

SABBATH THOUGHT 2025-07-05—WHO IS AN ENEMY?

May God bless you on His Sabbath day!

If one takes a hard and honest look at the *ekklesia* today, there can be little doubt that this it is the age of Laodiceans:

REVELATION 3:14-17 “And to the angel of the *ekklesia* of the Laodiceans write, ‘These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God: 15 “I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. 16 “So then, because **you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot**, I will vomit you out of My mouth. 17 “Because you say, ‘**I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing**’—**and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked**—

Today is a life of prosperity and recreation for most—they are “rich [and] have become wealthy and have need of nothing.” There is nothing wrong with wealth except that it is through afflictions that we draw and stay close to God with a zeal not found in a life of ease. That is why Jesus said “it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 19:23-24).

I only mention the prosperity and ease of these days because this is also a time when there are none of the enemies who pursued God’s people to murder, rape, torture, or imprison them. I am referring to the real and brutal enemies of God and His people. In the Greek, enemy is *echthros* (H2190) meaning a hateful, odious, and hostile person. This describes people like Hitler, Genghis Khan, Stalin, Mao Zedong, Pol Pot, Leopold II, Lenin, Ivan the Terrible, Tojo, Vlad the Impaler, Saddam Hussein, etc. Thankfully, no one today has enemies like these.

So, that prompts the question, who is an enemy of God’s people today? We surely need to know because we are to love our enemies—those who do evil to us:

MATTHEW 5:43-44 “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ 44 “But I [*Jesus Christ*] say to you, **love your enemies**, bless **those who curse** you, do good to **those who hate** you, and pray for **those who spitefully use** you and **persecute** you,”

An enemy mentioned here could be someone who is wicked like the evil leaders listed above. However, most enemies stop far short of that, although they persecute God’s people in other ways. Even so, it is not very common for God’s people to encounter them, at least in this country.

The end of this age is certainly drawing near in which prophecy once again will bring the worst of afflictions upon God’s people. John records what happened in the past and what will come about again:

REVELATION 20:4 And I [*John*] saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw **the souls of those who had been beheaded** for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received *his* mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.

The nations of Abraham's descendants have not experienced such horrors in more modern times and, until it starts during the Tribulation, the enemies of God's people fulfill a different prophesy:

MATTHEW 7:15 “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves.

ACTS 20:29-30 “For I [*Paul*] know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. 30 “Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves.

2 **PETER 2:1** But there were also false prophets among the people [of God], even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, *and* bring on themselves swift destruction.

Nowadays, the true enemies are WITHIN the *ekklesia*. They may not physically torture and murder, but they are enemies nonetheless and, perhaps, even worse:

1 **TIMOTHY 4:1-2** Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, 2 speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron,

Paul is referring to men who preach DECEPTIVE DOCTRINES of demons. Who were they? Men who DEPARTED from—are you ready?—The Faith! In other words, they were once a part of the Body of Christ! Scripture clearly states that enemies within the *ekklesia* include both shepherds and sheep. Notice first the enemy, shepherds:

EZEKIEL 34:2-3 “Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel [ordained ministers], prophesy and say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD to the shepherds: “Woe to the shepherds of Israel who feed themselves! ... 3 “You eat the fat and clothe yourselves with the wool; you slaughter the fatlings, (living luxuriously) ...

Tithes are a mainstay of organizations so they convince people to give directly to them. Their false doctrine is that elders and organizations are the successor to the temple and priests and that they have the authority to determine what is to be done with the tithes. (In doing so, the people abdicate their responsibility for Good Works to help others in need—a salvational requirement.) Mainly the money funds lavish office buildings, high-end retirement plans, insurance, housing and car allowances, fully paid festival expenses, etc. all for the shepherds. SIGN #1 of an enemy within the *ekklesia* is shepherds who live luxuriously off the backs of their flocks.

Oh, but you might say, they have a huge responsibility to preach the Gospel and that requires money. Hmm. Posting a bunch of sermons geared strictly toward believers on a website or Youtube channel is NOT preaching the Gospel and it does not cost that much! In fact, their messages are rarely, rarely, rarely ever about the Gospel. Preaching the gospel that way is so ineffective that, in the corporate world, it would be considered a failed business strategy, forcing any CEO and board to revamp their entire approach. Jesus said, “**Go** into all the world” (Mark 16:15), not hope that someone stumbles upon the Truth. Hope is never a strategy. Tinder,

Bumble, and Hinge websites might work for dating and LinkedIn for job searches, but how many people were baptized who said, "I found God's Truth on Google." How did Paul say it should be done?

ROMANS 10:14-15 How then shall they call on Him [*Jesus Christ*] in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And **how shall they hear without a preacher?** 15 And **how shall they preach unless they are sent?** As it is written: "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, who bring glad tidings of good things!"

What little money remains is given to a few but it is always insufficient. Some receive a little help for the festivals but it usually does not cover a lot or is sufficient for the entire duration. There are also impoverished widows who are struggling and never receive a dime. And heaven forbid that they should help anyone who belongs to another group!

Continuing in Ezekiel 34:

EZEKIEL 34:2-4 ... **Should not the shepherds feed the flocks?** 3 ... **but you do not feed the flock.** 4 **"The weak you have not strengthened, nor have you healed those who were sick, nor bound up the broken, ...**

Shepherds are responsible for teaching. These days, it is mostly done through sermons, which are lectures that demand acceptance without question. I recall withholding comments or questions from Scripture in times past because I knew it was contrary to the party line. **SIGN #2 of an enemy within the *ekklesia* is shepherds who do not help the spiritually weak, sick, or broken sheep.**

Returning to Ezekiel 34:

EZEKIEL 34:4 ... **nor brought back what was driven away, nor sought what was lost; but with force and cruelty you have ruled them.**

Shepherds also 'disfellowship' those who disagree with their teachings and drive them out. It is also not enough to expel them from their organization because they also forbid the members to associate with them. They are dictators who surround their members with doctrinal barbed wire fences to keep them from associating with others who are not of their fold. **SIGN #3 of an enemy within the *ekklesia* is shepherds who subjugate the sheep and drive away those who will not submit to them.**

Now notice the enemies within the *ekklesia* who are sheep:

EZEKIEL 34:17-21 'And *as for* you, O My flock, thus says the Lord GOD: "Behold, I shall judge between sheep and sheep, between rams and goats. 18 **"Is it too little for you to have eaten up the good pasture, that you must tread down with your feet the residue of your pasture—and to have drunk of the clear waters, that you must foul the residue with your feet?** 19 **"And *as for* My flock, they eat what you have trampled with your feet, and they drink what you have fouled with your feet."** 20 'Therefore thus says the Lord GOD to them: "Behold, I Myself will judge between the **fat and the lean sheep.** 21 **"Because *you [fat sheep] have pushed with side and shoulder, butted all the weak ones with your horns, and scattered them abroad,***

22 “therefore I will save My flock, and **they shall no longer be a prey**; and I will judge between sheep and sheep.

This might seem to have an obscure meaning, but let me assure you that there are plenty of examples. How about wealthy Americans who attend a feast site in an economically poor country? They boast about enjoying the best that can be had at bargain rates while excluding the impoverished locals from their fellowshiping and feasting. Or the struggling, impoverished widow who was refused help by the church and ignored by local brethren with their expensive cars and houses? Or brethren who cut off all contact with those their organization ‘disfellowshipped’. (Disfellowshipping is such unspeakable heresy and hypocrisy because it is contrary to Scripture, which says “if anyone does not obey our word in this epistle, note that person and do not keep [*intimate*] company with him, **that he may be ashamed. Yet do not count him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.**”—2 Thess. 3:14-15.) Or those who spiritually murder other brethren through their gossip, rumor, and slander. Or those who tattle to the minister instead of talking privately to the brother or sister. These are fat sheep eating the good pasture and drinking the clear waters while lean sheep eat the trampled residue and drink fouled waters. **SIGN #4 of an enemy within the *ekklesia* are those who make victims of other sheep.**

Perhaps, at this late point, it is worth defining *enemy*. Paul said an enemy is someone whose “mind [*is motivated*] by wicked works” (Col. 1:21). Enemies within the *ekklesia* are those “whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame—who set their mind on earthly things” (Phil. 3:19). Enemies within the *ekklesia* are wolves in sheep’s clothing. Enemies within the *ekklesia* are tares among the wheat. Why did Jesus mention tares? Because they are poisonous, causing dizziness, headaches, mental confusion, visual and speech difficulties, and coma. They predominately affect the mind. Interesting, huh? In fact, sowing tares in a wheat field was so sinister and objectionable that even Roman law prohibited doing it to an enemy.

But this is why, perhaps, the enemies of the Laodicean era are WITHIN the *ekklesia*—this is the age of No Love and No Works! They have need of nothing and ignore the few who have need of everything. They do not understand what it means to love brethren (in spite of what their church says) much less God. They have become enemies of each other and cannot recognize the true enemies.

The most frightening aspect of Laodicea is that it is the only one that has a CLOSED door. They are so lukewarm that it seems the door to salvation is shut. However, Jesus offers hope: “Behold, **I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him** and dine with him, and he with Me.” (Rev. 3:20). In other words, He has not forsaken those of this Laodicean age—He is actively and purposefully KNOCKING on the door. Salvation is still there for those who are “zealous and repent.” But THAT requires us to open the door to allow Him in!

May God’s grace and peace be upon you!

Steven Greene

<https://sabbathreflections.org>
sabbathreflections@gmail.com