

**HAS CHRIST  
REJECTED OR  
FORSAKEN THE  
ORGANIZED  
SEVENTH-DAY  
ADVENTIST CHURCH**

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# Introduction

Has the corporate church become Babylon?

Has it become so totally apostate that it has been “spewed out of the mouth” of the Faithful and True Witness? Should faithful followers of Christ leave its fellowship?

The answer is a resounding “NO!”

But why?

Has it become so totally apostate that it has been "spewed out of the mouth" of the Faithful and True Witness?

Should faithful followers of Christ leave its fellowship?

The answer to these questions is a resounding No! But what are the reasons for my saying so?

There is a key word in the Greek of Revelation

3:16 that is causing serious discussion among Bible students today. It is lost in the KJV rendering which represents Christ as saying to "the angel of the church of the Laodiceans, ... I will spue thee out of my mouth." That sounds bad!

Other translations of this verse which are more accurate render the key phrase, "I am about to spit you out of my mouth" (NIV, TCNT). The Greek requires this because the key verb is *mello*. The actual Greek which John reports Jesus Christ as saying is, *mello se emesai*, which should not be difficult for a non-Greek reader to understand, for *emesai* is the infinitive for the verb to vomit (we get "emetic" from it), and *se* means you. Thus the clause says literally, I am about to vomit you out, or I am poised to do so.

The word *mello* always implies an element of conditionality, "a possibility of the determination being changed." In my seminars, I have translated the clause into more vivid modern English (a dynamic equivalence?), "Thus, because you are lukewarm, you make Me so sick at My stomach

that I feel like throwing up." If one takes into account the full context, it is impossible to soften or ameliorate the severity of what the True Witness actually says. But we must not make Him say more than He says!

We find an example of mello used conditionally in Revelation 10:4 where John says he was about to write what the seven thunders uttered, but was told not to, and did not write it. In John 4:47 he speaks of a child "on the point (mello) of death." But he did not die, for Jesus healed him.

Some say that the organized, corporate Seventh-day Adventist church, or at least its corporate leadership, is in such a hopeless spiritual state of apostasy that it has already been vomited out by the Lord. These people say that the use of mello in Revelation 3:16 means that "that which is indicated comes to pass," that is, that the vomiting out is assured.

In particular they point to the use of mello in Revelation 12:4, 5 as an example where the action

specified did indeed take place, where again the KJV says, "the woman was ready (mello, present participle) to be delivered." They say that the woman did bear the Child, therefore mello in Revelation can mean the same as a simple future tense statement. They also point to the use of mello in verse 5, the "man child, who was to rule all nations." They say that He will indeed rule all nations, and conclude therefore that in chapter 3:16 the use of mello also indicates a simple future statement of fact rendered unconditional and proven to be so by the alleged total apostasy of "the angel of the church of the Laodiceans."

They say further that since the repentance Christ called for in verse 19 has never taken place, therefore mello in verse 16 constitutes a simple promise of total rejection that has already been fulfilled. They say that the corporate Seventh-day Adventist Church is no longer the true church, no longer the object of Christ's supreme regard, and therefore true Christians should leave its fellowship, for no one who has "the mind of Christ" will support a church which He has already

spued out of His mouth.<sup>1</sup> This is their point.

This issue is more than a mere theological tempest in a teapot, for it very seriously calls into question the mind of Christ Jesus toward the corporate Seventh-day Adventist Church. Every true follower of Christ wants to have "the mind of Christ," to cherish the same attitude toward this church that He does. Thus nothing could be of greater importance than to know what He actually says about this church and its leadership in Revelation 3:14-21.

## Chapter 1

# The New Testament Use of Mello

The NT use of mello in distinction to the simple future tense.

Some versions such as Robert Young's Literal Translation and The Emphatic Diaglot consistently render mello in virtually all its forms and tenses as "about to." Thus, Young renders Revelation 12:4, 5:

The dragon did stand before the woman who is about to bring forth, that when she may bring forth, her child he may devour; and she brought forth a male child, who is about to rule all the nations with a rod of iron.

The picture is of the dragon standing poised, ready to devour the Child (which he did not do), and the Child standing poised with a rod of iron

ready to rule all nations (but again, He did not do so, for He was snatched away to God and to His throne; the rule is yet future). Other mello passages in Revelation are rendered thus in Young and in other literal translations:

Write . . . the things that are about (mello, present indicative) to come after these things (1:19).

Be not afraid of the things that thou art about (mello, same) to suffer (2:10).

Strengthen the rest of the things that are about (mello, imperfect indicative) to die (3:2).

The hour of the trial that is about (mello, present participle) to come upon all the world (3:10).

Their brethren, who are about (mello, present participle) to be killed—even as they (6:31).

The three messengers who are about (mello,



same) to sound (8:13).

I was about (mello, imperfect indicative) to write (10:4).

When he may be about (mello, subjunctive) to sound (10:7).

The beast . . . is about (mello, present indicative) to come up out of the abyss (17:8).

In sharp contrast is Christ's use of the simple future tense. In Revelation 2:22, 23 He makes several firm promises regarding "that woman Jezebel" saying "I will cast her into a couch," and "her children I will kill in death." Here we do not find mello, and yet the condition is expressed, "if they do not repent." Thank God there is no use of mello in any of the seven grand promises to "him that overcometh" (27, 11, 17, 26, 27; 3:5, 12, 21). Here the simple future tense is employed.

We can thank God that there is no use of mello in Christ's firm promises in John 14:3, 16-18

(which are recorded by the same apostle): "I will come again," and "I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter. . . . He . . . shall be in you. I will not leave you comfortless."

There must be a reason why He uses mello in that painful statement of Revelation 3:16. Although "the angel" of Laodicea has given Him greater sorrow than He has endured in all previous ages and nauseates Him terribly, He expresses a divine reluctance to yield to the nauseating impulse!

## Chapter 2

# The Context of the Revelation 3:16 Statement

After the pathetic disclosure of Christ's nausea in 3:16 there are no less than seven appeals "unto the angel" to do something to heal Him of it, and they are expressed with intimate family love (phileo in verse 19):

1. I counsel thee to buy from me gold (verse 18)
2. ... and white raiment (verse 19)
3. ... with eyesalve anoint thine eyes (verse 18)
4. repent (verse 19)
5. hear my voice (verse 20)
6. open the door (verse 20)
7. overcome (verse 21)

It defies all reason to understand why these appeals are made after the one appealed to has been totally, irrevocably rejected!<sup>2</sup> In contrast, following Christ's firm promise (without mello) to

judge "that woman Jezebel" and "her children" in 2:22, 23, there is no further appeal or "counsel" to her to do this or that to avert her certain doom.

Christ does not tease "the angel of the church of the Laodiceans." For a doctor to tell a patient that he or she for sure is dying, and then to offer medicine for healing that is now useless, this would be deceptive and cruel.

## Chapter 3

# **Does Revelation Indicate That the "Angel of the Church of the Laodiceans" Will Ultimately Fail and Pass a Point of No Return?**

If so, he will be the first of the seven churches to do so. Always in the preceding six messages there were promises "to him that overcometh," and in the end, each of those "angels" passed on the torch of truth to the succeeding generation, despite many failures and apostasies, and despite the fact that no one in past ages fully understood the truth as it was yet to be revealed.

The logical position of Mormonism implies that the preceding six angels did completely fail, and no true church survived in Europe until Joseph Smith came along. But the teaching of The Great Controversy is clear that God has always had a

remnant throughout history who were faithful. This is the import of Revelation 12, where we read of the true church as "the woman [who] fled into the wilderness," where she was "nourished." Thus the identity of the true church remained intact through all past ages.

This means that the preceding six messages to Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, and Philadelphia, did not fail of their objective. None were intended to prepare a people for translation, and none did; but in each succeeding age each "angel" did heed its message and did preserve the church and its essential truth so that "the angel of the church of the Laodiceans" could at last build upon it. No way can a true Christian say that Christ's ministry "who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks" has been a fake, or that it will ultimately become a failure. To say so would cast contempt upon His cross and His High Priestly ministry.

None of the preceding churches were invited to share Christ's throne, but the "angel of the church

of the Laodiceans" is so invited. But if the angel fails and is spued out, the final promise must fail, and such ultimate failure would call into question the "overcoming" of all the previous six churches. The messages to the seven churches are a total unit, and the failure of the last dooms them all.

This is readily seen by the fact that all believers in Christ of previous generations who are now sleeping in their graves must remain prisoners there until Christ returns; and He cannot return until the problem of Laodicea is resolved. Thus the solemn truth is that the ultimate success of the entire plan of salvation depends upon its final hour, and that hour is the overcoming brought to view in Revelation 3:21!

It is not difficult to understand how the enemy of all righteousness wants to zero in on attacking and denying the possibility and certainty of that final victory.

## Chapter 4

# Has the Corporate Church Passed the Point of No Return?

At this stage, opponents will concede that mello, in Revelation 3:16, does convey the idea of conditionality, "a possibility of the determination being changed." But they now go on to insist that the leadership of the corporate Seventh-day Adventist Church has failed, and thus has been spued out, and that the true "angel of the church of the Laodiceans" has assumed another identification, namely, their particular offshoot. If so, our objective theological investigation of mello must be continued by a further study of the elements of the Laodicean message. There is nothing in the words of Christ in Revelation 3:14-21 that can support such an idea; any possible support for it must now be derived from a subjective interpretation of history.



No candid mind can deny that this church has repeated the history of ancient Israel and Judah. Christ's message to the "angel" of Laodicea expressly declares that of all the seven churches, the last one is the one outstandingly, conspicuously "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked."<sup>3</sup> Not even in the days of Israel or Judah did the Lord have as difficult a problem to deal with as He has today. The situation is so serious that the "dragon" seriously entertains the hope that he may yet succeed.

While it is always possible to wrest some obscure text to prove anything, there is no objective theological evidence to support the position of those who declare the organized church to be hopeless. But there is objective evidence in Scripture that must deny such a view, because the "more sure word of prophecy" discerns truths about history that are beyond our subjective judgment:

The "woman" of Revelation 12 is a corporate entity, a visible church that has always been Christ's body, and represents Him on earth. She

was in the wilderness for 1260 years during which time her identity was often obscure. She now comes out of obscurity at the end of the 1260 years as "the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ" (12:17). She also comes to view again as a visible entity in 14:12, the "saints" who 'keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.'" Offshoot adherents will all agree that at the close of the 1260 years, that "remnant of her seed" became authentically identified as the pioneer Seventh-day Adventist Church which arose after the Great Disappointment of 1844. They will also agree that "the testimony of Jesus Christ" was manifested in her midst by the prophetic ministry of Ellen G. White.

Further, all will agree that around 1856, that pioneer church began to recognize that the message "unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans" applied principally to them. And all will agree that Ellen White's ministry to that church validated its identity at least through her lifetime. This included several decades following the 1888 failure and at

least one decade following 1903, when some say that more apostasy occurred.

Does the prophecy indicate that that corporate or denominational identity will be lost? (1) There is no eighth church to take the place of Laodicea if she should ultimately fail. (2) There is no verse 18 that follows verse 17 of Revelation 12; the woman who comes out of the wilderness carries on and endures the dragon's sophisticated wrath unto the end. She could not endure like that unless the message to Laodicea were heeded, because included in the dragon's wrath is some very clever counterfeiting that cannot be discerned unless the "eyesalve" somewhere in history is applied. (3) There is no other body of "saints" that succeed those who are raised up by the proclamation of the three angels' messages of chapter 14. (4) The "harvest" that ripens for Christ's sickle to be thrust in at His coming (verses 14, 15) is the same corporate body of saints we see in verse 12, the fruitage of the three angel's messages. Now they are seen as having grown up "unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ," ready for the

final events and for His coming. Somewhere between verses 12 and 14 a repentance has taken place.

A neglected aspect of Christ's appeal in Revelation 3:20 further identifies the corporate church that ultimately overcomes. The KJV renders the passage, "I stand at the door, and knock if any man hear my voice, and open the door ..." Again, the KJV misses the import of the actual Greek by rendering *tis* as "any man." Its actual intrinsic meaning is "a certain one" rather than "anyone" (see W. E. Vine, *An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, p. 178).

For example, when Revelation 22:17 concludes with the appeal, "whosoever will," the word *tis* is not used, for it is an invitation to "anyone." But when the "mother of Zebedee's children" came "desiring a certain thing" of Christ, the word used is the neuter form of *tis*. She was not making a vague request for anything indefinite, but for something particular and precise. Mark speaks of "a certain young man" who followed Christ

(14:51), again using tis. He is not speaking of any young man who followed Him, but of one in particular.<sup>4</sup>

When Christ speaks to Laodicea of knocking at the door, He says, "If a certain one hears My voice ..." That "certain one" is the same one to whom He has addressed this special message—"the angel of the church of the Laodiceans."<sup>5</sup> The identity of the "angel" has remained the same all through the message from beginning to end. Although any individual Christian can profitably apply anything in these seven appeals to himself personally, the eschatological application takes the priority, otherwise prophecy is pointless. Nothing in the text itself indicates a change from the corporate "angel" of verse 14 to individuals in verse 20. The same "angel" (or leadership) who is so woefully deceived and poverty-stricken in verse 17 is the one who is to "hear" the "voice" in verse 20 and repent and overcome in verse 21. Nothing but that same corporate "angel's" repentance can bring honor to Christ! Failing that, He must stand forever discredited and ashamed, as a bridegroom whose

bride has scorned him.

Further evidence is seen in the unmistakable reference in verse 20 to the Song of Solomon. This invests that same "certain one" with dramatic significance. Here Christ sets His seal of approval on the Song of Solomon, justifies its inclusion in the sacred canon, and discloses the love-poem setting of the Laodicean message. The Song poignantly describes a true lover being rebuffed and rejected by the one dearest to him.

The point is that Christ is also a Lover who has been rebuffed, rejected, by His true love, the supreme object of His regard on earth. His high hope was that, in union with His bride-to-be, He could lighten the earth with the glory of a message through which "all families of the earth [should] be blessed." Instead, "in a great degree" the message has been "kept away" both from the church and from the world (2SM 234, 235). Two terrible world wars have had to curse the earth (apparently needlessly), plus agonies unspeakable. Ten years before World War I Ellen White recorded that "the

disappointment of Christ is beyond description" (RH, December 15,1904).

Some dimensions of that divine disappointment can be grasped by considering the Laodicean message in the light of its true source, the Song of Solomon. In the poem, the true lover appeals to his sweetheart to let him in, for he is in need. He is out in the cold and the wet. But the girl is thinking only of her own comfort and ease and scorns his appeal. Finally she arouses herself to sense a concern for him that transcends her concern for herself. But when she at last opens the door, she finds he has gone.

The Septuagint passage from which Christ quotes is as follows:

(The lover) I am come into my garden, my ... spouse, ... I have eaten my bread with my honey; I have drunk my wine with my milk... .

(The bride-to-be) I sleep, but my heart is awake: the voice of my beloved knocks at the door,

saying, Open to me, my companion,... my dove, my perfect one: for my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night.

I have put off my coat; how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet, how shall I defile them? My beloved put forth his hand by the hole of the door, and my soul was moved for him. I rose up to open, ... I opened to my beloved; my beloved was gone: my soul failed at his speech: I sought him, but found him not; I called him, but he answered me not. (Song of Solomon, LXX, 4:16; 5:1-6).

The Faithful and True witness to Laodicea has taken from this source at least three or four direct quotations or allusions:

"I stand at the door and knock" contains a direct quotation from the LXX of Song of Solomon 5:2, epi ten thuran. This has been recognized by devout students of Scripture for centuries; Seventh-day Adventists have been slow to see it.<sup>6</sup> Christ is not only the Bridegroom Hero of the Song of Solomon; He is also the Bridegroom Hero of the



Book of Revelation and the Laodicean church leadership has been the tardy, unfeeling, unresponsive, unappreciative object of His love (19:6-8).

The lethargy of the lukewarm "angel" of Laodicea is seen to be the same as that of the bride-to-be in Song of Solomon 5, who is between sleeping and waking, a state analogous to that between hot and cold.

"If a certain one hear My voice" is a reference to the words of the girl of the Song of Solomon who responds so tardily, "The voice of my beloved knocks ..."

The reference Christ makes to His coming in to eat together is from Song of Solomon 4:16 and 5:1, which passage just precedes the knocking episode: "Let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits ... I have eaten my honey-comb with my honey; I have drunk my wine with my milk: eat, O friends" (KJV).

The obvious import is that the Laodicean invitation is to a nuptial intimacy. Thus the primary application cannot be individual or personal. Further evidence in the Book of Revelation confirms this.

## Chapter 5

# The Triumphant Climax of Revelation Is a Wedding

It is plainly stated that what has delayed the fruition of the Bridegroom's yearnings is the tardiness of the bride to get ready:

The Lord God omnipotent reigneth Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. (19:6-8).

The literal rendering is: "We should give glory to Him, because did come the marriage of the Lamb and His wife did make herself ready." The marriage could not have come unless she did make herself ready!

Again, the tie-in with the theme of the Song of Solomon is unmistakable. The "certain one" who at last repents and yields to the love of the Bridegroom in 3:20, 21 must be the same figure in 19:7 who at last makes herself ready for the marriage. The unity of the book cannot be broken. The essential element that must be inserted between failure and success is corporate repentance.

## Chapter 6

# Seventh-day Adventist History Is Not Yet Finished

Some say that it is impossible to be loyal both to Jesus Christ and also to the corporate, organized church on earth. But it is impossible to be loyal to Christ and not also be loyal to His bride-to-be whom He loves.

I was conducting a meeting where I was upholding confidence that the church will yet respond to Christ's appeal and repent, not because of her goodness or worthiness, but because Christ cannot be denied the full fruitage of His sacrifice. Two young women interjected opposition, and proceeded to read extensively from Testimonies, Vol. 8, pp. 249-251 where Ellen White says that "‘the faithful city [has] become an harlot.’ . . .The divine presence and glory have departed!" Their point was that the corporate church has passed the point of no return.

They paused long enough to let me ask a question: "Is it possible for a harlot to repent.?" There was a moment's silence, then came the answer: "Yes." I said I agreed; and they said no more.

The idea of corporate and denominational repentance does not in the least deny truth or whitewash "the prevailing iniquity" that Ellen White describes so vividly. It does not deny abounding sin; it insists only on much more abounding grace that makes possible the necessary overcoming. It insists that the honor and glory of the Saviour require that He see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied, that He have a corporate, denominated church on earth that at last completely fulfills its ministry to lighten the earth with glory, to bless "all families of the earth" with Good News that the world itself has never before clearly understood.

The devil is determined that this shall never take place. It might be futile to say that Christ is

even more determined that it shall take place; what is now important is that it is time that His people on earth, they themselves, determine that it shall take place! That is what is implicit in Revelation 3:20, 21 and 19:7.

No crisis in world history has ever been as severe as the last crisis that will confront the Seventh-day Adventist Church and its leadership. Nothing but the gold tried in the fire, the white raiment, and the eyesalve, will make a repentant overcoming possible. According to abundant Ellen White testimony it is entirely possible that some strong and influential leaders may, in the crisis, turn traitor and betray sacred trusts. Bright lights that we have admired for their brilliancy will go out in ignominious darkness. But the point is that the betrayers and traitors will prove to be chaff (which they have been all along, although undiscerned for such),<sup>7</sup> and the process will purify the church, which remains throughout:

Satan will work his miracles to deceive; he will set up his power as supreme. The church may

appear as about to fall, but it does not fall. It remains, while the sinners in Zion will be sifted out—the chaff separated from the precious wheat. This is a terrible ordeal, but nevertheless it must take place. (2SM 380).



## Chapter 7

# **The 1888 History and Message Unlock the Mystery**

As individuals, God's people will be guests at the marriage of the Lamb; but as a corporate body, those who are ready when He returns will be the Bride (see GC 427). The Book of Revelation does not confuse the two entities.

The true significance of 1888 is that the Bridegroom-to-be appealed to His Bride-to-be to surrender to Him fully in a more intimate relationship than any previous generation of God's people have known. According to 1,812 pages of Ellen White testimony He was "in a great degree" rebuffed, scorned, even insulted. The Song of Solomon vignette encapsulates the history.

There is no way that the Bridegroom-to-be can experience vindication except by the repentance of that same corporate body which insulted Him. The

appeal in Revelation 3:20 is for that corporate repentance to take place.

Three possible reactions to the appeal are:

1. "Impossible; it will never take place." This is the view of cynical, despairing church members and off-shoot enthusiasts.
2. "Unnecessary; we are rich and increased with goods, in need of nothing so serious as denominational repentance. A call for repentance is being critical." For many decades this has been the view of the apathetic, lukewarm "angel," the leadership of the church.
3. "Amen. So be it. And I dedicate my life, my all, to its realization."

Which is your view?