poverty, but thou art rich."**

First Peter 4:12-14 says,

"Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified."

The word "Christian" is only found in two verses in the Word of God. One of those verses is First Peter 4:16 that says, *"If any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf."*

Second Timothy 3:12 was also written to the pastor. It says, **"Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution."**

"Thou Art Rich"

Revelation 2:8-9,

"And unto the angel of the church in Smyrna write; These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive; I know thy works,

and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan."

There are two Greek words for poverty. One refers to a man who has to work for a living. He has nothing extra. The Greek word used here literally means to be beggarly or utterly destitute.

Our average fundamental Baptist congregation is in no state of mind to appreciate a church like Smyrna. Today, very few have a real interest in what it costs to be a Smyrna kind of Christian. In our age most are in church for what they can get, rather than what they can contribute. It is a fact that less than ten percent of the members in our churches do all the work. We have a Laodicean sense of wealth. The church at Smyrna was marked by material poverty and spiritual strength, and most of our churches are marked by material wealth and spiritual weakness.

"The First And The Last" "Dead And Alive"

Revelation 2:8,

"These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive."

In times like we are living in today, the sincere Christians need to focus on the bigger picture. The Lord was in charge long before the apostasy of our day set in and He will be in charge long after it is over.

"I Know"

Revelation 2:9,

"I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan."

The Lord understood the situation for the Christians at Smyrna. Jesus lived in extreme poverty when He was living on earth. He was homeless, He didn't have a place to lay His head, He was slandered and ridiculed.

Four Things The Lord Knew

Revelation 2:9,

"I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan."

Christ understood...

1. **The pastor's works.** Jesus knew about hard work in the ministry. He understood the pastor's works in a difficult place.
2. **The pastor's tribulation.** Jesus suffered extreme tribulation and persecution during His time here. He understood the pastor's persecution.
3. **The pastor's poverty.** When Jesus was here He had nothing, not even a place to lay His head (Luke 9:58).
4. **The pastor's opposition** from sheep in wolves clothing. Jesus had more opposition from the religious hypocrites than He did from the Gentiles.

The Rich And The Poor

To the pastor at Smyrna Jesus said, *"I know thy poverty, but thou art rich."* The dictionary definition of rich is, "Having a great deal of money or assets." God's definition of rich is, "As poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things" (Second Corinthians 6:10).

Jesus said the pastor at Smyrna was rich. The pastor at Laodicea bragged saying *"I am rich,"* however, Jesus said that pastor knew not that he was *"wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked."* The Laodicean pastor was rich in the dictionary definition of the word, the pastor at Smyrna was rich in God's definition of the word.

To the pastor at Laodicea Jesus said, *"I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich"* (Revelation 3:18).

The pastor at Smyrna was a pastor who was, *"Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt"* (Treasures of the world) (Hebrews 11:26).

The pastor at Smyrna did not *"trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God"* (First Timothy 6:17).

The pastor at Smyrna understood what Paul was talking about when he said, *"How that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality"* (Second Corinthians 8:2).

The pastor at Smyrna understood what Paul was talking about when he said, *"O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!"* (Romans 11:33).

The pastor at Smyrna understood what God meant when He said, *"There is that maketh himself rich, yet hath nothing: there is that maketh himself poor, yet hath great riches."* (Proverbs 13:7).

The Message To The Congregation

Revelation 2:11,

"He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death."

Types of Hearers Today

1. "Dull of Hearing"

Hebrews 5:11,

"For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed."

These people were sharply rebuked.

Hebrews 5:12-14,

"For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil."

For the most, part ninety percent of what we call our fundamental independent Baptist church membership fit into the verses above. And to think, we call it "fundamentalism." God calls it "Laodicean."

2. "Turning Away Their Ears"

Second Timothy 4:3-4,

"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; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables."

Smooth Things Only, Please

During the apostasy of God's people in the Old Testament, we read the people said, *"Prophecy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits."*

It is the same today. If a preacher dares to preach things that are not in line with the carnal desires of his self-centered fundamental, carnal, church members, they will persecute him verbally or they will leave, or do both.

They will bounce from one church to another and they, *“after their own lusts (desires) shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears.”*

They want the pastor to be their “Tickle Me Elmo Doll,” that makes them feel happy. Unfortunately there is no shortage of “Tickle Me Elmo” pastors who will sell out the Word of God to make all his listeners feel warm and fuzzy and make himself look successful as he fills God’s church with disobedient people.

If a fundamental pastor dares to Scripturally discipline a church member, another “Tickle Me Elmo” pastor will gladly take the disobedient church member into his church or even start another church with those who, *“after their own lusts (desires) shall they heap to themselves teachers.”* These church hoppers do not want to quit going to church altogether. They have ears that desire to be tickled, therefore, they will look for a preacher to tickle them.

Our Laodicean Age

We are now living in the Laodiceans church age which is far removed from the Smyrna age. The church has become like the world. Phone most of our fundamental churches after hours and like phoning any business in town, you will get a recording telling you when their “office hours” are.

The area at the front of the church was once referred to as the “pulpit area.” Today we call it “the platform.” The dictionary says a platform is “A raised area where performers can be seen by their audiences.”

Many church platforms now feature girls dressed in tight formfitting clothes singing, “Jesus keep me near the cross,” and “Have you been to Jesus for the cleansing power?” Prayer has become something on the “order of service” card, that in many services has become nothing more than

an opportunity to get the congregation to close their eyes while the next set of performers get ready to do their “specials” on the platform.

The pastor’s study is now called the pastor’s office where operating the business aspects of the church have become more important than studying the Scriptures.

Win Them- Wet Them - Work Them

Pastors were put on guilt trips to baptize 200 a year. Win them, (by promising Heaven for all who pray a forgiveness prayer, minus repentance) wet them (in the baptistery) and work them, became the new philosophy.

Repentance became a thing of the past because it is easier for people to vote for Jesus and be considered saved. (We can put the right information in a computer and it will vote for Jesus, but it won’t go to Heaven.) Hard Bible preaching soon began to disappear from the scene because it would scare people off. We must have unity at all cost, if we are going to keep the attendance growing and the offerings up.

“I Will Give”

Jesus said, *“I will give unto every one of you according to your works”* (Revelation 2:23). In the seven letters to the seven pastors the Lord mentioned the word “works” twelve times. He said, *“I know thy works”* to all seven pastors. In all the references the term is plural. It is an *“activity involving mental or physical effort done in order to achieve a purpose or result.”*

In each of the seven letters the Lord revealed that He knew the real purpose they had in doing the work that they did. In five out of the seven letter, the Lord rebuked the pastor. Again, the Lord promised to *“give unto every one of you according to your works”*

“Every Man’s Work of What Sort It Is”

First Corinthians 3:13-15,

“Every man’s work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man’s work of what sort it is. If any man’s work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man’s work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.”

Dealing with The Apostasy of Our Day

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