

Intoxicated With Babylon-Chapter Six

by Steve Gallagher

Steve Gallagher's sermon emphasizes the parallels between the Laodicean church and the modern American church, calling for deep repentance and a return to genuine faith in God amidst prosperity.

Duration: 9:50

Scripture: 1 John 2:17, Revelation 3:14

Topics: "Babylon"

Description

In the video, Steve Gallagher discusses the urgency of turning away from the ways of the world and getting serious about the things of God. He emphasizes the need to sound the alarm and warn people that time is running out. Gallagher points out that the American church has created a gospel that fits the American lifestyle, neglecting certain biblical teachings and fashioning a slightly off version of the truth. The solution, according to Gallagher, is sincere and deep repentance, acknowledging that we are grieving a holy God and turning away from idolatry.

Transcript

The following interview was originally recorded for the Purity for Life radio broadcast. For additional interviews with Steve Gallagher and podcasts of the Purity for Life program, visit our website at purelifeministries.org. Steve, we want to talk today about the Church of Laodicea, and for those who may not be familiar about what that church is or about the biblical passages, I want you to share with us how do we even know about this church. The Church of Laodicea is brought up in the book of Revelation when Jesus addresses seven distinct churches of Asia Minor, and he had a word for each church, a specific word of either commendation or condemnation, I suppose, and the Church of Laodicea was the last of those seven churches he addressed.

Steve, I think we can assume that John had visited each of these churches, and you yourself have traveled to the area of Asia Minor. What stood out to you about this area? Yeah, I did visit the ruins of the cities of those seven churches, and Laodicea stood out as one of the prosperous cities, along with Ephesus. It sits in a valley between the tiny little hamlet, which Colossae must have been, and the resort city of Heriopolis.

Laodicea was situated in a very prosperous, fertile valley, and you can see by the ruins of that city that they were obviously doing very well for themselves. You know, Steve, because John is talking about this church in Revelation, it apparently has some significance to us today. What is the spiritual significance?

Yeah, any subject that's covered in the book of Revelation is pertinent to us today because we believe we're living in the last days.

But most especially, this message to the Laodicean church. Most scholars agree that these seven churches that Jesus addressed in Revelation 2 and 3 represent the history of the Christian church. And you can read books that kind of describe these different churches and how their characteristics seem to match what was going on in the church world in some particular period of time, you know.

And so we come to the last church, the Laodicean church, and that seems to represent the church in the end times. And it certainly lines up with other statements in the Bible about the end times church. Well, as we look at the Laodicean church, what similarities do we see between it, just in a general sense, and the modern church today? Well, of course, for us, the modern church means America, and the comparisons are obviously the Laodicean church were wealthy, prosperous, and they didn't see their need spiritually.

And Jesus said that they were lukewarm. And those terms very much describe the American church that we are a part of right now. And you mentioned that this city was a prosperous city.

We look at the church today, it, of course, is flourishing. Huge buildings are going up, huge congregations are gathering around. Yeah, it's like the more that Christianity flourishes in America, the more superficial it becomes.

It's like the two go hand in hand. You know, it's interesting, the churches of Smyrna and Philadelphia comparatively seem to be like just struggling little congregations, maybe even a house church or something along those lines. And so outwardly, the Laodicean church looked like God was blessing.

And outwardly, it looked like the churches in Smyrna and Philadelphia didn't have the blessings of the Lord. But we know by what Jesus said, Jesus had nothing positive. Not one single thing did he say positive about the Laodicean church, whereas the churches in Smyrna and Philadelphia, he had nothing but praise for them.

And that should tell us something. Steve, you have compared the message of Jesus to the Laodicean church and how that ought to be applied to the church in America today. And one of the issues that you talk about is the way that a worldly church views success differently than Jesus views it.

Yes, because a worldly church always views the outward trappings of success, large buildings, lucrative bank accounts, you know, and so on, popularity. So, you know, a worldly-minded superficial church is going to be looking for outward demonstrations of success. Whereas Jesus, when he looks at a body of believers, he's looking for people who are serious about their life in God.

He's looking for lovers of God, true worshippers of God. He's looking for consecrated saints who have separated themselves from the spirit of this world. He's looking for people who know what it means to live sacrificially and care about the needs of other people.

Those are the things that God considers successful in his kingdom. As the church of Laodicea, as that city at the time, of course America, despite our economic woes at the moment, is still a very prosperous nation, probably the most prosperous nation in all of human history. What impact does prosperity tend to have on people in a spiritual sense? Jesus once mentioned the deceitfulness of riches, and it's one of those things that, you know, prosperity tends to deceive us about spiritual matters.

You can have all your doctrines lined up right, you can be thoroughly orthodox in your understanding of Christianity, and yet be blind to your own spiritual need because your prosperity takes away your desperation for God. It gives us a false sense of security, doesn't it? That's exactly what it does. The truth is that some people can handle prosperity without it totally corrupting their Christian life.

But it's a battle. It does not come naturally. If you have prosperity, then there is that natural tendency to be corrupted by it to some degree.

I remember Jesus saying how difficult it is for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. Yeah, and that's why is it we don't believe him? Why is it that when he said, store up for yourselves treasures in heaven and do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, why is it that no one pays attention to that? Why do we blow off the words of Jesus as if they're nothing? Well, perhaps, Steve, one of the reasons, and this really leads us to another point that you've made, is it in the American church that we've created a gospel for our own culture? Well, there's a national mindset, you know, in America, of course, like there is in any nation. And for the church, there is also a corporate mindset.

And it has come about through all these maybe hundreds of thousands of people who have kind of gathered around certain teachers and so on. And we've created this gospel that fits our American lifestyle. You know, and the way we've done that is we've emphasized certain biblical teachings and more importantly, neglected others and kind of fashioned the gospel, you know, just this slightly off version.

It's not that it's unorthodox or false doctrine. It's just not the complete truth. So it's really, in a sense, it's a substitute for the real thing.

It is. The real thing is in there. What we do is we tend to suppress the parts of the gospel that make us uncomfortable or confront us about our sin or our worldliness and so on.

You know, we just kind of minimize those things, de-emphasize those things, and we focus on all the happy, positive things that tell us that God wants to bless us. You know, Steve, one of the things that stands out to me is that we really do have an enemy. And one of the tools that he uses is to get us satisfied in anything other than what is real and what God really wants to do.

You're really describing idolatry, because idolatry is anything we substitute in the place of the Lord in our hearts and in our lives. You know, anything we give our affections to instead of the Lord is an idol. And that's what we have in America.

That's what our prosperity buys us, is any idol that our flesh could possibly want. Steve, as we wrap up today, we've looked at the Church of Laodicea, we've looked at how much like that church, the American church, has become. What is the answer? Does Jesus give an answer to that church and to the Church of America today? Well, the answer is sincere and deep repentance.

You know, we have to get to the point where we acknowledge that we are grieving a holy God. There's a lot of people that think that they are on the narrow way headed towards heaven that I'm convinced are not. And they're in for a terrible, terrible shock when they stand before the Lord one day.

And that's what this book is all about, Intoxicated with Babylon. We are trying desperately to get people's attention before it's too late. This world is passing away and anything that's associated and connected to it is going with it.

And one of the burdens that we have at Pure Life Ministries is to sound the alarm as best as we can with the little amount of influence that we have and warn people that it is not always going to be the way it is right now and time is running out and it's absolutely urgent that we turn things around in our lives and get serious about the things of God. Amen. Well, Steve, we appreciate your heart and your word.

Steve's book, Intoxicated with Babylon, is of course available on our website at purelifeministries.org. Just click on the online bookstore. Steve Gallagher, thanks so much. Great to be with you again, Mike.

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