

“TO THE CHURCHES, WRITE . . .”

THE CHURCH THAT WAS WORTHLESS

THE LETTER TO THE CHURCH AT LAODICEA

THE SEVEN CHURCH CHIASM

- A. Ephesus: a critically *unhealthy* church
- B. Smyrna: a *healthy* church
- C. Pergamum: a very *unhealthy* church
- D. Thyatira: a very *unhealthy* church
- C' Sardis: an ignorantly *unhealthy* church
- B' Philadelphia: a *healthy* church
- A' Laodicea: a critically *unhealthy* church

(1) Christ, the Head of the Church, uses these seven churches to evaluate every church (and every Christian).

(2) Most churches—and most Christians—have very serious spiritual issues.

*(3) Churches with serious spiritual health issues often have a few healthy Christians—a **very** few.*

THE SERMON STRUCTURE

- ▶ Identification *“This message is from . . .”*
- ▶ Commendation *“I know all the things you do.”*
- ▶ Condemnation *“But I have this complaint against you”*
- ▶ Correction *“Repent! Otherwise . . .”*
- ▶ Admonition *“Anyone with ears to hear must listen to the Spirit . . .”*
“To everyone who is victorious . . .”

THE SERMON STRUCTURE

- ▶ Identification *“This message is from . . .”*
- ▶ Condemnation *“But I have this complaint against you”*
- ▶ Correction *“Repent! Otherwise . . .”*
- ▶ Admonition *“To everyone who is victorious . . .”*
“Anyone with ears to hear must listen to the Spirit . . .”

IDENTIFICATION

“Write this letter to the angel of the church in Laodicea. This is the message from the one who is the Amen—the faithful and true witness, the beginning of God’s new creation.”

REVELATION 3.14

- ▶ To each church, Christ identifies himself in a manner that presents his credentials as the One who is authorized and qualified to evaluate and administer judgment to the churches. Christ identifies himself to the church of Laodicea as the “Amen”: ^(1a) the “faithful and true witness,” ^(1b) “the beginning of God’s new creation.” What is the significance of these names and credentials?

THE AMEN

Jesus Christ . . . the faithful witness to these things, the first to rise from the dead, and the ruler of all the kings of the world

REVELATION 1.5

- ▶ The Greek word “amen” is a transliteration of the Old Testament Hebrew term of the same. In Isaiah 65.16, God declares himself to be “the God of Amen,” (i.e., the God of truth). When Christ identifies himself to the church of Laodicea as “the Amen,” he is declaring himself to be the God of Infinite Truth. When he tells Laodicea: “I know all the things you do,” he wants them to know that **HE** “really knows” the truth about them—while they haven’t a clue!

Jesus said unto them, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I AM.”

JOHN 8.58

- ▶ Jesus extensively used the word “amen” in the Gospels. In the KJV it is translated “verily” and in our contemporary versions, “I tell you the truth.” In the Gospel of John, Jesus always uses it doubled: “Amen, amen . . .”
- ▶ “Amen” means trustworthy, most certainly. It is a confirmation that what has been said is *the* truth: “so be it.” The declaration of Jesus to the Jews in John 8.58 was profound and provocative: “*So be it, so be it: Before Abraham existed, I have eternally existed as the True-full God.*”

- We must be clear about who Jesus is—not from our own perception but from his “full of truth” presentation of himself:

(1) He is “true to”— *“If you have seen me, you have seen the Father.”*

(2) He is “truthful speaking”— *Jesus shouted to the crowds, “If you trust me, you are trusting not only me, but also God who sent me. For when you see me, you are seeing the one who sent me. . . . I don’t speak on my own authority. The Father who sent me has commanded me what to say and how to say it. And I know his commands lead to eternal life; so I say whatever the Father tells me to say.”*

JOHN 12.44-45, 49-50

(3) He is “truthful doing” — *“I brought glory to you here on earth by completing the work you gave me to do. Now, Father, bring me into the glory we shared before the world began.”*

JOHN 17.4-5

- ▶ To the Laodicean church, Christ further substantiates his identity by declaring that he is:
 - (1) “the faithful and true witness” (cf. 1.5; 19.11; 21.5)
 - (2) “the beginning of God’s new creation.”
- ▶ This last reference is a profound fulfillment of the “God of Amen” reference in Isaiah 65: “. . . to his servants he will give another name. Whoever invokes a blessing in the land will do so by the one true God; whoever takes an oath in the land will swear by the one true God. For the past troubles will be forgotten and hidden from My eyes. “See, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind. (65.15c-18)

► In Revelation 21, we hear these words:

And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. ‘He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death’ or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.” He who was seated on the throne said, “I am making everything new!” Then he said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.” (21.3-5)

► Jesus Christ is the “Faithful and True Witness.” When he looked at the Laodiceans, he saw what they could not see and would not see about themselves: they were not faithful and true representations of Christ and he could not accept or tolerate their condition.