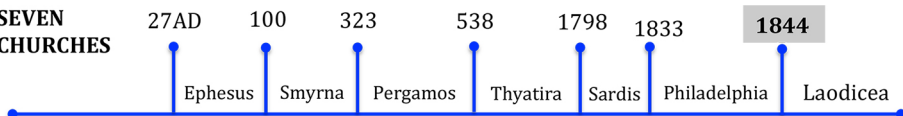


# THE LAODICEAN CHURCH

BY ELLEN WHITE

SEVEN  
CHURCHES



## THE ADVENT REVIEW

And Herald of the Sabbath.

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"Here is the patience of the Saints: Here are they that keep the Commandments of God, and the Faith of Jesus." Rev. 14:12.

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VOLUME 42.

BATTLE CREEK, MICH., THIRD-DAY, SEPTEMBER 16, 1873.

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# **The Laodicean Church**

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## **The Laodicean Church Ellen White, Review & Herald, September 16, 23, 30, 1873**

**The message to the church of the Laodiceans is a startling denunciation, and is applicable to the people of God at the present time.**

“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: I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot; I would thou wert cold or hot. So then, because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.”

The Lord here shows us that the message to be borne to his people by ministers whom he has called to warn the people, is not a peace--and--safety message. It is not merely theoretical, but practical in every particular. The people of God are represented in the message to the Laodiceans in a position of carnal security. They are at ease, believing themselves in an exalted condition of spiritual attainments.

“Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.”

What greater deception can come upon human minds than a confidence that they are right, when they are all wrong? The message of the True Witness finds the people of God in a sad deception, yet honest in that deception. They know not that their condition is deplorable in the sight of God. While those addressed are flattering themselves that they are in an exalted spiritual condition, the message of the True Witness breaks their security by the startling denunciation of their true situation of spiritual blindness, poverty, and wretchedness. The testimony, so cutting and severe, cannot be a mistake; for it is the True Witness who speaks, and his testimony must be correct.

It is difficult for those who feel secure in their attainments, who are believing themselves to be rich in spiritual knowledge, to receive the message which declares that they are deceived and in need of every spiritual grace. The unsanctified heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked,

God leads his people on, step by step. The Christian life is a constant battle, and a march. There is no rest from the warfare. It is by constant, unceasing effort that we maintain the victory over the temptations of Satan. We are, as a people, triumphing in the clearness and strength of the truth. We are fully sustained in our positions by an overwhelming amount of plain scriptural testimony. But we are very much wanting in Bible humility, patience, faith, love, self-denial, watchfulness, and a spirit of sacrifice. We need to cultivate Bible holiness. Sin prevails among the people of God. The plain message of rebuke to the Laodiceans is not received. Many cling to their doubts and their darling sins, while they are in so great a deception as to talk and feel that they are in need of nothing. They think the testimony of the Spirit of God in reproof is uncalled for, or that it does not mean them. Such are in the greatest need of the grace of God and spiritual discernment, that they may discover their deficiency in spiritual knowledge. They lack almost every essential qualification necessary to perfect Christian character. They have not a practical knowledge of Bible truth, which leads to lowliness of life, and a conformity of their will to the will of Christ. They are not living in obedience to all God's requirements.

It is not enough to merely profess to believe the truth. All the soldiers of the cross of Christ virtually obligate themselves to enter a crusade against the adversary of souls, to condemn wrong, and sustain righteousness. But the message of the True Witness reveals the fact that a terrible deception is upon our people, which makes it necessary to come to them with warnings, to break their spiritual slumber, and arouse them to decided action.

This message of the True Witness has not accomplished the design of God. The people slumber on in their sins. They continue to declare themselves "rich, and having need of nothing." Many inquire, Why are all these reproofs given? Why do the testimonies continually charge us with backsliding and grievous sins? We love the truth. We are prospering. We are in no need of these testimonies of warning, and reproof. But let these murmurers see their hearts, and compare their lives with the practical teachings of the Bible; let them humble their souls before God; let the grace of God illuminate the darkness, and the scales will fall from their eyes, and they will sense their true spiritual poverty and wretchedness. They will feel the necessity of buying gold, which is pure faith and love; white raiment, which is a spotless character, made pure in the blood of their dear Redeemer, and eye-salve, which is the grace of God, and will give clear discernment of spiritual things, and detect sin. These attainments are more precious than the gold of Ophir.

I am very sure that the greatest reason why the people of God are now

found in this state of spiritual blindness, is because they will not receive correction. Many have despised the reproofs and warnings given them. The True Witness condemns the lukewarm condition of the people of God, which gives Satan great power over them in this waiting, watching time. The selfish, and proud, and lovers of sin, are ever assailed with doubts. Satan has ability to suggest doubts and devise objections to the pointed testimony that God sends, and many think it a virtue and mark of intelligence in them to be unbelieving, and questioning, and quibbling. Those who desire to doubt will have plenty of room. God does not propose to remove all occasion for unbelief. He gives evidence, which must be carefully investigated with a humble mind and teachable spirit. All should decide from the weight of evidence.

Eternal life is of infinite value, and will cost us all that we have. It is evident that we do not place a proper estimate upon eternal things. Everything worth possessing, even in this world, must be secured by effort, and sometimes by most painful sacrifice. And this is merely for a perishable treasure. Shall we be less willing to endure conflict and toil, and to make earnest efforts and great sacrifices for the infinite treasure, which passes all estimate in value, and the duration of life which will measure with the Infinite? Can Heaven cost us too much? Faith and love are golden treasures, elements that are greatly wanting among God's people.

Faith in the soon coming of Christ is waning. "My Lord delayeth his coming" is said not only in the heart, but expressed in words, and most decidedly in works. Stupidity in this watching time is sealing the senses of God's people as to the signs of the times.

The terrible iniquity abounding calls for the, greatest diligence, and for the living testimony, to keep sin out of the church. Faith has been decreasing to a fearful degree. Faith can only increase by exercise.

In the first rise of the third angel's message, those who engaged in the work of God had something to venture. They had sacrifices to make. They started this work in poverty, and suffered the greatest deprivations and reproach. They met determined opposition, which drove them to God in their necessity, and kept their faith alive. Our present plan of Systematic Benevolence amply sustains our ministers. And there is no want and no call for the exercise of faith as to a support. Those who start out now to preach the truth have nothing to venture. They have no risks to run, no especial sacrifices to make. The system of truth is made ready to their hand. Publications are provided for them, vindicating the truths they advance.

Some young men start out with no real sense of the exalted character of the work. They have not privations, and hardships, and severe conflicts to

meet, which call for the exercise of faith. They do not cultivate practical self-denial, and cherish a spirit of sacrifice. Some are becoming proud and lifted up, and have no real burden of the work upon them. The True Witness speaks to these ministers, "Be zealous, therefore, and repent." These ministers are some of them so lifted up in pride that they are really a hindrance and a curse to the precious cause of God. They do not exert an influence which is saving upon others. There is need of these men being thoroughly converted to God themselves, and sanctified by the truths they present to others.

Very many feel impatient and jealous because they are frequently disturbed with warnings and reproofs which keep their sins before them. Says the True Witness, "I know thy works." The motives, the purposes, and the unbelief, suspicions, and jealousies may be hid from men, but not from Christ. The True Witness comes as a counselor: "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 thine eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayest see. 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 hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me. To him that overcometh 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."

Those who heed the testimony of warning, and zealously go about the work of separating their sins from them, in order to have the needed graces, will be opening the door of their hearts that the dear Saviour may come in and dwell with them. This class you will ever find in perfect harmony with the testimony of the Spirit of God.

Ministers who are preaching present truth should not neglect the solemn message to the Laodiceans. The testimony of the True Witness is not a smooth message. The Lord does not say to them, You are about right, you have borne chastisement and reproof that you never deserved, you have been discouraged unnecessarily by severity, you are not guilty of the wrongs and sins of which you have been reproofed.

The True Witness declares that when you suppose you are really in a good condition of prosperity you are in need of everything. It is not enough for ministers to present theoretical subjects. They need to study the practical lessons Christ gave his disciples, and make a close application of the same to their own souls and to the people. Because Christ bears this rebuking testimony, shall we suppose that he is destitute of tender love to his people? Oh, no! He who died to redeem man from death, loves with a divine love. He rebukes those he loves. "As many as I love, I rebuke and



chasten.” But many will not receive the message Heaven in mercy sends them. They cannot endure to be told of their wrongs, and of their neglect of duty, of their selfishness, their pride, and love of the world.

The servants of the Lord should bear a plain testimony. They should cry aloud and spare not, and show the people their transgressions, and the house of Israel their sins. But there is a class who will not receive the message of reproof, and they raise their hands to shield those whom God would reprove and correct. They will ever be found sympathizing with those whom God would make to feel their true poverty,

The word of the Lord spoken through his servants, is received by many with questionings and fears. And many will defer their obedience to the warnings and reproofs given, waiting till every shadow of uncertainty is removed from their minds. The unbelief that demands perfect knowledge will never yield to the evidence God is pleased to give. God requires of his people faith that rests upon the weight of evidence, not perfect knowledge. The followers of Jesus Christ, those who accept of the light God sends them, must obey the voice of God speaking to them, when there are many other voices crying out against it. It requires discernment to distinguish the voice of God.

Those who will not act when the Lord calls upon them, waiting for more certain evidence, and more favorable opportunities, will walk in darkness, for the light will be withdrawn. The evidence given one day, if rejected, may never be repeated.

Tempted souls, whose hearts have ever been at war with the faithful reproving of sin, would cry, Speak unto us smooth things. What disposition will these make of the message of the True Witness to the Laodiceans? There can be no deception here. This message must be borne to a lukewarm church by God’s servants. This message must arouse the people of God from their security and dangerous deception in regard to their real standing before God, This testimony, if received, will arouse to action, and lead to self-abasement, and confessions of sins. The True Witness says, “ I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot.” And again, “ As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten; be zealous, therefore, and repent.” Then comes the promise, “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.” “ To him that overcometh, 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.”

These wrongs and sins, which have brought the people of God in their state of wretchedness, blindness, and poverty, must be seen, and they arouse to zealous repentance, and a putting away of these sins which have

brought them into such a deplorable condition of blindness and fearful deception. The pointed testimony must live in the church. And this alone will answer to the message to the Laodiceans. Wrongs must be reproved, sins must be called sins, and iniquity must be met promptly and decidedly, and put away from us as a people.

Those whom God has chosen for an important work, have ever been received with distrust and suspicion. Anciently, when Elijah was sent with a message from God to the people, they did not heed the warning. They thought Elijah unnecessarily severe. He must, they thought, have lost his senses, that he would denounce them, the favored people of God, as sinners, and their crimes, so aggravating, that the judgments of God would awaken against them.

Satan and his host have ever been arrayed against those who bear the message of warning and reprove sins. The unconsecrated will be united with the adversary of souls, to make the work of God's faithful servants as hard as possible. Elijah, one of God's great and mighty prophets, as he fled for his life from the rage of Jezebel, an infuriated woman, a fugitive, weary and travel worn, desired to die rather than live. His bitter disappointment in regard to Israel's faithfulness crushed his spirits, and he felt that he could no longer put confidence in man. In the day of Job's affliction and darkness, he utters these words : "Let the day perish wherein I was born."

When Ahab ruled Israel, the people departed from God and corrupted their ways before him under his perverted rule. "And Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the Lord above all that were before him. And it came to pass, as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nubat, that he took to wife Jezebel, the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Zidonians. and went and served Baal, and worshiped him. And he reared up an altar for Baal in the house of Baal, which he had built in Samaria. And Ahab made a grove; and Ahab did more to provoke the Lord God of Israel to anger than all of the kings that were before him."

Ahab was weak in moral power. He did not have a high sense of sacred things. He was selfish and unprincipled. His union by marriage with a woman of decided character, and positive temperament, devoted to idolatry, made them both special agents of Satan to lead the people of God into idolatry and terrible apostasy. The determined spirit of Jezebel molded the character of Ahab. His selfish nature was incapable of appreciating the mercies of God to his people, his obligation to God, as the guardian and leader of Israel. The fear of God was daily growing less in Israel. The blasphemous tokens of their blind idolatry were to be seen among the Israel of God. There were none who dared to expose their lives by openly standing forth in opposition to the prevailing blasphemous idolatry. The

altars of Baal, and the priests of Baal who sacrificed to the sun, moon, and stars, were conspicuous everywhere. They had consecrated temples and groves, wherein was placed the work of men's hands to worship. The benefits which God gave to this people called forth from them no gratitude to the Giver. For all the bounties of Heaven, the running brooks, and streams of living waters, the gentle dew, and showers of rain to refresh the earth, and to cause their fields to bring forth abundantly, they ascribed to the favor of their gods.

Elijah's faithful soul was grieved. His indignation was aroused, and he was jealous for the glory of God. He saw that Israel was plunged into fearful apostasy. He was overwhelmed with amazement and grief at the apostasy of the people when he called to mind the great things that God had wrought for them. But all this was forgotten by the majority of the people. He went before God, and with his soul wrung with anguish, plead for him to save his people if it must be by judgments. He plead with God to withhold from his ungrateful people dew and rain, the treasures of heaven, that apostate Israel might look in vain to their idols of gold, wood, and stone, the sun, moon, and stars, their gods, to water the earth and enrich it, and cause it to bring forth plentifully. God told Elijah he had heard his prayer. He would withhold from his people dew and rain, until they should turn unto him with repentance.

God had especially guarded his people from mingling with the idolatrous nations around them, lest their hearts should be deceived by their attractive groves and shrines, temples, and altars, all of which were arranged in the most expensive, alluring manner, to pervert the senses, so that God would be supplanted in their minds.

Jericho was a city devoted to the most extravagant idolatry. The inhabitants were very wealthy. All the riches that God had given them they accredited to the gifts of their gods. Gold and silver were in abundance. Like the people before the flood, they were corrupt and blasphemous. They insulted and provoked the God of Heaven by their wicked works. God's judgments awakened against Jericho. It was a stronghold. But the Captain of the Lord's host came himself from Heaven to lead the armies of Heaven in the attack upon the city. Angels of God laid hold of the massive walls and brought them to the ground. God had said that the city of Jericho should be accursed, and that all should perish except Rahab and her household. They should be saved because of the favor that Rahab showed the messengers of the Lord. The word of the Lord to the people was, "And ye in any wise keep yourselves from the accursed thing, lest ye make yourselves accursed, when ye take of the accursed thing, and make the camp of Israel a curse, and trouble it." "And Joshua adjured them at that time, saying, Cursed be the man before the Lord, that riseth up and

buildeth this city Jericho; he shall lay the foundation thereof in his first-born, and in his youngest son shall be set up the gates of it.” Josh. 6:18,26.

God was very particular in regard to Jericho, lest the people should be charmed with the things that the inhabitants had worshiped, and their hearts be diverted from him. He guards his people by most positive commands. Notwithstanding the solemn injunction from God by the mouth of Joshua, Achan ventured to transgress. His covetousness led him to take the treasures God had forbidden him to touch, because his curse was upon it. And because of this man’s sin, the Israel of God were as weak as water before their enemies.

Joshua and the elders of Israel were in great affliction. They lay before the ark of God in most abject humility, because the Lord was wroth with his people. Joshua and the elders of Israel prayed and wept before God. The Lord spoke to Joshua, “Get thee up; wherefore liest thou thus upon thy face? Israel hath sinned, and they have also transgressed my covenant which I commanded them; for they have even taken of the accursed thing, and have also stolen, and dissembled also, and they have put it even among their own stuff. Therefore the children of Israel could not stand before their enemies, but turned their backs before their enemies, because they were accursed; neither will I be with you any more, except ye destroy the accursed from among you.” E. G. W.

## **The Laodicean Church. – September 23, 1873**

*(Continued from No. 14.)*

In the case of the sin of Achan, God has shown how he regards sin among those who profess to be his commandment-keeping people. Those whom he has especially honored with witnessing the remarkable exhibitions of his power, as did ancient Israel, and that will venture to disregard his express directions, will be subjects of his wrath. God would teach his people that disobedience and sin are exceedingly offensive to him, and not to be lightly regarded. He shows us that when his people are found in sin, they should at once take decided measures to put the sin from them, that his frown should not rest upon all his people. But if those in responsible positions pass over the sins of the people, his frown will be upon them, and the people of God, as a body, will be held responsible for the sins that exist in their midst. God, in his dealings with his people in the past, shows the necessity of purifying the church from wrongs that exist among them. One sinner may diffuse darkness which will exclude the light of God from the entire congregation. When the people realize that darkness is settling upon them, and they do not know the cause, then they should earnestly seek God in great humility and self-abasement, until the wrongs which grieve God's Spirit are searched out and put away from among them.

If wrongs exist among the people, and the servants of God pass on indifferent to them, they virtually sustain and justify the sinner, and are guilty alike with the sinner, and will receive the displeasure of God just as surely as the sinner; for they will be made responsible for the sins of the guilty. Those men who have excused wrongs have been thought by the people to be very amiable, and of lovely disposition, simply because they shunned to discharge a plain and scriptural, duty. The task was not agreeable to their feelings; therefore they avoided it.

The spirit of hatred which has existed with some because the wrongs among God's people have been reprov'd, has brought blindness and a fearful deception upon their own souls, making it impossible for them to discriminate between right and wrong. They have put out their own spiritual eyesight. They may witness wrongs, but they do not feel as did Joshua, and humble their souls in humiliation because the burden of souls is felt by them.

The true people of God, who have the spirit of the work of the Lord and the salvation of souls at heart, will ever view sin in its real, sinful character. They will always be on the side of faithful and plain dealing with sins which easily beset the people of God. Especially in the closing

work for the church, in the sealing time of the one hundred and forty-four thousand, who are to stand without fault before the throne of God, will they feel most deeply the wrongs of God's professed people. This is forcibly set forth by the prophet's illustration of the last work under the figure of the men, each having a slaughter weapon in his hand. One man among them was clothed with linen, with a writer's inkhorn by his side. "And the Lord said unto him, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for the abominations that be done in the midst thereof."

Who are standing in the counsel of God at this time? Is it those who virtually excuse wrongs among the professed people of God, and murmur in their hearts, if not openly, against those who would reprove sin? Is it those who take their stand against them, and sympathize with those who commit wrong? No, indeed! These, unless they repent, and leave the work of Satan in oppressing those who have the burden of the work, and holding up the hands of sinners in Zion, will never receive the mark of God's sealing approval. They will fall in the general destruction of all the wicked, represented by the five men bearing slaughter weapons. **Mark this point with care: Those who receive the pure mark of truth, wrought in them by the power of the Holy Ghost, represented by a mark by the man in linen, are those "that sigh and cry for all the abominations that are done" in the church. Their love for purity and the honor and glory of God is such, and they have so clear a view of the exceeding sinfulness of sin, that they are represented as being in an agony, even sighing and crying. Read Ezekiel, chapter nine.**

But the general slaughter of all those who do not thus see the wide contrast between sin and righteousness, and do not feel as those do who stand in the counsel of God and receive the mark, is described in the order to the five men with slaughter weapons: "Go ye after him through the city, and smite; let not your eye spare, neither have ye pity; slay utterly old and young, both maids, and little children, and women; but come not near any man upon whom is the mark; and begin at my sanctuary."

God said to Joshua (in the case of Achan's sins), "Neither will I be with you any more except ye destroy the accursed from among you." How does this instance compare with the course pursued by those who will not raise their voice against sin and wrong; but whose sympathies are ever found with those who trouble the camp of Israel with their sins? Said God to Joshua, "Thou canst not stand before thine enemies until ye take away the accursed thing from among you." He pronounced the punishment which should follow the transgression of his covenant.

Joshua then began a diligent search to find out the guilty one. He took

Israel by their tribes, and then by their families, and next, individually. Achan was designated as the guilty one. But that the matter might be plain to all Israel, that there should be no occasion given them to murmur, and to say that the guiltless was made to suffer, Joshua used policy. He knew that Achan was the transgressor, and that he had concealed his sin, and provoked God against his people. Joshua discreetly induced Achan to make confession of his sin, that God's honor and justice should be vindicated before Israel. "And Joshua said unto Achan, My son, give, I pray thee, glory to the Lord God of Israel, and make confession unto him; and tell me now what thou hast done. Hide it not from me."

"And Achan answered Joshua, and said, Indeed I have sinned against the Lord God of Israel, and thus and thus have I done: When I saw among the spoils a goodly Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight, then I coveted them, and took them; and, behold, they are hid in the earth in the midst of my tent, and the silver under it. So Joshua sent messengers, and they ran unto the tent; and, behold, it was hid in his tent, and the silver under it. And they took them out of the midst of the tent, and brought them unto Joshua, and unto all the children of Israel, and laid them out before the Lord. And Joshua, and all Israel with him, took Achan the son of Zerah, and the silver, and the garment, and the wedge of gold, and his sons, and his daughters, and his oxen, and his asses, and his sheep and his tent, and all that he had: and they brought them unto the valley of Achor. And Joshua said, Why hast thou troubled us? the Lord shall trouble thee this day. And all Israel stoned him with stones, and burned them with fire, after they had stoned them with stones."

God said to Joshua, that not only had Achan taken the things which he had positively charged them not to take, lest they be accursed, but had stolen, and also had dissembled. The Lord said that Jericho and all its spoils should be consumed, except the gold and silver, which was to be reserved for the treasury of the Lord. The victory obtained in taking Jericho was not through warfare, or the exposure of the people. The Captain of the Lord's host had led the armies of Heaven. The battle was the Lord's. The children of Israel did not strike a blow. It was the Lord who fought the battle. The victory and glory were the Lord's. The spoils were his. He directed it all to be consumed, except the gold and silver which he reserved for his treasury. Achan understood well the reserve made, and that the treasures of gold and silver which he coveted were the Lord's. He stole from God's treasury for his own benefit.

There are many who profess to keep the commandments of God who are appropriating to their own use the means which the Lord has intrusted to them, and which should come into his treasury. They rob God in tithes

and in offerings. They dissemble, and withhold from God to their own hurt. They bring leanness and poverty upon themselves, and darkness upon the church because of their covetousness, and in dissembling, in robbing God in tithes and in offerings.

Those who work in the fear of God to rid the church of hindrances, and to correct grievous wrongs, that the people of God may see the necessity of abhorring sin, and that they may prosper in purity, and the name of God be glorified, will ever meet with resisting influences from the unconsecrated. Zephaniah describes the true state of this class, and the terrible judgments that will come upon them.

“And it shall come to pass at that time, that I will search Jerusalem with candles, and punish the men that are settled on their lees; that say in their heart, The Lord will not do good, neither will he do evil.” “The great day of the Lord is near, it is near, and hasteth greatly, even the voice of the day of the Lord; the mighty man shall cry there bitterly. That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of wasteness and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness, a day of the trumpet and alarm against the fenced cities, and against the high towers. And I will bring distress upon men that they shall walk like blind men, because they have sinned against the Lord; and their blood shall be poured out as dust, and their flesh as the dung. Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them in the day of the Lord’s wrath; but the whole land shall be devoured by the fire of his jealousy ; for he shall make even a speedy riddance of all them that dwell in the land.”

It is in time of conflict when the true colors should be flung to the breeze. It is then the standard-bearers need to be firm and let their true position be known. It is then the skill of every true soldier for the right is tested; shirks can never wear the laurels of victory. Those who are true and loyal will not conceal the fact, but will put heart and might in the work, and venture their all in the struggle, let the battle turn as it will. God is a sin-hating God. And those who will encourage the sinner, saying, It is well with thee, God will curse.

Confessions of sin made at the right time to relieve the people of God will be accepted of him. But there are those among us who will make confessions, as did Achan, too late to save themselves. God may prove them and give them another trial, for the sake of his people to evidence to them that they will not endure one test, one proving of God. They are not in harmony with right. They despise the straight testimony that reaches the heart, and they would rejoice to see every one silenced that gives reproof.

The people of Israel had been gradually losing their fear and reverence for God, until his word through Joshua had no weight with them.



“In his days did Hiel the Beth-elite build Jericho: he laid the foundation thereof in Abiram his first-born, and set up the gates thereof in his youngest son Segub, according to the word of the Lord, which he spake by Joshua the son of Nun.”

While Israel was apostatizing, Elijah was a true prophet of God. He remained loyal and true to God. His faithful soul was greatly distressed as he saw that unbelief and infidelity were fast separating the children of Israel from God. Elijah prayed that God would save his people. He entreated that the Lord would not wholly cast away his sinning people, but by his judgments, if necessary, arouse them to repentance, and not permit them to go on to still greater lengths in sin, and thus provoke him to destroy them as a nation.

The message of the Lord came to Elijah to go to Ahab, with the denunciations of his judgments, because of the sins of Israel. Elijah traveled day and night until he reached the palace of Ahab. Elijah stands before the astonished king of Samaria in the coarse garments usually worn by the prophets. He made no apology for his abrupt appearance, without invitation. He raised his hands to heaven, and solemnly affirmed by the living God, who made the heavens and the earth, the judgments which would come upon Israel: “There shall be neither dew nor rain these years, but according to my word.”

This startling denunciation of God’s judgments because of the sins of Israel fell like a thunderbolt upon the apostate king. He seemed to be paralyzed with amazement and terror; and before he could recover from his astonishment, Elijah, without waiting to see the effect of his message, left as suddenly as he came. His work was to speak the word of woe from God, and he instantly withdrew. His word had locked up the treasures of heaven, and his word was the only key which could open them again.

The Lord knew that there was no safety for his servant among the children of Israel. He would not trust him with apostate Israel; but sent Elijah to find an asylum among a heathen nation. He directed him to a woman that was a widow, who was in such poverty that she could barely sustain life with the most meager fare. A heathen woman, living up to the best light she had, was in a more acceptable state with God than the widows of Israel who had been blessed with especial privileges, and great light, and who did not live according to the light which God had given them. As the Hebrews rejected light, they were left in darkness. God would not trust his servant among his people who had provoked his divine anger.

Now there is an opportunity for apostate Ahab and pagan Jezebel to test the power of their gods, and to prove the word of Elijah false. Jezebel’s prophets are numbered by hundreds. Against them all, stands Elijah, alone.

His word has locked heaven. If Baal can give dew and rain, and cause the vegetation to flourish, if he can cause the brooks and streams of water to flow on as usual, independent of the treasures of heaven, in the showers of rain, then let the king of Israel worship him, and the people say he is God.

Elijah was a man subject to like passions as ourselves. His mission to Ahab, and the terrible denunciation to him of the judgments of God, required courage and faith. On his way to Samaria, the perpetually flowing streams, the hills covered with verdure, the forests of stately, flourishing trees, everything his eye rested upon, flourishing in beauty and glory, would naturally suggest unbelief. How can all these things in nature so flourishing be burned with drought? How can these streams that water the land, and that have never been known to cease their flow, become dry? But Elijah did not cherish unbelief. He went forth on his mission at the peril of his life. He fully believed that God would humble his apostate people, and through the visitation of his judgments would bring them to humiliation and repentance. He ventured everything in the mission before him.

When Ahab recovers in a degree from his astonishment at the words of Elijah, the prophet was gone. He made diligent inquiry for him, but no one had seen him or could give any information respecting him. Ahab informed Jezebel of the word of woe that Elijah had uttered in his presence, and her hatred against the prophet was expressed to the priests of Baal. They unite with her in denouncing and cursing the prophet of Jehovah. The news of the prophet's denunciations are spread all through the land, arousing the fears of some and the wrath of many.

After a few months, the earth, unrefreshed by dew or rain, becomes dry, and vegetation withers. The streams of water that have never been known to cease their flow, decrease, and the brooks of water dry up. Jezebel's prophets offer their sacrifices to their gods, and call upon them night and day to refresh the earth by dews and rain. But their incantations and deceptions formerly practiced to deceive the people do not answer the purpose now. The priests have done everything to appease the anger of their gods, and with a perseverance and zeal worthy of a better cause, have they lingered around their pagan altars, while the flames of sacrifice burn on all the high places, and the fearful cries and entreaties of the priests of Baal are heard night after night through doomed Samaria. But the clouds do not appear in the heavens to cut off the burning rays of the sun. The word of Elijah stands firm, and nothing that Baal's priests can do will change the word spoken by Elijah.

An entire year passes, and another has commenced, and yet there is no rain. The earth is parched, as though a fire had passed over it. The flourishing fields become as the scorched desert. The air becomes dry and

suffocating, the dust storm blinds the eyes, and nearly stops the breath. The groves of Baal are leafless, and the forest trees give no shade, but appear as skeletons. Hunger and thirst are telling upon man and beast with fearful mortality.

All this evidence of God's justice and judgment does not awaken Israel to repentance. Jezebel is filled with insane madness. She will not bend or yield to the God of Heaven. Baal's prophets, Ahab, Jezebel, and nearly the whole of Israel, charge their calamity upon Elijah. Ahab had sent to every kingdom and nation in search of Elijah, and he required an oath of the kingdoms and nations of Israel, that they knew nothing in regard to the strange prophet. Elijah locked heaven with his word, and had taken the key with him, and he could not be found.

Jezebel then decided, as she could not make Elijah feel her murderous power, that she would be revenged by destroying the prophets of God in Israel. No one who professed to be a prophet of God should live. This determined, infuriated woman executed her work of madness in slaying the Lord's prophets. Baal's priests and nearly all of Israel were so far deluded that they thought if the prophets of God were slain the calamity under which they were suffering would cease.

But the second year passes, and the pitiless heavens give no rain. Drouth and famine are doing their sad work, and yet the apostate Israelites do not humble their sinful, proud hearts before God. But they murmur and complain against the prophet of God who has brought this dreadful state of things upon them. Fathers and mothers see their children perish with no power to relieve them. And yet they were in such terrible darkness that they could not see that the justice of God was awakened against them because of their sins; and that this terrible calamity was sent in mercy to them, to save them from fully denying and forsaking the God of their fathers.

It will cost Israel suffering and great affliction to bring them to that repentance necessary in order to recover their lost faith, and a clear sense of their responsibility to God. Their apostasy was more dreadful than drouth or famine. Elijah waited, and prayed in faith through the long years of drouth and famine, that the hearts of Israel through their afflictions might be turned from their idolatry, to allegiance to God. Notwithstanding all their sufferings, they stood firm in their idolatry, and looked upon the prophet of God as the cause of their calamity. And if they could have had Elijah in their power they would have delivered him to Jezebel, that she might satisfy her revenge by taking his life. Because Elijah dared to utter the word of woe which God had bidden him, he has made himself the object of their hatred. They could not see God's hand in the judgments

under which they were suffering because of their sins. They charged them to the man Elijah. They abhorred not the sins which had brought them under the chastening rod, but hated the faithful prophet, God's instrument, to denounce their sins and calamity. "And it came to pass after many days that the word of the Lord came to Elijah in the third year, saying, Go show thyself unto Ahab, and I will send rain upon the earth."

Elijah hesitated not to start on his perilous journey. He had been hated, and hunted from city to city by the mandate of the king, for three years, and the whole nation had given their oath that the prophet could not be found. And now Elijah, by the word of God, is to present himself before Ahab. Through the apostasy of all Israel, the governor of Ahab's house has proved faithful to God while his master is a worshiper of Baal. He had, at the risk of his own life, preserved the prophets of God, by hiding them by fifties in a cave, and feeding them. While the servant of Ahab is searching throughout the kingdom for springs and brooks of water, Elijah presents himself before him. Obadiah revered the prophet of God, and as Elijah sends him with a message to the king, he is greatly terrified. He sees danger and death to himself and also Elijah. He pleads earnestly that his life might not be sacrificed; but Elijah assures Obadiah with an oath that he will see Ahab that day. The prophet will not go to Ahab, but as one of God's messengers to command respect, he sends by Obadiah a message, "Behold, Elijah is here." If Ahab wants to see Elijah, he has now the opportunity to come to him. Elijah will not go to Ahab.

*(To be Continued.)*

## The Laodicean Church. – September 30, 1873

*(Continued from No. 15.)*

The king heard the message with astonishment, mingled with terror, that Elijah, whom he feared and hated, was coming to meet him. He had long sought for the prophet, that he might destroy him, and he knew that Elijah would not expose his life to come to him, unless guarded, or with some terrible denunciation. He remembered the withered arm of Jeroboam, and he decides that it is not safe to lift up his hand against the messenger of God. And with fear and trembling, and with a large retinue, he hastened with imposing display of armies to meet Elijah. And as he meets the man he has so long sought for, face to face, he dared not harm him. The king, so passionate, and filled with hatred against Elijah, seems to be powerless and unmanned in his presence. As he met the prophet, he could not refrain from speaking the language of his heart, "Art thou he that troubleth Israel?" Elijah, indignant and jealous for the honor and glory of God, answers the charge of Ahab with boldness, "I have not troubled Israel, but thou and thy father's house in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the Lord."

The prophet, as God's messenger, had reproved their sins, and denounced the judgments of God because of their wickedness. Elijah, standing alone in conscious innocence, firm in his integrity, surrounded by the train of armed men, shows no timidity, neither does he show the least reverence to the king. The man whom God has talked with, who has a clear sense of how God regards man in his sinful depravity, has no apology to make to Ahab, nor homage to give him. Elijah, now as God's messenger, commanded, and Ahab obeyed at once the command, as though Elijah was monarch, and he subject.

Elijah demands a convocation of all Israel at Carmel, and also all the prophets of Baal. The awful solemnity in the looks of the prophet gives him the appearance of one standing in the presence of the Lord God of Israel. The condition of Israel in their apostasy demanded a firm demeanor, stern speech, and commanding authority. God prepares the message to fit the time and occasion. **Sometimes God puts his Spirit upon his messengers** to send an alarm day and night, as did his messenger John, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord." Then, again, men of action are needed, who will not be swerved from duty, but whose energy will arouse, and demand, "Who will be on the Lord's side," let him come over with us. God will have a fitting message to meet his people in their various conditions.

Swift messengers are sent throughout the kingdom with the message from Elijah. Representatives are sent from towns, villages, cities, and

families. All seem in haste to answer the call as though some wonderful miracle was to be performed. Ahab, according to Elijah's command, gathers the prophets of Baal at Carmel. The heart of Israel's apostate leader is overawed, and he tremblingly follows the direction of the stern prophet of God.

The assembly was upon Mount Carmel, a place of beauty when the dew and rain fall upon it, causing it to flourish. But now the beauty of Carmel has languished under the curse of God. Upon Mount Carmel, which was the excellency of groves and of flowers, Baal's prophets had erected their altars for their pagan worship. This mountain was conspicuous, and overlooked the surrounding countries. As upon Mount Carmel God had been signally dishonored by idolatrous worship, Elijah chose this as the place most conspicuous for the display of God's power and to vindicate his honor. It was in sight of a large portion of the kingdom. Jezebel's prophets, eight hundred and fifty in number, like a regiment of soldiers prepared for battle, march out in a body with instrumental music, and imposing display. But there was trembling in their hearts as they considered that, at the word of this prophet of Jehovah, the land of Israel had been destitute of dew and rain three years. They felt that some fearful crisis was at hand. They had trusted in their gods, but could not unsay the words of Elijah, and prove him false. But their gods were indifferent to their frantic cries, prayers, and sacrifices.

Elijah, early in the morning, stands upon Mount Carmel, surrounded by apostate Israel and the prophets of Baal. He stands undaunted, he, a lone man, in that vast multitude. The man whom the whole kingdom has charged with its weight of woe is before them, unterrified, unattended by visible armies and imposing display. He stands, clad with his coarse garment, with awful solemnity in his countenance, as though fully aware of his sacred commission, as the servant of God, to execute his commands. Elijah fastened his eyes upon the highest ridge of mountains, where had once stood the altar of Jehovah, when the mountain was covered with flourishing trees and flowers. The blight of God was now upon it, and all the desolation of Israel was in full view of the neglected and torn-down altar of Jehovah, and in sight were the altars of Baal. Ahab stands at the head of the priests of Baal, and all wait in anxious, fearful expectation for the words of Elijah.

In the full light of the sun, surrounded by thousands, men of war, the prophets of Baal, and the monarch of Israel, stands the defenseless man, Elijah, apparently alone, yet not alone. The most powerful host of Heaven surround him. Angels that excel in strength have come from Heaven to shield the faithful and righteous prophet.

Elijah, with stern and commanding voice, cries out, "How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word." Not one in that vast assembly dare utter one word for God, and show their loyalty to Jehovah.

What astonishing deception and fearful blindness had, like a dark cloud, covered Israel. This blindness and apostasy had not closed about them suddenly, but it had come upon them gradually, as they had not heeded the word of reproof and warning which the Lord had sent to them because of their pride and their sins. They, in this fearful crisis, in the presence of the idolatrous priests and the apostate king, remain neutral. If God abhors one sin above another, of which his people are guilty, it is of doing nothing in a case of emergency. Indifference or neutrality in a religious crisis is regarded of God as a grievous crime; and equal to the very worst type of hostility against God.

#### FALSE TEACHERS EXPOSED.

All Israel is silent. Again the voice of Elijah is heard addressing them, "I only am a prophet of the Lord, whilst Baal's prophets are four hundred and fifty men. Let them therefore give us two bullocks; and let them choose one bullock for themselves, and cut it in pieces, and lay it on wood, and put no fire under; and I will dress the other bullock, and lay it on wood, and put no fire under; and call ye on the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of the Lord; and the God that answereth by fire, let him be God. And all the people answered and said, It is well spoken. And Elijah said unto the prophets of Baal, Choose you one bullock for yourselves, and dress it first; for ye are many; and call on the name of your gods, but put no fire under. And they took the bullock which was given them, and they dressed it, and called on the name of Baal from morning even until noon, saying, O Baal, hear us. But there was no voice, nor any that answered. And they leaped upon the altar which was made."

The proposition of Elijah is reasonable. The people dare not evade it, and they find courage to answer, "The word is good." The prophets of Baal dare not dissent or evade the matter. God has directed this trial, and has prepared confusion for the authors of idolatry, and a signal triumph for his name. The priests of Baal dare not do otherwise than accept the conditions. With terror and guiltiness in their hearts, but outwardly bold and defiant, they rear their altar, lay on the wood and the victim, and then begin their incantations, their chanting and howling, characteristic of pagan worship. Their shrill cries re-echo through forests and mountains, "O Baal, hear us." The priests gather in an army about their altars, and with leaping and unnatural gestures, and writhing and screaming, and stamping, and tearing

their hair, and cutting themselves, they manifest apparent sincerity.

But the morning is gone, and noon has come, and yet there has been no move of their gods in pity to Baal's priests, the deluded worshipers of idols. No voice answers their frantic cries. The priests are continually devising how, by deception, they can kindle the fire upon the altars, and give the glory to Baal. But the firm eye of Elijah watches every motion. Eight hundred voices become hoarse. Their garments are covered with blood, and yet their frantic excitement does not abate. Their pleadings are mingled with cursings to their sun-god that he does not send fire for their altar. Elijah stands by, watching with eagle eye lest any deception should be practiced; for he knew if they could, by any device, kindle their altar-fire, he would be torn in pieces upon the spot. He wishes to show the people the folly of their doubts, and their halting between two opinions, when they have the wonderful works of God's majestic power in their behalf, and innumerable evidences of his infinite mercies and loving-kindness toward them. "And it came to pass at noon, that Elijah mocked them, and said, Cry aloud; for he is a god: either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is in a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked. And they cried aloud, and cut themselves after their manner with knives and lancets, till the blood gushed out upon them. And it came to pass when midday was past, and they prophesied until the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that there was neither voice, nor any to answer, nor any that regarded."

How gladly would Satan, who fell like lightning from Heaven, come to the help of those whom he had deceived, and whose minds he had controlled, and who were fully devoted to his service. Gladly would he have sent the lightning and kindled their sacrifices; but Jehovah had set Satan's bounds. He had restrained his power, and all his devices could not convey one spark to Baal's altars. Evening draws on. The prophets of Baal are wearied, faint, and confused. One suggests one thing, and one, another, until they cease their efforts. Their shrieks and curses no longer resound over Mount Carmel. With weakness and despair, they retire from the contest.

The people have witnessed the terrible demonstrations of the unreasonable, frantic priests. They have witnessed their leaping upon the altar, as though they would grasp the burning rays from the sun to serve their altars. They have become tired of the exhibitions of demonism, of pagan idolatry; and they feel earnest and anxious to hear what Elijah will speak.

Elijah's turn has now come. "And Elijah said unto all the people, Come near unto me. And all the people came near unto him. And he repaired the



altar of the Lord that was broken down. And Elijah took twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, unto whom the word of the Lord came, saying, Israel shall be thy name; and with the stones he built an altar in the name of the Lord; and he made a trench about the altar, as great as would contain two measures of seed. And he put the wood in order, and cut the bullock in pieces, and laid him on the wood, and said, Fill four barrels with water, and pour it on the burnt sacrifice, and on the wood. And he said, Do it the second time. And they did it the second time. And he said, Do it the third time. And they did it the third time. And the water ran round about the altar; and he filled the trench also with water. And it came to pass at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that Elijah the prophet came near, and said, Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel, and that I am thy servant, and that I have done all these things at thy word. Hear me, O Lord, hear me, that this people may know that thou art the Lord God, and that thou hast turned their heart back again. Then the fire of the Lord fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench. And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces; and they said, The Lord, he is the God; the Lord, he is the God.”

Elijah, at the hour of evening sacrifice, repairs the altar of God which the apostasy of Israel has allowed the priests of Baal to tear down. He does not call upon one of the people to aid him in his laborious work. The altars of Baal are all prepared; but Elijah turns to the broken-down altar of God which is more sacred and precious to him in its unsightly ruins than all the magnificent altars of Baal.

Elijah respected the Lord’s covenant with his people, although they had apostatized. With calmness and solemnity, he repaired the broken-down altar with twelve stones, according to the number of the twelve tribes of Israel. The disappointed priests of Baal, wearied with their vain, frenzied efforts, were sitting or lying prostrate on the ground, waiting to see what Elijah would do. They were filled with fear and hatred toward the prophet for proposing the test which had exposed their weakness and the inefficiency of their gods.

The people of Israel stand spell-bound, pale, anxious, and almost breathless with awe, while Elijah calls upon Jehovah, the Creator of the heavens and the earth. The people have witnessed the fanatical, unreasonable frenzy of the prophets of Baal. Now they are privileged to witness the calm and awe-inspiring deportment of Elijah, in contrast. He reminded the people of their degeneracy, which had awakened the wrath of God against them, and then calls upon them to humble their hearts, and turn to the God of their fathers, that his curse may be removed from them.

Ahab and his idolatrous priests are looking on with amazement mingled with terror. They await the result with anxious, solemn silence.

After the victim was laid upon the altar, he commanded the people to flood with water the sacrifice, and the altar, and fill the trench round about the altar. Elijah then reverentially bows before the unseen God, raises his hands toward Heaven, and offers a calm and simple prayer, unattended with violent gestures, or contortions of the body. No shrieks resound over Carmel's height. A solemn silence, which is oppressive to the priests of Baal, rests upon them all. In his prayer, Elijah makes use of no extravagant expressions. He prays to Jehovah as though he was nigh, witnessing the whole scene, and hearing his sincere, fervent, yet simple prayer. Baal's priests had screamed, and foamed, and leaped, and prayed, very long—from morning until near evening. Elijah's prayer was very short, earnest, reverential, and sincere. No sooner had his prayer been uttered, than flames of fire in a distinct manner, like a brilliant flash of lightning, descended from Heaven, kindling the wood for sacrifice, and consuming the victim, licking up the water in the trench, and consuming even the stones of the altar. The brilliancy of the blaze is painful to the eyes of the multitude, and illumines the mountain. The people of the kingdom of Israel, not gathered upon the mount, are watching with interest the gathering of the people upon the mount. As the fire descends, they witness it, and are amazed at the sight. It resembles the pillar of fire at the Red Sea, which by night separated the children of Israel from the Egyptian host.

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ILL NATURE is a contradiction to the laws of Providence and the interest of mankind; it is a punishment no less than a fault to these that have it.



