



Lovely Lord of the Lord's Day

18. Sprucy Lucy

The Christ of Laodicea.

Lucy flew in with a friend of hers, to see us about the breakup of her home. From the very first we observed that Lucy's husband, Harley, had done her grave injury. He had for years, been unfaithful to her. He had had other women on the string and had flouted every offer of Lucy's to become reconciled. Lucy had tried every avenue that she could conceive of, but none seemed to make the slightest impression on Harley! Then Lucy heard of the ABC's of prayer.

She gobbled up this philosophy as a turkey gobbles corn. For a year and a half she had gone through the ritual of "asking, believing, and claiming" God's promises for a happy home. But nothing that Lucy prayed for seemed to happen.

We were at a loss to understand just why God seemed to turn His ear in the other direction when Lucy prayed. Hence we began to pray most earnestly that we might understand the mystery. Had God not promised "Ask, and it shall be given you" (Matthew 7:7)? Had He not promised, "And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive" (Matthew 21:22)? And was it not He who taught us to follow His example of returning thanks that we have been heard and the prayer has been answered (John 11:41)?

It took us months to draw a conclusion. We do not wish to judge another, but to aid others in not following Lucy's example we share with you what we discovered about Lucy's relationship with her husband and with her Lord as well, and this is not in any sense to justify Harley. Lucy had every legal right to divorce him: but since she chose the route of reconciliation, she needed to learn and follow divine principles of reconciliation.

Lucy took the same attitude taken by the church of Laodicea, pictured in Revelation 3:14-21. It was that she herself was in the right. Harley *was* in the wrong—this fact was self-evident. But that Lucy was in the right was not so clear.

Her attitude was one of innocent, dignified self-righteousness. She felt that she had "need of nothing" just as did Laodicea. To hear of her efforts at reconciliation one would be tempted to exclaim, as did a close friend of hers, "She has a wonderful faith." So Laodicea thought of herself too.

Yet "the faithful and true witness," Christ, the "Amen" to all the promises of God states, "I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich." Golden faith and love, which she and some closest to her sincerely thought she had, were actually missing. How do we know? She herself admitted, after months of communication, that she had actually shaken her fist in the face of God when He did not come through and grant her requests in the way she demanded.

Lovely Lord of the Lord's Day

God would have gladly forgiven Lucy for her behavior. We know of several who have sought for and received forgiveness for this. But Lucy never wavered from her attitude that God should "shape up." No, Lucy felt that she was "rich, and increased" with the goods needed for a successful marriage, but that it was God and her husband who had failed to shape up.

One day Fred, a friend of ours, went with Lucy to search for a lot on which to build her home. When we next saw Fred, he confided, "I think I know now why Lucy is having difficulty with her husband, Harley."

Lucy was asking God to shape others up instead of pleading, "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." Psalm 139:23, 24. God's promises are "Yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us." 2 Corinthians 1:20.

There was no lack of cooperation on God's part in solving the problems of the home. The lack of cooperation was not merely on the part of Harley. It lay at Lucy's door also.

"I could never live with her," confided Fred, after that day of searching with Lucy for a lot. Hers was a cultured selfishness, a refined domination, and a gracious opinionated-ness.

These are not characteristics recommended by our Lord to win an ungodly mate. Our Lord's inspired apostle Peter stated that all the outward and external changes made in or on the physical person are not what is the prime factor in winning another. It is the "meek and quiet spirit." Lucy did not know how to take a truly Christian attitude toward Harley or her Lord.

In her frustration she had tried a new symbolic "planetary system." Instead of her rotating around the Lord as the earth does the sun, her scheme had herself the sun, with the Lord, like the earth, revolving around her desires. In spite of our repeated counseling she could not, dared not, submit to the rulership of Christ. The very first lines of that wonderful chapter on faith and prayer in a wonderful little book emphasize the need for this attitude. Notice how they place faith in relation to God's control:

"Faith is trusting God—believing that He loves us and knows best what is for our good. Thus, instead of our own, it leads us to choose His way. In place of our ignorance, it accepts His wisdom; in place of our weakness, His strength; in place of our sinfulness, His righteousness. Our lives, ourselves, are already His; faith acknowledges His ownership and accepts its blessing." Education p. 253.

What Lucy needed is what Laodicea needs; I counsel thee to buy of me gold." Lucy lacked the golden love and faith that "seeketh not her own." She needed the "white raiment" to replace all her self-righteousnesses which are "filthy rags." Her "innocent sanctimony" needed to be replaced by a "heart of flesh," and her blindness as to her own lack of trust needed, the eyesalve of the Holy Spirit's apothecary.

Were we to share with you all the things that Lucy did in her efforts to effect reconciliation, you would probably be as surprised, if not as shocked, as we were. But all was done to change Harley—not Lucy. None of these physical changes she painfully made did the job. She needed spiritual renovation. She needed meekness, not merely beauty.

She needed the re-Creator, and can this be why our Lord Jesus pictures Himself to Laodicea as the "faithful and true witness," not merely as the "Amen" of heaven but also as "the beginning of the creation of God." Revelation 3:14.

This expression, "The beginning of the creation of God," means the source of every created thing. This had already been made clear to Laodicea by a former message from the apostle Paul which was ordered to be read at Laodicea. Colossians 4:16. "And when this epistle is read among you, cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans; and that ye likewise read the epistle from Laodicea."

Lovely Lord of the Lord's Day

Humanity can lift its face, reform its bust, correct its nose; but only the Creator can form within the heart a sweet submissiveness, a gentle meekness, a kindly and wholesome attitude.

The message to Laodicea is far more than one to a local church at a particular city. It is a prophetic period—namely the last in the history of time.

God is sending a special message, both to the world of the last days and also to the church of the end of time. It is a message of One who is the very source of the "beginning of the creation of God."

In Revelation 14:6,7 we learn that He sends a message just prior to His second coming. It is "to every nation and kindred and tongue and people, saying. . . " Fear God, and give glory to him: for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters." It is saying in effect, You cannot change your heart, your attitudes; but I can, for I made the world.

While our Lord orders this message of a Creator heralded to the entire world, He Himself brings a message similar in nature to His own church, Laodicea. It is significant that while a people are proclaiming God as Creator to the world, they themselves sit back in sanctimony and self-sufficiency, needing everything that the world needs and yet not recognizing that need.

When sermons are preached, they are "pitchfork" listeners. They pitch the sermon over their shoulder to "Brother Jones" or "Sister Smith" who they know needs the message desperately. Like Lucy they recognize the need of the other, but not their own. They may even be the ones who are heralding the "everlasting gospel" to the world, while they themselves consider themselves "rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing."

But the remedy is found in the appellation of the One who addresses Laodicea. He is "the beginning of the creation of God." Why not let Him start a new beginning in our lives, dear friends!

Have you ever, dear reader, actually fallen on your knees before the Lord and asked Him, as "the beginning of the creation of God," to do what He has promised, not to your mate, not to your neighbor, not to your fellow church member—but to yourself? We have done so, and been richly rewarded. We cannot receive the golden love and faith offered Laodicea except as we "commit the keeping" of our "souls to him . . . , as unto a faithful Creator." 1 Peter 4:19.

We personally find it absolutely essential to call on our Lord to do what He has promised. "A new heart," He says, "also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them." Ezekiel 36:26.

Beloved, we plead with you to do as we do—fall down before Him, laud and adore Him. Ask, believe. and receive a completely new attitude—one of trust in God and humility in our relation to others.

Just recently we spent possibly two hours with a dear friend of ours who had tried gaining victories her way. We suggested that the only source of deliverance is to become Christ-centered. He says, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." Revelation 3:14.

Fall down and actually plead with Jesus, "the beginning of the creation of God," to change you, not another.

The remedy for family friction is the creatorship of Christ—not plans, resolutions, and organization. "Now if any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his." But "if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature." So long as we are satisfied with ourselves and try to "play Creator" with others' lives, hoping to

Lovely Lord of the Lord's Day

remake, reform, or refine them, we cannot find the power of the One who "is the beginning of the creation of God."

He waits to come into our hearts, our thinking, our constant consciousness. We suggested to the friend just above mentioned that it would be well for us to subsist on Him. We are to talk of Him, think of Him, sing of Him, and live in Him.

This is the need of the world. This is the most urgent need of professed Christians in this moment of earth's history. Laodicea is guilty of self-fellowship, and self-fellowship is self-worship. It cannot unite with Christ. It must be renounced. He wants to come into the life, but how can He enter when we are satisfied with our own attainments and merely work on the remaking of others?

Lucy went so far in her explanations of God's failures as to "humbly" state, "I am covering for my Lord." When we inquired as to what she meant by this statement, she said that when her children ask her why her prayers are not answered she "covers" for the Lord's mistakes!

What a deception! What a delusion! What a Laodicean! And what a tragedy!

Jesus Christ, the "beginning of the creation of God," longs to enter the heart and reveal not merely our emptiness but His fullness—His answers. He wants to bring a feast of love with Him. He pleads that we may understand why He sends us the message of reproof. Says He, "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten."

May we suggest, dear reader, that you kneel before the Lord who is "the beginning of the creation of God" and ask Him to begin a new experience in your life. He is waiting. He is pleading. He is knocking at the door. Why not cease the self-fellowshipping kind of service that leaves the soul wretched, and miserable and poor and blind, and naked"? Why not invite the One in who creates new hearts, new lives, new attitudes, and new homes? Why not ask Him to take over. We all need to ask Him to give us the humble and teachable spirit. Then it will be true of us that "he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."

As we plead with you, dear reader, we also are weeping out our own needs, opening anew our own hearts. Now having recommitted our hearts to our Lord, having accepted His new creation within us by faith, why not confess our faults to our mates, rather than seeking to extract from them a confession of their guilt? It can do wonders if we will but let our Redeemer, who is none other than the 'Source' or "the beginning of the creation of God", take over. He promises to answer when we seek Him with all our hearts.

Wretchedness will flee; self-pity will evaporate; the agony that comes by self-serving will melt away; and the emptiness of Christless satisfaction will be filled with Him, whom to know is life eternal.

As we are often driven to our knees with the prayer that our Lord will create again and again, right impulses within us and that we may "die daily", so you, dear one, may do the same. Please do not just sit there and read—fall down just now and claim His promise, "I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me."

Dear Lord; the beginning of the creation of God, I ask You to come into my life at this moment and bring me Your fellowship. Mighty Creator and Redeemer, I ask You to Create in me a clean heart . . . and renew a right spirit within me. I believe that You are effecting this transformation, and I thankfully receive You personally for the answer. In Your blessed name, Amen.

PLEADING CHRIST
Laodicea's Christ
Pleads with us lukewarm men,
Jesus is faithful, true,
He is the Great Amen.

Lovely Lord of the Lord's Day

Thou art both wretched, blind
Naked and poor thou art;
I am the Source of life,
Waiting to change thy heart.

If thou wilt open the door,
Quickly I'll enter in,
I will bring thee a feast—
Cleanse thee from every sin.

Then shalt thou overcome—
Never be left alone,
Thou shalt sit down with me,
Ever to share my throne.

Reflection: As we bring this chapter to a close, may we suggest that you or your prayer circle prayerfully consider the seven great Bible facts following. You may wish to discuss the attitude Lucy should have toward her Lord.

Seven Great Bible Facts:

1. The first Bible picture of our Lord is that of Creator: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." (Genesis 1:1)
2. The memorial of His creation is the worship day—the seventh-day Sabbath. (Genesis 2:1-3)
3. We are to "commit the keeping of [our] souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator." (1 Peter 4:19)
4. The Bible give many pictures of our Lord. Among these is that He is, "the beginning of the creation of God." (Revelation 3:14)
5. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature:" (2 Corinthians 5:17)
6. God Promises, "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you." (Ezekiel 36:26)
7. He promised us; "And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive." (Matthew 21:22)