

**THE MYSTERY OF GOD
SHALL BE FINISHED**

**THE
LAODICEA
CHURCH AGE**

THE MESSAGE TO LAODICEA
End Time Overcomers

A STUDY IN THE RESTORATION OF THE CHURCH

THE LAODICEA CHURCH AGE

End Time Overcomers

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1. INTRODUCTION

Will there be any True Believers at the End?

The book of Revelation is a prophecy (Rev 1.3). So, the letters to the 7 churches of Asia are not only addressed to literal churches of the day, they are also prophetic. Prophetic of what? Of the 7 periods of Church history from its inception to the return of the Lord. So the condition of the last church, Laodicea, is therefore prophetic of the condition of the Church in the last days, just before the Coming of the Lord.

At first sight the picture depicted in Revelation 3.14-22 gives no indication of any true believers at all. As expounded in detail in the previous study in this series, she is wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked. Jesus is outside. Her lukewarmness makes Him so sick that He spits her out of His mouth.

In fact, not a single good thing is said about Laodicea. Her condition is dire. With the other six churches there is at least one thing which is praised. With Laodicea there is nothing.

Her condition seems to mirror the implication of Jesus' solemn question in Luke 18.8, *when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?* The literal translation asks whether He would find **the** faith. What faith? That spoken of by Jude (the faith **once for all delivered to the saints** (Ju 3)) and by John (*Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning* (1 Jn 2.24)). In other words, will Jesus find the original faith when He returns?

We seem justified, then, in echoing the disciples' shocked response to a different situation (Mt 19.25), *Who then can be saved?* Will there be any true believers in the end time church?

Yes!

Who?

The overcomers (Rev 3.21).

Since there are no explicit commendations in the letter to Laodicea, who are these end time overcomers? We shall look at this in detail shortly, but to summarise briefly, they are those who heed the Lord's,

- **Desire** for His people to be hot, not lukewarm (3.15).
- **Counsel** to buy from Him gold tried in the fire, white raiment and eyesalve (3.18).
- **Rebuke and chastening**, zealously repenting and turning back to what they have left (3.19).
- **Invitation** to open the door, welcoming Him back among them (3.20).

In short, they give heed to **the Voice of the Spirit** to and through the angel/messenger to the final Church Age (3.22).

They may be few, but there is great blessing for them. Their future is glorious indeed.

To better understand how they overcome when the professing church as a whole is in such a dire condition, let us firstly see how Jesus and the early Church overcame.

2.

OVERCOMING BY THE WORD & THE SPIRIT

How did Jesus Overcome?

Jesus said, *be of good cheer, I have overcome the world* (Jn 16.33).

How did He overcome?

By the Word and the Spirit.

By the Word

When dealing with critics or those who questioned His teaching, Jesus repeatedly overcame by the Word. For example,

- When tempted by a lawyer about how to inherit eternal life, He asked, *What is written in the law?* (Lk 10.26).
- When the resurrection was questioned, He asked, *Are you not mistaken, because you do not know the Scriptures?* referring them to Exodus 3.6 (Mk 12.24, 26-27).

(For other examples, see Matthew 9.13 (referring to Hosea 6.6); Matthew 12.3, 5, 7 (referring to 1 Samuel 21.3-6, Numbers 28.9-10 and Hosea 6.6); Matthew 19.4 (quoting Genesis 1.27); Matthew 21.16 (quoting Psalm 8.2); Matthew 21.42 (quoting Psalm 118.22-23); and John 10.34-35 (referring to Psalm 82.1, 6).

In fact, from the very beginning of His ministry, this is how He overcame not only men but the devil himself. Consider the temptation in the wilderness.

- **At the first temptation**, He quoted Deuteronomy 8.3 (Mt 4.3-4).
- **At the second**, after supernaturally setting Jesus on a pinnacle of the temple, the devil tried a new approach. He also quoted the Word (Ps 91.11-12), but not in the context or spirit in which it was written. Jesus again overcame by the Word (Dt 6.16) (Mt 4.5-7).
- **At the third**, the devil tried another supernatural display. Taking Jesus up into a very high mountain, he offered Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. How did Jesus put him to flight? By quoting Deuteronomy 10.20 (Mt 4.9-10).

So, He overcame not by the supernatural but by the most powerful weapon in the universe. The Word.

By the Spirit

But there was something else by which Jesus overcame. The Spirit.

Consider again His temptation.

- Immediately before going into the wilderness, Jesus returned from His baptism **full of the Spirit** (Lk 3.22; 4.1).
- He was then **led by the Spirit** into the wilderness (Mk 1.12; Lk 4.1).
- Afterwards He returned from the wilderness **in the power of the Spirit** (Lk 4.14).

So, how did Jesus overcome? By the Word and also by the Spirit.

How did the Early Church Overcome?

Jesus said, *be of good cheer, I have overcome the world* (Jn 16.33) to His disciples. But how was this of any comfort to them? They were not Jesus.

Because the early disciples would overcome in exactly the same way as Jesus. By the Word and by the Spirit. Through the indwelling Spirit of the same life that was in Him, they also were more than conquerors (Ro 8.37).

Let us illustrate.

By the Word

The first believers were totally grounded in and committed to the Word.

Paul, for example, wherever he went, ensured his converts were fully grounded in the Word (e.g. Acts 20.20, 27). He was focussed on the Word to the very end of his days. Even when in prison awaiting a probable death sentence, Paul's chief request was for his Bible:

*Bring the cloak ... when you come, and the books, **especially the parchments** (i.e., probably, copies of the Hebrew Scriptures) (2 Tim 4.13).*

Having the Word in them ensured the early Church was well equipped to overcome even the devil himself just as Jesus did.

*I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, **and the word of God abides in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one** (1 Jn 2.14).*

By the Spirit

The early Church also overcame by the Spirit.

Like Jesus, Paul's preaching was not *in word only, but also in power and the Holy Ghost* (1 Th 1.5; 1 Cor 2.4). The words he spoke worked powerfully in those who believed (1 Th 2.13). That power was the Spirit (2 Tim 3.16a).

Despite strong supernatural opposition, the early Church overcame by the Spirit. They were,

- **Guided** by the voice of the Spirit (1 Tim 4.1).
- **Strengthened** by the voice of the Spirit (1 Tim 1.18-19a).
- **Enabled to keep** what was entrusted to them by the Spirit (2 Tim 1.13-14).
- **Endued** by the Spirit (1 Tim 4.14).
- **Emboldened** by the Spirit of power (2 Tim 1.6-8).

As John said,

*Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them (i.e. many false prophets, spirits and the spirit of antichrist, 1 Jn 4.1-3): **because greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world** (1 Jn 4.4).*

And **Who** was in them? The Anointing, the Spirit (1 Jn 2.27; 3.24; 4.13), the same Spirit that was in the Word.

So, like Jesus the early Church overcame by the Word and the Spirit.

How does the End Time Laodicean Believer Overcome?

It may be that only a few in the end time professing church remain true to the original faith, while most follow a 'faith' which is to their own liking. But there **will** be those who are faithful.

The end time is a time of unprecedented deception, including great signs and wonders done in Jesus' name. Among the perils listed by Paul in the last days were men **in the church** who would resist the Truth (i.e. the Word, Jn 17.17) in the same way as the Egyptian magicians opposed Moses, by remarkable and real miracles (Ex 8.18; 9.11; 2 Tim 3.8-9).

But, despite unprecedented opposition, the true believers will overcome,

- The wicked one (1 Jn 2.14).
- Many false prophets, spirits, the spirit of antichrist, the spirit of error (1 Jn 4.1-6).
- The world (1 Jn 5.4).

Like those who come out of the great tribulation with white robes and palm branches in their hands (Rev 7.10, 14), the overcoming Laodicean bride will stand erect like a palm tree (SoS 7.7), symbolising victory over everything the enemy can throw at her, whilst triumphantly bearing abundant fruit (Ps 92.12, 14).

How will they overcome? Just like the early Church, through Jesus and like Jesus (Jn 16.33; Ro 8.37). By the Word and by the Spirit.

Let us illustrate from the letter to the Laodiceans.

By the Word

How do they overcome by the Word?

- **By turning from lukewarm religion** (3.15-16). Such a religion has long lost its first love. How does the Bible say love to God is manifested? By the attitude to the Word (Jn 14.15, 23; 15.10; 1 Jn 2.5; 5.3; 2 Jn 6). So, with ardent devotion the overcomer turns wholeheartedly back to the Word that the professing Laodicea church treats with such indifference.
- **By heeding His counsel** to buy gold tried in the fire (3.18). What is this gold? Clearly neither the gold nor their poverty were literal, otherwise how could they have been able to buy literal gold? It symbolises a genuine faith, tried and tested in the fire (cp 1 P 1.7). At a time when the Lord questioned whether He would find the faith once and for all delivered unto the saints on His return (Lk 18.8), the overcomer goes back to **the original faith, the Word first given at the beginning**.
- **By zealously repenting** (3.19). To repent means to change the mind, to think differently, to turn.
 - Turn **from** what? From their earlier thoughts, from the religion of Laodicea.
 - Turn **back to** what? Back to what has been left, to the original Word.
- **By responding to His knocking, opening the door to Him**, welcoming Him back (3.20). **And Who is the One they welcome back? The Word** (Jn 1.1, 14).

By the Spirit

How do they overcome by the Spirit?

- **They buy white raiment** to cover the shame of their nakedness (3.18). What does white raiment speak of in Scripture?
 - **The garment of salvation** (Ex 39.27; Ps 132.9, 16; Isa 61.10).
 - **The wedding garment** (Rev 19.8).
 - **The garment of the overcomer** (Rev 3.4-5).

But raiment has another symbolic meaning in the Bible.

- When Elisha cast away his own garment and put on the mantle of Elijah, that symbolised his being clothed with the same Spirit that had clothed Elijah (2 K 2.12-15).
- When the Bible says **the Spirit came upon** Gideon (Jud 6.34), the Hebrew literally says, **the Spirit clothed** Gideon.
- The disciples were told they would be **endued (i.e. clothed, arrayed) with the Spirit** (Lk 24.49).

So, the Laodicean overcomer is clothed with the Spirit.

- ***They anoint their eyes with the eyesalve of the Spirit***, giving them spiritual vision (3.18). So, overcomers have understanding of the times (1 Chr 12.32; Mt 16.3). Their eyes are flooded with light to see the hope of their calling, the riches of His inheritance in the saints and the exceeding greatness of His power toward (and in) us, by which He raised Christ from the dead and seated Him in heavenly places, and us with and in Him (Eph 1.17-2.5).
- ***They heed the voice of the Spirit*** through the messenger to their age (3.22). Each of the 7 churches had a messenger pre-eminently anointed to bring the food due for that age (Mt 24.45; Lk 12.42), the manna for their own day. Though nourishing and filling in its own day, yesterday's manna is of no benefit for the new day (Ex 16.19-20). In each age the overcomer heeds the voice of the Spirit through his own messenger.

The Secret of the Overcoming Life

We have seen how fundamental the Word and the Spirit are to the end time Laodicean believer in overcoming all that comes against him.

But how are the Word and the Spirit so effective in their lives? What is the secret?

Birth! The attributes of the Word and the Spirit are in them by birth. It is what they are. It is what they are born from.

Let me explain.

How does the Bible say the true believer is born? Of the Word and the Spirit.

- Peter said, he are ***born of the Word*** (1 P 1.23).
- But Jesus said he must be ***born of the Spirit*** (Jn 3.5).

John put it in other words. He said the true believer is born of God (Jn 1.12-13) and that His seed is in him (1 Jn 3.9).

Now the seed anything is born from can only manifest the nature/life of that seed.

- Whether ***in the natural***, *Let the earth bring forth ... the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself* (Gen 1.11).
- Or ***in the spiritual***, *Ye shall know them by their fruits ... every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit... Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them* (Mt 7.16-20).

So, the believer is born of the Word. And since Jesus is the Word (Jn 1.1), and since His life was an overcoming life (Jn 16.33), so also must be the life of he who is born of the Word.

This is why John said, *whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world* (1 Jn 5.4). The very life the true believer is born from is an overcoming life. So, he overcomes,

- ***By the Word***: *ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one* (1 Jn 2.14).
- ***By the Spirit***: *Ye ... have overcome them* (i.e. spirits, false prophets, the spirit of antichrist) *because greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world* (1 Jn 4.4). And Who is in them? The Anointing (1 Jn 2.27), the Spirit.

Let us illustrate from nature. The Bible compares the believer and the bride to a palm tree (Ps 92.12-14; SoS 7.7). Even in old age it still bears fruit, despite everything that comes against it in its harsh, arid surroundings:

- The constant beating sun, seeking to drain its leaves of every last drop of the water of life and the air around it of the breath of life.
- The howling tempest, that can go on for days, seeking to snap its tall, upright trunk by bending it almost double.
- The arid, waterless landscape that sometimes goes without rain for up to 10 years.

And yet the palm tree overcomes. How? What is the secret?

Because of the seed/life it came from!

It is a palm tree. It is not a grape vine or a mango or an orange or an apple tree. It is a palm tree. By birth it has within itself all that it needs to overcome the hostile surroundings it lives in.

And so it is with the end time Laodicean believer. The seed he is born from, the Word and the Spirit, contains the life that will enable him to overcome the perilous times and apostasy of the last days.

And that seed will not only enable the end time believer to overcome.

3.

OTHER EFFECTS OF THE WORD & THE SPIRIT

We have seen how fundamental are the Word and the Spirit to the believer in overcoming the perilous times of Laodicea.

But there is more. He not only overcomes by the Word and the Spirit, but by them he is also,

- **Made ready** for presentation to the coming Bridegroom.
- **Brought to perfection.**

Made Ready by the Word & the Spirit

Let us see how the 2nd Coming Laodicean bride is made ready for presentation to her Bridegroom. But before we do, let us first look at how the 1st Coming bride was made ready.

The 1st Coming Bride

Before Jesus' 1st Coming, John the Baptist, a prophet, was sent to prepare the way (Lk 3.4-5) and to make ready a people prepared for the Lord (Lk 1.17).

How? By the Word and the Spirit.

- He was given a voice (Mk 1.2-3). **He had the Word of the Lord** (Lk 3.2).
- His word was not in word only. **He was filled with the Spirit** from the womb, and came in the Spirit and power of Elijah (Lk 1.15, 17).

Although most who professed to be the Lord's people rejected Him when He came (Jn 1.11), the bride of that day was well prepared, bringing joy to the Bridegroom, and satisfaction to John (Jn 3.29). How was she prepared? By heeding the Word of the Lord by the Spirit through a prophet.

The 2nd Coming Bride

Just as at the 1st Coming, those who profess to be the bride of Christ at the end time will refuse to hear His Word, His voice (Lk 18.8; 2 Th 2.3; 2 Tim 4.3-4; Rev 3.20).

How then does the true bride prepare and make herself ready herself for her soon coming Bridegroom and the marriage feast (Rev 19.7)? In exactly the same way as she overcomes, and in exactly the same way as the 1st Coming bride. By the Word and by the Spirit.

a) Washed & Sanctified by the Word

In what way is the bride prepared and made ready for presentation to her Bridegroom? By being sanctified and cleansed, without spot or wrinkle (Eph 5.26-27).

How does the Word help her to attain this? By both **revealing** defilement and **removing** it.

Looking into the Word is compared to looking into **a mirror** (Jas 1.22-25). Unlike a natural mirror, it reveals not the external blemishes but the internal (Heb 4.12).

How can such exposed impurities and blemishes be cleansed and removed? By the same Word that reveals them:

- Ps 119.9 *Wherewithal shall a young man **cleanse** his way? **by ... thy word***
- Jn 15.3 *ye are **clean through the word***
- Jn 17.17 ***Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.***
- Eph 5.26 ***sanctify and cleanse ... with the washing of water by the word***

So, the Word not only reveals impurity, it can remove it. It has the power to satisfy the heart-felt cry of the psalmist for a clean heart (Ps 51.10):

- Acts 15.9 **purifying their hearts**, (how?) *by faith* (i.e. faith in the Word)
- 1 P 1.22 **purified your souls** (how?) *in obeying the truth* (i.e. the Word)

b) Washed & Sanctified by the Spirit

How is the cleansing power of the Word released? By the Spirit.

- 1 P 1.22 *purified your souls in obeying the truth* (how?) **through the Spirit**
- 1 Cor 6.11 *washed, sanctified* **by the Spirit** of our God
- 1 P 1.2 *through sanctification* **of the Spirit**

c) Spots & Wrinkles removed by the Word & the Spirit

We have seen how the bride is washed and cleansed by the Word and the Spirit. But what about spots and wrinkles? As the day of her presentation draws near, she must certainly keep herself *unspotted from the world* (Jas 1.27).

Two common ingredients in facial cleansing products for natural blemishes and wrinkles are oil and honey. And it is the same in the spiritual. In the Bible,

- **Honey** symbolises **the Word** (Ps 19.10; 119.103).
- **Oil** symbolises **the Spirit** (e.g. 1 S 16.13).

So, the bride is not only washed and cleansed for her wedding day by the Word and the Spirit. By the same means she also ensures there are no spots or blemishes.

d) An OT illustration of the cleansing power of the Word & the Spirit

A passage which beautifully explains the power of the Word and the Spirit to prepare the bride for presentation to the Bridegroom is Ephesians 5.25-27:

Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word, that he might present it to himself... not having spot or wrinkle

The word "*washing*" means both the **act** of washing and the **place** of washing. The latter refers to the Old Testament laver. Let us briefly see how the laver illustrates beautifully the cleansing of the bride both by the Word and the Spirit.

To enter the Tabernacle, the dwelling place of God, the priest must first wash at the laver (Ex 30.17-21). This foreshadows the New Testament believer entering His Presence, for we also are priests (1 P 2.5, 9; Rev 1.6).

- The laver was where defilement was exposed and judged.
 - It was made from brass originally used as mirrors (Ex 38.8). A mirror reveals.
 - Brass symbolises judgement (e.g. Dt 28.23).
- But the laver was also the place where the revealed defilement was removed.
 - It was filled with water. The water symbolises **the Word** (Eph 5.26).
 - But the water was not normal, natural water. It was supernaturally produced by the power of **the Spirit**, from the flint rock of Mt Horeb (Ex 17.6). For this reason Paul calls it **spiritual** water (1 Cor 10.4).

So, the laver illustrates perfectly how the bride prepares herself to enter the dwelling place of God by both the Word and the Spirit.

Made Perfect by the Word & the Spirit

End Time Perfection

The Bible compares the Church to a body, a building (or, temple), a field of grain and a bride. Through the Church ages, in each comparison, she has been progressively moving towards a grand end time climax. This climax is described as perfection.

- **The Body** will come to full maturity, to a perfect man, to the full stature of Christ (Eph 4.13, 15-16), where Christ is all and in all (Col 3.10-11).
- **The Building**, the holy temple, will be completed when the last living stone (Eph 2.20-22; 1 P 2.5) is put in place, the headstone brought forth (Zech 4.7) and the house filled with the Glory (2 Chr 5.13-14). This is described as the house being perfected (2 Chr 8.16).
- **The Grain** will come to its final stage, the harvest, when it brings its long awaited (Jas 1.18; 5.7) fruit to perfection (Lk 8.14). What is the nature of that fruit? The same life as at the beginning, able to reproduce the same works as the original seed.
- **The Bride** will complete her preparation, coming to the perfection of beauty

Let us look more closely at the last point, the perfecting of the bride.

The Perfecting of the Bride

Through the ages the bride has been preparing herself to be presented unspotted and unblemished to her Groom. We have seen how she is washed and sanctified by the Word and the Spirit. The Bible shows that she is made perfect in the same way.

- *All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable... that the man of God may be perfect* (2 Tim 3.16-17). In other words, He breathed into the Scripture His Breath, His Spirit. So, we are made perfect **by the Word and the Spirit**.
- *having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?* (Gal 3.3). The answer to Paul's question is clear. No; we are made perfect **by the Spirit**.

The work of bringing the bride to perfection comes to its climax at the end time, at the time of her presentation to her Bridegroom.

Let us look at one beautiful implication of the bride's coming to perfection.

Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God hath shined (Ps 50.2).

What do these words mean? What do they have to do with the bride?

We know that Zion is Jerusalem (Heb 12.22). But what does Jerusalem symbolise? The bride! In Revelation 21, the angel said to John he would show him the bride. But what did he show him? The holy Jerusalem (21.9-10). So, the breath-taking perfection of beauty described by the psalmist is speaking of the bride.

At the end time, the bride will come to the perfection of beauty.

- That beauty is not only **of** God. It **is** God (cp Ezk 16.14). God Himself radiates out of her (Ps 50.2).
- She is not simply beautiful (SoS 1.15; 4.1), she is totally beautiful. *Thou art **all** fair, my love; there is no spot in thee* (SoS 4.7). Every single thing about her is spotless beauty.

How fascinating and how appropriate, then, that the root meaning of the Hebrew word translated "bride" is, "the perfect one".

4.

THE WORD IN THE MOUTH OF THE END TIME CHURCH

The Power of the Word

We have seen how the Word and the Spirit are absolutely crucial in the life of the end time Laodicean believer. It is only by the same Word and Spirit from which he is born that he overcomes in the perilous times of the last days.

What is it about the Word and the Spirit? What is their secret power that equips the believer to overcome, be made ready and be brought to perfection?

The Word & the Spirit are One

Why are the Word and the Spirit so often linked? What is the secret of their invincible power? Because they are one. The Bible itself links them inseparably together.

Let us see how.

The Word is living, it contains life (Acts 7.38; Heb 4.12; 1 P 1.23). What is that life? The Spirit. How do we know? Because the Bible says all Scripture is inspired by God (2 Tim 3.16). In other words, He breathed into the Word His Breath, His Spirit.

(To better understand what this means, consider the effect of God breathing into lifeless dust (Gen 2.7; 7.22) and into dry bones (Ezk 37.4-5, 9-10)).

This is why Jesus said, *the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit* (Jn 6.63).

Let us consider some examples to illustrate the oneness of the Word and the Spirit.

- We have already seen that our very birth is by the Word and by the Spirit. You cannot have two fathers, so the Word and the Spirit must be one.
- The heavens were made not only by the Lord's Word but also by His Breath (i.e. Spirit) (Ps 33.6).
- We are sanctified and washed both by the Word and by the Spirit (Eph 5.26; 1 Cor 6.11).
- The effect of the Word within us is identical to that of our being filled with the Spirit (Eph 5.18-19; Col 3.16).
- John says that at His Coming the armies of the beast are slain with the sword of His mouth (Rev 19.15, 21), i.e. ***the Word***, whereas Paul said the Wicked is consumed with ***the Spirit*** of His mouth (2 Th 2.8).

The Power of that Word in the Life of the Believer

We have seen that the Word is alive with the Breath/Spirit of God. But it not only ***contains*** life, it ***imparts*** life.

The ministry of the new covenant is not a ministration of a letter without the strength to empower the believer to live by its teaching. It is a ministration of life (2 Cor 3.6-8). Its very words contain the life/Spirit/breath/power to enable the believer to live in accordance with its injunctions.

Compare the effect of the heavenly Voice that spoke to Ezekiel (Ezk 2.1-2). When the Word of command was spoken, the Spirit entered into the prophet enabling him to overcome the weakness of his flesh and to obey that command.

Consider also the woman taken in adultery (Jn 8.1-11). The words of the Law spoken by the scribes and Pharisees could only condemn. Even though true, they had no power to change her manner of life to enable her to live by those words. But when Jesus said, *Go, and sin no more*, His very words contained the power/life/Spirit to enable her to do what they said.

We have already seen the effect of the Word and the Spirit in enabling the believer to overcome, to be made ready and to be perfected. In fact, that same Spirit-breathed Word plays a central role in his life from his new birth right through to full maturity, not only **teaching** him, but **empowering** him to enter into its teachings.

- It contains the power to save (Jas 1.21; Ro 1.16).
- It has the power to bring full assurance (1 Th 1.5).
- After conversion, it continues to work powerfully in the believer (1 Th 2.13).
- It not only teaches holiness, it imparts it (Jn 15.3; 17.17, 19; Eph 5.26).
- Finally, it produces a harvest in us (Col 1.5-6). The end result of the power of the Word at work within us is to be a partaker of the very nature of God (2 P 1.3-4).

The Power of the Word in the Mouth of the Believer

Let us examine more fully one particular aspect of the relationship between the Laodicean true believer and the Word.

At the end of the Church age, the fully developed seed of the Word that is in him will come to fruition and reveal itself. The life and character of the end time Laodicean believer will fully reflect the Word and Jesus (who is the Word).

One way this will be seen is by his words. When he speaks, in the will of God and in and by the Spirit, his words will have the very same power and effect as if the Lord Himself had spoken them.

Let me explain.

The Word of His Power

The Word of God is not only living (Acts 7.38), it is powerful (Heb 4.12).

- It is both ***the Word of Life*** (Phil 2.16), alive with ***the Spirit of life*** from God (Rev 11.11).
- And also ***the Word of His power*** (Heb 1.3), full of ***the Spirit of power*** (2 Tim 1.6).

It is a mighty weapon. To be ignorant of the Word is to be ignorant of His power (Mt 22.29).

- ***Like a sword***, it can cut down the enemy (1 K 19.16-17; Is 49.2; Ho 6.5; Rev 19.13,15) and uncover the deepest secrets (Heb 4.12-13). It is the sword of the Spirit (Eph 6.17).
- ***Like a hammer***, it can shatter the hardest resistance (Jer 23.29).
- ***Like a fire***, it can consume all opposition (Jer 5.14; 23.29; Rev 11.5).

The Power of the Word in the Mouth of God

A word in the mouth of God has immense power. By His spoken Word, He,

- Created all things (Gen 1.3; Ps 33.6; Heb 11.3)
- Upholds all things (Heb 1.3)

The Power of the Word in the Mouth of the Son of God

The Son of God manifested that same power of the spoken Word:

- When Jesus cursed the fig tree, He did not pray, He spoke (Mt 21.19-20).
- When He stilled the storm, He did not pray, He spoke (Mk 4.39).
- When raising Lazarus, after He had prayed, He spoke (Jn 11.41-43).

The Word in the Mouth of the Sons of God

That same Word is found also in the mouth of the sons of God.

There is a very instructive symbolical description of the bride in Song of Solomon 4.11:

Thy lips, O my spouse, drop as the honeycomb; honey and milk are under thy tongue

What does this mean? Why does this make the bride so attractive to the Bridegroom?

- **Firstly**, why are honey and milk under her tongue? Because both honey (Ps 19.10; Ezk 3.3; Rev 10.8-10) and milk (1 P 2.2) are symbolic of the Word. So, if the bride has these under her tongue, she is both savouring the Word and absorbing it rapidly into her heart. (The quickest way for the body to absorb some foods or medicines is to put them under the tongue.)
- **Secondly**, why are her lips dripping with honey? Because she is not only taking in the Word, but she is giving it out. In fact, her mouth is so full of honey that it is like a honeycomb that is full to overflowing. She is constantly speaking the Word. She is like her Lord, from whose mouth proceeds the Word (Mt 4.4).

How different from the Laodicean professing church! Her mouth also should be full of the Word. In fact, she should be His mouth (2 Cor 13.3). But instead she is lukewarm towards His Word, putting it outside. So, the Lord spits her out of His mouth (Rev 3.16).

The Power of the Word in the Mouth of the Sons of God

The Word in the mouth of the true believer is a very powerful weapon (Eph 6.17). It is able to pull down the strongest opposition (2 Cor 10.4-5).

When the preaching of Stephen was opposed by the Jews, they were not able to resist the wisdom and the Spirit by which he spoke (Acts 6.10), i.e. the Spirit of his words. Like Paul, his word came not in word only but in power and in the Holy Ghost (1 Cor 2.4-5; 1 Th 1.5).

The Power of the Word in the Mouth of the End Time Sons of God

Most remarkable of all, as the end time Church comes to the full stature of Christ, believers will speak the Word with the same authority as the Lord Himself. Just as the Word in the mouth of **God** and of **the Son of God** has creative power, so shall it be when **a son of God** speaks according to the will of God with the faith of God.

Jesus taught this:

- Mt 17.20 you shall **say** (not **pray**) to the mountain
- Mt 21.21-22 if you **say** (not **pray**) to the mountain
- Lk 17.5-6 if you **say** (not **pray**) to the mulberry tree

Just as in the Old Testament (Jos 10.10-13; Ezk 37.4-7, 9-10), so it was in the early Church. For example, Peter. After he had prayed, he then spoke life back into the dead body of Tabitha (Acts 9.40).

And so shall it be in the end time Church.

How? By the Faith of God

How is it possible to have sufficient faith in the Word to do such things? Where can we find the faith to move mountains (1 Cor 13.2)?

In the same way we overcome, are made ready, and are made perfect.

- **From the Word**, *Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God* (Ro 10.17).
- **From the Spirit**, *having the same spirit of faith* (2 Cor 4.13); *the fruit of the Spirit is ... faith* (Gal 5.22); *Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Ghost* (Acts 6.5; cp 11.24).

With man, such faith it is not possible. It must come from outside himself. It does. Like every other good gift, it comes down from above (Jas 1.17; cp 3.15).

In fact, such faith is not simply **from** God, it is the very faith **of** God.

The English translations of Jesus' words in Mark 11.22 say, "Have faith **in** God". But in the original language of the Bible, as shown in the margin of some KJV Bibles, the exact meaning is, "Have the faith **of** God". Amen!

So here we have yet another beautiful example of a believer manifesting the life of Jesus:

- Not only are his **words** are not his own. It is Jesus speaking in him (2 Cor 13.3; cp 2 S 23.2).
- But also the **faith** to speak such words is not his own. His faith is the faith of the Son of God (Gal 2.20).

Truly, although the true Laodicean believer lives in perilous times, he also lives in glorious times. He,

- is not only **born of** the Word;
- not only **overcomes, is made ready and is made perfect by** the Word;
- not only **speaks** the Word;
- but **becomes** the very manifested, incarnate Word.

This is the mystery of God come to its ultimate fulfilment.

But this needs a much fuller exposition than is possible here.

5.

CONCLUSION

The Overcomer's Hope & the Overcomer's Reward

The Overcomer's Hope

As with the other churches, in the opening words of the letter to Laodicea Jesus gives a description of Himself specifically relevant to that age. It reveals what the overcomer has to look forward to in this final age, the grand climax of Church history. So, let us look at the details of that description (Rev 3.14).

These things saith,

- **The Amen.** This designation is also found in Isaiah 65.16. There the expression “the God of truth” in the literal Hebrew is “the God of the Amen”. So, Jesus is revealed to be the God of the Amen, the Old Testament Jehovah.

The end time Church will come to a full knowledge of Who Jesus really is. What will be the glorious effect of that knowledge?

- To open our eyes to the hope of our calling and to the exceeding greatness of the mighty power at work in us, the self-same power that raised Christ from the dead (Eph 1.16-20).
 - To bring us to a perfect, full grown man, measured by nothing less than the full stature of Jesus Christ Himself (Eph 4.13).
 - To bring us to the place where Christ is all and in all (Col 3.10-11).
 - To impart grace and divine power to make us partakers of the divine nature (2 P 1.2-4).
- **The faithful witness.** In other words, He will do what He said. Throughout the ages He has been working out all things in accordance with the counsel of His will. He is faithful and can be relied upon to bring the work He began in the first age to its full and final perfection/completion in this last age (Phil 1.6; Heb 6.17-18; Ps 138.8). That work includes, but is not limited to, our entire sanctification (1 Th 5.23-24). He is both the Author (i.e. Beginner) of our faith and its Finisher/Perfecter (Heb 12.2).
 - **The true witness.** The word translated “true” does not mean “not false”. It means perfect realisation in contrast to partial. For example, when Jesus said, *I am the true vine* (Jn 15.1), He did not mean that Israel (Isa 5.1) was a false vine, but rather a partial shadow or type of Himself. He was the full and complete realisation of what the earlier shadow was imperfectly and incompletely conveying. So,
 - In this final age the earlier partial realisation of the hope and calling of the Church will be made perfect, completed realisation.
 - Whereas through the ages the true Church has been going from glory to glory (2 Cor 3.18), in this last age we shall come back to the full lost original, perfect glory. That glory is not only *like* His (1 Jn 3.2), it *is* His (2 Th 2.14). The mystery of God shall be finished (Rev 10.7).
 - **The beginning of the creation of God.** According to Strong's, the word “beginning” can mean either the commencement or the one that commences i.e. the beginner/author, the active cause by which anything begins to be, the origin.
Jesus was the Beginner/Author of both the first creation (Jn 1.3; Col 1.16) and the Origin, the Firstborn of the new creation (Ro 8.29; 2 Cor 5.17), created in Christ Jesus (Eph 2.10), in righteousness and true holiness (Eph 4.24).

Why does He reveal Himself as such in this last Church Age? Because in this age His new creation of God-men will come to full stature.

What a hope!

The Overcomer's Reward

We have seen that those who overcome the apostasy of the professing church in this final Laodicea Age are they who,

- Hear His voice, the last voice of **the Spirit** to the churches; and,
- Open the door to Him, **the Word**.

At the end of each of the letters to the seven churches, Jesus describes the reward to the overcomer. With the other churches, the essence of their reward is Jesus Himself. For example,

- **Ephesus**, the tree of life (Rev 2.7), which is generally acknowledged to symbolise the Lord Jesus, who is Himself the life (Jn 14.6).
- **Smyrna**, a crown of life (Rev 2.10), which is the Lord Himself (cp Isa 28.5). The overcomer shall be crowned with glory, the very glory of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself (2 Th 2.14; Heb 2.9-10).
- **Pergamos**, the hidden manna (Rev 2.17), which is Jesus Himself (Jn 6.48-51).
- **Thyatira**, the Morning Star, which is Jesus (Rev 2.28; 22.16).

What is the reward to the Laodicean overcomer? There are two promises, both of which speak of an unspeakable intimacy with the Lord and point to the soon coming wedding day.

To sup with Him

I will ... sup with him and he with me (Rev 3.20).

What supper is this?

The Lord gives two aspects to this promise.

- **Him supping with us**. When? In this world, while we wait for His appearing. The supper is the main meal at the end of the day and symbolises fellowship together (cp Acts 10.41).
- **Us supping with Him**. When? In the world to come. In a general sense this speaks of eating with Him at His table in His kingdom (Lk 22.30). But pre-eminently it speaks of the coming wedding feast, the marriage supper of the Lamb (Rev 19.9).

This supper has been long anticipated by both Bridegroom & bride.

- **The Bridegroom** said He would not drink of the fruit of the vine until in the coming kingdom (Mt 26.29).
- **The bride** anticipates that kingdom every time she breaks bread at the Lord's Supper (*till he come*, 1 Cor 11.26).

To sit with Him

he will sit with me in my throne (3.21).

Who sits in the throne with a king? The queen (Neh 2.6)! She will be His bride, seated with Him in heavenly places (Eph 2.6).

So, despite the dire state of the end time Laodicean professing church, let us go on unto Him.

Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life (Jn 6.68).

Whom have I in heaven but thee? And there is none on earth that I desire beside thee (Ps 73.25).

Let us press on, like the apostle Paul,

Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus... this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus (Phil 3.12-14).

And what is that prize? Jesus Himself.

He is our Inheritance,

*The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance ... yea, I have a goodly heritage (Ps 16.5-6).
The Lord is my portion, saith my soul (Lam 3.24).*

He is our Reward,

I am ... thy exceeding great reward (Gen 15.1).

Amen!