

# LETTERS TO THE CHURCH

## *Laodicea: The Lukewarm Church*

### *Revelation: 3:14-22*

#### **Laodicea**



- Laodicea is the last of the seven letters Jesus wrote to the churches of Asia Minor
- Laodicea was about 45 miles southeast of Philadelphia and about 90 miles east of Ephesus
- Laodicea was located in the Lycus Valley where three highways converged
- Because of its location Laodicea was business and commercial center
- Laodicea was a very wealthy city and was known for three things:
  1. Banking and finance
  2. Manufacturing of wool clothing and carpets

#### 3. Eye salve

- Laodicea was so wealthy that when an earthquake destroyed the city in 60 A.D., Laodicea was rebuilt without any financial aid from the Roman government.
- Laodicea had one major weakness, its water supply
- Laodicea received its water from two nearby cities Colossae and Hierapolis that were less than 10 miles away
- Colossae was known for cold and refreshing spring water and Hierapolis was known for its hot springs
- To get the water from Colossae and Hierapolis to Laodicea underground aqueduct was built, but as the water traveled through the pipes, it picked up impurities and when the cold and hot water mixed together arrived at Laodicea, it was lukewarm, and didn't taste or smell good

#### **Jesus Introduces Himself**

**Revelation 3:14 (KJV) <sup>14</sup> And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God;**

- As with the previous letters, Jesus writes to the angel or the pastor of the church in Laodicea
- Whatever Jesus says to the pastor in the letter, it is the pastor's responsibility to convey the message to the church
- In this letter Jesus describes Himself as *The Amen; The Faithful and True Witness; and The Beginning of the Creation of God*
- What do these titles mean?
- *The Amen* – Amen means *so be it or it is done*
  - Amen is used to close a prayer or to declare the truthfulness of a statement
  - Jesus Christ is the Amen, He is the declaration, the guarantee of truth
  - Amen affirms the truthfulness of what has been previously said

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- So, when Jesus calls Himself, *the Amen*, He is saying that He is true *all the time* and, in every way,
- Amen also suggests the idea of finality or last word
- With Jesus is there is no need to search further for the truth, He is the *final authority*
- *The Faithful and True Witness* – It emphasizes Jesus is perfectly trustworthy and faithful to His Word
  - Witness here means record, such as a document, therefore Jesus is the Word or record of the truth
  - When we read and study the Word of God, it reveals our true condition John **17:17 (KJV) 17 Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.**
- *The Beginning of the Creation of God* – The word *beginning* here means *origin or source* of a thing. Therefore, Jesus is saying He is the origin, ruler, or source of all creation
- Jesus is describing Himself to the church in Laodicea because there is a *stark contrast* in who He is and how they are living as His followers

#### ***Jesus' Complaint Against the Church in Laodicea***

***<sup>15</sup> I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. <sup>16</sup> So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.***

- As in every letter, Jesus says I know they works
- Jesus sees all, nothing is hidden or overlooked by Jesus
- What Jesus saw in the church in Laodicea was not worth commending
- Jesus says the church at Laodicea was *neither* hot nor cold
- Jesus speaks to the church in Laodicea in terms they could understand, the church was just like the water they drink; they were *lukewarm*
- To be lukewarm as a church means the church at Laodicea was only half-committed, complacent, self-satisfied, indifferent, apathetic
- The waters from Hierapolis were hot and possessed healing powers and the waters from Colossae were cold and could quench a thirst, but when they were mixed in dirty pipeline and reached Laodicea, it was foul tasting, foul smelling and made people sick
- Jesus said it would have been better if Laodicea were hot *or* cold, they could have at least minister healing or quench a thirst
- But because they lukewarm, they have just enough to protect them from the feeling of need
- But the church in Laodicea was neither, it was lukewarm, and Jesus said He spews it out of His mouth
- Jesus was saying the indifference, the apathy, the self-sufficiency of the church in Laodicea made Him sick
- When a church or believers try to play the middle of the road, you make Jesus sick
- You're "too cold to be hot" and "too hot to be cold", you make Jesus sick
- It's a horrible thing when Jesus says you make Him sick

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- When a church or believers are lukewarm, they're *useless*
- The lukewarm believer has *enough Jesus* to satisfy their desire for religion, but *not enough* for eternal life
- Lukewarm churches and believers are not only a danger to themselves, but they are danger leading others down the same path spiritual indifference, apathy, and self-satisfaction
- The world was pleased with a lukewarm church and a lukewarm church is pleased with itself

#### **Jesus' Warning to the Church in Laodicea**

***<sup>17</sup> 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:***

- The problem with being spiritually lukewarm is not knowing one's *true condition*
- The church in Laodicea was not only *lukewarm*, but it was also *deceived*
- Laodicea was a very wealthy city and a very wealthy church
- They Laodiceans had placed their trust their material prosperity and what their wealth could *more than* they placed put their trust in God
- They believed that their wealth was a sign of God's approval of their lives
- Some believers today think that because they have a lot of material things, it's a sign of God's approval of their lives
- We focus more on what is *seen and tangible* than what is *unseen and eternal*
- The Laodicean church in their mind was rich, prosperous and in need of nothing, but they didn't recognize their true condition
- The Laodicean church didn't even know they were *wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked*
  - The city that was known for its wealth, Jesus says the believers in it were *wretched, miserable, and poor*
  - They city that was known for its healing eye salve, but the believers in the city were *spiritually blind*
  - The city that known for it fine black wool clothing, but the believers in the city were *spiritually naked*
  - The Laodiceans felt they were *set and needed nothing* until Jesus revealed their true spiritual condition

#### **Jesus' Counsel to the Church in Laodicea**

***<sup>18</sup> I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see. <sup>19</sup> As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent. <sup>20</sup> 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.***

- The church in Laodicea was in an awful state

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- But the great thing about Jesus is He never gives a “critique” without giving a *cure*
  - Jesus gives the Laodiceans a three-part prescription to cure their lukewarm spiritual condition
1. Laodicea was known for its wealth and Jesus says the cure for spiritual poverty is to *buy*:
    - *gold from Him that's been tried in the fire, the impurities have been removed, so they can experience real spiritual wealth*
    - *white garments from Him to cover their spiritual nakedness and they can experience His righteousness*
    - *eye salve from Him to allow them to see the truth*
  2. Jesus' 2<sup>nd</sup> prescription is for repentance for the Laodicean church
    - Because Jesus still loves the Laodicean church, He disciplines them
    - Jesus' discipline is not out of anger, it is out of love
    - The word love here is not *agape*, it's *phileo* love as for friends
    - Sometimes it takes God's discipline to shake us out of the spirit of complacency, apathy, self-satisfaction, lukewarmness
    - The discipline of Jesus is to drive us to sincere repentance where we whole-heartedly return to Him
  3. Jesus' 3<sup>rd</sup> prescription is for spiritual responsiveness
    - Jesus gave the Laodicean church the *great invitation*
    - Why did Jesus have to knock at all?
    - Jesus wants the person on the other side of the door to open it to Him without pressure, fear, or coercion
    - Jesus will stand at the door and patiently knock at the door of our heart for however long it takes
    - Jesus *calls us loudly and clearly* by His Word, by His ministers, and by His Spirit
    - The key to opening the door is to *hear* His voice
    - When open the door to our heart, Jesus will come in and dine or fellowship with us
    - Jesus makes this great invitation to *anyone* who hears His voice and opens the door
    - The invitation is *not* to the Laodicean church, but to *individual* Laodicean believers

#### ***Jesus' Promise to the Church in Laodicea***

***<sup>21</sup> To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne. <sup>22</sup> He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.***

- As awful as the church in Laodicea was, Jesus says they can *still* overcome
- Jesus promises the overcomers will sit with Him on His throne
- It means we shall reign and rule with Christ forever and ever
- Jesus closes as He always does with, He who has an ear let them hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches
- Jesus wants us to hear and heed what the Spirit is saying to the churches