

## **The Epistle from Laodicea** **By Paul R. Blake**

Colossians 4:16 - *"Now when this epistle is read among you, see that it is read also in the church of the Laodiceans, and that you likewise read the epistle from Laodicea."*

An epistle "ad Laodicenses" (To the Laodiceans) exists in Latin, a very old copy of which is in the library at St. Alban's of Anjou. Bible scholars reject it as a brief and pointless forgery composed of verses from other epistles of Paul randomly cobbled together. However, the reference in Colossians 4:16 to an epistle of Paul to the church at Laodicea speaks of an authentic, apostolically written book that no longer exists, and in all likelihood, after accomplishing the purpose for which it was written, was Providentially permitted to be lost to posterity. In this, it is similar to the writings of Gad, Iddo the Seer, Nathan, the Prophecy of Ahijah the Shilonite, and the Book of Jehu, etc. (2Chron. 9:29, 20:34; 1Kings 16:1), books that served the purpose of their writing and passed out of existence. There is no reason to believe that a Divinely inspired book may have been carelessly lost or that God was unable to preserve the fullness of His written word. There is no special sacredness in the written page or in the fact that inspired truth was at one time recorded that makes it critical to be preserved by the desire and actions of men. The oral teachings of Jesus were the inspired will of the Father, just as the writings of Paul or Peter, but only part of what He said and did was preserved in scripture (John 21:25). Yet no one believes there are critical gaps in Jesus' teaching because not every word or deed was written down. Why should there be a fuss over whether an apostolically written book may also have been lost? And even if it has, how does that fact weaken the importance or the value of the scriptures we now have? Does the fact that a large part of the sermons of Christ were not preserved somehow diminish the value of the Sermon on the Mount or lessen His Divine authority?

In truth, God revealed what He wanted revealed; He has that kind of power. Deuteronomy 29:29 - *"The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law."* In truth, God preserved what He wanted preserved; He has that kind of power. 1Peter 1:23-25 - *"Having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever, because All flesh is as grass, And all the glory of man as the flower of the grass. The grass withers, And its flower falls away, But the word of the LORD endures forever. Now this is the word which by the gospel was preached to you."* God revealed what He wanted us to know, and He preserved that revelation in a form we can comprehend, and He will continue to preserve His whole word intact until this world ends.

Are there other books mentioned in the Bible written by inspired prophets, but not preserved to this day?

The Book of Jasher (Joshua 10:13; 2Sam. 1:18)

The Book of the Wars of the Lord (Num. 21:14)

The Chronicles of the Kings of Israel and Chronicles of the Kings of Judah (1Kings 14:19, 14:29)

The Book of Shemaiah the prophet, and of Iddo the Seer (2Chron. 9:29, 12:15, 13:22)

The Manners of the King (1Sam. 10:25)

The Acts of Solomon (1Kings 11:41)

The Annals of King David (1Chron. 27:24)

The History of Nathan the Prophet and the Book of Gad the Seer (1Chron. 29:29; 2Chron. 9:29)

The Acts of Uzziah (2Chron. 26:22)

The Prayers of Manasseh and the Sayings of Hozai (2Chron. 33:18-19)

The Chronicles of King Ahasuerus and the Chronicles of the Kings of Media and Persia (Esther 2:23, 6:1, 10:2; Neh. 12:23)

Why don't we need them today? After they served their purpose, God in His wisdom determined that it was not necessary to preserve them for future generations. The books of the Bible He preserved are fully sufficient for all of our spiritual needs. Perhaps men should learn to be content with what God has already revealed and continues to preserve. 2Timothy 3:16 - *"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work."* Romans 15:4 - *"For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope."*

### **Thanks, Heather**

By Gary Berdine, on behalf of the TR Elders

Over the past few years TR has received donations of a variety of books, magazines, sermon outlines, library notes, and both audio and video media. Also, recordings of sermons and classes taught over the years here at TR going back as far as 1977 needed to be organized. In reviewing the quality and magnitude of this material, the elders determined that it would be good that these items be available for the whole congregation to use. A decision was made to create a library in the TR building. Literally thousands of items will be available in this library, with more items being added as they come in. The elders also realized that this library would have to be created in an orderly fashion. We are very fortunate to have a professional librarian, Heather Blake, as one of our members. Heather has donated 120 hours of her time to cataloging and organizing the material in this library. She has even donated boards to make shelves for the library, and has done the work necessary to finish each board. Her expertise in how to set up a library has proven to be invaluable. She has created a system so items can be checked out of the library, and she will be able to document their return. While the library is scheduled to be opened, Heather will still be working to finish several projects needed to make the library complete. There are members helping her with her tasks, and the elders appreciate each person who has a part in making this library come into existence. Most of all, the elders want to offer our heartfelt thanks to Heather, for all she has done so far, as well as for all she will do in completing the work of organizing the contributions to the library. She probably will always be doing something to keep the library current and growing. We encourage the entire congregation to take a look at what the library has to offer. And when you do visit, please join the elders in thanking Heather for her great work.