

Eternity to Eternity 09 Genesis 1:14

by Joseph Balsan

The sermon explores God's creation, the role of the church, and its significance as a witness in the current age.

Duration: 54:20

Scripture: Acts 1:4, Acts 1:6-8, Revelation 1:10, Revelation 1:19

Topics: "Genesis"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the fourth age or present age in which we live, where God is focused on gathering a people for His name. The promise given to Abraham was two-fold, with an earthly seed as numerous as the sands of the seashore and a heavenly seed as numerous as the stars of heaven. The preacher emphasizes that just as the moon goes through different phases but never disappears, the Church has faced challenges throughout history but has never been exterminated. The sermon also references Acts 1:4, where Jesus commands his disciples to wait for the promise of the Holy Spirit, and Revelation 1:10, where John sees seven golden candlesticks and the Son of Man in the midst of them.

Transcript

Let us turn to Genesis chapter one. Genesis chapter one. Genesis one and verse fourteen.

Genesis one and verse fourteen. And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night, and let them be for signs and for seasons, and for days and years. And let them be for lights in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth.

And it was so. And God made two great lights, the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night. He made the stars also.

And God set them in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth, and to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good, and the evening and the morning were the fourth day. Acts chapter one.

Acts chapter one. Acts chapter one and verse four. And being assembled together with them, Jesus commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me.

For John truly baptized with water, but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence. When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons which the Father hath put in his own power, but ye shall receive power. After that the Holy Ghost is come upon you, and ye shall be witnesses unto me, both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

Now, one more portion in Revelation chapter one. Revelation one. And verse ten.

I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice as of a trumpet, saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last. And what thou seest, write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia, unto Ephesus, and unto Samaria, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea. And I turned to see the voice that spake with me, and being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks.

And in the midst of the seven candlesticks, run like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and gird about the paths with a golden girdle. And when I saw him, I thought his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not, I am the first and the last.

I am he that liveth and was dead, and, behold, I am alive for evermore. Amen. And have the keys of hell and of death.

Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter. The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches.

May the Lord bless to us the reading of his word. Now, you remember those of you who were here last night, that we were speaking on the fourth day. We saw how that on the fourth day, God, as it were, turns his attention away from the earth, and he is occupied with the heavens.

Through the first three days, God is, as it were, occupied with the earth. But in the fourth day, he turns to the heavens, picturing for us the fourth age, or the present age in which we live, as being the period of time when God is occupied with taking out of this world a people for his name, a people for heaven. You remember that in one of the preceding messages, we had that the promise that was given to Abraham was a twofold promise.

According to Genesis 22, it was a promise that Abraham would have an earthly seed who would be as numerous as the sands of the seashore. And God also promised that Abraham would have a heavenly seed, and this heavenly seed would be as numerous as the stars of heaven. And you remember that we mentioned that this was not just a twofold prophecy of the same thing, but it was a twofold prophecy of two different things.

And that is that Abraham was to have a natural and earthly seed as pictured for us in the nation of Israel, but Abraham is also to have a heavenly seed pictured for us in the church which is described in the word of God as we saw last night as the body of Christ. We saw last night that the difference between the third age and the fourth age, this age in which we live, is that in the third age, God was dealing with one nation in particular, and that was the nation of Israel. They were God's chosen, they were God's special people.

In this present age, God has no special or favored people. All nations are alike before him, and he sends the gospel to all men. You know, we, of course, we quote John 3.16, and it's a wonderful verse to us, For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

We want to remember that that verse was first quoted by the Lord Jesus to a Jew by the name of Nicodemus. And Nicodemus, trained in the religion and the thinking of the Jews, of course, he thought that the Jews were God's favored people, and that every other nation was nothing but dogs in the eyes of the Jews. And so, to hear the Lord Jesus say, For God so loved the world, why, that must have been a tremendous truth to come in upon Nicodemus' mind and heart.

Whether he grasped it or not, we do not know. We do know that when Peter, in the tenth chapter of Acts, the Lord desired to send him to the Gentiles, we know that it called for a special revelation from the Lord to Peter to persuade him that God had any thought, or that God had any blessing for the Jews whatsoever, or the Gentiles whatsoever. And so it was only with a special revelation that Peter went to the Gentiles in Cornelius' house to bring them the message concerning the Lord Jesus Christ.

We saw how that, in this present age, God is doing a new thing. God is forming from Jew and Gentile who believe he is forming that organism which he calls the church, something that did not exist prior to the day of Pentecost as we saw, because it could not exist until the Lord Jesus, who is the head, had ascended to heaven. The head had to be in heaven, all principalities and powers being made subject to him, before the church, the body of Christ, could be formed.

Neither could it be formed without the special presence of the Holy Spirit, because it is by the baptism of the Holy Spirit that the church is formed. And we saw that there is a fourfold picture of the church in its relationship to Christ, presented to us in the New Testament, that that church is likened to a body of which the Lord Jesus is the head. Now, I might say that body has only one head.

That body does not have two heads. That body does not have a head in heaven and a head in Rome, the way Romanism tells us. That body has only one head.

If it had two heads, why it wouldn't be a body, it would be a monstrosity. In Ephesians chapter 2, why the church in its union with Christ is spoken of as one new man, making of twain one new man, so making peace. And so the Lord Jesus Christ is the head.

And it would be beautiful to notice some of the relationships and responsibilities, privileges that flow from that union of head with body. But that speaks of its oneness, its unity. Then we saw how the church is likened to a building of which the Lord Jesus is the foundation, and he is the chief cornerstone.

And as the building, the church is the dwelling place of God. God dwells among his people. You know, there are three temples spoken of in regard to the present age.

Let us just look for a moment in Ephesians chapter 2. I didn't mention this last night, but I think it is very suggestive and very helpful for us to remember this. Ephesians chapter 2, and notice it tells us here, and verse 19, Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God, and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom all the building fitly framed together draweth unto an holy temple in the Lord, in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit. Now,

in Ephesians 2, we have the church universal.

That is, this temple that is spoken of here in Ephesians 2 is the entire church from the very beginning on the day of Pentecost until the very last soul that is brought into the temple of God, the living stone, by means of the gospel just prior to the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. That is the temple of God, a universal temple. But let us turn to the third chapter of 1 Corinthians, and here we have a smaller temple, but nevertheless also a temple.

1 Corinthians chapter 3, it says in the 16th verse, Paul is writing to the church at Corinth, and he says, Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy, for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are. Now, this temple here is a local temple. The church at Corinth, or the assembly at Corinth, was also a temple, just as the assembly here in Hamilton Street is a temple, just as the assemblies in Des Moines are a temple, just as the assembly in Lincoln or any other place is also a temple, and the Spirit of God dwells in this temple, and because the Spirit of God dwells in the local assembly, the local assembly is to be kept clean.

The local assembly is to be kept pure, not because they are any better than anyone else is, but because the Spirit of God dwells amongst the people of God. And so here we find that the local assembly is also a temple, but when you turn to the sixth chapter of 1 Corinthians, you'll notice that here we have a third temple. 1 Corinthians chapter 6 and verse 17, it says, But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit.

Flee fornication, every sin that a man doeth, is without the body, but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body. What know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price. Therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.

Now here we have that the body of the individual believer is also a temple. So you see we have the church universal, and then we have the church in its local aspect, both of which are temples, and then we come down to the individual believer, who is a member of that temple, and his body in turn is also a temple of the Holy Spirit, so that we find that in its universal aspect, the Spirit of God dwells in the temple. In its local aspect, the Spirit of God dwells in the temple, and in the individual personal believer, the Holy Spirit dwells in that temple.

And so there we have the three temples, you might say, that are specially characteristic of this age, the dwelling place of God. And then we saw the church as the bride, and that speaks of the affection of Christ for the church, and the church for Christ. And then we saw the church as the city in the future, when it is going to be the administrative center of the Lord throughout the entire universe.

But now there is a fifth aspect that we have not looked at, that we want to look at tonight, and that is brought before us, of course, in the thought of the sun, the moon, and the stars. Now if you and I were to go outside at this time, you and I would look toward the heavens, and you and I would find no sun. And yet we know that there is a sun.

Around us there is nothing but darkness. But how would you and I know that there is a sun? Because if we were to look to the heavens, we would see the moon, and the moon is reflecting the light of the unseen sun. Nineteen hundred years ago, the Lord Jesus Christ came into the world.

Nineteen hundred years ago, the Lord Jesus Christ lived His life. Nineteen hundred years ago, He died on the cross. None of us here have ever seen Him.

I remember a woman down in Guthrie, Oklahoma one time who was a Christian. She ran an old store, and she was in the assembly, and she was telling me about an experience that she had with a salesman that came in, and so she started to talk to him in the course of their conversation about the Lord. And so this man said, well he said, they say there was such a person as Jesus Christ, but he says, I don't know whether there was or not.

He says, they say so, but I don't know. She says, you don't know? He says, no, I don't know. Well she says, I'm about to write out a check for you in payment for some goods that you sold me some time ago.

Now what I'll do is, I'll just write any date on this check. It doesn't make a difference. I'll just put this check ahead, oh maybe 1975 or something.

And she says, oh, he says, no, no, he says, you couldn't do that. She says, why not? Well, she says, I couldn't collect on it. She says, you have to put this date down.

Well, she says, what difference does it make what date I put on? Well, after all, he says, it is 19 so and so. I think it was about 1955 or something. It is this date.

She says, yes, but 1955 what? How come it's 1955? Well, he says, 1955 A.D. in the year of our Lord. Well, maybe there is something to it after all. Maybe he did come into the world.

All around us there is a witness that Christ has come into the world. How does the world know that Christ came into the world? The world, you say, has the Bible. Yes, but the world is not reading the Bible.

Is there some other proof that Christ came into the world apart from the Bible? Does all our proof come from the Bible? No, there is another witness that Christ came into the world. The existence of the church just as the moon reflects the light of that unseen sun. Just so, the church is a witness for the Lord Jesus Christ in the time of His absence.

And so, here we find that when God set the sun and the moon and the stars in their various places in the heavens above in their proper relation to the earth, it was for signs and for seasons and for days and years. And we know how true it is that the sun and the moon and the stars are for signs. Men are dependent upon these heavenly orbs at all times.

The mariner out on the sea, on the ocean, often times gauges His direction by means of the stars. He looks into the heavens above and He gauges His direction by means of the stars. I remember reading a story one time about a man who had a boat and he was crossing the sea and he had a green man working with him.

That is, he was a green hand. He was an Irishman. And so he asked this Irishman that night to take care of the helm and to keep the ship in the right direction.

He says, now you keep your eye on that star and you keep that star just to the left of the mast and you keep going in that direction. And he says, I'm going to sleep and if anything happens or any problem arises, you come and wake me up. And so, of course, he went to sleep and about the middle of the night suddenly he heard a rapping on the door and the Irishman comes to him and he says, you better wake up

and find me another star because I passed the one that you gave me.

Well, friends, he hadn't passed it. He had just lost his direction. And so it is also when men get off their course, when they get out of tune with God, I look at this watch here or I look at that clock up there and let us just imagine that clock is absolutely correct.

How do I know it's correct? Where does that time come from in the first place? Well, it comes from an observatory. But where does the observatory get its time? The observatory gets its time from the heavens above. Those myriads of stars are in absolute order.

In fact, my friends, they vary so slightly that they may only vary one one thousandth of a second every two or three hundred years. Astronomers who have studied the stars and have gauged the stars have found that in the course of two hundred years, they may lose just perhaps about twenty-seven one thousandth of one second. It may be running perhaps a little fast, and then it will slow up again for the next two hundred years until it's kept in perfect balance.

Who arranges that perfect order? It is God. And so we find that the sun, the moon, the stars are for signs and for seasons, for days and for years. And my friends, we look at the heavens above, the moon changes its fate at different periods of the month.

There's the time of full moon, half moon, quarter moon, and down it goes until at times it seems that perhaps it's going to disappear out of the heavens altogether. And yet, my friends, it's always there. Just as in the course of the church's history on earth, at times it seemed as though men were going to exterminate it, but my friends, they never have.

And they never will until the Lord takes His church to be with Himself. We have seen that this church is formed by the descent of the Holy Spirit, that every believer who is born again is in that church, that that church is left here to be a witness, to be a light for the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord Jesus says, ye shall receive power, and ye shall be witnesses unto me.

And that's why when we turn to Revelation, in chapter 1, John has this wonderful vision of the Lord Jesus standing in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks. And these seven candlesticks, he says, are the seven churches. And the seven churches are in Asia, Ephesus, Samarna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea.

Now, to do this justice, we should really and truly take each of these churches up one night at a time. But we don't have the time for that. Now, these were actual, actually seven churches in Asia.

They were seven assemblies in Asia at the time of John. Now, some people say, well, these were only historical churches. Those seven churches have disappeared off the face of the earth, and they're gone.

They have no more lesson for the day in which we live. But I want you to notice that in Revelation 1 in verse 20, John was told, The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches.

Now, there was the mystery of tending these seven candlesticks, which shows there is more than just a historical significance here concerning these churches. That these seven churches and the condition that was existing in these churches was such that it was meant by the Lord for a special purpose and to

convey to us a special lesson. And we believe that the lesson is, according to the structure of the book of Revelation, that these seven churches picture for us a sevenfold, or a complete, description of the history of the church in the earth as a witness for the Lord Jesus from the very time that it began until the very time that it ends.

If we didn't have this history, you and I wouldn't know just where we are in the church age. People could say, Well, they've always preached about the coming of the Lord. There's always been perilous times.

Even in the days of the Apostle John, he said this is the last hour when Antichrist is about to come. Why after 1,900 years? Why we're just this far along? How do we know that we're at the very end of the church's history upon earth? Because of these seven churches. These seven churches, they picture for us seven stages.

And I want you to notice, my friends, it's all a downward stage. Just like everything that man ever had from God, man failed in everything. He failed in the Garden of Eden.

He failed in the creation outside. He failed after the flood. He failed when God took the children of Israel and blessed them, enriched them.

Everything about man is a failure. Now, of course, we're living in a day-to-day when men say, well, we're about on the brink of tremendous things for the church. The ecumenical movement.

When all the churches seem to be getting together, why we're looking forward to a tremendous resurgence of the church in the Western world. Why just think of what a mighty power and influence it's going to be for good if they're all together. But, my friends, when we turn to the Word of God, we find that the account is a downward account.

We find that these seven churches picture for us the seven stages of the church's history. Ephesus, the first century. Samarna, from the first century through the third century when the church was persecuted.

Pergamos, from the time of the third century Constantine until the seventh century. And from the seventh century, Thyatira, something that continues on to the present time. The emergence and development and fruition of Roman Catholicism pictured for us in Thyatira.

Sardis, the sixteenth century, the Protestantism, which came out of Roman Catholicism. And here we have Philadelphia, that movement of about 150 years ago when believers began to get back to the Word of God and meet in simplicity around our Lord Jesus and sought to go out with the gospel. And we know, according to the Word of God, that we're in the last stage.

Laodicea. Laodicea, the rule of the laity. The voice of the people.

And so we know that we are in the very last stage of the church's history of honor just prior to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. We know this from the book of Revelation, the second and third chapters, which are occupied with this present church age. And from the fourth chapter of Revelation on to the end, we have that which is going to take place after the Lord takes His people to be with Himself.

In this first chapter of Revelation, John, very carefully, by the Spirit of God at the direction of the Lord, gives us the division, the threefold division of the book of Revelation. Revelation 1, that vision which John saw on the Isle of Patmos, that which was past. Revelation 2 and 3, that which is present, the church age.

And from Revelation 4 on, that which shall be after these things, the things that are going to take place on the earth from heaven during the tribulation period and on into the kingdom and into the eternal state. So, my friends, Revelation 2 and 3 gives us the church age in which we live. And it's going to come to an end.

This age is just like every other age has come to an end. Now, what are some of the things that the Lord brings before us concerning these seven churches? Here they were to be witnesses, lights for the Lord. We know, according to the word of God, that the church was to be composed only of those who were saved.

And in the early days, this was so. You read the epistle to the Ephesus, for instance. Notice what the apostle is told here in the second chapter.

It says, Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write, These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks. I know thy 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 and hast borne and hast patience and for my name's sake hast labored and hast not fainted. You know, it would have been pretty hard to get into that church at Ephesus.

It would have been pretty hard to get into the church in the early days. You know, they tested everyone who applied for fellowship. They tested their profession.

You know, some people don't like to have their profession tested. They say, Well, after all, what right does anyone have to question me as to whether I'm saved or not? Isn't that between the Lord and me? After all, what right does anyone have to question me about that? Well, the questioning and answer is not going to determine anyone's salvation. It is between the Lord and you as to whether or not you are really and truly saved.

But as far as being in fellowship with God's people, it is their responsibility and their obligation to make sure that those who are in fellowship with them are really and truly born again because the word of God tells us that we as believers are not to be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship have righteousness with unrighteousness and so on and so forth? Now, this church in the early days was very careful about their fellowship. They were very careful about their orders.

They were very careful about the ministry that they received because they tried them which said they were apostles and they were not. And they were a church that was very zealous and very fervent. Do you know that the first generation of Christians evangelized the entire known world of their day? Do you know that Paul could say that every creature under the sun had heard the gospel in his day? There was nothing to hold back the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ after that first generation because they had evangelized the entire known world of that day.

Just think of what a tremendous power they were for God. How zealous they were for God. But I want you to notice it tells us here in the church at Ephesus the fourth verse Nevertheless I have against thee because thou hast left thy first love.

Zealous, diligent, meticulous in their order. Nevertheless the Lord said to them I have against thee because thou hast left thy first love. Not lost thy first love.

It wasn't that they lost their first love. You know if a person loses something it's not always his fault. Or if a person loses something why sometimes he may not miss it.

But you know when you leave something that's something that you deliberately have done of your own volition. And that was true of this church. The Lord says I have against thee because thou hast left thy first love.

You know what the Lord says a premium on above everything else in our lives it's our love for Him. Our love for Him. I'm not talking about our love for one another.

We hear a lot of preaching about our love for one another. And how much love there should be toward one another. But there can only be love for one another if there is love for Him.

Do you want to know how we can test whether we love Him or not? Let me ask. How much time do you and I spend in His presence? Do you and I love to be in His presence? How much time do you and I spend listening to His Word and learning of Him? Love to the Lord Jesus. If your love and mine was gauged tonight and if the Lord Jesus came down to you and me tonight and He asked you and me the question Lovest thou me? I wonder what would be our answer? You know we can conceal sometimes our spiritual condition with a lot of activity and a lot of talk.

People talk about their love. But the question is how do we show our love? We show our love by being occupied with, by being absorbed with, by delighting in, by enjoying our Lord Jesus Christ. You know that's the way it was when we were first saved.

We loved to hear about Him. Nothing would keep us from hearing about Him. We'd make sure that we'd get over this word and learn something about Him.

We loved to hear Him spoken of. But you know as time went on, goes on, we leave that. And we don't want to be thought fanatical.

We don't want to be thought too preoccupied with Him. But friends, He notices and He misses love. What does a husband care how good a housekeeper his wife is? Or how she takes care of things if he didn't love her, or if she didn't love him? Love is the basis of everything in life.

And love is that which our Lord sets the highest premium on. The second church we find is the church that passed through persecution. That's the time when the church was suffering.

When Satan was putting them into the crucible. And when they suffered for their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. And though they were poor materially, the Lord said that they were rich.

They were rich. Our place in the kingdom is going to be determined by our suffering for the Lord Jesus Christ. If we suffer with Him, we shall also reign with Him.

And so we find that the second church age, or the second part, was a part of suffering. And of course, it was perhaps one of the purest stages of the church. Concerning this church, we find no word of rebuke.

We find no word of correction. You know, it meant something to be a Christian in those days. Because it might mean death.

It might mean being burned at the stake. Thrown to the lions. It might have meant to fight wild beasts.

Or perhaps to slay one another. And so Christians were slaughtered by the thousands. It is believed that Nero slew millions of Christians in the time that he was the ruler of Rome.

If we have to suffer for our faith, it would purify the church. The church never has to fear. The church never has to fear suffering.

Someone has said, more have been destroyed by the south wind of prosperity than destroyed by the north wind of adversity. Adversity always brings blessing, purifying, a drawing back to the Lord. Whereas prosperity is always the danger.

And then we find Pergamos. And Pergamos, of course, is marriage. And if we were to notice this church, you notice here where the Lord says in the 14th verse, I have a few things against thee, because thou hast dared them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast the stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication.

So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate. Here we find the church uniting with the world. And you know the church loses testimony when it unites with the world.

And here we find the introduction as a doctrine of the doctrine of the Nicolaitans. What is the doctrine of the Nicolaitans? Well, the doctrine of the Nicolaitans is the division of the people of God into clergy and laity. That is the doctrine of the Nicolaitans.

And the Lord says, I hate it. Mr. Darby thought it was the sin against the Holy Spirit. I don't know whether he was right about that or not.

But I do know that the Lord says He hates that teaching. He hates that doctrine which divides the people of God into clergy and laity. Really and truly, they handle it backwards.

You know, if we turn to 1 Peter chapter 5, we notice that Paul Peter is speaking to the elders there, and he says to them that they are to feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof not by constraint, but of a willing mind. He's speaking to the elders. And he speaks of the people of God as God's heritage.

And you know that word heritage there is the word phleros, from which we get our word clergy. If people ask, are you a clergyman? I could rightfully say yes, and every believer is a clergyman because every believer is one of God's clergy. Did you know that you are a clergyman? If you're saying you're a clergyman, you're one of God's heritage.

You're one of God's clergy. Every believer is one of God's clergy. But the Nicolaitans is the division of believers into clergy over laity, so-called, and the Lord says, I hate it.

I hate it. Do we hate it? Do we hate it? You want to know how in tune with the Lord you are? How much am I in tune with the Lord? Well, if I hate what He hates, I'm in tune with Him. If I love what He loves, I'm in tune with Him.

But if I love what He hates, if I go along with what He hates, in that measure, I'm out of fellowship with the Lord. And so the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, the erection of the clergy-laity system, which eventually became part and parcel of Romanism and Protestantism, is the thing that the Lord hates. Thyatira, of course, and you notice here we have a blue line, but the blue line is very faint here in Thyatira, and it's also

very faint in Sardis, because Sardis is... We have there the woman teaching.

Now this is not only a woman, but this brings before us, and that is, that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess to teach. Jezebel was an outsider, but Jezebel takes the place of a prophetess in Israel, and she misleads and deceives Israel in the time of Ahab, and becomes a persecutor of the true people of God. And that's what the church in Thyatira, in Romanism is.

I was quite interested to notice that in this last ecumenical council, the bishops were debating the question, is the Bible the sole revelation of God, or is the voice of the church to be considered on an equal par with the word of God, or is it to be even beyond the word of God? And you know, like a number of other things, in this last ecumenical council, there was a lot of talk, and there were a lot of propositions that filled the air and befuddled the thinking of many people, especially Protestants and their leaders. But when all the vapor and all the talk simmers down, you don't find, after it's all over, that old Il Papa, the Pope in Rome, or his council the Curia, who are the doctrinal doctors of the church, you don't find that they're changing any of the basic teachings or principles of Romanism. They're still holding up the voice of the church is that which must be listened to and that which must be obeyed.

That is the doctrine that emerges out of Romanism, the exalting of the voice of the church above the voice of Christ, the Son of God. Sardis, a name that they live in our day, a form, but no life. That's what Protestantism is.

The Lutheran Church today is very far from what it was when Luther was saved. Luther taught justification by faith, but eventually that was lost amidst the doctrine of infant baptism and confession. I've talked to Lutheran preachers and they have told me that when they were baptized as infants, they were born again, that they were made members of the kingdom of God and that because of that they don't need to be converted.

I remember the Lutheran preacher telling my first wife when he came to visit her and found that she didn't go to the Lutheran Church. As she told about how she was converted, he said to her, you didn't have to be converted. You were all right.

When you were baptized, you were made a Christian. You didn't have to be converted. A name to live, but they're dead, dead in trespasses and sins, without life.

Baptism can never give life to the soul. Baptism can never bring into the kingdom of God. Philadelphia, brotherly love, the movement of believers leaving Romanism, leaving Protestantism, going forth to the Lord Jesus, taking the word of God as their guide, leading together in simplicity, reaching out with the gospel, holding forth his name, holding on to his word, a little strength, and then we have Laodicea.

The church in the last stages where they measure everything by their material prosperity. We are rich, increased with good, have need of nothing. Millions of dollars a day going into building.

I read an article not so long ago in a secular magazine. I think it was Newsweek that the church is going to spend nearly 500 million dollars in this year alone just for building. That it is going more and more into the material thing.

The success is measured by material. The spiritual is lost, take it all together. Even amongst us, how often the idea is all we need is a new building.

If we get a new building, we'll see results. Make no mistake about it, I've seen very, very few places where a new building has ever brought spiritual results. It takes spiritual power, the spiritual power of the Holy Spirit, spiritual dependence upon the Lord to see anything done for the Lord.

Don't misunderstand me, I'm not talking against a new building, but I'm talking about what are you trusting in? What are you depending upon? What is your hope in? What is your object? What is your purpose? What was the purpose of the church? The church was not a social organization. The church was not an organization to set the world right. The church was not a place to make the world a better place to live in.

I remember one time going from George Doran, northern Michigan, and I came to the home of a blind man. But he was a blind man who read his Bible. He had beliefs that I didn't agree with, but I remember he told me about how a Roman Catholic priest had come to visit him.

And he was talking with the Roman Catholic priest about his church. He says, well, don't you play cards in your church? Don't you have dances and bazaars and everything else in your church? And the man says, well, he says, we don't have it in the church. He says, we have it in the basement of the church.

Well, the blind man said, and I thought it was a classic answer. He said, well, I thought that's where the foundation was supposed to be. I thought that's where the foundation was to be.

You know, what is the foundation of our gathering together? What is the foundation of our assembling together? It's wonderful to have fellowship, social fellowship. It's wonderful to get together as Christians and enjoy one another's company. But let's never forget that the basic foundation of our coming together is to be a witness for the Lord Jesus Christ.

It's to worship Him. It's to enjoy Him. It's to get to know Him.

It's to grow up into Him. The emphasis, the basis of our witness must be Christ. Christ-centered.

Christ-directed. Christ-glorifying in order that others might be one for our Lord Jesus Christ. Tomorrow night, the Lord willing, we'll be speaking on the end.

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