

Jesus pitied the church of Laodicea as He pondered their wretched condition. Devoid of all that makes a people of God truly rich; they languished in an impoverished state. Blind to their own shameful nakedness, they could no longer blush (Jer. 6:15). But in spite of their pitiable condition, they were given to self-congratulation, as they, in high-minded praise, pointed to their recent tokens of temporal gain. Their boastful arrogance made Jesus sick to His stomach, and He threatened to vomit them out of His mouth if they failed to repent, though He desperately sought to get their attention by standing, knocking, and seeking re-entrance into their lives in hope of their spiritual recovery.

This picture of the excommunicated Christ, unwelcome in His own church, and crowded by carnal cares out of the practical lives of His people, is not simply a relic from the first century era. It is a portrait for all times, and has a particular application to the church of the latter days before Christ's return, as it grows casual, careless, carnal, and compromising due to abounding iniquity (Matt. 24:12,13). The love of this church, as the love of many in our day, had waxed cold, until they were but moderately interested in Christ and His concerns, and mildly indifferent to the claims He sought to urge upon them. Jesus knew this church would never endure in its present

condition, and calls them to heartfelt repentance with these words: *"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"* (Rev. 3:19,20). Jesus had come knocking at their door. But a crucial question remained: what would they do? Would they remain otherwise occupied with pursuits of self-interest and continue to ignore Him? Would they be startled by His persistent rapping and be sufficiently stirred to arise and open the door? Would they leave Him out in the wet, cold night air (Ps. of Sol. 5:3-5), or invite Him in for table fellowship, that He might press His holy claims upon their lives and teach them the pathway of "the overcomer"? In a very real sense, the story of Laodicea is the story of the race, largely indifferent, politely ignoring the voice and the rapping of the Son of God as He seeks to bring them back from the brink of sin's self-destruction, pleading with them, if only He might get their attention and bring spiritual remedy to their miserable condition. How will you respond to His appeal for admittance into your life?

### *God Is Not Silent*

*"God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers*

*by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds"*

*Hebrews 1:1,2*

*"See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven"*

*Hebrews 12:25*

*"He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches"*

*Rev. 3:22*

A classic statement by Elihu, one of Job's listeners in the famous dialogue concerning his inexplicable sufferings, condenses for us the Divine initiative, as He seeks in redeeming love to communicate with man and deflect him from his self-destructive designs. Elihu observes, *"For God speaketh once, yea twice, yet man perceiveth it not"* (Job 33:14). In this one-sentence summary we have described the long history of God's desperate attempt, as His Spirit strives with humankind (Gen. 6:3), to gain the attention of men and women, captivate their imaginations, and bend their will to His purpose for them in Christ. As men go astray, and turn every one to their own way, God does not remain silent, but ever seeks through the Son of Man, Who came to seek and to save that which is lost (Luke 19:10), to woo and win the wayward from their sin, and to gently draw them into the safe haven of saving faith in Christ Jesus. To this end He employs the voice of conscience, visions and dreams,

the humbling set-backs of life, serious illnesses, and special messengers. Such a vast array of methods speak eloquently of His longing love for even the chief of sinners. Elihu, brings the discussion between Job and his three accusatory friends concerning the meaning and purpose of his sufferings to a higher plateau with his introduction of the concept of suffering as a benevolent attempt on the part of God to gain man's attention and rescue him from the unseen pitfalls of his own tendencies. Moreover, Elihu elaborates on several methods God utilizes for the attainment of this end. Let us look at them.

First of all, there is the *speaking* of the Son of God to the sons of men. *"God speaketh once, yea twice..."*, said Elihu. Though occasionally given in audible tones, God's voice primarily comes to us as an inward moral awareness, telling us to do right, as we know right to be, or else signalling the Divine displeasure whenever we lapse from the course and call of moral duty. As a steady monitor of thoughts, attitudes, and behavior, the voice of conscience brings a universal awareness of sin, though men often seek to suppress its uncomfortable message. The written Word of God, the Bible, however, is the Voice of God par excellence. Within its sacred pages we find the infallible record of God's will for mankind and by the touchstone

of its truth all other voices are to be evaluated. Whenever it is read or heard, God is speaking to men of a truth, whether they hear or forbear (Isa. 8:20; II Pet. 1:19-21; Ps. 119:50,89; I Cor. 1:21). Then again, the voice of the Holy Spirit can urge God's holy claims upon the souls of men, bringing in His train conviction of sin, of righteousness and of judgment (Jn. 16:7-13). By so much pleading does God ever speak to the sons of men.

God also grants revelatory dreams and visions in His persistent attempt to communicate with man: *"In a dream [בַּחֲלוֹם חֲזוֹן לַיְלָה], in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men, in slumberings upon the bed; Then he openeth the ears of men, and sealeth their instruction"* (Job 33:15,16). While some in our day give undue attention to dreams of a purely natural sort, and others are ensnared in the occultic art of dream analysis, God can and does still seek to gain the attention of both the regenerate and unregenerate by means of supernatural dreams and visions (Gen. 20:3; 28:12; 31:11,24; 37:5-10; 40:5; 41:1-7; 46:2-4; Daniel 2:2, 19; 7:1; Hosea 12:10; Matt. 1:20; 2:12,13; Matt. 27:19; Acts 10:3; 16:9; 26:19).

Then there are the Divinely ordered setbacks of life that tend to stifle pride, frustrate worldly ambitions, and highlight the vanity of life under the sun: *"That he may withdraw man from his purpose [לְהַסִּיר אֹדָם מִזַּעֲשָׂה], and hide pride from man. He keepeth*

*back his soul [יִחַשְׁדָּךְ גַּפְשׁוֹ] from the pit, and his life from perishing by the sword"* (Job 33:17,18). God often arranges the circumstances of life in order to deflect us from some intended purpose that would only bolster self-will and lead us further astray from Him. Though often seen as exasperating and adverse, these checks to human pride and arrogance serve a benevolent purpose in the Divine economy and bring one to a deeper understanding of the delicate fabric of human life and to the healthy realization that we do not control our own destiny. Whether in the form of business failures, domestic disharmony, divorce, a delinquent teenager, broken friendships, or the unexpected death of a loved one, temporal setbacks prompt us to seek the verity of Jesus Christ beyond the vanities of this life. Left otherwise to our own course, we would likely fail of salvation. Thus do Divinely orchestrated drawbacks draw us closer to God and open our souls to the loftier influence of His Spirit.

There is also the Divine knocking to gain man's attention through wasting illness and a body wracked with severe pain: *"He is chastened also with pain upon his bed, and the multitude of his bones with strong pain: So that his life abhorreth bread, and his soul daintymeat. His flesh is consumed away, that it cannot be seen; and his bones that were not seen stick out. Yea, his soul draweth near unto the grave, and his life to the destroyers"* (Job 33:19-22).

Severe illness or accidents are sometimes God's merciful check to a hell-bound course. When they come knocking, strong, ambitious men are made bedfast invalids, and their lingering condition provides ample time for reflection as their motives and life come under thorough review. The contemplation of approaching death also has a sobering and spiritual effect upon the awakened soul, as he considers his eternal future, and the awaiting judgment of a holy God.

Finally, there are those special messengers, oh how beautiful are their feet (Rom. 10:15), who warn us to flee from a wrath to come, interpret for us the meaning of life's vanities and vicissitudes, and bear the glad tidings of a Divinely provided ransom: *"If there be a messenger [מִלְאָךְ] with him, an interpreter [מְלַיֵן], one among a thousand, to shew unto man his uprightness: Then he is gracious unto him, and saith, Deliver him from going down to the pit: I have found a ransom"* (Job 33:23,24). As ambassadors of Christ, these anointed ones shew unto us the way of salvation through Jesus' shed blood (the ransom-Matt. 20:28; I Pet. 1:18) and beseech us in Christ's stead to be reconciled to God (II Cor. 5:20). These, the Lord's messengers, with the Lord's message (Haggai 1:13), have been sent by a gracious God to deliver us from going down to the pit, by turning away every one of us from our iniquities (Acts 3:26). Eternity will tell whether we have heeded their voice.

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# WHEN JESUS COMES KNOCKING AT YOUR DOOR

## *Blind Laodicea's Last Call And A Lost World's Only Chance*

*"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: 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 eyesalve, 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"*

Rev. 3:15-20

*"For God speaketh once, yea twice, yet man perceiveth it not"*

Job 33:14