

Beauties of the Truth

A Forum for the Publication of Scriptural Viewpoints
Thought to be Harmonious with God's Plan of the Ages
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Laodicea, The Indifferent Church

"As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent. 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" (Revelation 3:19-20).

There is no city whose spirit and nature are more difficult to describe than Laodicea. There are no extremes and hardly any very strongly marked features. But in this even balance lies its peculiar character. Those were the qualities that contributed to make it essentially the successful trading city of bankers and finance, which could adapt itself to the needs and wishes of others, ever pliable and accommodating, full of the spirit of compromise.

The ordinary historian would probably not condemn the spirit of Laodicea so strenuously as the Author of the Letter to Laodicea did. For he was not one of those who regarded a successful career in trade and money-making as the best proof of the higher qualities of citizenship. The very characteristics that made Laodicea a well-ordered, energetic center of trade, appeared to him to evince a coldness of nature that was fatal to the highest side of human character — the spirit of consecration, of self-sacrifice and enthusiasm. Laodicea must therefore appear to him as undecided, devoid of initiative, pliable, irresolute, and unsatisfactory, although to itself the Church of Laodicea was entirely self-satisfied.

The spirit of the city could not be kept out of the church. The allusions to the circumstances of Laodicea are unmistakable. Following a great earthquake in AD 60, Laodicea recovered its prosperity without any of that financial help which the Imperial government of Rome was generally ready to bestow. They could boast of their famous medical school connected with the temple of Aesculapius "whose physicians prepared the Phrygian powder for the cure of eye-disease." Particularly illustrious was their manufacture of cloth, garments, and carpets from the valuable wool of the local sheep which was "soft in texture and glossy-black in color."

"I have grown rich and have need of nothing."

Tragically, it never saw its real condition! It was poor and blind and naked. Of all the seven Churches, there is not one word of commendation for this one. Yet her absent Lord loves her, and writes her so incisively only because he hopes to find her chastened and penitent when he returns and knocks at her door (Revelation 3:19, 20).

INDIFFERENCE AND LUKEWARMNESS

The Laodicean Church cannot come to terms with indifference, lukewarmness, and complacency until it accepts the facts that this attitude nullifies our perspective, our motivation, our witness, and our availability. There is only one way open to the Church; it must cease to trust to itself. It must recognize that it is poor and seek riches of the "gold refined by fire." But it must be bought at the price of suffering for the truth, fidelity to principle, and martyrdom.

The Laodicean Church must recognize that it is naked, and seek to be clothed. Its manufacturers cannot help it with their fine glossy black garments which they sell and export to the then-known world. Only white garments, such as the faithful in Sardis wear, will be of any use to cover their shame, and these are sold only by the Divine Author. They must be bought with the price of full consecration.

IN THIS ISSUE

<i>Laodicea, the Indifferent Church</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Tiras, the Etruscans, Rome</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>David's Mighty Men</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>Financial Report</i>	<i>8</i>

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The Laodicean Church must learn that it is blind, but not yet incurably blind. It is suffering from disease and needs medical treatment. But the physicians of its famous medical school can do nothing for it -- only the Divine Author Himself can heal, at the price of full consecration and submission to the Divine will, suffering, and steadfastness. The Christians at Laodicea had bought peace by compromise.

The sharp edge was gone from their doctrine. Luke-warmness of testimony avoided all offense by avoiding distinctiveness and challenge. Whatever the cause — ease, wealth, prosperity the pervading spirit of the place — the life of the church community was at a dangerously low ebb in Laodicea. It is curious that such a state should accompany an absence of enemies or persecution. Wealth and an easy environment have not normally been the stimuli of progress. Rather, the pressure of hard and difficult conditions has been the prerequisite of achievement and growth. And so, physically at ease, Laodiceans had grown indifferent to the call to sacrifice and following in the Master's footsteps.

What footprints are we leaving behind?

Should we really like others to put their feet in our footsteps? Have we but one track in life, and is its goal the altar of sacrifice? We must leave footprints somewhere. No person can come into life, and live 100, 70, or 50 years and go out without leaving the mark of his feet somewhere.

We are to put our feet into the footprints of the Master (1 Peter 2:21). Those footprints lead to Bethany, Gethsemane, and finally to Golgotha and Christ's cross. We can have no difficulty in finding the footprints of Christ if we really want to discover them. His feet were not to be mistaken for any other.

Are our footsteps in the same direction? Are we frightened? Have we become indifferent to the call to sacrifice?

Let us remember that although the years come and go, God abides forever. His throne is the same, His years fail not, He changes not, His covenant is unbroken, and His love is an eternal oath. The Lord saves us from the tragedy of complacency, and the folly of anxiety and despair. Though we have but a little while to live, may the time be rocked by stormy trials. May we measure nothing by time and so mis-measure it. Let us measure all things by eternity, and let the things of time fall into their proper littleness.

NEITHER COLD NOR HOT

The letter to the Laodicean church combines a fierce denunciation of complacency with a tender appeal for wholeheartedness. The church was not infected with the poison of any special sin or error. We read of nothing of heresy or persecutors. But the Christians in Laodicea were neither cold nor hot (Revelation 3:15). The Laodicean



Ruins of Laodicea

church was a half-hearted church. Perhaps none of the seven letters is more appropriate to our day than this one.

The “cold or hot” is an allusion to the hot springs of Hierapolis, which in their way over the plateau became lukewarm, and in this condition discharged themselves over the cliff opposite to Laodicea for their water supply. “Cold” means icy cold and “hot” means boiling hot. Christ would prefer his followers not to simmer down to a tasteless lukewarm tepidity. He desires whole-heartedness, not fanaticism which is unreasoning and unintelligent. He desires the reflection which leads to commitment and a commitment which is born of reflection. This is the meaning of whole-heartedness, of being enthusiastic for the Lord.

Christ warmly approves of enthusiasm even if the Church of today disapproves of it. The Savior's message to Laodicea years ago is his message to the sleepy-headed lethargy of the Church of today, “be zealous and repent” (Revelation 3:19).

CHRIST'S DIAGNOSIS

Here is the diagnosis of the Good Physician. The lukewarm person is one in whom there is a glaring contrast between what he thinks and says as compared to what he does. The root cause of half-heartedness is complacency. To be lukewarm is to be blind to one's true condition. The congregation of Laodicea teemed with self-satisfied church-goers who said, “I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing.” And this is true — in material things.

The Laodicean will not admit that he has departed from the right ways of the Lord. In his own estimation his wants are satisfied; he has enough of everything. He feels therefore, no stimulus to effort; he sits down in contentment, self-complacency, and indifference. He is rich, increased with spiritual and temporal goods, “and has need of nothing.” He is blind because he has no idea either of his spiritual poverty and danger. Such is the ascended-Christ's penetrating diagnosis of Laodicea's spiritual

condition. To contradict the diagnosis of one's spiritual condition is the surest road to disaster. Laodiceans tend to flatter and deceive themselves, but Christ sees and knows them as they really are.

CHRIST'S ADVICE

"Therefore I counsel you ..." (Revelation 3:10). We have a Lord who is content to give advice. He is the Father's agent and heir of all things (1 Corinthians 8:6). All things were created by him and for him, and he precedes all things, and in him all things have been permanently placed. He is the head of the Church (Colossians 1:15, 18).

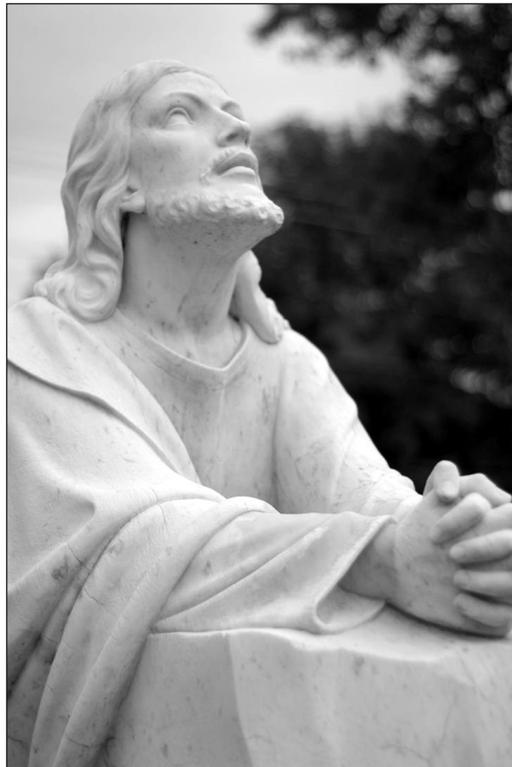
He has the right to command and to expect us to obey. He prefers to give advice which we need not heed. He could command; he chooses to counsel. He respects the freedom and free moral agency with which he has ennobled us. At the same time he warns us of the serious consequences of our complacency. His purpose is not to terrify us into submission, but to enforce upon us the solemnity of our choice.

He warns, "Because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue [spit] you out of my mouth" (Revelation 3:16). The verb "I will" implies that these words were not meant as a final verdict; it was rather a warning of the utmost severity. Lukewarm liquids create nausea. They are tasteless and distasteful. This expression is one of disgust. He will utterly repudiate those whose attachment to him is purely nominal and superficial. It is not only through fear of judgment, however, that the warning should be heeded, but also from respect for the one who issues it.

THE WORDS OF THE AMEN

He describes himself as "The words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of God's creation" (Revelation 3:14). He is the "Amen." This Hebrew word indicates full agreement and assent. John 3:11, "Verily, verily," (i.e., "Amen, Amen") "I say to thee."

"Amen" may be traced back to the old prophetic utterance in Isaiah 65:16 RV. "He who blesses himself in the earth shall bless himself in the God of truth." This phrase in the English version is based on the Septuagint, but the Hebrew is much more stark: "the God of Amen" (RVM). "Amen" means true, certain, faithful. As used here it means that he to whom it is applied is eminently true and faithful. Therefore, the word in this text means that he is the True One.



Jesus seeks in us true Godliness

His ministry fulfills all the promises of God, "for all the promises of God find their Yes in him." (2 Corinthians 1:20). His words are reliable because of his steadfast character. He is neither fickle nor capricious. No idle whim ever moves him to speak or act. He has never needed to retract or modify any statement which he has made. He is absolutely consistent.

What he affirms is true; what he promises or threatens is certain. He is characterized by sincerity and truth. His words are true and therefore trustworthy. They are accurate and dependable. He is a witness for God and His truth, and he can approve of nothing which the God of Truth would not approve. Again, he is the beginning of God's creation. Our Lord was the Beginning of the New Creation, but, more than that, he was the beginning of all creation (Revelation 3:14, cf. Revelation 1:5).

"He is the Image of the invisible God ... First-born of all creation" (Colossians 1:15-18, Psalm 89:27, E85-86).

Jesus was the Word, the Logos, the agent of the Father's creative activity (John 1:1-3). All things are of the Father, and by or through the Son (1 Corinthians 8:6). Such is Christ, the Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the beginning of God's creation.

SUFFICIENCY IN CHRIST

The Laodiceans had much to learn. They considered themselves self-sufficient; now they must humbly find their sufficiency in Christ. They were saying "I need nothing" — they must come to admit that their need was great and that only Christ could supply it. Christ had to humble them and say, "it is from me that your salvation comes." He might have echoed his own statement to the twelve Apostles, "apart from me you can do nothing" (John 15:5).

But why does He recommend the Laodiceans "buy" from Him?

Christ is using language appropriate to the commercially-minded Laodiceans. He likened himself to a competing merchant visiting the city's crowded market place, where buying and selling went on from dawn to dark, "I advise you to forsake your former suppliers and come trade with me." So Christ continues, "I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire, that you may be rich, and white garments to clothe you and to keep the shame of your nakedness from being seen, and salve to anoint your eyes, that you may see."

They could buy this treasured gold only at the cost of entire consecration and sacrifice (Proverbs 23:23, Matthew 13:14, Z96-44). It would lift them out of all poverty and give them wealth beyond all telling (1 Timothy 6:18, James 2:5, Revelation 2:9, 2 Corinthians 8:9, Proverbs 10:22, Luke 12:21).

The “gold” of divine truths, promises, and graces of the spirit “tried in the fire” must be bought at the cost of faithful and constant submission to the discipline of the Lord in fiery trials. There is no other way the dross can be eliminated (1 Peter 4:12).

The white garments are the imputed righteousness of Christ’s robe, which so many have discarded to appear before God in their own righteousness (Revelation 19:8, D42). To be well clothed was an honor; to be naked was the ultimate humiliation (cf. Genesis 41:42, Isaiah 20:4, Matthew 22:1-14). In the white raiment, their shame would not be made manifest.

His last offer was to those who are blind. He would give them light for darkness that they might see. He spoke of an eye salve that was far more precious than the Phrygian powders for which Laodicea was famous. This eye salve would heal their blindness and make them see (2 Corinthians 4:4, Ephesians 2:2, Psalms 13:3, 19:8, John 9:6, 41, D611). This could only be bought at the cost of complete consecration and submission to the Divine will.

REPENTANCE AND FAITH

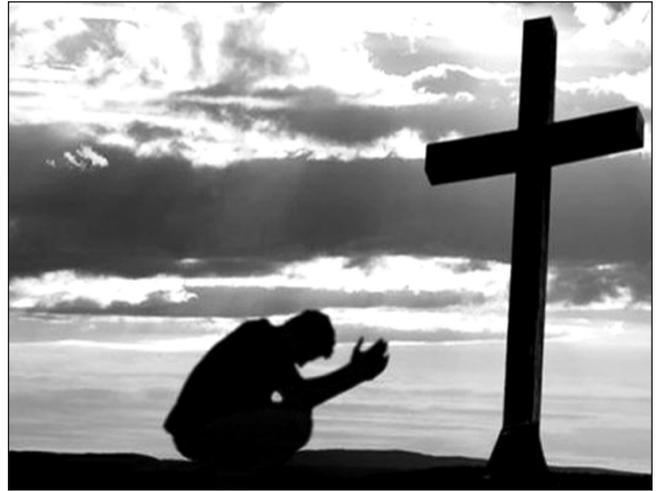
The Laodiceans must take two steps. The first step is repentance, “Those whom I love, I reprove and chasten; so be zealous and repent” (Revelation 3:19).

Already Christ had called on those in Ephesus and Sardis to repent (Revelation 2:5, 3:3). The same message is addressed to Laodicea. The Christ who warns them that he will spit them out of his mouth if they do not stir themselves, still loves them. He longs to save them from judgment, and for this reason he now reproves and chastens them. They must be zealous and repent.

The tenses change significantly. Let them repent at once and irrevocably; then let them continue always to be fired with zeal. To repent is to turn with resolution from all that is known to be contrary to God’s will. The old life of easy complacency must be renounced. Smug satisfaction does not become one who claims the life of Christ. Shallow piety will not suffice.

The second step is faith. “Behold I stand at the door and knock; if any one hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me” (Revelation 3:20). We are aware of the chronological implications in this verse. However, let us notice that this is also a personal appeal to the individual. “If any one,” Christ says.

Our heart is likened to a dwelling. If we do open the door of our heart to the Savior and let him in, he will transform us from paupers to princes. He will cleanse us



The first step is repentance.

and clothe us. He will sup with us, and we with Him. The picture illustrates the shared joys of the Christian life, the reciprocal fellowship of the Christian with his Savior. That he should bid us come and sup with him is honor enough; but that he should wish to share our humble board and sup with us is wonder beyond our finite understanding.

We are not worthy that he should come under our roof, and will he sit at our table?

This inward feast is only a foretaste of the heavenly banquet, which in Revelation 19:9 (cf. Luke 22:30) is called, “the marriage supper of the Lamb.” But it is not merely for supper that Christ enters the heart. He comes in also to receive our submission.

This is what it means to be committed to the Lord and to be whole-hearted in our allegiance to him. It is to seek his will in his word and promptly to obey it. It is not just attending religious services. It is not just leading a good moral life or believing certain articles of a creed. No, it is first to repent, turning decisively from everything we know to be wrong. It is getting our gold and our white garments and our eye-salve from him. It is being personally and unconditionally committed to the Lord, and seeking his will in all the affairs of life. Nothing else will do.

THE REWARD CHRIST OFFERS

“He who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, as I myself conquered and sat down with my Father on His throne” (Revelation 3:21).

This is overcoming the battle with lukewarmness, complacency, and indifference. For this results in selfishness, which sees no further than its own needs. The Christians at Laodicea had plenty of opportunity to share their blessings, even in their own valleys. Poor, suffering Smyrna would have been appreciative of any help they could get, and Laodicea would surely have heard of their plight through Christians who travelled the trade routes.

But the Laodicean church lived for itself — and the Church that lives for itself will die by itself.

This promise in Revelation 3:21 exceeds in glory all the other promises to the conquerors in the seven letters. A throne is the symbol of conquest, authority, and judgment. As Christ shares the Father's throne, so the Christian overcomer will share Christ's throne (1 Corinthians 6:2, Matthew 19:28, A91).

If we let Christ enter the door of our heart, he will let us enter the house of his Father. If we allow Christ to sit with us at our table, he will allow us to sit with him on his throne. Here then is the great alternative, which confronts every thoughtful follower of the master.

To be half-hearted, complacent, and only casually interested in the things of God is to be distasteful to Christ. It is to be in danger of vehement rejection and loathing. To be wholehearted in one's devotion to the Lord (Christ), having opened the door and submitting without reserve to him, is to be given the privilege both of supping with him on earth and reigning with him in heaven. Here is the choice which cannot be avoided. We must throw open the door to him or keep it shut in his face.

— Adapted from a discourse by Bro. David Skein

Prophecies Against Rome Addressed to Tyre

TIRAS, THE ETRUSCANS, ROME

The list of first-generation nations from Japheth ends with Tiras. Their homeland was at the west and southwest of the Black Sea, where Romanians today call it Thracia, and in English we slur it to Thrace. Its capital was called Troy, or Troas, and the people were called Trojans.

Like other seafaring nations, these people established colonies on faraway shores, including Tyre, Rome, and later Carthage long after the 12th century BC, when the Greeks destroyed Troy. The first inhabitants of Rome and points north to Florence were the Etruscans, a name which may be derived from iter-Tiras, the going of Tiras, or distant-colony of Tiras. The part of the Mediterranean Sea west of Italy is still known as the Tyrrhenian Sea, the waters of Tyre.

The animal used by Thrace to symbolize itself was the wolf. That Rome was founded (about 753 BC) with assistance from the remnants of Thrace is preserved in the myth of Romulus and Remus being suckled by a wolf.

Long after the founding of Rome, Thrace was conquered by the Greeks and incorporated into the Greek Empire of Alexander (the Great, according to the Greeks; the Terrible, according to the Persians). After the death of Alexander, Lysimachus (died BC 281) took Thrace for his quarter. Thus had Daniel 8:8-9 prophesied, "The he-goat [Macedonia] magnified himself exceedingly: and when he

was strong, the great horn was broken [Alexander died BC 323]; and instead of it there came up four notable horns toward the four winds of heaven. And out of one of them [Thrace, to the north] came forth a little horn [Rome], which waxed exceeding great, toward the south, and toward the east, and toward the glorious land."

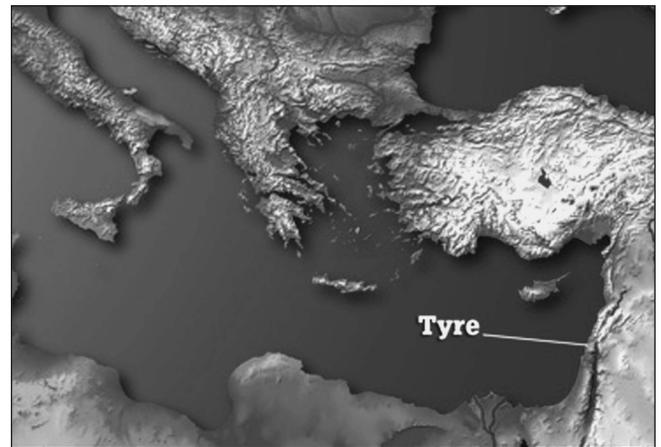
When later the Roman Empire expanded to include the west side of the Black Sea, it represented a return to the Thracian homeland of the Romans. The northern part is known as Romania today.

TYRE

When Tiras built a colony on the Mediterranean east coast, in Canaanite/Semitic territory, the terminal "s" was dropped, to become Tira, or Tyre (Hebrew, *Tzur*, whence "Big Sur"). Tyre enhanced its power by allying itself with Sidon, a major Canaanite city. Historians have labeled the peoples of the alliance as "Phoenicians," although they were two separate ethnic peoples.

When it is recognized that Tiras/Thrace, Rome, and Tyre began as all one people, it can be understood why some prophecies against Rome are addressed to Tyre. Rome's religious heritage was from Babylon, but its ethnic heritage was from Tiras, or Tyre.

Ezekiel chapters 26 to 28 prophesy against "Tyre," where evidently they apply to Rome.



"Son of man, because that Tyre hath said against Jerusalem, Aha, she is broken that was the gates of the peoples; she is turned unto me; I shall be replenished, now that she is laid waste: (3) therefore thus saith the Lord Jehovah, Behold, I am against thee, O Tyre, and will cause many nations to come up against thee, as the sea causeth its waves to come up. (4) And they shall destroy the walls of Tyre, and break down her towers: I will also scrape her dust from her, and make her a bare rock. (5) She shall be a place for the spreading of nets in the midst of the sea; for I have spoken it, saith the Lord Jehovah; and she shall become a spoil to the nations. (6) And her daughters that are in the field shall be slain with the sword: and they shall know that I am Jehovah"¹ (Ezekiel 26:2-6).



The Coliseum at Rome

“Say unto Tyre, O thou that dwellest at the entry of the sea, that art the merchant of the peoples unto many isles ... Tarshish was thy merchant by reason of the multitude of all kinds of riches; ²with silver, iron, tin, and lead, they traded for thy wares. (13) Javan, Tubal, and Meshech, they were thy traffickers; they traded the souls of man and ³vessels of copper for thy merchandise” (Ezekiel 27:3, 12-13).

“Son of man, say unto the prince of ⁴Tyre, Thus saith the Lord Jehovah: Because thy heart is lifted up, and thou hast said, I am a god, I sit in the seat of God, in the heart of the seas; yet thou art man, and not God, though thou didst set thy heart as the heart of God; — (3) behold, thou art wiser than Daniel; there is no secret that is hidden from thee; (4) by thy wisdom and by thine understanding thou hast gotten thee ⁵riches, and hast gotten gold and silver into thy treasures; (5) by thy great wisdom and by thy traffic hast thou increased thy riches, and thy heart is lifted up because of thy riches ... (6) Because thou hast set thy heart as the heart of God ... (7) I will bring strangers upon thee, the terrible of the nations; and they shall draw their swords against the beauty of thy wisdom, and they shall ⁶defile thy brightness. (8) They shall bring thee down to the pit; and thou shalt die the death of them that are slain, in the heart of the seas. (9) Wilt thou yet say before him that slayeth thee, I am God? but thou art man, and not God, in the hand of him that ⁷woundeth thee. (10) Thou shalt die the death of the uncircumcised by the hand of strangers ... saith the Lord Jehovah” (Ezekiel 28:2-10).

— *Br. James Parkinson*

(1) After Nebuchadnezzar, the city was rebuilt on an island one mile offshore. Alexander, ca. BC 322, destroyed the on-shore city, and in a seven month siege took all materials from shore, and even scraped the soil to bare rock, to build a causeway to the island to destroy it. (The island is now washed away.)

(2) The Celts mined silver, iron, and lead in Spain, and tin in Cornwall (Southwest England). Compare Genesis 10.

(3) Armenia (Meshech) had the copper mines, Georgia (Tubal) was the great center for refining it, and Greece (Javan, Ionia) fabricated the copperware.

(4) Tiras (Thrace) colonized Tyre, Rome, and Carthage; they were ethnically one people.

(5) Or, power, And twice in verse seven.

(6) Or, profane.

(7) Or, profaneth thee.

David’s Mighty Men

“These be the names of the mighty men whom David had ... thirty and seven in all” (2 Samuel 23:8, 39).

Saul, David, and Solomon, the first three kings of Israel, conspicuously each reigned the same number of years, 40 in each case. Forty is a symbol in Scriptures of trial or testing, and in this case reflects that the reigns of these three kings represented three contiguous ages of testing and development in the Divine Plan — the Jewish Age, the Gospel Age, and the Millennial Age.

Saul’s reign represented the Jewish Age. As Saul proved unfaithful and his line was ended, so Israel at large, at the end of the Jewish Age, proved unworthy of entering the heavenly calling. The “remnant according to the election ... hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded” (Romans 11:5,7). David, whom God strengthened with many victories, represents Jesus and the Church who overcome during the Gospel Age. Solomon, in the glory and majesty of the kingdom, represents the glory of the Millennial Kingdom of Christ.

These three ages are also represented in the three 40 year periods of Moses’ life. For 40 years Moses was tutored in the wisdom of Egypt, for 40 years he toiled humbly as a shepherd in the wilderness, and for 40 years he was the great emancipator and leader of the nation of Israel. The first 40 represent the Jewish Age when Israel was trained under the “schoolmaster” of the Law (Galatians 3:23, 25). The second 40 represent the Gospel Age when Jesus tends his flock in the wilderness condition of humility. The third 40 represents the time when Jesus will triumphantly lead the world into liberty in the Millennial Age.

In this respect, much of the narrative concerning King David refers to the Gospel Age period. Perhaps, therefore, the 37 “mighty men” specially prominent in David’s forces represents the saints of God, those who are specially strong in faith among those who follow our King Jesus in the present time.

OUR SUGGESTION

2 Samuel 3 identifies three chief ones in David’s forces — then it refers to a second three, though not each of those is identified by name — then it refers to another 30, itemized name by name, apparently led by Asahel, a nephew of David.

Our suggestion is that the first three, the second three, and Asahel — seven in all — represent the seven leaders of the Gospel Age elsewhere referred to as seven “angels,” or spiritual leaders, of God’s people during the Gospel Age (Revelation 1:20. See also 1 Corinthians 11:10, and Malachi 2:7, where “angel” and “messenger” refer to spiritual leaders). And that the remaining 30 represent the sanctified elect of the Gospel Age, perhaps with special focus on those living in the harvest.

ASAHEL

Asahel was one of three nephews of King David who were prominent in his armed forces, namely Joab (leader of the army), Abishai (leader of the second triad of David's mighty men), and Asahel, "light of foot as a wild roe" (2 Samuel 2:18). These were sons of Zeruiah, who was a sister of David (1 Chronicles 2:16). Zeruiah was evidently older than David, so that her sons, though younger than David, may have been less than a full generation his junior.

2 Samuel 23:24, in the common version, says "Asahel the brother of Joab was one of the thirty." However, thereafter 30 more names appear. This leads us to the opinion that this text really means "Asahel ... was first of the thirty" — that is, the leader of this band which numbered 30 persons other than Asahel.

The word rendered "one," though not in italics, is not supported by a distinct Hebrew word. Literally, the text says Asahel was "of the thirty." If we join this to the latter part of verse 23, we have this: "And David set him [Benaiah] over his guard. Asahel ... of the thirty," followed by a list of 30 other names. Perhaps the intent is that as Benaiah was set over the guard, so Asahel was set over the thirty. In this case the first three of David's mighty men, and the second three of David's mighty men, and Asahel, and 30 men under him, would sum to the "thirty and seven in all" specified in verse 39.

THE FIRST THREE

Our focus here will be the first three mighty men. If our suggestion is correct that the seven, as distinct from the thirty, represent seven special leaders of the Gospel Age, then the first three would represent those Jesus used as special helpers to the Church in the first three periods — Ephesus, Smyrna, and Pergamos.

Our view — embraced by many others (though not by all) — is that these leaders were Paul, John, and Arius. With this in mind, let us compare the achievement of the three mighty men of David.

(1) Adino the Eznite. "The Tachmonite that sat in the seat, chief among the captains; the same was Adino the Eznite: he lift up his spear against eight hundred, whom he slew at one time."

The spear, as often is the case with the sword, may represent the Truth, which is the only offensive weapon of the Spiritual Israelite. This earnest warrior was victorious over 800 persons, unexcelled by any other in David's entourage. The Gospel Age is divided into seven parts, and the Kingdom following that is sometimes considered a day "eight." For example, Leviticus 8:33 depicts the church as

consecrated during seven "days" of the Gospel Age, and on the following day, number "eight," they are ready to serve.

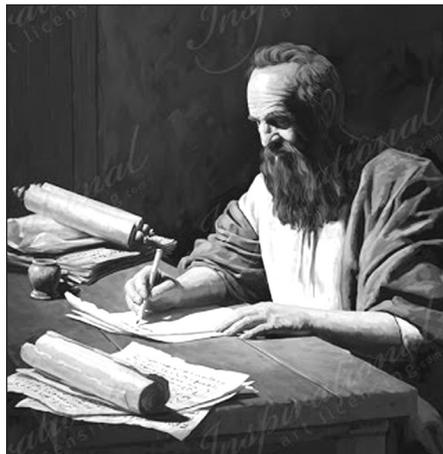
The Jewish age, the foreshadow of the Gospel Age, can also be represented as an age of seven parts. As an example, we have the seven years that Jacob served for Rachel (but received Leah) — he then served for seven more years to cover both wives. These two spans of seven years represent the Jewish and Gospel Ages respectively.

In this sense, the beginning of the Gospel Age was also a period "eight." It can be referred to as "eight" to show its relationship to the previous Jewish Age. Circumcision, for example, on day eight, can have an application to the purification of the faith remnant of Israel who accepted Christ in the opening of the Gospel Age, while the unclean remainder were "cut off" when Rome campaigned in Israel and took Jerusalem.

The foes of the early church were Jewish influences. The greatest warrior in that struggle was Paul, who wrote in his epistles much about freedom in Christ from the Law and its obligations. In this he waged spiritual warfare, and the "weapons" of his warfare were spiritual weapons — Truths honed from the Scriptures (2 Corinthians 10:4). He appealed to the Old Testament prophecies, types, and promises. Perhaps that single source is indicated by the "spear," a singular instrument, in the warfare of Adino the Eznite.

After the passing of Joshua, who represents our Lord Jesus, the next seven judges also represent the seven messengers of the Gospel Age. The number eight is involved in that episode also. Cushan-rishathaim oppressed Israel for eight years, and this burden was broken by Othniel in the strength of God. Cushan may have been the early Hittite ruler Hatusilis I, who referred to himself as the "Man of Kushara," the latter term an easy link to the name Cushan. In any case he is said to be "king of Mesopotamia," *Aram-Naharaim* in the Hebrew (Judges 3:8, margin). This designation refers to the land that the Mittianians later dominated, but it was previously the domain of the early Hittites. By all accounts the area was north of the Euphrates, and thus part of Mesopotamia.

Mesopotamia, as a region, is a picture of the Law covenant. Abraham had to leave Mesopotamia in order to inherit God's promised blessings, representing that those of faith had to leave the Law arrangement in order to become, with Jesus, a seed of blessing. Thus Cushan's origin of Mesopotamia is consistent with his influence being the burden of the Law that "oppressed" early spiritual Israelites. Paul (Othniel) was God's agent to explain to the church their liberty from such bondage.



The Apostle Paul

(2) Eleazar the Ahohite. “And after him was Eleazar the son of Dodo the Ahohite, one of the three mighty men with David, when they defied the Philistines that were there gathered together to battle, and the men of Israel were gone away: He arose, and smote the Philistines until his hand was weary, and his hand clave unto the sword: and Jehovah wrought a great victory that day” (2 Samuel 23:9, 10).

John, the apostle, was the second messenger, and his struggle was against the gnostic heresy. The Gospel of John, and the Epistle of First John, both are writings by this apostle battling against gnosticism, which in various forms denied that Jesus was the Christ. John was alone in this struggle, in the respect that the other apostles had preceded him in death.



Eleazar’s weapon was a sword. John’s weapon was his writings, his Gospel and his Epistle — perhaps the two edges of a spiritual sword. The enemies were the Philistines, gentile enemy from Crete (Caphtor, Jeremiah 47:4). Gnosticism was an influence from gentile thought, an enemy that caused great havoc among spiritual Israel in the early Smyrna period.

The corresponding judge was Ehud, who dispatched the foe Eglon with a two-edged dagger. Eglon was a Moabite who had taken up residence in Jericho, as Gnosticism was a foreign philosophy that took up residence within the Christian Church until it was dispatched through the writings left by the Apostle John.

The oppression of Eglon endured for 18 years, a number that elsewhere, in its only appearance in the New Testament, ties into the world abroad, which is mostly gentile (Luke 13:4, 11).

(3) Shammah the Hararite. “After him was Shammah the son of Agee the Hararite. And the Philistines were gathered together into a troop, where was a piece of ground full of lentiles: and the people fled from the Philistines. But he stood in the midst of the ground, and defended it, and slew the Philistines: and Jehovah wrought a great victory.”

Arius was the third messenger, to the Church of Pergamos. As John had battled the gnostic views, represented by the Philistine enemy, Arius battled the influence of

pagan philosophy in its next incarnation, as he maintained that Jesus was the Son of God, not God Himself. At the Council of Nicea he stood nearly alone in the final decision, with only two bishops supporting him in refusing their consent to the Nicene Creed.

As time passed, this resolute spiritual warrior gained a great victory. By the time of his death the tide had turned in his favor, even if it turned otherwise in later years.

Shammah stood his ground while others fled. The third judge, Shamgar, similar in name to Shammah, “slew of the Philistines six hundred men with an ox goad: and he also delivered Israel” (Judges 3:31). Shamgar’s weapon was a simple instrument intended for use with an ox — Arius’ “weapon” was the simple Truth (wonderfully articulated) that Jesus (sometimes represented by a sacrificial ox) was the son of God.

THE SECOND THREE

2 Samuel 23:18 begins to describe the second set of three mighty men of David. The first of these was Abishai, the brother of Joab. He was “chief among three ... howbeit he attained not unto the first three” (2 Samuel 23:18, 19).

The next was “Benaiah the son of Jehoiada,” who among other exploits had dispatched “two lionlike men of Moab” in a pit on a snowy day, and a formidable Egyptian whom Benaiah slew with the Egyptian’s own spear (2 Samuel 23:20, 21).

“He was more honorable than the 30, but he attained not to the first three. And David set him over his guard” (2 Samuel 23:23).

A third member of this second set of three is not named. Some speculate that it may have been Joab, but the passage is not specific. Presuming that it was not Asahel, introduced in verse 24, then Asahel would be a seventh mighty man that stood above the 30 men listed after him. If Asahel, captain of 30, is a picture of the seventh messenger, then it is notable that Ibzan, the seventh judge, “had thirty sons” under him (Judges 12:9).

Our opinion is that Abishai represents Waldo, Benaiah represents Luther, and Asahel represents Br. Russell. We leave the exploration of this proposal for the interested reader.

— Br. David Rice

Financial Report

3,694.44	Balance January 1, 2016
3,846.28	Donations
-2,262.42	Expenses
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5,278.30	Balance January 1, 2017
623	Current subscribers
360	Email subscribers