

A Blind Church – Part 2

(Sermon Notes) By Warren Zehrung 8/4/2018

We have been looking at the **indictments** that Jesus brings against the Church brethren in Revelation 2 and 3. Jesus shows us that He **finds fault** with what is constantly going on in His church congregations – from top to bottom.

Specific Purpose Statement: Brethren, we must put God and His values and principles **FIRST** in our lives every time we do anything – eat – sleep – talk – and act, but the Churches of God are **blind** to that.

It is not me saying that! It is Jesus who is telling us that we are **Blind**.

The prevailing attitude of God's Church today is predominantly **Laodicean**, though the principal characteristics of any of the seven congregations are also present. However, in God's Church, we have become accustomed to looking at ourselves **only** as **Philadelphians** against whom Christ brings **no** allegation of wrong doing. That is entirely self-serving at its worse.

We all say, "We love everybody and everything." When we begin with the premise that we have done **no wrong**, and are pleasing to God in every way, we are in danger of believing in our own righteousness.

Romans 3:22-23 ...The righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: For **all have sinned**, and **come short** of the glory of God.

No one in the Church of God wants to believe that they are **spiritually blind**. In every age within the Church there are those who think that they '**have it made**.' They assume that because they have been baptized and are surrounded by Christians at Sabbath services, they will be welcomed into the Kingdom with everyone else. Jesus tells us that not everyone who thinks he is in the Church is going to make it into His Kingdom! That is precisely who Jesus is addressing when He tells us **who it is** that will make it into the Kingdom of God:

Revelation 3:21 To him that **overcomes** will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also **overcame**, and am set down with my Father in His throne.

All of us wish to think that we **see** clearly, and that only the world is blinded. We rely on Scriptures like 1John 5:19 to support our uprightness:

1John 5:19 We know that **we are of God**, and the whole world lies in wickedness.

But, it is Christ who **tells us** that it is His Church brethren who are **spiritually blind**:

Revelation 3:17-18 Because you say, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and know not that **you are ...blind**: ...I counsel thee to buy of me ...white raiment [the righteousness of the saints], that you may be clothed, and that the shame of your nakedness does not appear; and **anoint your eyes with eye salve**, that **you may see**.

How do we **spiritually anoint** our eyes to be able to see the things of God clearly? It behooves the Church brethren to make sure that we anoint our eyes with **eye salve** so that we may be able to truly see our wretched spiritual state. So **many** who have gone before us have fallen prey to deception. We will look today at some of those **lapses of judgment** in today's sermon.

Like some of the Pharisees of Jesus' day, we Laodiceans claim to be able **to see** clearly, but it is Jesus Himself that tells the people that, like **so many** who have gone before us, **we are blind**. How do we go about becoming **zealous** and **repenting** of our blindness (Revelation 3:19)? Jesus tells us that we are not there yet.

In fact, Jesus **chides** us to **respond** to all of His messages and warnings to all the Churches, and be overcomers. The first thing we have to do is to swallow our pride and realize that we are not perfect in every way – otherwise we will never be able to examine ourselves properly. Some of the brethren think that they are **perfect** in every way.

We must understand that we Church brethren do **not see clearly** as God unmistakably does. For the Church brethren, seeing clearly is a **matter of salvation** and being able to sit with Jesus **on His throne** in the Kingdom of God.

Because Laodiceanism is so prevalent in the world, it is almost impossible to avoid – but there is no excuse for it in God's Church. We are called to repentance by Christ – it is not a lite matter. Each of us must make a greater effort to study, pray, fast, grow in love for all the brethren.

In "A Blind Church - Part 1," I said, "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.

Today, we will look at **some other ways** of deciphering what Jesus said to the churches of Revelation 2-3.

Let's understand that the spiritual condition of church congregations is not stagnant – congregations are continuously changing – some for **better** and some for **worse**. Typically, church congregations go through **cycles** – just as it is well recorded that nations and empires go through cycles.

A Scottish historian Alexander Tytler's theory (1747-1813) set forth a cycle that every democracy goes through starting with bondage and slavery.

He theorized that nations will progress in an **upward spiral** from... Bondage, to Spiritual Faith, to Courage, to Liberty, and then, Abundance,...

But then a **downward spiral** commences: Abundance breeds Greed and Selfishness, which leads to Complacency, Apathy, Dependence - then Bondage and slavery again.

England and the USA are not far from the end of the cycle.

Brethren, you will see that very same spiritual pattern that the **church goes through** in our very own experience – Herbert Armstrong was no exception.

History has taught us that Church of God congregations throughout the centuries have followed a similar pattern of **growth** – followed by **decline**.

Church growth begins with an epiphany and spiritual awakening – but after a time growth ceases – followed by a regression and deterioration. The Church of God today is blind, asleep and in this final stage before the Tribulation. The Church needs to awake.

A fourth way to view these seven Churches of Revelation 2 and 3 is that they represent the development cycle that **all of God's people go through** over time.

The Church brethren are severely tested in every generation, but in every case, there are **some** who **stand up** to the trials and become **overcomers**. Not all the brethren take a stand, but there are always a few **overcomers**. Let me give you a Biblical **example**:

Revelation 3:4 Thou hast a **few names** even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy.

Does that "**few names**" mean that "**most names**" have defiled their garments and are not righteous in God's sight? Generation after generation of Church brethren are placed in circumstances where they too have the opportunity to be overcomers - just as Jesus was tried, tested and **overcame** this world.

1Corinthians 12:18 Now has God set the members every one of them in the body, as it has pleased Him.

John 16:33 Jesus said: ...In the world you shall have trials: but be of good cheer; I have **overcome the world**.

Again, the Church brethren are severely tested in every generation, but in every case, there are those who **stand up** to the trials and become overcomers.

There is a **fifth way** for us to view these seven Churches of Revelation 2 & 3 - it is **personally** - looking at our own life's development.

The messages from Christ are directed to us personally. Jesus tells each of us to hear Him:

Like Ephesus - we all experienced our **First Love**... yet dealt with false apostles, and with the Nicolaitans—wrong church organization.

Like Smyrna - we have all had our individual trials to go through...

Like Pergamos - We are still dealing with the Nicolaitans as the Ephesians and the Church at Pergamos

Like Thyatira - We all have to deal with the **lawlessness** within the church.

Keep in mind that these seven churches constitute the True Church of God.

An interesting tidbit - In the same way that Worldwide Church of God had the seal of a Lion, the Lamb and the little Child for a symbol, Thyatira's symbol was the **Menorah** with the **middle lamp** aflame. Thyatira recognized that they were the middle era of the churches of Revelation 2 and 3.

Jesus Christ does **not** give us a lot of **detail** into the things He hates in Revelation 2 and 3. He just tells us to **deal with it** and overcome it as He did. We are to take it **personally** - what Jesus says to **all** the churches, and examine each **stage** of our Christian growth and experiences after having been called to perfection by God.

I want to briefly review Herbert Armstrong's personal story: I am not in any way **condemning** anyone for anything because it is God who places us in the Body where it pleases Him. We are all tested and tried by **tailor made** tests and trials to see if we will overcome as Jesus did. I am reiterating this piece of history to demonstrate what our human proclivities are when **human nature** is added to the mix of God's government. This should be a stark personal warning to every one of us!

When called by God, Herbert W Armstrong also experienced his "**First Love**" as the Ephesians did. He fell in love with the **Word** of God. He proved the **Sabbath** Day and changed his life. He grew in understanding – and began to see the **Plan** of God as revealed by the **Holy Days—the Feasts of the Lord** of Leviticus 23. Where would we be without the knowledge he restored about **the Feasts of the Lord**?

Looking **directly to God** removes spiritual blindness. Herbert Armstrong knew and understood that everyone was to look **directly to God** – and not to any organization of men.

Like Ephesus -> Herbert Armstrong was called into a mostly fallen Church of God that had lost its **first love** and needed to be reawaken to its spiritual state and returned to loving God with a right and proper zeal.

Like Smyrna -> When Herbert Armstrong came on the scene – he repudiated the form of Church government that superseded God as head of the Church, and he helped the brethren back to the love of the supreme God. And the Church grew with great spiritual works back unto God, small in numbers at first, but doing a powerful spiritual work.

Like Pergamos where Satan's government ruled -> After the 1950's the doctrine of **authoritarian hierarchy** began to be used to control, crush, and injure the brethren of Christ. That form of government continued to influence the Church brethren until Herbert Armstrong's last days.

Of all the doctrines that Herbert Armstrong emphasized in the latter years of his life, the most repeated and accentuated theme was that the "Government of God has been restored in the Church of God."

One of the main things Herbert Armstrong underscored was the one-man-rule from the top down form of government.

Herbert Armstrong even taught in the latter years of his life, and it's in print, the Petrine [primacy-of-Peter, or apostolic-succession] doctrine. It is similar to the Catholic form of governance and military form of governance. That was Herbert Armstrong's introduction of error into the church. The Roman Catholic Church practices a pyramidal structure with one man at the top as does the U.S. military with the Commander and Chief at the top.

The correct form of government was shown to us by Jesus Christ who obeyed God the Father and served man. A servant of Jesus Christ's responsibilities is to feed the sheep – which emphasizes the spiritual development of all those little ones. The ministry is to be helping them prepare for being the bride of Christ.

Like Thyatira -> The Worldwide Church of God became totally paganized in the mid to late 1980's after Herbert Armstrong was no longer alive to lead things, they went into Jezabel's bed (Revelation 2:20) with every kind of false doctrine – including the Trinity, Sunday worship, Christmas, Easter etc.

Like Sardis > Many weak brethren became spiritual victims.

The above pattern is the very one that Ancient Israel went through as well:

Ancient Israel parallels the cycles of churches and nations

1st (Ephesus): Called out of Egyptian bondage to seek the lost love of God that He had shown his servant from the start (Abraham, Isaac, Israel etc.).

2nd (Smyrna): After they were led by Joshua into promised land, and thereafter were triumphant for the things of God.

3rd (Pergamos): That is when Israel **rejected God's** rule over them - "make us gods," and wanted a king – introducing the pyramid structure of man's government into Israel.

Israel's sin was trying to have the best of both worlds. They professed that the True God was their god, but they proved their **insincerity** by not honoring Him with their love and spiritual affection.

God was low on Israel's list of priorities. God was always **second** to other things. That constitutes idolatry.

4th (Thyatira): The subsequent Kings of Israel and Judah corrupted themselves with all the heathen pagan practices around them.

5th (Sardis): The penalty of sin came upon the 2 kingdoms of Israel and Judah. Death, destruction and captivity.

Herbert Armstrong wrote as late as 1939 **against organized church hierarchal government**. He knew then that it was a dangerous situation. The letter he wrote **repudiating** man's government over God's people is widely **available** – even today.

Herbert Armstrong titled his letter: "DID CHRIST REORGANIZE THE CHURCH?" – 1939

It is interesting to note that the Radio Church of God grew and prospered greatly – **with Christ at its head**. There was yet no top down hierarchy of government ruling the Church brethren.

However, as the church grew as an organization with lots of **departments** – ministerial administration, publishing, congregations, feast sites, colleges, programs like SEP (Summer Educational Program), YOU (Youth Opportunities United), archeological projects, motor pool, field ministry, Radio and TV, letter answering department, finances, travel, etc., Herbert W. Armstrong saw the need to maintain control and became an advocate for a **hierarchy** headed by one man.

Herbert Armstrong, with a council of elders and ministers formed and administered a hierarchy that took over, not only the governance of the organization, but over the Church brethren as well. The greater problem was that neither the organization or the Church brethren were being taught to **look directly to God**. The Church brethren – the *spiritual* entity – had to submit to a *physical* government that was often a coercive hierarchy. There was great social and psychological pressure on the Church brethren to accept the presumed spiritual authority as coming directly from God.

Ministers began to be **ranked by hierarchy**: Apostle, Evangelist, Administrators, Regional Directors, Senior Pastors, Pastors, Associate pastors, Assistant pastors, Elders, Church Elders, and Local Church Elders, Deacons and Deaconesses.

As the organization grew, spread out and developed, God the Father, Christ as head of the Church and Christ-centered servant leadership, were often relegated to **second place** in importance. Perhaps not willingly – but the result was to displace God as supreme ruler. In fact, that topic of **looking to God** and **servicing** as Christ did was declared **bogus** in subsequent ministerial conferences and forums. It is in the public record. Eventually, with much encouragement from ministers in his organization, Mr. Armstrong **changed to a hierarchical government** with tight control over doctrines and members.

Excerpts and comments from "DID CHRIST REORGANIZE THE CHURCH?"

"By Herbert W Armstrong The Good News, February 1939

"DID CHRIST Reorganize THE CHURCH? WHICH is the one true church? Here is amazing new light from the Bible, establishing the TRUTH of this important question of Church organization and government. Let us open our minds, and without prejudice, search the Scriptures, whether these things are so!

"Just what is "The Church"? What is its object and purpose—its real mission? Is it AN ORGANIZATION, or a spiritual ORGANISM, composed of those saints whose names are written in heaven, and who have, and are led by, the Holy Spirit?"

God's Spirit is poured out today just as it was in the first century.

Titus 3:5-6 Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the **Holy Spirit**; which He **shed on us abundantly** through Jesus Christ our Savior;

"It is the true remnant people of God who keep the COMMANDMENTS that the Devil is wroth with today. It is US Satan is seeking to deceive. He will deceive even the very elect IF POSSIBLE.

"An **apostle** does not mean one IN authority, but one UNDER authority—one SENT by the authority of another! The only power and authority Jesus ever gave even His original twelve was to heal the sick and cast out demons. And He SENT them, **not to rule**, but to PREACH—**not to BEAR authority**, but to MINISTER, to serve!"

Herbert Armstrong wrote and understood God's government correctly in 1939!

"Nowhere in the Scripture do we find the slightest hint that the twelve constituted a higher-up church board, and nowhere were they ever given **power to rule, or govern**, or decide what doctrines the other disciples must believe.

"Notice the necessary qualification to be an apostle. Not the ability to govern, nor talent to discern and vote on right doctrine. Look at it in your Bible: "Wherefore of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John, unto the same day that He was taken up from us, must one be ordained TO **BE A WITNESS** WITH US OF HIS RESURRECTION." (Acts 1:21-22.)

"Do you grasp it? Do you see plainly revealed here the PURPOSE of the twelve?

"First, Jesus ordained twelve "that they should be with Him." Later, after His ascension, one of these was replaced. And it had to be ONE WHO HAD BEEN WITH HIM, along with the others, throughout His entire ministry, beginning with the baptism of John!

"Why? TO BE A WITNESS WITH THEM OF HIS RESURRECTION!"

"Brethren, let us have the courage to accept the TRUTH, and to COME OUT!

The Purpose of the Church

“Finally, what is the very PURPOSE of the New Testament Church? Is it to BUILD AN ORGANIZATION?

“Let us, now, finally understand it.

“God formed Abraham’s children into A NATION, giving them HIS LAWS, to show how a nation would be blessed that would build its civilization according to His Commandments. At Mt. Sinai Israel was united to the Lord in MARRIAGE, as **HIS** GOVERNMENT, both state and church.

“But when Israel went after the ways of other nations, breaking the Commandments, God DIVORCED Israel, and gave over the GOVERNMENT (which included CHURCH GOVERNMENT as well as state) to the Gentile kingdoms symbolized by Daniel’s image and the four “beasts.” He gave the GOVERNMENT into Gentile hands UNTIL THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST, when the **government, church and state, shall be RESTORED to Israel!**

“When Jesus comes with POWER and great glory—power to RULE, and the SAINTS possess the kingdoms of this world—He will make a NEW Covenant with Israel and Judah, which NEW Covenant will be the MARRIAGE OF THE LAMB!

“And this MARRIAGE will not be made with some one organization! It is THE INDIVIDUAL SAINTS—not some organization—which shall possess the government, and rule. (Dan. 7:18; Rev. 2:26-27; 3:21, etc.)

“Our fellowship is first with God, and with Christ—then with each other, in LOVE!

“Brethren, let us have the kind of cooperative FELLOWSHIP, based on LOVE, that was practiced by the early saints, as recorded in the Book of Acts. Let us work together, in unselfish effort to GIVE of the Gospel Truth to the world—to GIVE of the “waters of life” to as many precious souls as we can reach—to GIVE out the last warning message with great POWER!

“But let us drop all effort to BUILD UP A MOVEMENT or AN ORGANIZATION. Let us quit working FOR organizations, and **work FOR THE LORD**—and the salvation of souls!

“What has split and divided up the saints in the Church of God? Nothing but ORGANIZATION—which has led to politics, ministers lusting for rule and for power—striving against each other, lining up the brethren on THEIR side, against the other! It is SUCH PREACHERS who have split up and divided our brethren!

“God’s Word commands us to COME OUT FROM AMONG THEM, and be separate. God’s last warning is, “COME OUT OF BABYLON!!”

“Organization and church GOVERNMENT has brought us only strife, jealousies, divisions, bitterness! It is not of God, and it can bear no other fruit.

"The CHURCH OF GOD needs more of the POWER OF GOD—more of HIS LOVE—of HIS HOLY SPIRIT, that the work may now begin to go forth IN MIGHTY POWER! We ought to be ASHAMED of the pitiful, puny, weak, feeble work that has split up and divided brethren, reached but so very few with the message, with almost no real conversions! All this, while leaders desiring power to RULE send out misleading, exaggerated, deceiving statements designed to convince tithe-payers that "the work is progressing." What a mockery! What a tragedy! What a pity!

"We praise God that many of the more spiritual HAVE COME OUT! Let us obey GOD!"
End Herbert Armstrong Letter 1939

Later, the change to an **organizational** and hierarchical type of church government that demanded support and loyalty to whatever it thought at the time – was a test for God's people – especially the ministry to see who would serve the organization – and who would serve God.

Supporting an organization became first and foremost:

3John 1:9 I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, received us not.

Diotrephes placed himself at the pinnacle of Church Authority – that was obviously **terribly wrong**. But the **supporters** of Diotrephes in the congregations were equally at **fault**.

We made the same mistake when the ministry was out of line.

It was putting up a big false front in order to look better than we were. It was 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 consequences in putting up a false front – **people begin to believe it!**

Every last person will say that they are serving God first – but when they compromise one iota with His word – they are putting God **second**.

The organizations demand the member's loyalty – and that is idolatry – putting God second.

Jesus says that He hates the doctrine of the Nicolaitans at least twice – because it is prevalent in the churches.

Nicolaitanism is the practice of hierarchical form government -- like a military establishment –

Nicolaitanism is a practice of hierarchal abusive administration of dictatorial church government.

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.

Like with Diatrophes (III John), everyone knew and recognized the pecking order.

We do see that Nicolaitanism: Is a belief system, like a religion or a philosophy. It results in ungodly behavior. And, Christ hates it vehemently.

God Alone is King

Paul preached that Jesus was the Messiah to come (Acts 17:3).

The brethren gladly picked up on that theme declaring that Jesus is **King** (Acts 17:7). The Bereans... received the word [of God] with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so (Acts 17:11).

We search the Scriptures as the Bereans did. Is Jesus in fact, **King**?

At His trial, Jesus responded to Pilate's question - that He was indeed born to be **King** - but His acknowledgment also limited His present kingly duties to bearing witness to the Truth (John 18:38). Two thousand years ago, Jesus had **not** come to be an acting King but a servant.

Who was the **first king** of Israel? It is a trick question - the answer is not, "Saul." The elders of Israel said to the old Prophet, Samuel:

1Samuel 8:5 ...**Make us a king** to judge us like all the nations.

1Samuel 8:6 But the thing displeased Samuel, when they said, **Give us a king** to judge us. And Samuel prayed unto the LORD.

1Samuel 8:7 And the LORD said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but **they have rejected me**, that I should not reign over them.

God was the **first King** over Israel, and Israel rejected Him.

1Samuel 12:12 ...You said, "A king shall reign over us: when the **LORD your God was your King**."

Excerpt from Herbert Armstrong's 1939 Letter

"As God first organized His people, HE was their HEAD—their King. But soon the Israelites wanted a MAN to be their king, like the Gentile nations around them. It is IMPOSSIBLE to have ORGANIZATION, or GOVERNMENT, without having a MAN as the actual and real head, even though we SAY Christ in heaven is the Head, and continue to try to believe it that way.

"A fact that many of us have never noticed is that THE OLD COVENANT WAS A MARRIAGE COMPACT!

"When God first set up AN ORGANIZATION on earth, the people who formed this organization were MARRIED to the Lord. It was this MARRIAGE that bound Him and His people together!"

Jesus Christ will be King again...

Revelation 15:3 ...Great and marvelous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou **King of saints**.

Revelation 17:14 ...He is Lord of lords, and **King of kings**:

That is in the Kingdom of God - beginning in the Millennium. The Church of God does not have a King - because it is a *spiritual entity*, a spiritual body with Jesus Christ as the **head**.

Colossians 1:18 [Jesus] is the **head** of the body, the Church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.

Ephesians 5:23 ... Christ is the **head of the Church**: and He is the Savior of the body.

Jesus is not only the head of the Church, He is the Savior, our High Priest, the Mediator and Intercessor, Judge and our **soon-coming King**.

Ministers are to be servants of God's people – not kings. As late as January 17, 1972, Herbert W. Armstrong commented that some of the Worldwide Church of God ministers looked on their ordination more as a **coronation**. (Raymond F. McNair Ministerial Conference Notes 1972)

In much of the Worldwide Church of God, the ministers were unquestionably the boss over the lay members. The members were subject to the directives of the ministry in many significant aspects of their lives. Some church leaders believed that they represent "God's government on earth," and if you reject their authority over you, they made you feel as though you were rejecting God, Himself. Those church leaders fully believed that they had dominion over your life. Ministers believed that they belonged to a higher class than the rank-and-file brethren.

2Corinthians 1:24 Paul said: We do not have **dominion** over your faith, but are helpers of your joy: for by faith ye stand.

Some individual ministers recognized that there was a wrong emphasis beginning in Worldwide Church of God. They quoted the words of Jesus Christ declaring the hierarchal form of Church government to be **incorrect**:

Matthew 20:25 ...Ye know that the chief leaders of the Gentiles [authorities outside of the Church] **exercise dominion** over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them.

Matthew 20:26 But **it shall not be so among you**: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your servant;

Matthew 20:27 And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your **servant**:

Matthew 20:28 Even as the Son of man came not to be served, but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.

How do church leaders presume to act in place of Christ? Jesus is Spirit, and His Church is a **spiritual entity** – all would agree. The terrible problem is that many of the Church brethren do not acknowledge any problem with the hierarchal class system. Many want physical rulers between themselves and God.

When Jesus says that His Church people are **naked**, it means that they are not righteous in His sight.

Revelation 3:15-16 I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of my mouth.

Revelation 3:17-18 Because thou say, I am **rich**, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and know not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and **blind**, and **naked**: I counsel thee to buy of me **gold** tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed [in righteousness], and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with **eye salve**, that thou mayest see.

Revelation 3:19-22 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 hears my voice, and opens the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me. To him that **overcomes** will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in His throne. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches.

Luke 13:28 There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when **ye shall see** Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the Kingdom of God, and you yourselves **thrust out**.

Notice carefully – not just your little smug Church group.

Luke 13:29 And they shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down in the Kingdom of God.

Who are these firstfruits in the Kingdom of God – **taking your place?**

Luke 13:30 And, behold, there are last which shall be first, and there are first which shall be last.

Seven times God warns His Church of what the **blinded** miss out on: Bitter, most intense disappointment – realization of the horrific loss - bite down in pain, extreme anguish, or anger in the realization (dreadful, partly because it is eternal judgment) in the final judgment of sinners. Their superior, smug, self-satisfied, prideful attitude of being better than their brethren... of their secure, privileged position in God's Plan was misconstrued.

Psalms 112:10 The wicked shall see it, and be grieved; he shall gnash with his teeth, and melt away: **the desire of the wicked shall perish**.

They will be kicking themselves because **down deep they knew better** – and somehow thought they would get away with it.

Matthew 13:41 The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity;

Matthew 13:42 And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and **gnashing of teeth**.

Matthew 13:50 And shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and **gnashing of teeth**.

One finds himself – persona non grata (an unacceptable or unwelcome person) – dis-invited to the marriage/wedding Feast

Matthew 22:11 And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment:

Mat 22:12 And he saith unto him, Friend, how did you come in here not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless.

Matthew 22:13 Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and **gnashing of teeth**.

Matthew 24:51 And shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and **gnashing of teeth**.

Matthew 25:30 And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and **gnashing of teeth**.

Matthew 8:11 And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven.

Matthew 8:12 But the children of the Kingdom shall be cast out into **outer darkness**: there shall be **weeping and gnashing of teeth**.

Revelation 2:25 But that which ye have already hold fast till I come.

Jesus is telling us – Yes, **warning us**, His Church, that we do not yet measure up to His expectations.

Revelation 2:26 And he that **overcomes**, and keeps my works unto the end, **to him** [not everybody that goes to Sabbath services] will I give power over the nations:

Revelation 2:29 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto [all] the churches.

Jesus Christ is giving us the directive to **measure ourselves** against everything that He says to all the Churches of Revelation 2 and 3!

To the Church in Sardis

Revelation 3:1 And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write; These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that you have a name that you are living, and **art dead**.

It is Jesus who says that those who call themselves “Living,” are dead.

When God says that His Church is dead – that is really serious.

Revelation 3:2 Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have **not found** your works to be perfect before God.

Again, Jesus is the Judge who says that the Church does not measure up to His expectations.

Revelation 3:3 Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and **repent**. If therefore you shall not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.

Revelation 3:4 you have a **few names** even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy.

Gain, does “few names” mean that “**most names**” have defiled their garments?

Revelation 3:5 He that **overcomes**, the same shall be clothed in white raiment [the righteousness of the saints]; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.

Revelation 3:6 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

To the Church in Philadelphia

Revelation 3:7 And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write; These things saith He that is holy, He that is true, He that hath the key of David, He that opens, and no man shuts; and shuts, and no man opens;

That verse tells us that Jesus is orchestrating everything for our benefit.

Revelation 3:8 I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an **open door**, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name.

Since Jesus tells us to hear what He says to ALL the Churches – it means that the same **open door** is set before all the Churches – not just Philadelphia.

Revelation 3:9 Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and **worship** [when ye are Gods] before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee.

Revelation 3:10 Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.

Revelation 3:11 Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.

Revelation 3:12 Him that overcomes will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name.

Revelation 3:13 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

To the Church in Laodicea

Revelation 3:14 And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God;

Revelation 3:15 I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot.

Revelation 3:16 So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew you out of my mouth.

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:

We are **rich** in doctrinal understanding and **literature** – more so than anyone else has ever been.

We have access to every booklet and article ever written!

Jesus' words apply doubly so for us – where He says:

Matthew 13:17 Many prophets and righteous men have desired to **see** those things which you **see** and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear and have not heard them.

Brethren, we have it all, but, do we have the **eyes to see**?

Revelation 3:18 I counsel thee to buy of me **gold tried in the fire**, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and **anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see.**

Jesus warns **us** - the Laodiceans, of our lack of **Godly character** and tells us to, "buy of me **gold** tried in the fire." Gold – that is spiritual character.

Revelation 3:19 As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and **repent.**

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.

Jesus is knocking on our door – trying to get our attention!

We brethren are so **distant** from Jesus—so unaware of what He is asking of us—we are not even aware of **our spiritual need**, and thus have no desire to be near Him.

He is knocking!

Have we so little desire for prayer; for a true relationship that He can say these things of us? Don't point at others – He is addressing us.

Where there is no relationship with Christ, there is no awareness of spiritual need. It goes in a vicious **cycle.**

Revelation 3:21 To him that **overcomes** will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.

Revelation 3:22 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

One of the things that has not been preached forcefully in God's Churches is how dismal our record is in some places.

We all want to begin with the premise, "I'm in God's Church, I've got it made."

But as we have just clearly demonstrated – that is not the case.

Too much of God's Church throughout history – **came short** – and never got around to repenting. We have the record!

Let's look at our own history – WCG – what percentage failed to repent of their apostasy.

I think that we lost upwards of 75% of those attending church when Herbert Armstrong died and the Tkach apostasy came to the full - God is keeping track.

Everyone will possess his **own personal record** of **evidence** (or the **lack** thereof) which will be presented to Jesus Christ on His judgment seat.

Romans 14:10, 12 ...We shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ... So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.

Be zealous therefore, and repent. Brethren, Jesus is certainly not **white-washing** His Church as the Churches of God try to do today as a matter of policy.

In this last era of God's Church, do we believe that we are going to get off scot-free and breeze into His Kingdom? Why haven't these **weaknesses** been more widely preached

among God's people as a warning to us? Why does God tell us that we are **blind**? The answer is because, **we are blind**.

God has allowed the world to remain **blinded and in darkness** until He establishes the Kingdom of God over all the earth. However, **within God's Church**, we understand - we know the truth.

There is a spiritual darkness that encompasses the world—but God's people have been shown that **glorious light**. The rest of humanity must await a future date when all will be recipients of God's Holy Spirit (Joel 2:28-29).

Let us understand that God has already brought His Church out of blindness into His **glorious light**.

1Peter 2:9-10 You [Church brethren] are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a people purchased and possessed by God; that you should show forth the praises of Him who has **called you out of darkness into His marvelous light**. Who in time past were not a people but are **now** the people of God.

We have all experienced what it is like to try to describe God's way of life to someone in the world who has not been specifically called to this truth.

It is almost as if their eyes glaze over and their mind changes channels. Sometimes they try to follow what you are saying – but to no avail. They simply **cannot understand**.

John 1:5 The light shone in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.

The world is in darkness:

1John 2:8-11 Again, a new commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in Him and in you: because the **darkness is past**, and the **true light** now shines. He that says he is in the **light**, and hates his brother, is in **darkness** even until now. He that loveth his brother abides in the **light**, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him. But he that hates his brother **is in darkness**, and walks in **darkness**, and knows not whither he goes, because that **darkness** has **blinded** his eyes.

Jesus makes a very clear distinction between who is blind and **who is not blind**.

Matthew 13:10 And the disciples came, and said unto him, Why do you speak unto them in parables?

Matthew 13:11 He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them **it is not given**.

Brethren, we know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven! How great is that?

Matthew 13:12 For whosoever has, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever has not, from him shall be taken away even that which he has.

Even if those not called get the smallest **glimpse** of God's Kingdom – it is soon removed from them. They cannot hear – they cannot see – for they are **truly blinded**.

Matthew 13:13 Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing **see not**; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand.

This world is truly blind – but the Church should never be **Blind!**

Why does Jesus say that – in this age – **we are blind**? There is a **sizeable percentage** of the Church of God that is **not qualifying** for the Kingdom of God because of their **blindness** – their lack of true faith.

Matthew 13:14 And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah, who said, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing **ye shall see**, and **shall not perceive**:

Not perceive **what**?

Matthew 13:15 For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they **should see** with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should **understand with their heart**, and should be converted, and I should heal them.

Matthew 13:16 But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear.

Matthew 13:17 For verily I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous men have **desired to see** those things **which ye see**, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them.

Jesus Christ, the light of the world, came to dispel darkness. Those are beautiful words, but unless we can understand **with our heart** what they mean they are without profit to us as Christians. We must allow the Holy Scriptures to define what God means by these words that are much more than merely pious sounding sentiments. The importance of these words cannot be overestimated in that they represent the way to eternal life—the light of life. Jesus gave us a most stern warning with regard to the path a Christian must walk when He said,

Matthew 6:23 If therefore the **light** that is in you be darkness, how great is that darkness!

For those of us who are sitting in God's congregations around the earth today, let us hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches.

Luke 11:35 Take heed therefore that the light which is in thee be not darkness.

Brethren, we all say, "**I see clearly.**"

Because, to a man, we all say, "**We see,**" Jesus has one final warning for us:

John 9:39 And Jesus said, "For judgment I have come into this world, that those who do not see may see, and that those **who see** may be made **blind.**"

It is Jesus Himself that tells us that – like so many before us – we are **blind**. It behooves us to make sure that we anoint our eyes with **eye salve** that we **may** be able to truly see our spiritual state.

How is it that everyone in all the various scattered churches of God thinks that they are **sitting pretty**? ...In the right **place**? ...Doing everything **right**? ...Saying, "Our organization is the one that **sees** clearly—it is those others who are blind, **because we see!**" Jesus Christ is telling everyone of us to **re-evaluate** our relationship with **Him, His Father**, and every **one** of our brethren.

John 9:41 Jesus said unto them, **If ye were blind**, ye should have **no** sin: but now ye say, "**We see;**" therefore your sin **remains**.

End: A Blind Church – Part 2