

A Blind Church – Part 1

(Sermon Notes)

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As we go through today's sermon let's **remember** that God's true Church members **never die out** completely. Jesus promised:

Matthew 16:18 ... the gates of **the grave** shall not prevail against His Church.

This does, however, give us some idea that God's Church will be very sparse at times. History tells us that the Church **almost died out** at times – and what few brethren who held on – were not that well versed in Christ's doctrine.

We would not know many names at all except that the big Catholic Church recorded a list of those they considered heretics. A **few of the names** ascribed to those who sought to hold on to God's truth through the ages were the **Ebionites** (poor men, from "poor in Spirit" in Matthew 5:3), the **Albigenses**, the **Nazarenes** (Mentioned in Acts 24:5), the **Paulicians**, the **Cathars**, the **Waldenses** (of Peter Waldo), the **Bogomils**, the Sabbatarian **Anabaptists** (who did not recognize infant baptism – so they **re-baptized** adults)... I dare say that most of God's true people have been **lost entirely to history**— but not to God.

Questions: Has Jesus returned to this earth and established His Father's Kingdom yet? I think most would say that **we are still awaiting** that event! Will Christ's coming be in the distant future – or will it be **SOON**? I think most would agree that it will be soon. Most agree that these are the LAST-DAYS.

If I called for a show of hands – **which I won't** – and asked how many of you are **Philadelphians**, What would the result be? Most do not want to think about being **Laodiceans** – because Jesus has some tough correction for Laodicea.

I checked with a lot of people and almost unanimously – all agreed that **we are Philadelphians** – and I suppose that is because God had no **correction** for the Philadelphia era of His Church. Philadelphia means "City of Brotherly Love." Today, we are just full of BROTHERLY LOVE in God's Church – **aren't we?**

Strangely I find very little love across Church lines. Dallas/Fort Worth has a lot of love. There is a great deal of **social love** within the Dallas/Fort Worth congregation – but little regard for anyone else and their needs – **even for widows** in need.

Charlotte – same thing – they say, "we'll set the pace for the rest..." but very little regard for anyone else.

California – they feel that they are better than the rest – and there is no need to reach out to others.

Cincinnati – don't care to associate... "**they can come to us,**" is their position – we're told.

There are many, many other congregations...

Rhetorical question...

Is it serving Christ – to only serve **a part** of His Body – while specifically excluding other true saints – **I think not?**

I believe it must appear to Christ as a **snobbish self-serving kind of love**, and **not** a "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto **one of the least** of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me," **kind of love**. (Matthew 25:40)

For generations within God's Church we have witnessed an agenda wherein our headquarters and leadership have always tried to make light of our sins and shortcomings. Big, big sins were swept under the carpet.

Why? Because we did not want to give Headquarters a black eye. We did not want to tarnish what should remain an **impeccable reputation**.

Even when we have experienced severe sin and grave troubles among the membership or ministry, we have endeavored to show ourselves in the most positive light possible in order to put on a façade of perfection. You know what a façade is? It is putting up a big false front in order to look better than you are. It has been as though we were attempting to uphold a reputation of our Church which **was not warranted**.

When that sort of thing is taking place, some weak brethren can get the idea that, "we are doing just fine – God is totally pleased with our conduct." There are some serious united consequences to putting up a false front – people begin to believe it.

This improper conduct still goes on in God's Churches today. The rational goes something like this: When a minister has been out of line in **harassing** and **abusing** even **disfellowshipping** the brethren, he must be **upheld** by headquarters for **two** reasons. (1) They want HQ to **look good** – and besides (2) they don't want to correct wayward ministers. That demonstrates **a lack of Godly love** – and we'll see that God does not work that way.

Let's harken back to a time when I thought the Church was so perfect in every way. I took a trip to Pasadena about 30 years ago... and **here is what I found**:

There were handsome and beautiful young people in classes – learning the **word of God**, and busy with activities like heavenly choirs. There were beautiful buildings, stately mansions, and gardens... Where we had hand weeded dichondra lawns too precious to walk on.

The glorious Pasadena Auditorium with breathtaking beautiful inlaid carpet, world class acoustics, crystal chandeliers, precious stone from around the world – accoutrements from Persia, fountains and reflecting ponds – "a house for God" was displayed inside the portico.

I spoke there in the Auditorium for my first Sabbath message ever. There were evangelists, Pastors, an overflowing congregation, cameras, sound equipment, lights... it was daunting, intimidating and formidable.

And there was the Hall of Administration... When I walked into the Hall of Administration... A young lady – beautiful and sharp in every way. I knew her well ever since she was a young lady... Let's call her Miriam.

Miriam was at the greeter's desk in the Hall of Administration – the first person the public would encounter... Miriam had been in my Y.O.U. (Youth Opportunities United) area – She had won nearly every bible bowl contest. She went on a great hike across the Appalachian Mountains. She had been in volley-ball with tears of victory and defeat. She was a great performing pianist -> and then -> **apostasy** -> **and a marriage broken**...

Pasadena seemed **perfect** – and yet it's fruit was often **bitter**...

Upstairs, high above Miriam's desk was the 4th floor – where the Pastor General's office was... He had the most **beautiful office desk** and **furniture** (custom made – because it could not be purchased) – built and installed by my creative son-in-law).

Exodus 31:3-4 And I have filled him with the spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of **workmanship**, to devise inventive machines. Whose marriage also broke up after being raised "supposedly" in the Church...

I saw the boys Y.O.U. Basketball national Champs -> but alas, every tall boy left the Church before the year was over...

On the first floor of the Hall of Administration, I would often see my good friend, Bob, moping the floors (and doing the bathrooms) – whose **brother was an evangelist** (who followed the apostate leaders into the Trinity and Sunday worship). **It did not look good** for those of **high rank** to hobnob with the hired help – the servants – even if they were your brother...

But we were **Philadelphians**...

Brethren, I want to make a clear, vital distinction up front in this sermon.

I hear people say, I can't believe that **Church People** could be like that – so **mean**, so heartless, so cruel, so vain, so controlling – you fill in the blank... They say, I don't want to have anything to do with "Church People."

1John 2:18 Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there **many antichrists**; whereby we know that it is the last time.

They were suffering then as we are suffering today.

1John 2:19 They went **out from us**, but they were **not of us**; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued **with us**: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that **they were not all of us**.

They were not really "Church people" – at least not according to Jesus Christ. They were tares, infidels, imposters – but not "Church people."

God's Church people are very hard to spot. God's Church people are busy serving in some quiet corner – not with their names in the lime-lights.

God is not building Basilicas with double colonnades, Cathedrals with high steeples, bells or Obelisks, or monuments for all the world to see. In fact, if you go back in history you can find no remnants **of stone** and structure representing God's Church.

That is because the Church is a **spiritual** entity that leaves no lasting mark in the soil.

1Peter 2:5 Ye also, as **living stones**, are built up a **spiritual** house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ –... who is our chief corner stone.

I prefer to use the term "Church brethren" to distinguish between the people who are so **proudly** and **prominently** having their way over others, AND, those who are fasting, praying, encouraging, helping and serving, and provoking one another to love and good works.

God's true people are being **judged** NOW! God's true people are being are being persecuted now – there are no exceptions.

1Peter 4:17 The time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God:

We find ministers being continuously exonerated for the vilest abuses toward the little ones. Not only the abuse of treating the brethren harshly and putting them out of the congregations (for then they would stand a chance of getting back on their feet)... But the abuse of not teaching that God is serious about: Forgiving one another, parents being honored, showing mercy, generosity (rather than trusting in mammon), marriage is for life, loving all the brethren, etc.

As God's Church people **we lack zeal**. We are truly **lukewarm!**

On the other hand, as we read through Revelation, Chapters 2 and 3, we find Jesus Christ being **brutally transparent** about the weaknesses among His peoples. Jesus does not put on airs. God does not white-wash the sins of His Churches—but rather sternly warns the Church.

Notice the strong displeasure He has with His Churches – He **publicly** and **boldly** exposes those who come short and are guilty. We have not done that in God's Church – – – **to our peril**.

The title comes from Revelation 3:17

Revelation 3:17 Because thou say, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and do not know that you are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and **blind**, and naked:

I could have said "A miserable, A poor, or A naked Church," but let's go with this particular attribute that God ascribes to us – **A Blind Church**.

Why does God **say to us** in these last days, "You do not know that you **are blind**; ... anoint thine eyes with **eye salve** that you **may** be able to see."

The Prophet Isaiah spoke of how **the entire earth lay in darkness** and in need of the One who would **lift the veil of blindness**.

There's a covering—a blindness—that exists, first a blindness that makes man unfit to rule himself, but more importantly, a spiritual blindness to God's truth and way of life.

Speaking of Jesus Christ, the Messiah, who will devour that veil that separates man from His God Isaiah said:

Isaiah 25:7 He will 'swallow up' in this mountain [Zion] the face of the covering cast over all peoples, and the **veil that is spread over all nations**.

From the day that Adam and Eve brought sin into the world man has been covered by a veil of separation and a right relationship with their Creator (Isaiah 59:2).

Ever since that time, mankind has had an inability to see things as they really are because the way to the Tree of Life has been closed to him (Genesis 3:24).

1Thessalonians 5:4 But you, brethren, **are not in darkness!**

There is a dimension missing in mankind that **disallows** a sound mind (2Timothy 1:7, Psalm 119:80).

We know that the **world** abides in blindness, but how can God say of His **Church**, "**You are blind?**"

No one wants to even consider such a thing.

Church History Written in Advance

There are at least **three ways** to look at the seven cities of Revelation 2-3.

First: A clockwise Mail route of cities in Asia Minor

Second: History of the Church throughout the ages – don't keep time with a stop watch because the dates lapse and overlap one another.

Third: Attitudes that are present at all times within God's Churches.

We see that Christ's statements that were not fulfilled in the first century:

Revelation 2:5 ... I will **come unto thee quickly,**

Revelation 2:22 Behold, **I will cast her** into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her **into great tribulation,** except they repent of their deeds.

Jesus has not come back yet!

Revelation 3:20 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.

We are privileged to have **personal letters** from God the Father through Jesus Christ to the Churches of God (Revelation 1:1).

The letters were written to seven active Church congregations on a Roman mail route. There are seven cities spoken of in the prophecy of Revelation 2 and 3. This is a sermon on **prophecy!** Too many people wish to relegate Christ's words as being relevant only to the first century Church congregations—they are relevant today!

There was a viable congregation of the Church of God in each city.

The language to these Churches often speaks in relation to the return of Christ – which is not yet (Revelation 3:3).

That same argument rules out that the seven Churches are strictly historically sequential because **the language** also speaks of more than one Church being **extant** at Christ's return (Revelation 3).

And finally, we have Christ injunction to hear what is said to **all** the Churches. With this common refrain Jesus forewarned of the attitudes of the Church eras and what they would go through:

"He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the Churches" (Revelation 3:22).

Jesus spoke of the **pervasive characteristics** of these first century Church congregations that would be found in all congregations **throughout** time until His return. Every Church congregation has had and continues to have its own unique strengths and weaknesses on which each and every Church member will be judged.

Anyone can from time-to-time have any one of the attitudes of the seven Churches. Let's take a close look:

To the Church in Ephesus

Revelation 2:1 Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write; These things saith he that holds the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks;

Jesus is the head of the Church.

Revelation 2:2 I know your works, and thy labor, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars:

Revelation 2:3 And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast labored, and hast not fainted.

Revelation 2:4 **Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.**

Jesus would not say this except that they have let down and are now off course.

They are no longer headed for God's Kingdom!

Revelation 2:5 Remember therefore from whence **thou art fallen, and repent**, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and **will remove thy candlestick** out of his place, except thou repent.

What does that mean? **I will remove thy candlestick?**

It means that they would no longer be His Church! If you do not repent and return to doing your first love – you are no longer God's Church.

Did the entire Church repent and get busy??? We are not told. That seldom happens

Revelation 2:6 But this thou hast, that thou hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.

Revelation 2:7 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcomes will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.

To the Church in Smyrna

Revelation 2:8 And unto the angel of the church in Smyrna write; These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive;

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.

Revelation 2:10 Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.

Revelation 2:11 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; He that overcomes shall not be hurt of the second death.

To the Church in Pergamum

Revelation 2:12 And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write; These things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges;

Revelation 2:13 I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is: and thou hold fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth.

Revelation 2:14 But **I have a few things against thee**, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication.

Revelation 2:15 So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the **Nicolaitans**, which thing I hate.

The doctrine of the Nicolaitans is the teaching that there is a strict rank and file hierarchy dominating within God's Church that must be submitted to by everyone.

I found in Pasadena, – and you will remember that there was a Pastor General, evangelists, senior pastors, pastors, headquarters ministers, associates, lowly assistants (I was one), but I was told to be ahead of the Church elders and local elders – everyone knew and recognized the pecking order. The word, "Ministers" when properly translated means "**servants**" of Jesus Christ.

Example: I told my superior that I was bringing some papers across the Pasadena freeway to an elder who worked in Publishing who needed them.

My superior said to me: Make that Elder come to you to learn to "Look Up" the line of authority to God.

Jesus said, **I will fight against** those who were supposed to be in His Church with the sword of my mouth.

Revelation 2:16 Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.

Revelation 2:17 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcomes will I give to eat of the **hidden manna**, [the word of God – the perfect food of God] and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knows except he that receives it.

To the Church in Thyatira

Revelation 2:18 And unto the angel of the church in Thyatira write; These things saith **the Son of God**, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet are like fine brass;

“The Son of God” – we see who is writing these letters to us!

Revelation 2:19 I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last to be more than the first.

They got off on the right footing – a good start but then they jumped into bed with Jezebel’s -> false doctrines...

Revelation 2:20 Notwithstanding I have a few things **against thee**, because thou allowed that woman Jezebel, which calls herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols.

That is exactly what took place at Pasadena in the Worldwide Church of God.

Revelation 2:21 And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and **she repented not**.

What is going to happen to those in WCG who went with the apostasy?

Revelation 2:22 Behold, **I will cast** her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her **into great tribulation**, unless they repent of their deeds.

And it does not stop with Joe Tkach’s Sr’s generation.

Revelation 2:23 And **I will kill her children with death**; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searches the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you **according to your works**.

God is keeping track of everything going on with His people right now – no one is getting away with anything!

Revelation 2:24 But unto you I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak; I will put upon you none other burden.

God does not give anyone more than they can handle.

1Corinthians 10:13 There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.

What was going on at Pasadena was not right – and it is still not right to sweep malfeasance, misconduct and abuse of the brethren under the carpet.

Jesus does not work that way.

End: A Blind Church – Part 1