

I Have Loved Thee . . . I Come Quickly

by H.J. Vine

The Lord promises to come quickly to those who keep His Word and not deny His Name, and He encourages them to remain faithful and true.

Scripture: Hebrews 11:5, 1 John 4:19, Revelation 3:9, Revelation 3:19-20

Topics: "End Times", "Repentance"

Description

H.J. Vine preaches on the contrasting conditions of the saints in Philadelphia and Laodicea as depicted in Revelation 3:9-11. The assembly in Philadelphia, characterized by their love for the brethren and faithful endurance, is encouraged by the promise of Christ's quick return and the assurance of an open door no one can shut. In contrast, the Laodiceans are rebuked for their lukewarmness, self-sufficiency, and spiritual poverty, yet are offered the opportunity for repentance and intimate communion with Christ.

Transcript

Revelation 3:9-11

These words are said by our Lord Jesus Christ, not to men who are prominent in world affairs or who are famous for great learning or successful work, but to His saints who have a "little power," and who look with eager longing for His return; and who use the power they have to keep His Word, and that in consistency with who and what He is--not denying His Name.

In the prophetic and symbolic book of Revelation the assembly in Philadelphia represents these. Philadelphia means "love of the brethren." This is always found where God's love is known, for is it not written, "We love because He first loved us"; and again, "We know we have passed from death to life because we love the brethren"? If we love Him that begat, we necessarily love those who are begotten of Him. These marks given in the Spirit's writings through John abide. It is said also of those saints that they keep the word of "Christ's patience." They remain true to their absent Lord, unseduced from Him by the world or Satan or any plausible schemes of men who would put the world right without Him. They wait for Him, their quickly coming Saviour, who will take them up to Himself before the clock strikes "the hour" of the great tribulation!

With a word of encouragement and exhortation THE HOLY AND THE TRUE cheers these loved ones: "I come quickly," He says. "Hold fast what thou hast, that no one take thy crown" (v. 11). There is nothing "adverse" in these words, nor in all that He says to them.

There is nothing spectacular in waiting on and for the Lord; in simply keeping His word and not denying His Name. There is nothing in that that the Daily Press would care to chronicle, and those who are doing this maybe despised for it all, but they need not be dismayed, for their risen Lord says to them, I have set before thee "an opened door which no one can shut," and the key of David is in His hand. Regal authority belongs to Him. The royal treasures are under His care: the throne of glory, the riches of His Father's house. He is the great Administrator. He has opened the door for them, and He loves them, and He will keep them till He comes to take them up to be with Him for ever. "I come quickly" He says to such. Even the "Behold" is left out in their case--as though their attention did not need to be arrested by this great truth, because it was already the joy and hope of their heart.

What a solemn contrast we find in Laodicea! Neither cold nor hot! Lukewarm! Nauseate!--about to be spued out! Nevertheless, these Laodiceans are boastful and self-satisfied! Someone has said a great store of truth had come down to them from Philadelphia! God says the opposite!--they are "wretched" and "miserable" and "poor!" The truth cannot be in Laodicea for the truth would have set them free had it been received by them. They possess none of "the excellent spiritual wealth" which would have produced an excellent spiritual condition. They "SAY" they are rich, but the One who cannot lie says they are poor and wretched and miserable. Who tells the truth in this matter? We believe God. There is no hint that Philadelphia will cool down into lukewarm Laodicea. Philadelphia is "kept" by her quickly coming Saviour, but Laodicea is spued out by "the Amen, the faithful and true Witness."

The condition of Laodiceans is described as "blind and naked." They are without the anointing which gives sight, and without the white raiment which would cover the shame of their nakedness, without the gold that would make them rich, yet they are boastful, and say they have need of nothing. They can even do without the One who could supply them with the true riches, for He stands outside their door. A true description of that sphere where intellectual attainments are crowned, and the power of the Holy Ghost despised, where "modern" thought is preferred to the Word of God, and where man vaunts himself and Christ has no place at all. On the other hand, although He is about to refuse them altogether, yet He reminds them of the door of repentance, just as He wept over Jerusalem and pleaded with her before her doom overwhelmed her, for He rebukes and disciplines "as many" as He loves (v. 19). If any individual therefore who heard His voice as He stood at the door and knocked, and opened the door to Him, He would grant an individual communion of a personal nature, as He says, "I will come in and sup with him and be with Me" (v. 20). Precious as this character of communion is, it does not suggest the heights of intimacy we read of elsewhere. It is suitable to the condition and relationships in view. It is the same in regard to the overcomer: a part in regard to His throne, when we shall reign with Him, does not indicate such a deep and abiding portion as other Scriptures speak of. Further, in regard to every condition of the assemblies, it is taken for granted that there are those at all times who have ears to hear what the Spirit says to them--to all the assemblies--not to one phase only. This is specially true in regard to the final four, where the hearer is addressed last of all, and not as in the former three, where the last word is said to the overcomer.

The wise man was once moved to write--and with good reason--"Say not thou, what is the cause that the former days were better than these? For thou dost not inquire wisely concerning this" (Eccl. 7:10). We cannot improve or alter the past, and we may be in glory with Christ tomorrow; wisdom says, Follow that which is good now! and do it earnestly. Christ abides, and He still says, Follow Me. The remnant of Malachi thought upon His Name and ordered their path according to that. Philadelphia keeps the word of His patience, and He keeps her right on to the end, she is true to His Name. And the door is still set open before her, the door of devotion to her Lord and for the maintenance of His testimony. Nowhere does the

Word of God say she has "lost her crown," or that she has "cooled down into lukewarm Laodicea." If Scripture does not say so, who has authority so to do? Could Ephesus become Corinth? It is equally impossible for Philadelphia to become Laodicea. The two are quite different and remain different till the Lord returns as these addresses to them show.

The Lord Himself is the test, to Philadelphia He is everything: to Laodicea He is nothing. It should be a question of solemn moment to all who bear the Name of the Lord as to which of these two conditions or spheres we move in. It becomes increasingly solemn and momentous as we hear His voice saying, "I come quickly." It is true that none who are His will be left behind when He comes, but who would care to be dragged out of a state of things wholly obnoxious to the Lord, as Lot was dragged out of Sodom? Would it not be for His pleasure and our joy to have Enoch's testimony at last--"God had translated him, for before His translation he had the testimony that he had pleased God" (Heb. 11). The hand that holds the keys of David has opened this door for us and keeps it open, and we may to the very end keep His word and not deny His Name. We may have as our greatest treasure the knowledge of His love that passes all knowledge, and have as our brightest hope His speedy coming again.

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