

SPECIAL INTERLUDE

Revisiting Church History In Light Of The 500th Anniversary Of The Protestant Reformation VII. Laodicea: Today's Evangelical Church -- Our Dire Need To Return To The Biblical Faith (Revelation 3:14-22)

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

We face unrest and decadence in all kinds of institutions, secular and religious, and it is stressing a lot of people today:

(1) Theodore Hayre of Prospect, Connecticut, in his letter to the Republican-American, November 11, 2017, p. 14A, wrote, "The problem with the world right now is . . . [that] we are experiencing social transitions, ideological renovations, philosophical instability all over the world and . . . moral manipulation [of] values." (brackets ours)

(2) It is little wonder then that "the National Institute of Mental Health" claims that "anxiety is the most common mental-health disorder in the United States, affecting nearly one-third of both adolescents and adults." (Jeannie Cunnion, "America's teen anxiety epidemic is heartbreaking. Parents, here's the incredible thing you must do now," October 16, 2017; foxnews.com)

(3) It affects us as believers locally: in the last three weeks, a head a household told me of a discipling crisis he faces in another evangelical church, another of a life-threatening crisis a member of his family faced in a business and another of a job-threatening crisis he faces due to governmental decisions, and three others have told of the general chaos they see in society!

Need: *So we ask, "From God's perspective, what is going on in OUR era of Church History, and what does He advise?!"*

I. The titles attributed to Christ in Revelation 3:14 identify the Laodicean Church as today's Evangelicals in crisis:

- A. Jesus is "the Amen," a phrase used elsewhere in the Greek N. T. *only* at (1) 2 Cor. 1:20 where the *godly* say "the Amen" if the Bible is taught of Christ's literal fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant, i. e., dispensationally, versus Reformed-Calvinist theology, and at (2) 1 Cor. 14:16 where the *godly* say "the Amen" if the speaker uses a known human language opposite Charismatic-Arminian theology. (Moulton & Geden, Concordance to the Greek Testament, 1974, p. 51-52; J. Dwight Pentecost, Things to Come, 1972, p. 65-128; Charles C. Ryrie, Dispensationalism Today, 1970, p. 43-47)
- B. Christ is also "the Faithful and True Witness," a title used elsewhere of God *only* in Jer. 42:5 with 43:1-44:30 where *carnal* people first promise to heed God's Word from His messenger only later to disobey it so that God punishes them.
- C. Jesus is the "Head of the creation of God," alluding to Col. 1:15-22 esp. of His sovereignty in evangelizing the *unsaved*.
- D. To explain, (1) around 1950, "new evangelicals" disobeyed Christ's Rev. 3:11 call to Philadelphian era Fundamentalists to hold firm to the truth, and they opted instead to "engage" the world with an alleged respected Reformed Theology [*for doctrinal vitality*]. (J. H. Armstrong, gen. ed., The Com. Evan. Crisis, 1996, p. 29-31) (2) However, (a) this left them with Reformed Theology's figurative handling of prophecy from the Alexandrian School that yields amillennialism, postmillennialism and reconstructionism that in turn fuel ecumenism and anti-semitism and also (b) left them open to compromise with (i) all the past errors of Church History still in the world [like Catholicism's Babylonian Semiramis cult; Liberal Theology's subjectivism that leads to Postmodernism that inhibits Evangelicals from interpreting alleged "debatable" Bible verses; cults, etc.] and (ii) troubling secular ideologies like evolution, Marxism, globalism, paganism, etc. [that also corrupt "Christian counseling"]. (Ibid., p. 31ff; B. Howse, Rel. Troj. Horse, 2012, pp. 439; Martin and Deidre Bobgan, Psychoheresy, 1987, pp. 242) (b) Also, Charismatic-Arminians reacted to the "new evangelicals" promotion of their old nemesis Calvinism in Reformed Theology by promoting Arminian theology [*for spiritual vitality*] (Ibid., Armstrong; Quebedeaux, The New Charismatics, p. 30-31), but (i) Calvinism reflects Augustine's Pergamum era pagan Neo-Platonism where man as an extension of God sees God author his faith (B. B. Warfield, Calv. and Aug., 1974 [all, esp. p. 378]; G. Carruth, ed., The Vol. Lib., 1994, v. 22, p. 2025f; E. M. Burns, West. Civ., 1963, p. 395-396) and (ii) Arminianism reflects Pelagius' pagan Stoicism where man helps save himself (W. Walker, A Hist. of the Chr. Ch., 1959, p. 168ff). (3) By thus not heeding and relying on Christ to "engage" the world, Evangelicals have sabotaged their ministry to everybody and afflicted God's flock with oppressive religious errors and secular ideologies in the world!

II. Christ critiques today's evangelical plight by way of an illustration from ancient Laodicea itself, Rev. 3:15-17:

- A. Laodicea piped hot water from Heliopolis [*illus. spiritual vitality*] and cold from Colossae [*illus. doctrinal vitality*], but both pipes lay exposed to the weather and gave only lukewarm water fit as an emetic, The New Bib. Dict., 1967, p. 716f.
- B. Evangelicals' pollution with world errors makes it doctrinally and spiritually inept, so Christ is about to "vomit" (*emeo*, Arndt & Ging., A Grk.-Eng. Lex. of N. T., 1967, p. 254) it up as "adulterous" (Lev. 18:25), or *idolatrous*, Rev. 3:17a:
 1. "I am rich" alludes to Zech. 11:5 where Israel's leaders abused God's flock for material gain; "I have acquired wealth" points to Hos. 12:8 where Israel thought her wealth meant she was without sin and "[I] do not need a thing" refers to 1 Thess. 4:11-12 where one's material welfare aids in his reputation before the unsaved world.
 2. Thus, in compromising with worldly wickedness, Evangelicals cease trusting in Christ to disciple people and instead view money as their god, focusing on acquiring it as the measure of their ministry success, Ibid., Howse, p. 11.
- C. Jesus then revealed *HOW errant Calvinist* and *errant Arminian BELIEFS* have *led* to this dire crisis, Rev. 3:17b:
 1. "Wretched" (*talaiporos*) appears elsewhere *only* in Rom. 7:24 (Ibid., Arndt & Ging., p. 811) where one is carnal versus what he wills, Rom. 7:15-24. Calvinists teach **Total depravity**, that *both* lost man's will and nature are *fully* corrupt and Arminians say *both* are *partly* corrupt so the lost can contribute faith to help save themselves. However,

Rom. 7:15-24 shows the **will** is **not bound** by the **sin nature** though the latter is **fully corrupt opposite both views**, and both groups fail to get saved men to rely on the Holy Spirit to live above sin in the Christian life, Romans 8:1-4!

2. "Pitiful" (*eleeinós*) occurs elsewhere **only** in 1 Cor. 15:19 (Ibid., p. 249) of those who hope only in this life. Calvinists say God chose who would believe (**Unconditional election**) while Arminians say He chose to save those He foreknew, with both making election result in justification. Yet, **Scripture** (1 Pet. 1:2; 2 Thess. 2:13; Eph. 1:3-6) has election unto **only post-justification** goals. Both groups lead believers to focus on this life, yielding **worldliness**.
3. "Poor" in light of Rev. 3:18 and 1 Peter 1:7 is **weakness in faith** versus Calvinism that asserts **Limited atonement**, that Christ died only for the elect since only they are given God's "rich" saving faith, for **true believers** in Rev. 3:18-19 (in light of Heb. 12:6-8) are **poor in faith!** "Poor" also critiques Arminianism that holds one's faith helps save him so that one loses his salvation if his faith falters, for in Rev. 3:18 (with 3:19) believers are still saved **though poor in faith!** Calvinists as believers fail to live by faith as they rely on predestination to preserve their salvation and Arminians fail to live by faith by relying on a self-help faith that falters, so both theologies yield ungodly lives!
4. "Blind" signals a lack of discernment versus Calvinism's **Irresistible grace** belief that God makes the elect discern the truth to believe the Gospel. This "blind" state also counters the Arminian view that the lost on their own can discern the truth to be saved. Christians in both groups thus fail to rely on God's Holy Spirit to convict the lost (Jn. 16:7-11) and for themselves as believers to rely on the Holy Spirit to discern God's truth, John 16:12-15; 2 Tim. 1:13-14.
5. "Naked" via Rev. 3:18 and 19:8 is a lack of godly works versus Calvinism's **Perseverance of the saints** doctrine in its view that such perseverance is due to God's predestination and versus the Arminian view that failing to persevere means one lost his salvation. In Rev. 3:18, the saved do not persevere due to carnality, and versus both theologies, believers are unconditionally eternally secure by means of the Holy Spirit's sealing ministry, Ephesians 1:13-14.

III. Christ's solution is to use painful trials to separate believers from Evangelicalism for great blessing, Rev. 3:18-22:

- A. The Rev. 3:18 verb "counsel" exists elsewhere in the N. T. **only** at Jn. 18:14 (Ibid., p. 785) where Caiaphas advised the Sanhedrin to kill Jesus to save the nation Israel, and Jn. 11:47-52 shows that his advice via **Christ's cross** led to God's unifying His flock **worldwide**. Evangelicalism's compromise with the troubling world is so corruptive (Ibid., Howse), for the good of believers worldwide, God calls overcomers to be "**crucified**" to worldly Evangelicalism **itself**, Gal. 6:14!
- B. To that end, Christ in Rev. 3:18b calls one to trust Him to "buy" [by grace, Isa. 55:1] in His sovereignty "gold" tried in the fire, alluding to 1 Pet. 1:7 with 2:12 [**faith**], "white garments" [**perseverance in godly works**] seen via Rev. 16:12-16 and "eyesalve" [**discernment**] via John 9:1-39. **Each of these contexts involve one's being slandered**, so God calls one to let Him arrange that one to be slandered by Calvinists as an "heretical Pelagian" for rejecting their **TULIP** beliefs [II,C,1-5]! (Rev. 3:18) The overcomer will thus be spurred to part from and be free of Evangelical Calvinists as (1) he **lives by faith** in God's help, as (2) he **perseveres long-term in God's ministry assignment** and (3) he **discerns the truth!**
- C. Then, Rev. 3:19 KJV uses **Charismatic** vocabulary to urge one to "repent," so he is to "buy" from Christ the same three items he did relative to Calvinists (v. 18b), i. e., to be slandered by **Arminians** as being "unloving" [contextually implied] for rejecting **their** views and works, leading to one's separating from and being independent of **them**. "Love" is **phileo**, typical Charismatic **emotional** love (Ibid., Arndt & Ging., p. 866-867), and "be zealous" (**zeleuo**, Ibid., p. 338) points to 1 Cor. 12:31, 14:1, 39, verses Charismatics use to urge others to be "zealous" to acquire their false gifts, Ibid., Quebedeaux, p. 13-18. **Zeleuo** is the late form of **zeloo** in these 1 Cor. verses (Abbott-Smith, A Man. Grk. Lex. of the N. T., 1968, p. 195), so Christ here critiques the Charismatic claim that they are obtaining God's "latter day" gifts!
- D. Then, in **righteous** victory over the ["wretched"] **sin nature**, Christ in Rev. 3:20 [it points to James 4:13-5:9 via 'the Judge's standing at the door' phrase] calls esp. pastors to trust Him to meet their material needs not by faithlessly seeking another higher paying job or pressuring God's flock for money, and Christ will reward them in their Bible study (John 14:23) to glean abundant, rich information they can use to "feed Christ" [His people **vicariously**, cf. Acts 9:4-5] and Christ through His flock will [cause His people **vicariously** to] meet the pastor's material needs.
- E. For overcoming ["pitiful"] **worldliness** like Christ did (Rev. 3:21a points to John 16:33) in not loving the world and its lusts to do God's will (1 Jn. 2:15-17), Jesus will set one "in" (*en*, U. B. S. Grk. N. T., 1966, p. 845) **His earthly Davidic** throne like He sat down "in" (Ibid.) **His Father's heavenly** throne [which contrast of these thrones critiques Progressive Dispensationalism that compromises regular Dispensationalism with Reformed Theology!]. This wording is clarified via Rev. 7:9-17 to mean (1) God will give him a nurturing Bible exposition ministry to God's flock worldwide that lives in an oppressive era akin to that of the future Great Tribulation. (2) To explain, the phrase "as even I Myself" (**hos ka'go**) exists elsewhere in Rev. 2 & 3 only of Luther's era and "with Me" (**met' emou**) exists elsewhere in Rev. 2 & 3 only of Edwards' era (Ibid., p. 839-845), so our era's overcomer(s) like them will impact secular and religious realms by preaching and writings that nurture of God's flock **worldwide** (Rev. 3:18) from the oppressive, one-world, religio-politico-economic complex, with which complex errant Evangelicalism is converging, Ibid., Howse, p. 15-69.

Lesson: *In violating Christ's call to Fundamentalists to hold to His truth, Evangelicalism is corrupting itself with troubling, futile ministries as it converges with the troubling apostate, one-world, religious-politico-economical complex! God calls us to trust Him to purge us by trials from errant Evangelicalism and the world complex with which it is converging for blessing.*

Application: *May we heed Christ's call for our needy Laodicean Church era to enjoy His blessing and to be blessed of God!*