

A Sermon Transcribed

THE MARTYRDOM OF THE LAODICEANS

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Good morning, brethren! Nice to have a cool day over here after the hot ones we've been having in Concord, and believe me, it does get hot in Concord. We seem to have many climates in the bay area, and things are upside down and backward, like San Francisco's summer that comes in the fall...

If you were new to the Church, brethren, and you were starting to really open up the Bible for the first time in your life, what would you say you would consider to be the strangest prophecy of all? Because, obviously, when we come into the Church, in this age, we are very concerned with Bible prophecy, particularly as we understand that we are living in the end-time. But there are prophecies, particularly if you're new, that strike you as very strange - Ezekiel as a prophet, for instance, lying thirteen months on one side and forty days on the other; what a ridiculous thing for a person to do?! Or, it could be some of the prophecies in Daniel: the image of Nebuchadnezzar, Nebuchadnezzar's image rather, composed of different metals; or some of the weird animals and, finally, the beast; each one overcoming the other, one by one, as we understand representing different world empires. Perhaps Zechariah, the different colored horses riding off in different directions. And of course, the book of Revelation, with locusts coming up out of a bottomless pit.

There are many prophecies that, on initial reading, brethren, when you're new in the Church, strike you as very strange. But, really, the strangest prophecy in the Bible relates not to occasional strange actions on the parts of the prophets, nor to curious symbols used in prophetic books. It doesn't relate to weird looking creatures, or to the Woes, or the trumpets of Revelation. In fact, the strangest prophecy in the Bible does not relate even to the future of Israel, or to the world's political events to come. The *strangest* prophecy, brethren, relates to the Church of God itself! Now, before we get to that prophecy, I'd like to talk about three great advantages that we, who are members of the Church, have in this end time.

The First of those three great advantages is that we are a part of the greatest, and most extensive work of God in scope, of all of man's 6000 years of history. It's not just a worldwide Church, it is truly a worldwide work. And there is the advantage then of the excitement of being a part of the most successful work of God that has ever been. We are excited by the growth that God gives to us, by the doors that He opens up to us. If you've been in this work any length of time, you will know for a certainty that it is not a dull work, it is an exciting work to be a part of.

The Second great advantage we have in the Church of God today is that we have a greater understanding of the Bible than ever before, and a greater understanding of Bible prophecy simply because we live at the time of the fulfillment of many of the prophecies put into the Bible - the things like locusts we can identify with modern armorments; in fact, many of the prophecies of the Bible *could not* be understood until our time. And, true, the "Book of Revelation" was unveiled at last to Mr. Armstrong in this century. And it was something that could be understood not just because of the inspiration that God gave to him, but because of the technology of this end time that helps to explain some of those symbols in the Book of Revelation - *a book that was not understood in the same way by precedings eras of the Church*. And so, we are watching prophecy of the end time unfold; it's related to us in the *Plain Truth*, we can study it in the *Correspondence Course*, we have the booklets, we have the television programs that explain to us what is going on in the world scene - the *World Tomorrow* broadcast.

The Third great advantage - and this is the greatest advantage of all - is that *we are the generation who will see the return of Jesus Christ to this earth*. For 2000 years brethren in past centuries have prayed "Your Kingdom come", in obedience to Jesus Christ's command to do so. But, of course, that Kingdom never came; it came for them in one sense at the time of their death because, even though they're dead and buried, they have no awareness of the passage of time, for them it's as if they stepped into the grave and there they are at the first resurrection - that Kingdom has come in answer to their prayers. But we understand that we are living *in the generation* that will literally see God's Kingdom come... the return of Jesus Christ is just a few years down the line. So these are three great advantages that we have in the end time era of God's Church, brethren; and yet, this brings us to the great paradox, the greatest paradox perhaps of the end time - *that the closer we get to the return of Jesus Christ, the more some converted Christians are to become unexcited about that return*. Now, on the surface so many prophecies of the end time make sense... except this one! This to me is the strangest prophecy of all, this one relating to the Church of God, that we who live in the end time, with greater advantages than any other preceding generation of Christians, should allow ourselves, with the eminency of Jesus

Christ's return, to become unexcited about it, lackadaisical in our spiritual approach to life, and perhaps lose out on the great reward that is just a few years down the road...

Let's turn to Revelation chapter 3, brethren, Revelation chapter 3 and beginning in verse 14. Now, as has been explained to you in the past concerning the seven eras of the Church, they were, of course, contemporaneous with each other - these seven towns on this mail route, and so the problems related were all a part of the apostolic era, though the *major problem* with the apostolic era was that of the Ephesus Church. And as we come down through history, there is the flow of the different eras and we realize that we are a part of the Philadelphian era today, with one more to come, the Laodicean. But as we would understand, and as has been explained to you in the past - Mr. Orchard went through the book of Revelation with you, brethren, in a Bible study and explained these things, that there has *always* been Laodiceans in every era of the Church. There was always a portion who had that particular lukewarm spirit and attitude. But what is made clear by the Bible is that these problems are not just contemporaneous, they also follow one after the other - from the stand point of what is the biggest problem of that particular group in that particular century.

The First involves the prosperity of the end time. Let's begin with Revelation 3 and verse 14: "To the angel of the Church of the Laodiceans write, "These things says the Amen, the Faithful and the True Witness, the Beginning, (or 'the Beginner' as it should be) of the creation of God". Now, Jesus Christ addresses each Church with a different introduction, so this introduction, verse 14, is unique to the Laodiceans. He says, "These things says the Amen", now the Amen is a word that can be "sobeit", can have the meaning "I believe, I agree". And yet the Laodiceans - because Jesus Christ uses this particular introduction for a purpose, don't truly believe Jesus Christ, in a sense that their faith, to a certain extent, is a dead faith, it is not a living faith. They pay lip service to Jesus Christ and to the Commandments, but they don't really act like Jesus Christ in their lives. If they did, they would be Philadelphian, they'd be zealous. Not that Philadelphia is the greatest of the Churches by any means, each one has those who will be a part of the first resurrection, but just to simply contrast there. "The Faithful and the True Witness" because Jesus Christ set an example and was a witness to the Laodiceans of how to live zealously for God. And He was the Beginner of the creation of God. And there is a problem with the Laodiceans with intellectual vanity - instead of the humility that recognizes God as their creator and look to Him daily because they recognize daily they *need* God - their approach is "I have a need of nothing". But also there's another application of this - Amen is the way you end something, and this is the *last* era of God's Church. The Faithful and True Witness because the

Laodiceans who have not truly done the work of God are going to have to do it in order to make it into the Kingdom. One way or other, if you don't do a work now, you will have to do a work then!!! God will not take non-workers into His Kingdom, and so they will have to do, as we're going to see, a work of witness for God after Philadelphia is taken to the Place of safety. And there they will recognize their God and their true need for Him. Verse 17: "Because you say, 'I am rich and increased with goods and have need of nothing'. I'm OK, spiritually I'm doing fine, but also, brethren, obviously there is the physical application as well as the spiritual. We live in the richest generation of all time. We live better than kings and queens of past ages lived. How many of them had color television? How many of them had refrigerators? How many of them had air condition - living in some of those drafty old castles, they would certainly envy some of the luxuries we have today brethren. We are a generation that is rich and is increased with goods, not that riches are wrong or goods are wrong, they can be a blessing from God. Abraham was a tremendously wealthy individual, but he always kept it in perspective: God first, material things way down the line! Continuing in verse 17, "and know not that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked". And the major thrust of this, of course, brethren, as you understand... and we've been through it with you before, is spiritual. But certainly there is the *physical application* as well, that is not negated by the spiritual, they are both here. "You know not", *they are deceived!* And people can be deceived by the comforts of modern day living, the ease of this life; in comparison to when you were grubbing the ground for food stuff in past ages.

Let's notice Matthew 13, beginning in verse 19, the Parable of the Sower and the Seed, and in verse 19 Jesus says, Matthew 13, "When anyone hears the Word of the Kingdom and understands it not", he's not really called of God, "then comes a wicked one catches away that was sown in his heart, this is he that receives seed by the wayside". Verse 20, "But he that receive the seed into stony places the same as he that hears the words and anon with joy receives it", the curiosity seekers to a certain extent, "yet he has not root in himself", he's not truly, deeply, committed, he's just superficially interested, "he has not root in himself and lasts only a little while, when some tribulation or persecution arises because of the Word, *immediately* he is offended" - that's what "by and by" means in the King James. Very thin, has no root there, so it's very easy for him to get offended. "But he also (verse 22) that receives seed among the thorns is he that hears the Word, and the care of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, choke the Word and he becomes unfruitful", which meant that he was bearing fruit for a while. He was not unfruitful period, he had been, but then he had started producing fruit and then he *became* unfruitful; this is a person *in God's Church!!!* But what were the major causes?? The care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches! The Laodiceans know not, they are deceived!!! Now,

they can be in the Church today, but the deceitfulness of riches, the comfort of this present society has had its effect upon them... has made them complacent and lukewarm. Proverbs chapter 1, brethren... they have been lulled into a false sense of security. *They think they're secure* because they're in the Church, because they hear the sermons and the Bible studies - they're not truly aware of their spiritual condition, and some of that spiritual condition is as a result of the age in which they live. They're not having to beg God every day for their next meal, they've got enough stocked in their refrigerator and in their freezer to last them, you know, a couple of weeks. There were times when Christians in past ages were truly praying "Give us our daily bread", because a lot of times they didn't know where their next meal was coming from - do we worry about that? We all know where the next meal is coming from - we've already got it back home. We went out and bought it a week ago; or we can go out to a restaurant. It is very easy, with the comforts of this society, brethren, to get into a complacent attitude.

Now, God here in Proverbs chapter 1 is talking about those who do not accept the way of wisdom. He talks in verse 26 of the calamity to come and He says in verse 27, "when your fear comes as a desolation, your destruction comes as a whirlwind, when distress and anguish come upon you". All those who have rejected the truth of God and the words of wisdom that is preached by this Gospel message, "then in the tribulation they shall call upon Me but I will not answer, they shall seek Me early and they shall not find Me". Verse 32, "For the turning away of the simple shall slay them", or if you have a center margin, "the ease, the easy way of life", the *comforts of today* shall slay them. Now, does television, you know, reach out and grab a knife and stick it in you? Does television kill you, brethren? Does, you know, your car, does it run over you? Usually you're at the wheel; you don't let it run over you. How do the *comforts* of this life slay you? They can kill us spiritually, brethren, because we can be so much at ease that we don't really push ourselves spiritually in prayer and Bible study before God. "The ease of the simple shall slay them and the prosperity of fools shall destroy them, but who so harkens unto Me shall dwell safety and shall be quite from the fear of evil to come". Oh, I realize for the most part these verses are dealing with people in the world in contrast with those in God's Church, but also, brethren, verse 32 can apply to the Laodiceans and verse 33 to the Philadelphians. Verse 33, "Who so harkens unto Me shall dwell in a place of safety," by extrapolation, and shall be quiet from the fear of the evil of the Third World War. But if a person has a Laodicean attitude, then the ease of the simple shall slay them in the Tribulation, as Laodiceans, and there prosperity shall have destroyed them.

So this is the First reason they reject these three great advantages, brethren - the prosperity of the end time. The Second reason is the evil of the end time. Matthew 24 and verse 12, what Jesus Christ had to say about this end time generation and because of the wickedness that is upon it? Matthew 24 and verse 12, "And because inequity shall abound the love of many shall wax cold". Now, true, we see a society that is becoming more and more heartless, more and more calloused, more and more dog-eat-dog, but once again, brethren, there is the application to the Church - this Book was written majorly for us, not for the world that is blinded. "Because inequity shall abound the love of many shall wax cold". There are those in the Church that were hot in their love for God, who will allow themselves to wax totally cold and commit the unpardonable sin! *But in between*, going from hot to cold, is lukewarm. And there are those who allow themselves to become lukewarm - as Jesus said in Revelation 3 and verse 15, "I know your works that you are neither hot nor cold, I would that you were one or the other, and so then because you are lukewarm", verse 16 of Revelation 3, "I will have to spit you (or as it is in the Greek, I am about to spit you) out of my mouth". Now, of course, with that town of Laodicea there in Asia Minor, when Jesus Christ spoke those words to John, there were hot springs a certain distance away from Laodicea, and the water was transported from those hot springs to the town of Laodicea. But by the time the water reached Laodicea, it was lukewarm. Now, if you've ever tried to drink a cup of lukewarm warm coffee, you know what your reaction usually is, you want it heated up. If you think it's hot and you grab it and it's lukewarm, the chances are you are going to spit it out. I can remember visiting a place call "Bath" in England, and they named it that because the Romans baths were there. And there were these waters that came up from the spring, but they were only lukewarm warm waters and they would have you taste it, and there was a faucet where you could actually taste the water; and it was good for you, it had medicinal values, and there were those who made themselves drink it. But you had to make yourself drink it because being lukewarm it didn't taste enjoyable at all. Now, some have felt, you know, and it can be taken from Revelation 3 there, verses 15 & 16, about the lukewarm water: "And that I would that you were hot or cold", that hot water is an enjoyable beverage; coffee or tea, and cold water can be refreshing on a hot day. And there is a Proverb that makes that statement about cold water, and so some have felt that it's not necessarily negative - the cold aspect, that on a hot day you need a cold drink of water, on a cold day you need a hot drink. But of course there is also the application spiritually, that a person can be on fire for God (hot), or they can be spiritually cold. And when Jesus Christ says in that case: "I wish that you were one or the other". At least with the cold of this world, they are not being called, this is not their day of salvation, their time of calling is yet future. So if they die, terrible as that will be in the Tribulation, at least it's not the end for them, they are not spiritually accountable because this is

not their day of salvation. But a person that has God's Spirit and is lukewarm... is in jeopardy, where their eternal life or death is concerned. And so, you can see why spiritually Jesus Christ would say: "I would that you were hot or cold". If you're hot, I know I can put you into the First resurrection, if you're cold, uncalled, OK, I'm going to wait for a better day to call you, after My return. But because you are called and you're lukewarm, it's now or never!!! And you put upon Me a terribly difficult decision, and that decision has to be, as He says: "Unless there is repentance, I have to spit you out of My mouth" - implied, into the Tribulation, because that's the only way I can save you spiritually... and get you into My Kingdom.

Isaiah 5, talking about the evil of the age and its affect upon people in God's Church, a slow, subtle, pernicious effect, because Satan has done his job well with this end time society as it becomes more and more wicked all around us. Isaiah 5 and verse 20: "Woe to them that call evil good and good evil", like the homosexuals and the lesbians with their gay parades, who say that their perversion is a good and the rest of us should accept it, and, what's more, even join their parade!!! "Woe to them that call evil good and good evil, that put darkness for light and light for darkness, that put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter"!!!! How apt a description of 1989, and our society! "And woe to them that are wise in their own eyes and prudent in their own sight, who have no need for God, in their lives"!!!! *Liberated individuals, in their own mind!!* "Woe to them that are mighty to drink wine and many strength to mingle strong drink, which justify the wicked for reward", verse 23, "and take away the righteousness of the righteous from him". Now, the actual meaning there is that they will justify the wicked for reward, for a bribe, and they will neglect to give the righteous their just cause, say in a Court of Law. However, by extrapolation, we could take it literally (verse 23) "to take away the righteousness of the righteous from him", because this society, as it degenerates, if we individually are not close to God, we will be gradually sucked into the vortex of this world and swallowed up and gradually lose our righteousness, brethren. This world can take our righteousness away from us, if we allow it to do so!

Nehemiah, chapter 13 and verse 26. We have been blessed with the gift of God's understanding of the end time prophecy, the understanding of the Commandments of God and the real way to live and the true Jesus Christ, tremendous wisdom and the principals for right living. But we can allow the world, brethren, by its degeneracy and by its evil influence... to begin to subtract from us - righteousness before God! Verse 26 of Nehemiah 13, "Did not Solomon, King of Israel sin by these things"? A man of tremendous wisdom. "Yet among many nations was there no king like him, who was beloved of His God; and God made him king over

all Israel. Nevertheless (even him) did outlandish women cause to sin". Now in the truest analyses, brethren, no one causes you to sin, we sin of ourselves, but what the Bible is stating is, we can allow others to have this influence upon us, whereby *indirectly* they cause us to sin... and to give up little by little upon our righteousness. And so, there are those in the Church who will, as the Bible says, "grow weary in well doing" and gradually allow their love, that was once hot, to become lukewarm. So that's the Second reason why the Laodiceans reject the three great advantages of living in the end time Church, in the 20th century.

The Third, brethren, is the return of Jesus Christ. The third reason some people get unexcited about the return of Jesus Christ is the return of Jesus Christ, or more accurately, the fact that the return of Jesus Christ doesn't come when they expect it to come. Matthew 24 and beginning in verse 42 – now, remember that this chapter, brethren (we've already referred to verse 12) is the Olivet prophecy of the end time. What Jesus Christ said here had application to the apostles, to the Apostolic era, to the Ephesian era of the Church, and it did have a fulfillment, back then, a type fulfillment, *but the major thrust of this prophecy is for our time in the 20th century*. Yes, it is applied to all Christians through the last 2000 years, but especially to us! Verse 42: "Watch therefore" Jesus warned us, "for you know not what hour Your Lord does come, but know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched and would not have suffered his house to be broken up". If he had known the future to the point of knowing when Jesus Christ would return, if he had known the year of the Tribulation and the month when it would begin, he would have prepared himself, he would have been ready - and WE know it's coming, brethren, we know it's close, we know it might be at the end of the very next decade... But... *because* it's still distant... *because* it's not fully in our mind, *because* we don't know the exact time, we sort of play Russian roulette with our lives... And we take it easy, and we wait for events of the future to stir us up... But, you see, the problem with the Laodiceans is they wait one day too long...

Verse 44: "Therefore be you also ready, for in such an hour as you think not!, the Son of Man comes". For anyone of us, brethren, it could come today if we die on the road driving home. Obviously, we will go to grave and have to await the resurrection, but from the standpoint of a person in their death, there is no concept of the passage of time; for them it's like the next split second when that resurrection occurs. "Who then is that faithful and wise servant whom his lord has made him ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season? Blessed is that servant whom his lord when he comes shall find so doing. Verily, I say to you, he shall make him ruler over all his goods. But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart: "My Lord delays

His coming" - and certainly that was the problem with the Ephesian era, that's why Jesus Christ said: "they lost their first love". Because they had thought Jesus Christ was going to come back in their lifetime, and when He did "delay His coming" (in quotes), He never has truly delayed it. God is punctual, God will be on time. But, because *we* made the mistake and *they* made the mistake of putting it too early, there were those who fell prey to this.

I had a friend who was a local elder up in Canada, although he was on the U.S. side while I was in Canada, but he attended one of the Canadian churches. He was zealous up until 1972. Shortly thereafter he started to fall apart, and it wasn't long before he was gone. "He says, "My lord delays His coming, shall begin to smite his fellow servants and eat and drink with the drunken" – now, if you literally do that, you are going to get yourself disfellowshipped, OK; if you start beating up the brethren and start, you know, ah, boozing at the local taverns, we're going to put you out. This is talking spiritually, brethren, that he's letting go of his hold on God and he's starting to let sin creep into his life more and more - "The lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looks not for him and in an hour that he is not aware of, and shall cut him asunder and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth". Yes, it did apply too back then, it has applied to different centuries throughout the last 2000 years; But...! in the original there was no chapter breaks - "Then", chapter 25 and verse 1, "shall the Kingdom of heaven be likened to ten virgins". And Mr. Orchard was talking to you about the Parable of the Ten virgins recently, which is for our day. "Then", you see, the scripture just flows on, brethren. A lot of times we separate chapter 24 from chapter 25. They belong together, there is a flow here from verse 51 to verse 1 of chapter 25, "Then, shall the Kingdom of God be likened to ten virgins", and it goes on to talk about the return of Jesus Christ.

So, you see, brethren, we have these three reasons why they reject the three great advantages of being called in this time: the prosperity of this age, the evil of this age, and the fact that Jesus Christ, in their minds, has delayed His coming - we've got a few more years left, you know, we can sort of take it easy now, then get stirred up when things start to get a little warm; *but, like I said*, they're going to wait one day too long - none of this death bed repentance with God, brethren, you can't wait till the last day and suddenly get zealous and say: OK, God, I'm Philadelphian now, now You can take me to the place of safety tomorrow! God is going to say: "Forget it, I'm not fooled! The only reason you've gotten zealous is to save your hide!!! You haven't been zealous out of concern and compassion for a dying humanity! You haven't been zealous for love of Me! The only reason you've suddenly become zealous is for fear of what is to happen is for yourself! That doesn't wash, that's not the character of Jesus Christ".

Well, I mentioned earlier, brethren, that the Laodiceans have to do a work. They have to witness for God in order to make it into the Kingdom. Luke 17, verse 34: "I tell you, that in that night there shall be two in one bed: one shall be taken the other shall be left; two shall be grinding together, one shall be taken the other shall be left". So, on one side of the earth it's night, people are asleep; on the other side of the earth it's day light and they are working; it's still the same time with God. "One shall be taken and the other left; two shall be in the field, one taken and the other left". "And they answered and said: 'Where will they be taken Lord?', because they knew they wouldn't be taken to heaven - were not going to heaven! He said to them, "Wheresoever the body is thither will the eagles be gathered together." Body referring to the Church, and the Church being taken to a Place of safety. Revelation 12, verse 14: "To the woman (the Church) were given the wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness into her place, where she is nourished for 3.5 years from the face of the serpent, from Satan". "So Satan cast out of his mouth water as a flood, (he sends an army after the woman, as she's fleeing) that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood, (destroyed). But the earth will help the woman, the earth will open her mouth and swallow up this army which the dragon casts after her". And, in consequence, verse 17, the dragon who has failed to destroy the Philadelphian era that was now protected from him utterly for 3 1/2 years that remain before the return of Jesus Christ, the dragon was wrath with the women and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, (true Christians, baptized members) which keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ. And the Bible tells us that the testimony of Jesus Christ is the spirit of prophecy, so the Laodiceans understand the prophecies. They keep the Commandments... but it's in a lukewarm fashion. They are members of the Church. They are the seed (the children) of the woman, they are begotten sons and daughters of God.

So, a part of the Church, brethren, is left behind... left behind to do a work that they would not do when they had plenty of opportunity to do it. And the work that they have to do is a three-fold work. First of all, they will have to witness to God's way by their refusal to accept the "mark of the Beast". They will testify to God's way by their refusal to accept the mark of the Beast; in other words, they will refuse to work on Saturday and they will refuse to accept Sunday. Secondly, the work of the Laodiceans will be to testify to the two witnesses being God's true prophets because, remember, the two witnesses will be doing their work during that 3 1/2 years, they will testify to the two witnesses being God's true prophets. And the third aspect of the work they will do will be the example of courage that they set through martyrdom. They will testify further to the truth of God's way by the ultimate sacrifice, martyrdom... You see,

after a life of ease and spiritual lazyness... the Laodiceans, sadly, are going to have to do a work of suffering and of martyrdom... because it is the only way that a loving Father can get them into His Kingdom and not have to destroy them for ever. He loves them so desparately that, rather than just destroy them and put them into the third resurection and finish it, He's willing to punish them with the Tribulation *in the hope* that they will remain firm and steadfast so that He, their loving parent, can have them for an eternity and never risk losing them again...

Now there are Five stages, brethren, to this experience that the Laodiceans will go through. The First of these five stages I've entitled "*Panic*". Amos, chapter 8, and beginning in verse 11 - because after the Philadelphian era is taken to the Place of safety, a state of termendious emotional distress will wash over those who are Laodiceans. A state of terrifying anxiety, knowing what they are faced with because they have the testimony of Jesus Christ. They understand prophecy, they have heard the same sermons as everybody else. Amos 8 and in verse 11: "Behold, the days come says the Eternal God, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread or of thirst for water" - though that is coming also, but He's putting the emphasis here on the *greater famine*, the spiritual famine, which is even worse than the physical one in God's eyes - "I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread nor of thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Eternal". Because there'll be no more *Plain Truth* magazine mailed out, there'll be no more headquarters of the Worldwide Church of God at Pasadena, there'll be no more *World Tomorrow* telecast, there'll be no more Watts line... All kinds of people will be trying to ring the Worldwide Church of God at that point, but they won't be able to find Pasadena or Headquarters, it will be emptied of our people. "They shall wander from sea to sea", from the Pacific to the Atlantic, "from the north even to the east; They shall run to and fro, to seek the word of God, And they shall not find it". And there'll be a panic for many people in the land; but there'll be a *greater panic* for the Laodiceans *because they, of all people, know exactly what is coming!*

God spoke as we read in Proverbs 1 and in verse 27: "When your fear comes as a desolation and your destruction comes as the whirlwind, when distress and anguish comes upon you", *they will know what lies ahead*, and they will know that they face the agony of being separated from their children in this tribulation to come. They know that if they had been Philadelphian, their children, their young children, could have gone to the Place of safety with them. But because they are Laodiceans, their children share their fate... *Can you imagine the emotional distress that will bring upon a person?* It's bad enough knowing what lies ahead for yourself, but your children... Now, some of the Laodiceans will not be able to face that, and they

will commit suicide. They would rather come up to the Third resurrection; and we've had people who have gone out of the Church in a state of apathy. I can remember one minister mentioning that he visited this couple, and they knew what was up ahead (the Third resurrection) and they said: "Well, it's not like an ever burning hell fire, we'll just be destroyed and that will be it, it will be over with". And that's right, some of the Laodiceans will choose that route; but, of course, suicide is the way of cowardice.

There is a work... *a good work*, that the Laodiceans can yet do for a dying humanity. And there are those who will be affected by their work. The innumerable multitude will be affected not just by the work of the two Witnesses, but by the example of the Laodiceans who are willing to die for the truth of God. People will be converted *in the Tribulation* as a result of the work of Laodicea, not just the work of Philadelphia. But God would much prefer that we be Philadelphian for obvious reasons, brethren. After the panic, the full effects of the famine and disease - Ezekiel 5, verse 2; and Mr. Orchard went through this with you, brethren, in the Bible studies, so I don't need to cover it in detail. Prophecy to Ezekiel: "You shall burn with fire a third part in the midst of the city" - these were the hairs of his head and this, as we find from verse 12, represents famine and disease. A third part of the nation! In the United States alone, 80 million people are going to die of famine and disease... ***Now can you conceive, brethren, in your mind, what 80 million people looks like...*** It's beyond us, isn't it? But that is the extent of this initial stage of the Third world war. "When the days of the siege are fulfilled" - so there is an economic blockade, and it culminates with a terrible famine and disease. True, there would have been portions of famine and disease perhaps before, but the full climatic effects take place when the economic blockade is over, "when the days of the siege are fulfilled", and after that you shall take a third part and smite about it with a knife" - *another 80 million people* are going to die by the sword! They survive famine, they survive disease, but now they have to die by war. "And a third part shall you scatter in the wind", take them into captivity, and a good portion of those will die in that captivity, "I will draw out a sword after them" until, finally, only 10% of the nation is left. If America numbers 240 million, you're talking 24 million people only, surviving. An unbelievable catastrophe, unparalleled in all of human history, brethren, **over 200 million people** to die in this land! Now, the Laodiceans experience this, but they are protected by God from it. They live through it all, because they have to die over in another country.

So, the Third stage brethren, is that of warfare. They've been through the famine and the disease, and then the Laodiceans experience the warfare where another third of the nation dies because, as I said, they are protected; and they do develop zeal through it, through all the

suffering that they see, the terrible things, they do develop a zeal for God. And we can sometimes wonder how can God allow them to go through all of this if they are His begotten children?! As I said earlier, it's because God has to. One time, I was watching a television interview of senator John McCain of Arizona. He was at one time a Vietnam POW, and they asked him about his experience and he said, "I would never want to go through it again, but, I know that I am a better person for the experience". He could look back on his sufferings in the Vietnam war and the way he was treated as a prisoner of war, and obviously as he said he would *never* want to have to repeat it. But, he was glad that he had been through it, he said he was a better person for the experience. He didn't take things for granted the way he had before when he had all his creature comforts; all of that had been stripped from him as a prisoner of war in Vietnam. And now he saw material things in a different balance and in a different perspective, life had a different meaning - he had seen both extremes, and now he was a better person for the experience; and so it will be, brethren, with the Laodiceans.

The Fourth stage is that of slavery, because then they are taken into captivity to Europe and to elsewhere. In Deuteronomy 28 and verse 68, it says that our people are to be taken in ships to Europe and to Egypt. And many people undoubtedly will die en route as they're crossing the Atlantic, but not the Laodiceans. God keeps them alive for this work of martyrdom that they must do. Once again they are preserved. They are put into concentration camps, they are sold as slaves and then comes the Fifth stage in their lives at this point - that of martyrdom. Revelation chapter 6 and verse 8, deals with the effects of the four horsemen of the Apocalypse: they are given power over a fourth part of the earth "to kill with a sword with hunger and with death and with the beast of the earth". And now verse 9: "When He had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God and the testimony which they held. And they cried with a loud voice, saying, "How long O God, holy and true, do you not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell upon the earth?" Verse 11, Revelation 6: "And white robes (symbolically) were given to each and everyone of them; and it was said to them that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow servants" - true servants of God now, because the Laodiceans are no longer lukewarm, they are Christians on fire for God to the point they're ready to die for God - "until their fellow servants also and their brethren should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled". And after them come the 144,000 and the innumerable multitude. Perhaps the Church is the 144,000 (that has been speculated). If not, then their work would be continued by the 144,000 and the innumerable multitude during the Day of the Lord. Before their martyrdom, they will be faced with tribunals and inquisition. And they would have to give their account of why they refuse to recant of their heresy; why they refuse to give up on their religious belief. They will be called to account for their refusal to work on Sabbath day. And

though sometimes they'll be physically kicked and beaten when they are brought to the inquisition, most of them will probably be subjected to refined forms of torture... So that, when they are brought out to be publicly martyred, they will not look like they have been terribly beaten because that probably would reflect upon the authorities; and in this day and age they have modern form of torture that do not leave marks on a person - they are no less painful, but that's probably what will take place.

But we do need, brethren, to pay tribute, at this point, to the courage of the Laodiceans - that they have come this far because, certainly, it is harder in a Laodicean state to show this kind of character. But, as they were influenced by this world now and let it take away righteousness from them, so they will be influenced by the world then because this society will be in its death robes, and that will influence them then, when everything is taken from them; *then* they'll become zealous for God and they will no longer be lukewarm in spirit. Now, God, as we said earlier, has to do this in His desire to save them from the Third resurrection and eternal death. Because of His desire to share eternity with them, to have them in His Kingdom forever, and in positions of rulership forever as kings and as priests. What God does here is not an act of cruelty, it is an act of love, an act of desperation; "I'm about to spit you out of My mouth" - don't make me do it; but if I do it, I do it because I love you and I want you for all eternity to be with Me. Revelation 20 and verse 4, the method of death that will be inflicted upon the Laodiceans. Revelation 20 and verse 4: "And I saw thrones and they that sat upon them, and judgment was given to them. And I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus and for the word of God, which had not worshiped the beast neither his image nor received his mark upon there foreheads and in there hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years". That verse true is for all Christians of whatever era, brethren. But it is a verse particularly directed to the Laodiceans - "For those that were beheaded for the witness" because they have to do a work of witness - "of Jesus and for the word of God, which had not worshiped the beast".

In past ages, Christians were burned at the stake, rarely were they beheaded. True, John the Baptist was beheaded, Paul was beheaded on the Apion way, I believe, outside of Rome. But for the most part, even in Roman times, they were burned at the stake or cast to wild animals and eaten alive. Very few have actually been beheaded, yet here it specifies beheading, "I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus and who had not worshiped the beast". The guillotine is coming back, and by coincidence this past week they celebrated the French Revolution and the storming of the Bastille, when the guillotine was used. So they'll use a

modern version of it, and these people will be publicly beheaded. So the beast and the false prophet will give warning to the peoples of the land: "recant of any heresy, do not make the mistake that these foolish individual's have made".

Now, we, brethren, as ministers, can talk to you about the Laodicean era, and on occasion we do, and we know full well that when we speak to you that we are also talking to ourselves. We can give up on laying hold on God. We can grow lax in prayer and Bible study. And there will be ministers in the Laodicean era of God's Church, but all of us - anyone of us, brethren - if we could go forward in time to look directly at the Tribulation to see what Laodiceans are going through, *then* we might be really stirred to change. I know fully well that there are people who fit the category that we have talked about today sitting in this room, who will go away from this room and it will have no effect upon them whatsoever. As Jesus said: "If the goodman of the house had known at what hour his lord would return, he would have been ready!" If he could have seen the future. OK, we've tried to portray the future, brethren, we do that with sermons on prophecy, but time and again it doesn't grip people in a real way... because for them it is not yet a personal experience...

Now, I've been going through the past year through my mid-life crisis, I'm beginning to wonder if it's ever going to end. And, I look back over the last 20 years with the knowledge I have now; I realize if you are only 19 or 20 years old this isn't going to mean anything - your life is before you yet, but how much I wish I could go back in time, 20-30 years, and tell myself then what I'm going to experience through the years to come up until now 1989. And warn myself back then of what lies ahead, of certain mistakes that I could avoid, how I could be a better husband and a better father, and different things. The mistakes I've made in the past I could stop myself from doing by going back there and saying: "This is what's going to happen, you can avoid it". What if, 10 years down the line, I were a Laodicean. What if I was facing the last day of my life, Revelation 20 and verse 4, and I could come back in time to myself now, and tell myself, this is the experience you're going to go through, you can avoid it all, ***"if the goodman had known the hour of his Lord's return, he would have prepared for it"***. What if a Laodicean member of God's Church, about to die some year in the future in the Tribulation, could come back now and not just tell himself, but tell all of us what lies ahead? Would it make a difference? Perhaps, perhaps not...

Who I am, brethren, does not matter... it's what I am that counts. I am a member of the Laodicean era of the Worldwide Church of God, and today, is the last day of my life... I rise

from my knees, beside the bunk where I've been kneeling and praying, and I walk over to the cell window and I look down into the courtyard below. And there, to the side I can see the machine of my execution, I have 2 hours left to live. As I stare down into that courtyard, I begin to think back over the events that brought me to this moment in time. And I remember that awful day, when the realization fully came to me that I was a Laodicean - the day after the Church of God of Philadelphia had fled to the Place of safety, and I was one of those left behind, and my wife who was also a member of the Church... and, of course, our children...

I remember the terrible knot in my stomach when that realization hit me with full force for the first time. I had suspected, I'd sort of known in my heart that I was Laodicean, but always pushed it back. But now it was facing me in full reality, and I was filled with a feeling of nausea... For 2 weeks afterwards I suffered terrible chest pains. And during those 2 weeks my wife was filled with recriminations against me. Why hadn't I'd been a better husband? Why hadn't I'd shown more spiritual leadership? And she was right... I should have. But after a while she stopped her recriminations, because despite my lack of leadership, she could have taken hold on God; that did not effect how long she prayed or she studied. At least if only one of us had been Philidelphian, then the children would have gone to the Place of safety. But both of us had failed... We'd had three children; one had died early, now we had a son and a daughter left. And after the initial panic and anguish and distress for myself, I considered my children and the terrible things that they were going to have to go through. And I didn't want to live with myself anymore, I wanted to end it, I wanted to die... but for some reason, I hung on. I remember the days of the famine that came, the full force of the famine afterwards... I remember the riots in the streets, and seeing people go over to supermarkets and smash the windows and break in to fill their arms with food and put it into baskets, in some vain hope to stave off the full effects of the famine, but it was food that would only last a little while... And people were even killing each other in the supermarkets, literally, for the food...

Anarchy reigned throughout the nation. And then the disease epidemics, the disease that finally claimed the life of my second son... I remember that day when I held him in my arms as he died, and his final words, "Daddy, why...?" And I couldn't answer him, emotionally, I could not answer him... I just choked up, but it didn't matter because he died after he said it. But within me at that point was formed a resolve! I had put this upon my son, I'd allowed my child to go through this famine and through this disease when he could have been in the Place of safety. And I formed a resolve in my mind, that when God brought him up to the Second resurrection, I intended to be there... I wanted, no matter what lay ahead, to go through to the bitter end and be

a part of the First resurrection, so that a thousand years later I could be there to meet my son. And instead of the misery and the suffering and the sickness that he had been through, to give him a hundred years of abundant living and health and well-being, to try to make up with the happiness, then, for the misery he had suffered now.

Sometimes you'd walk down the streets and people would be walking towards you and suddenly they'd just fall to the ground, collapse and die where they fell, either through being so emaciated through lack of food, or because of the effects of the plague... There were some houses that you'd walk by, and there was this... sickening smell that came from it... And you knew they were cooking human flesh... fulfilling the prophecies in the Bible of cannibalism in the land... And you hurried by for fear that they might come out and try and take you. Then came the invasion. I knew what it meant if we were captured, so I took my wife and my daughter and we hid. And I begged God to be merciful to us, not to allow us to be captured... but God allowed it. And then, I began to resent God all over again; I knew he was saving me up for martyrdom. He allowed me to survive the famine and survive the disease and survive the warfare so that He could take me to Europe and make an example of me. And I was filled in my mind with resentment toward God, but I knew that it came from Satan, and I remembered my son - I had to go through with this! They took my family and others by train to New York, where we would be disembarked by ship to Rotterdam. At the point that we got off the train that's when they separated the men from the women. As they took my wife and my little girl, she cried out to me: "Daddy, help me!", and I moved toward her, but immediately a soldier put his rifle butt into my stomach and I fell to the ground, coughing and gasping. Another prisoner helped me to my feet, but I was in so much pain I was doubled over and I never saw my wife or my daughter again. But those words: "*Daddy, help me!*", haunted me like an echo in the back of my mind, day... after day... after day... for months afterwards...

At this moment in my cell, I want to cry, but I can't... because the guards will come for me soon and if they walk in and see that I'm crying, they'll think that I'm afraid of having to face death and that's almost humorous. I'm not afraid to face death, I want death... I am so sick of this life and so sick of the hell I have been through... I want to die... and I can't cry, not today, lest they think I am afraid. And then, there is the knock at the door... the guard barks an order, and it's time for me to go out into the corridor. I remember thinking to myself, almost humorously, how I hate the German language... seems to be a language that can do nothing but bark orders. He walks me down the corridor and we begin to go down the steps to the ground floor, but I'm so weak and so emaciated through all the torture they've put me through and all the

things they've done to me, that I begin to stagger and to fall. From behind me the guard grabs me by my hair and yanks me upright. And beneath another guard, seeing what took place, laughs and says something in ridicule, and then they walk me out into the court yard.

There are five of us to be executed today, 2 women, 3 men. But we are not all members of the Church of God. One, the woman, is a Jehovah's witness. And I stand there and look at her with admiration... I think to myself, here is a woman uncalled of God, without God's Spirit, who has such conviction for her religious beliefs (a religion of the world) that she's willing to do what we who are converted are willing to do. And she, without the help of God's Spirit. And what a waste, when she comes up to the Second resurrection she will find that her religion was really not any better than the Catholic; and yet, I look at her with admiration for her courage, for her character, for her conviction. I can see by the way they've lined us up that I am the last one who is to die today. In front of me is a young girl in her 20s. We had opportunity to talk briefly at one point. Her mother was a member in Chicago, her mother was divorced, came into the Church, brought her daughter with her. The girl told me how many times her mother tried to encourage her to be a part of the youth activities and the other things in the Church, and she would go along to a certain extent. And how her mother would encourage her to pray and study, but she just resented it, she didn't like her mother interfering in her life that way. And she said, after her mother went to the Place of safety and she was left behind, then she resented her mother for not pushing at her more, while she was still together with her. She too had to realize that with human nature we will always pass the buck to somebody else, but in the end, as this young girl recognized, you finally have only yourself to blame... ***Nobody stops you from praying and studying, nobody stops you from laying hold on God, because God won't allow anybody, not even somebody in your immediate family, to stop you from doing it.*** You can't point to somebody else's bad example, you can't say: "there was this problem and that problem", we were all called and all given even opportunity to lay hold upon God.

The other three have been executed now, and they take up the young girl. I know it's my turn next, and after her head is decapitated I am filled with a terrible feeling of emptiness and loneliness. I know that after they have killed me, they will put my body into a common grave or they will just burn it up, and there's 2 years left for the return of Jesus Christ... But I know in my mind, it reads like the next split second of my consciousness, I'm there in the First resurrection. And what will Jesus Christ say to me? Will He upgrade me from my lukewarmness before, from my folly and my stupidity, my refusal to heed the sermons that were given? The guard pushes me forward, it's my turn. But as we walk toward the podium, where the guillotine is, I'm aware

of another present that walks beside me. And suddenly, I'm filled with a strength in my legs that has not been there for a long, long, time... And I remember the words: "I will never forsake you nor leave you". And almost a feeling of exhilaration comes over me, it's almost over... and I'll be in the Kingdom of God. We mount the podium, the Catholic priest addresses the crowd that have come there to jeer us, and to cheer when our heads are taken. I've heard the rigamaroll before, the same old ritual about these heretics who would not worship the great leader of Europe, who would not bow to the will of the State - *this will be the fate of all those...* I stop listening to him, I've heard it before. And in my mind I remember the last words of the martyr Steven, and I whisper them to Him whom I know stands besides me: "Jesus, forgive them"...

And then, the order is given... I see the wet blood on the guillotine from the precedings executions and I think to myself: a year and a half ago that would have utterly nauseated me, but I've seen so much death and suffering and hurt and cries of pain, it doesn't affect me anymore. After the order is given, they bind my hands behind my back, they kneel me down, they put my head in position... it's almost over now. But just before the order is given, one other scripture comes to mind... it's the scripture that most kept me going through all the terrible things of the months gone by. The one scripture that in the times of greatest duress kept me going and helped me hold firm and helped me make it through to this moment; but it's as if it's not a thought in my mind; it's as if the words this time are actually spoken by Him who stands beside me: "Be you faithful unto death, and I will give you a crown of life".

End . . .