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Mini Study

Are You Worthy?

"Though he slay me, yet will I trust in Him..." (Job 13:15).

A prominent religious leader once wrote: *"The Laodicean Church is not going to be worthy to escape to a place of safety."* What makes Christians "worthy"? What do we have to do, or be? And, anyway, what is the "Laodicean Church era"? And what is "a place of safety"?

- The idea of a "Laodicean Church era" is based on the famed "seven churches" addressed in Revelation 2 and 3. They were the churches based in the seven major cities of first-century Asia Minor around 90 A.D. each received a letter from Jesus through the apostle John, recorded in the book of Revelation. John was at that time in exile on the island of Patmos during the reign of Emperor Domitian. His message applied to all seven assemblies (Revelation 3:22).
- Each letter, with the weight of the authority of Jesus Himself, addressed the condition of the church to which it was addressed. The message pointed out the positive and the negative aspect of each church - and the remedy. Laodicea is perceived by many as "the bad boy." This letter is both a warning to lax Christians and an encouragement - for Jesus said to them: *"Behold, I stand at the door and knock: If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will enter to him, and I will dine with him, and he with Me"* (Revelation 3:20 LITV).
- Some twenty-first century churches hold the belief that each of the seven churches represents a "church era." That is, beginning with Ephesus (the apostolic era) through to Laodicea (the era just prior to the return of Jesus) they provide a panorama of church history. By this scenario, each era spans a variable - and variously interpreted - time period; some are centuries long, some just decades. "Laodicea" is deemed to represent the church in decline, and follows a supposedly highly successful but short-lived "Philadelphia era."
- The "place of safety" is considered by some to be a specific location on earth (usually identified as Petra in the nation of Jordan) to which God will miraculously transport "the faithful" in order to escape the ravages of an end-time "Great Tribulation." The concept is largely based on Revelation 3:10: *"...I also will keep [deliver] you out of the hour of trial which is going to come on all the habitable world in order to try those dwelling on the earth."* (LITV)
- Note: the text signifies *deliverance out of* (Gk *ek*) this stressful time, not kept from it. The same Greek term is used (*"prevail against"*) in Matthew 16:18. Historically, the Philadelphian church experienced such a time under the Emperor Trajan. This pattern may well be repeated during the end-time tribulation - for all the faithful.
- Faithful Christians become spirit (by resurrection) at Christ's return - that is, after the "Great Tribulation" (I Cor 15:52). There is no indication that they will be protected from it, but that they will be preserved through

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it. Psalm 91 refers to Messiah, but has implications for Christians in the last days. Read the example of Job 13:15 and the three Hebrew men (Daniel 3:13-30).

- As long as Christians “*dwell in the secret place of the Most High*” (Psalm 91:1 LITV) we need not fear anything that life throws at us. Jesus calls for us to overcome, conquer, and be victorious (Revelation 2, 3). The word *overcometh* used in Revelation chapters 2 and 3 (Gk *nikao*) is also used “...*of Christians, that hold fast their faith even unto death against the power of their foes, and temptations and persecutions*” (Thayer).
- We can be certain that, in the hands of the Father, each Christian will not face any experience with which he or she cannot - with God’s help - cope. Paul wrote to the Corinthian Christians: “*You are tempted in the same way that everyone else is tempted. But God can be trusted not to let you be tempted too much, and He will show you how to escape from your temptations*” (I Corinthians 10:13 CEV).
- Jesus makes clear that at the end “... *they shall deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and you shall be hated of all nations for My name’s sake*” (Matthew 24:9). Note that He was addressing the apostles. The people of the world and especially Israel and Christians will at that time be under extreme pressure (Matthew 24:29) (Gk. *thlipsis*, KJV *tribulation*).
- By reason of their spiritual “lukewarmness,” those Christians who neglect their calling and salvation - and who are represented by the church at Laodicea - will have forfeited the “hedge” with which the Father shields His children. They are still His children and any correction by Him will - as now - be tailored towards restoring them to their assigned place in the Kingdom (Hebrews 12:4-8). They can each “open the door” to restoration.
- There’s a tendency for those who hold to the idea of “church eras” and a “place of safety” to focus their life on this concept of future protection from physical danger. Yet, Jesus says: “*For whoever desires to save his life, he will lose it. But whoever loses his life for My sake, this one will save it*” (Luke 9:24 LITV).
- Christians, throughout the centuries, have faced, and will continue to face, opposition, persecution, and assorted pressures. We are “*called and chosen,*” but must remain “*faithful*” till our end - whatever trials we may face. Few Western Christians have - yet - experienced the opposition and outright persecution experienced by the early church. That may come.
- The lesson this first-century assembly holds for today’s Christians is that we be alert, be vigilant, be close to Jesus and His church. It’s easy to become absorbed and sidetracked by the world, to let our “*love grow cold*” in face of widespread lawlessness or worldly concerns. Let’s not exclude our Saviour, but actively stir up the precious gift in us of God’s Spirit.

(All Scripture references are KJV unless otherwise noted.)

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