

THE WORD OF

TRUTH

Bible Study Course

Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.

John 8:32

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AM I REALLY FOLLOWING JESUS ?

Christ's message to the seven Churches of Asia is a warning to every professedly Christian Church since the time of the apostles and the infant Church established by Jesus. He reveals the ways in which men can be deceived into thinking that their compromise with sin and with non-biblical teachings is acceptable to God. He further points out that those who follow these practices have fallen (Rev.14:8).

While this warning of Jesus carries an unmistakable reproof, it also extends a compassionate offer to the penitent. None need despair if he sees that he comes under any of the condemnations pronounced by Jesus. Our loving Saviour opens to us the way of life, all we need do is heed the warning and implement the instructions He has given.

Let us now see what Jesus offers to those who would forsake the things He has condemned and seeks to know the truth as it is in Jesus and obey it.

1. For all of the transgressions Jesus revealed in the various churches, what was the common requirement that they may receive the reward of salvation?

Revelation 2:7,17,26,5,21 _____

Note : The overcoming of our sin is the prerequisite to entry into heaven both now and in every age. How to overcome sin was explained in the first seven lessons of this series.

Ephesus became complacent and lost her love and zeal for God and the Gospel. This is so common among the ranks of many Christian bodies, that God gives continual warnings concerning it. For example...

2. What is the attitude of those who feel that the Lord Jesus is taking a little longer to come than they think necessary?

Luke 12:40-46 (note v.45) _____

Compare Galatians 6:9 _____

Note: In taking what appears to be a long time, Jesus is testing the sincerity of His professed followers. If they do not think enough of Him to wait through the tarring time, they will not endure the riggers of persecution later, or have the righteous mind that will live for eternity without the recurrence of transgression of His law (Rev.21:27; Nahum 1:9).

The cloud of indifference is a mire that seems hard to pull out of. A sure way to revive a flagging experience is to work for Jesus . The reason we die in the first place is our neglect of Bible study and prayer; this compounds in our lack of interest in the needs of others, whether those needs be temporal or spiritual. Nothing gives strength and earnestness to our profession more than ministering to the sick and to the desponding and giving the Gospel to others.

3. What promise did Jesus make to him that overcomes his spiritual lethargy and again has the zeal of God?

Revelation 2:7 _____

Note: a) In the new earth will be the "tree of life", the same tree from which Adam and Eve did eat, for the first dominion shall be restored (Micah 4:8).

At present the Word of God is our "tree of life". Jesus is the Word made flesh and says that His words are spirit and life (John 1:14; 6:63). As such, the Word of God possesses the elements necessary for the formation of a perfect character, the character that God can allow into heaven (Psalm 19:7-11; Rev.21:27). As our salvation begins now, we partake of His Word now, just as we will partake of the tree of life in Eden restored (Rev.22:14).

b) Concerning the zeal of God, see lesson 20, Q7, p3,4.

4. There was no condemnation of Smyrna, but what admonition did Jesus give to those who were to seal their faith with their blood?

Revelation 2:10 _____

Note: Our greatest fear, in the face of any kind of persecution and test of faith, is that we may fail the test. What a tragic loss, if after enduring a degree of persecution, even death, we let go of faith (Daniel 11:33-35; Heb.12:3-11).

5. What is promised to the true and faithful saints who lose their lives for the Gospel's sake and for the testimony of Jesus Christ?

Revelation 2:10; James 1:12 _____

Revelation 6:9-11 _____

Note: Only those who endure and remain faithful even unto death shall inherit the crown of life (Mark 8:34,35).

Every sinful trait of character must be purged out. Trials are sometimes the only means by which certain aspects of our character may be revealed and removed. Also, through trials we may gain a

better knowledge of God than through any other experience. Do not let the hardships rob you of your blessing, instead of the trial destroying you, let it do its work of purifying the soul (1Peter 1:3-7; 4:12-14). Regardless of the oppression Jesus will not leave one faithful soul to be overwhelmed (Rom. 8:28,35-39; 2Cor. 4:8-11).

6. What does God say is to be our attitude toward life's experiences?
1Thessalonians 5:18 _____

7. To those who overcome the false doctrines of Balaam, found in the church at Pergamos, a twofold promise is given. What is it that Jesus offers to the overcomer in this church?

Revelation 2:17 _____

Note: a) The hidden manna is the bread of life -- Jesus (Jn.6:47-51). As Ephesus ate of the tree of life, that is, the Word of God, so they partook of Jesus. In like manner, Pergamos has received the same promise. The overcomer will partake of the hidden manna, the Word of God, through which they have an intimate knowledge of Jesus.

b) The stone was a custom of the Jews whereby identification could be established. There were two matching halves, the bearer would compare his half with the half held by the recipient, thus establishing authenticity. When Jesus talks of giving us a stone bearing a new name, He is giving us a key whereby we may identify with heaven. Our only access to heaven is to have the character of Jesus formed within. Our character, or name, will be compared with that of Jesus and if they match, we may dwell with Him forever.

The term "name" is a metaphor for "character". When Jesus is giving us a new name, He is giving us a new character and this is achieved through the Word of God and the Spirit of Christ (2Timothy 2:19; John 17:8,11,12,14; Exodus 33:19; 34:5,6). His statement, that no-one else will know that name, seems to raise a question as to the usefulness of that name; but what He is actually saying, is that the

character of the converted soul is NOT transferable, that is, one man's righteousness cannot be given to another. We all stand or fall depending on our relationship to Jesus (Ezek. 14:12-23; 18:20; Rom. 14:12).

8. What promise was given to the church of Thyatira?

Revelation 2:24-28 _____

Note: Thyatira is said to be compromising with the non-biblical doctrines of worldly churches (vv.18-23). However, there are still those among them who are serving God with all the light they have. They are gaining the victory over sin by the power of Christ and are doing the works of Christ (Rev.2:26; 1John 2:5,6).

Like all the redeemed host, the converted from Thyatira will receive the kingdom and dwell with Christ forever (Dan.7:14,22; Mat.25:34).

9. The faithful saints from Thyatira receive the "Morning Star". What is meant by this expression?

Revelation 2:28; 22:16 _____

Note: Compare 2Peter 1:19. In this verse we see the appropriation of the "more sure word of prophecy", or the Word of God. By taking heed to it (obeying it, Rev.2:26) we begin to understand Jesus, we become acquainted with Him. He is no longer abstract and theory. Our experience with Him becomes real, it is said that we "see" God (John 6:40,46). This awakening to God and to Christ is described as the "Day Star rising in our hearts." The soul, thus blessed, receives the "bright and Morning Star," the indwelling of the Spirit of Christ.

10. Sardis is said to be spiritually dead. Yet even in the midst of this uninspiring environment, there are some who would serve God with all the light they have. What was the promise given to these faithful few?

Revelation 3:4,5 _____

Note: Like every saint that enters heaven, they will have overcome every cultivated and inherited tendency to sin and by the indwelling of Christ will have received His lovely character (Rev.19:8).

When we become children of God, our names are written in the books of heaven (Luke 10:20). It should be noted that while the names of the faithful are written in heaven, the names of the apostate will be removed from this Book of life and placed into the book appointed for the wicked (Exodus 32:32,33; Daniel 7:9,10; Rev.20:12).

By living up to what we know to be right and refusing the seductions of a wicked world, we reveal the working of Christ in our hearts and thus confess Him before men; our very behaviour is a testimony to the way Jesus loves people (Rev.12:11). By revealing to others the love of Christ, we confess to the world our relationship to Him. Those who confess Him before men, He will confess before His Father at the mercy seat (Matthew 10:32). Conversely, knowing the truth and going the ways of the world, is to deny Jesus and blaspheme Him and grieve the Holy Spirit. Jesus cannot plead His blood on behalf of the one who denies Him, refusing to reflect His character (2Chron. 7:14).

11. What promise is given to Philadelphia?

Revelation 3:12

Note: While there is no condemnation of Philadelphia, Jesus actually states, that with the little strength they have received from Him, they have kept His Word and have not denied Him (v.8). That is, their lives are a faithful testimony of the character of Jesus reproduced in them (compare Rev.12:11).

As discussed previously, "name " is character. The faithful souls in the Church at Philadelphia have "made a name for themselves". They are known by their righteous character (Rev.3:9,10). Because they have

obeyed the Word of God, through the strength of Jesus, Jesus has written upon their foreheads His name, His character, the character of God !

12. By what name will spiritual Israel, the children of God be called?

Jeremiah 23:6

Note: Jesus is called the "Lord our Righteousness". The righteousness of Jesus will be the "name" and "character" of His followers.

13. What is the covenant Christ has pledged to those who submit their mind unto Him?

Hebrews 8:10

Note: ""Mind" and "heart" mean the same thing and when compared with Revelation 3:12 can be seen to be synonymous with "forehead". The saints of Philadelphia have the law of God written in their hearts. Compare Revelation 13:16. Here a different kind of principle is inscribed upon the minds of men. This chapter will be discussed in a later study.

14. The kingdom of God, as the home of the saints, was mentioned in question 8. Where is that home and how do the saints relate to it now, when as yet they have not seen it?

Hebrews 11:8-10,13-16

Note: This passage in Hebrews, while it describes the earthly journey and settlement of Abraham, is also a perfect parallel to the earthly sojourn and final home of the faithful followers of Jesus (compare Ezekiel 36:24-27). That home is the new earth and the heavenly city on the new earth is "new Jerusalem" (Rev.21:1,2). The citizens of that land and city have the name "New Jerusalem" written in their minds; even before they actually arrive there, they are completely in harmony with the government of God. The heart of the redeemed will continually dwell upon that land wherein dwells righteousness (2Peter 3:13).

15. Laodicea is somewhat like the Jews. She has been entrusted with the oracles of God and the privileged revelations of Scripture. Because of her high and exalted position and the favour shown to her by God, she regards her heavenly calling as unconditional righteousness. How does Christ describe this blindness generated by pride?

Revelation 3:17 _____

Note: Concerning oracles - Romans 3:1,2. In this verse, note that those of the "circumcision" are the Jews. See also Romans 9:4,5.

16. Christ offers to Laodicea the same conditions for salvation as He offered to the other churches. What are those conditions?

Revelation 3:19,21 _____

17. All professing Christians may be identified under the character of one or more of the churches mentioned in Christ's address. All serious Christians will want to make positive identification of the Church that Christ claims as His own! What will be the identifying features of that Church and of its people?

1Timothy 3:15b _____

2Timothy 2:19 _____

18. If we reject the messages of Christ. Who / what is it we are actually rejecting?

Luke 10:16 _____

In this lesson we have seen the identifying marks of the Church that Jesus calls His people. Our next lesson will expand on how every man and woman can be numbered among God's saints on earth. God has done so much for the salvation of fallen man, that *if we are finally lost, it will be because we have deliberately chosen it.*