

Two Churches

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“Such as I have give I thee” (Acts 3:6)

[Editor’s note: I found this one page of a sermon and have not yet been able to find the other pages, but this is so powerful, I decided to share it.]

Contrast the description of two churches in the Bible. “And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance” (Acts 2:4). “Then Peter said unto them, Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost . . . Then they that gladly received his word were baptized and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. And they continued stedfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread and in prayers” (Acts 2:38, 41). “And a certain man lame from his mother’s womb was carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, to ask alms of them that entered into the temple . . . Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none, but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk . . . and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength. And he, leaping up stood, and walked and entered the temple, walking and leaping, and praising God” (Acts 3:2-8). “And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness . . . And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all” (Acts 4:31, 33).

Contrast this with another description of a church. “And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans, write . . . I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich and increased with goods and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked” (Revelation 3:15-17).

In the picture of the first church, there is power in the healing of the lame man. In the second, ere the proud boast of her riches has fallen from her lips, the Christ of the church is driven to nausea over the wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked church of Laodicea. What a sad condemnation of the church! What a pitiful plight! At a time when the world needs the church most, she is powerless to help. The church of Laodicea has pennies but no passion, gold but no God. They substituted their love for the lost for a love of money. Their programs, no doubt, were entertaining but their hearts were cold. Their message may have been full of wisdom but void of power. She walked on her merry way clad in regal attire, but she left the lame man sitting at the gate.

We have thus described the same church at two different times in her history. May I ask: To which era do we belong? Are we the church of Pentecost or the church of Laodicea? If we are to fill our divine mission in the earth as a church, we must go back to Pentecost and be refilled with the power that alone can heal a lame world and carry out the work begun by him of whom it was said:

That night while in Judean skies
The mystic star dispensed its light,
A blind man moved within his sleep
And dreamed that he had sight.

That night while shepherds heard
The song of hosts, angelic choiring near,
A deaf man stirred in slumber's spell
And dreamed that he could hear.

That night while in a cattle stall
Slept child and mother cheek by jowl,
A lame man moved his twisted limbs
And dreamed that he was whole.

That night while o'er the newborn babe
The mother rose to lean,
A loathsome leper smiled in sleep
And dreamed he was clean.

That night while to the mother's breast
The little king was held secure,
A harlot slept a happy sleep
And dreamed that she was pure.

That night while in the manger lay
The sanctified who came to save,
A man moved in the sleep of death
And dreamed there was no grave.