



The Church of “Laodicea”

“THE LUKE WARM CHURCH”

REVELATION 3:14-22 NKJV - (14) “And to the angel of the church 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— **(18)** I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, *that* the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see. **(19)** As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent. **(20)** 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. **(21)** To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne. **(22)** “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.” ”

Laodicea was a wealthy, industrious city in the province of Phrygia in the Lycos Valley. “For example, in 62 B.C. Flaccus seized the annual contribution of the Jews of Laodicea for Jerusalem amounting to 20 pounds of gold.” “The extent of its wealth is illustrated by the fact that Laodicea was rebuilt *without the financial help of Rome* after the disastrous earthquake of A.D. 60. Laodicea earned its wealth in the textile industry in the production of black wool and in the banking industry. Laodicea was also known for its medical school (school of ophthalmology) which concocted a spikenard for the treatment of the ears and an eyesalve. The major weakness of Laodicea was its lack of a water supply. This need was met by bringing water six miles north from Denizli through a system of stone pipes (another sign of Laodicea’s wealth).” Water conveyed to Laodicea through these pipes was tepid by the time it reached the city. The eye salve was called “collyrium,” probably a reference to how it was applied—that is, in the form of plaster or a poultice.

The message is from the Lord Jesus Christ via an angel or messenger (likely a reference to the church’s pastor): “To the angel of the church in Laodicea write . . .” (**Revelation 3:14**). This was not simply John’s message to those in Laodicea; it was a message from the Lord. Jesus identifies Himself thus: “The Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God’s creation.” These titles emphasize the Lord’s faithfulness, sovereignty, and power to bring all things to their proper completion (the “Amen”).

In contrast to the other six churches, the Laodicean church has nothing to commend it. Jesus begins the message with condemnation: “I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! So, because you are lukewarm—neither hot nor cold—I am about to spit you out of my mouth. You say, ‘I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.’ But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked” (**Revelation 3:15-17**). Jesus emphasizes their “lukewarm,” apathetic nature three times. As a result of their ambivalence to spiritual things, Jesus would have nothing to do with them. He would “spit them out,” as the people of Laodicea would spit out the tepid water that flowed from the underground aqueducts to their city. With their apathy came a spiritual blindness; they claimed to be rich, blessed and self-sufficient. Perhaps they were rich in material things. But, spiritually, the Laodiceans were in a wretched, pitiful condition, made all the worse in that they could not see their need. This was a church filled with self-deceived hypocrites.

Jesus calls the Laodicean church to repent of its sin: “I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see” (**Revelation 3:18**). Their material wealth had no eternal benefit, so Jesus commands them to come to Him for true, spiritual riches (**Isaiah 55:1-2**). Only Christ can supply an everlasting inheritance, clothe us in righteousness, and heal our spiritual blindness.

Jesus then notes His concern for His church in Laodicea: “Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest, and repent. Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me” (**Revelation 3:19-20**). His rebuke is not born of animosity but of love. “The Lord disciplines those he loves” (**Hebrews 12:6**). The desired response to God’s reproof was zealous change and true repentance.

Verse 20 is often used as an evangelistic appeal, yet its original context communicates Christ’s desire for fellowship with His lukewarm church in Laodicea. The church is nominally Christian, but Christ Himself has been locked out. Rather than turn His back on them, He knocks, seeking someone to acknowledge the church’s need and open the door. If they would repent, Jesus would come in and take His rightful place in the church. He would share a meal with them, a Middle Eastern word picture speaking of closeness of relationship.

Jesus then makes a promise to the believers in Laodicea: “To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne” (**Revelation 3:21**). The “overcomer” refers to any believer, and the promise is that he will share Christ’s future kingdom.

In summary, the church at Laodicea had become apathetic in their love for Christ. They were allowing “the deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things [to] come in and choke the word, making it unfruitful” (**Mark 4:19**). Christ called them to repent and live zealously for Him, to “choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve” (**Joshua 24:15**). The Lord Jesus issues the same call to those who say they follow Him today.

SCRIPTURE READING: TITUS 2:11-12

THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK: Worry is worshipping the problem.