

CHURCH OF THE
G O D

“And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all the nations; and then shall the end come.” – Matthew 24:14

September 28, 2011

Dear Brethren and Friends,

It is in the seasonal Holy Days of God that we are to experience a really special renewal of our faith—and much more!

We are now observing the final of “three times” of each year in which we are commanded to appear before God (Deuteronomy 16:16). We do so as brethren and with the astounding truth that both God the Father and Jesus Christ are very intimately involved in our lives.

Unmistakably, we have entered another juncture—a period of time spoken of in the Bible as “the end of the age.”

While on the one hand we are portraying—in type—the culminating events that will lead to the establishment of God’s Kingdom and a time of incomparable peace, the reality of what is happening right now appears bleak!

Jesus Christ has very clearly warned that those of this age will not understand the gravity of the situation (compare Matthew 24:36-39). In fact, as times grow worse and worse, God’s people will face increasing persecutions! Note what Jesus said would happen in this context:

“All these are the beginning of sorrows. Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name’s sake” (Matthew 24:8-9).

Regardless of what nation Christians might find themselves in, those who remain faithful to Jesus Christ will always have help from God. It is for the elect’s sake that God will intervene to shorten those days in order to save this world and to preserve life on it (compare Matthew 24:22; Romans 9:27-28).

In the Book of Revelation, a panoramic overview of the Church of God is presented. In chapters two and three, seven cities of Asia (Turkey) are identified and serve as archetypes for distinct eras of the Church. These periods are identified by dominant characteristics that arise and that will be prevalent in the Church following its establishment, and to each one Jesus Christ gives a specific message of warning and encouragement. In addition, each Church era receives this urgent admonition:

“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches” (Revelation 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22).

Much of what we read in the messages to the churches has already taken place, and it is apparent that Laodicea is now the predominant era. However, there are still remnants of previous eras in existence today, especially Philadelphia. Concerning the momentous times that lie ahead of us, Christ has a specific directive to Laodicea and the remnant of Philadelphia—and the implications are crucial.

First, note what Jesus promises to those in Philadelphia regarding their immediate future:

“Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth. Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown” (Revelation 3:10-11).

Understand that this will only find fulfillment at the occurrence of the period of great tribulation and events leading to Christ's return.

Next, a quite different challenge is presented to Laodicea:

"I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth. Because you say, "I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing"—and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked—I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent. Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me" (Revelation 3:15-20).

Laodicea represents the final emergence of God's Church, and their description is based on their spiritual condition as well as their approach to fulfilling the Work of preaching the gospel message. They are the ones who will not be kept "from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth." In Revelation 12, verses 13-17, two groups of God's people are also mentioned—one is protected from Satan while the other suffers persecution from him! The context of this prophecy is set in the final generation living in the end of this age (compare Matthew 24:32-35).

How does Philadelphia "persevere"? The answer is found in Revelation 3:8:

"I know your works. See, I have set before you an open door, and no one can shut it; for you have a little strength, have kept My word, and have not denied My name."

God has called only a few in this day and age to become His firstfruits (James 1:18). It falls to those of us who have received God's Holy Spirit to respond, and one way is to continually strive to overcome. We can overcome when we keep Jesus Christ in the forefront of our lives:

"Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you are disqualified" (2 Corinthians 13:5).

Brethren, we are to study and consider all that has happened to God's Church—as Jesus commands in His message to the churches. We are to "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 3:18). Even as Paul wrote to those of his era, so must we now heed his instructions:

"Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching" (Hebrews 10:23-25).

Let's take the time to be especially thankful to the Father and Jesus Christ for what they are doing in our lives, and let us firmly resolve to follow their lead and that of those who faithfully serve in the Work God has given to His Church.

In Christ's Service,



Dave Harris