

Revelation 3.14-22

“Neither Hot, Nor Cold”

Recently Pastor said to Me “Our church is like Early Church – Alive & Real”
Common Idea > Early Church > GOOD OLD DAYS > False Idealism

Doctrinal Precision > Theological Battles > No Love for Hurting People: Ephesus

Rejected by their Neighbors > Considered Aloof > Stigmatized: Smyrna

Climbed into Bed with Political and Social Leaders > Compromised: Pergamum

Secret Sexual Scandal spread across the Congregation: Thyatira

All Image > No Substance > Despite Impressive list of Activities: Sardis

Small Minority struggling to Hold On in City that Hated Them: Philadelphia

Laodicea > 80 kms. South-east of Philadelphia > Rich Commercial Center
Laodicea > in Lycus Valley > Juncture of 3 important Imperial Trade Routes
Antiochus named the city after his wife (and sister?) Laodice

“The Laodicean church was a halfhearted church. Perhaps none of the seven letters is more appropriate to the 21st century church. It describes vividly the respectable, sentimental, nominal, skin-deep religiosity which is so widespread among us today. Our Christianity is flabby and anemic. We appear to have taken a lukewarm bath of religion.”
John Stott

1. Jesus Knows 2. Jesus Cares 3. Jesus Counsels 4. Jesus Calls

1. Jesus Knows

v. 15 “I know your deeds”

Knows true inner state of each church: strength & weakness, faithfulness & failure

a. Lost their Drive - No Persecution from Without / No Heresy from Within

v. 15 “I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other!”

City's Major Weakness > Lack of Adequate Water Supply >
 10 kms. across Lycus valley > City of Hierapolis > Famous for Hot Springs
 Piped 10 kms. thru Stone Pipes > Arrived LIME LADEN, TEPID, SICKLY

Adjectives "hot," "cold," and "lukewarm" not describing Spiritual Fervor
 Contrast > Hot Medicinal water of Hierapolis > 10 kms to the North
 Cold, pure water of Colossae > 18 kms to the West

Church in Laodicea > had Neither COOL Refreshment for Spiritually Weary, nor
 Healing for Spiritually Sick > Totally Ineffective > Distasteful to its Lord
 SIN not Temperature > ABSENCE of GOOD WORKS

2nd Law of Thermodynamics > Closed System Moderates > No Energy Produced
 Laodicea > Closed Church > God Himself locked OUTSIDE their Door

Christ's DISAPPOINTMENT > Like God's Sorrow over Israel 1500 yrs Before...
 "For forty years I was angry with that generation; I said, "They are a people whose
 hearts go astray, and they have not known my ways." Psalm 95.10

We often FLATTER OURSELVES > but JESUS Sees and Speaks the TRUTH

b. Lost their Discernment

v. 17 "You say, 'I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.'
 Smug Satisfaction // Self Confidence > Arms too Full to Reach Out for God

"Affluenza: An array of psychological maladies such as isolation, boredom,
 passivity and lack of motivation engendered in adults, teenagers and children by
 the possession of great wealth. An unhappy condition of overload, debt, anxiety,
 and waste resulting from the dogged pursuit of more."

Late 20th Century North American Syndrome

"the man who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of
 wealth choke it, making it unfruitful" Matthew 13.22

"What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you
 boast as though you did not?" 1 Corinthians 4.7

Jesus said: "Apart from me you can do nothing" John 15.5

c. Lost their Dress

v. 17 “But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked.”

Roman times > Laodicea > Wealthiest city in Phrygia > Fertile ground good grazing
Sheep > Carefully Bred > FAMOUS Soft, Glossy Black Wool > Great Demand

Naked > No Garments of RIGHTEOUSNESS to APPEAR before a Holy God

Bible > ‘Nakedness’ symbolized Judgment & Humiliation
In God’s Sight > Laodiceans were SPIRITUAL STREAKERS
But Like Emperor’s New Clothes > Did not REALIZE they WERE NAKED

Medical School > Famous Teachers > Eye-salve from “Phrygian powder” & Oil

Blind > No Awareness of SPIRITUAL POVERTY and ETERNAL DANGER

Agricultural & Commercial Prosperity > brought Banking Industry to Laodicea

Following > Devastating Earthquake of A.D. 60 City Rebuilt w/out Financial Aid
REBUILT City on OWN FUNDS > Refused Imperial Loans

Poor > Nothing to purchase FORGIVENESS and ENTRY into God’s Kingdom

“The pride of Laodicea was infectious. Christians caught the plague. The spirit of complacency crept into the church and tainted it. Members of the church became smug and self-satisfied. Jesus Christ needed to bluntly expose them.” John Stott

Pitiful > opposite of Admirable > SMUG Self Satisfaction is EMPTINESS

If only we had STEM-CELL RESEARCH > then we would BE HEALED!!
Christ is Lord of Creation > Redeemer of World > gives Full & Final Healing

Wretched > opposite of Happy > Heading to Eternal Fire, and Gnashing of Teeth

FORGOTTEN “Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and
knowledge.” Colossians 2.3

In the Light of ETERNITY > All we Treasure on Earth is RUBBISH >
Compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord

2. Jesus Cares

NOT HAND GRENADE THROWER > Not Drive-by Rebuking > Email Critique

v. 19 “Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline.”

v. 20 “Here I am! I stand at the door and knock.”

GREAT MYSTERY > Why would He Love Us? > BUT HE DOES > Unto Death

a. Jesus Labored for the Church

I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. Matthew 16.18

v. 21 “I overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne.” HE DID IT!

INFINITE COST > Life of SINLESS SON OF GOD > Church’s Master Builder

b. Jesus Lives in the Church

“I saw seven golden lampstands, and among the lampstands was someone "like a son of man"... the seven lampstands are the seven churches” Revelation 1.12,13,20

Criticized on Earth for Choice of Company > Tax Collectors, Sinner, Prostitutes
Now as Exalted Lord > Still AT HOME WITH THE HYPOCRITES!

v. 20 “I will come in and eat with him, and he with me.”

Ephesian Church > WARNED > LAMPSTAND Can be Removed
UNFAITHFUL > He MOVES OUT > Lampstand not Turned Off > Transferred

“Nothing can exceed the desolation and melancholy appearance of the site of Laodicea today. The fragments of aqueducts and theaters spread over a vast extent of country tell of the former magnificence of this city; but of its once famous church nothing survives.” C.J. Vaughn

The Church with capital ‘C’ > Grows from Strength to Strength around World
Local churches with small ‘c’ > Opened and Closed on Regular Basis

c. Jesus Loves the Church v. 19 Those whom I love

“Having loved his own who were in the world, he now showed them the full extent of his love.”
John 13.1

1.5 “To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood”

WASHED Disciples Feet > WASHED Church with His OWN BLOOD

HISTORY MOVES TOWARD GREAT CELEBRATION OF THIS LOVE

"Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready. Revelation 19.6,7

JEALOUS LOVE > Passionate, Exclusive Love > Loves them enough to SPIT
v. 16 “So, because you are lukewarm--neither hot nor cold--I am about to spit you out of my mouth.”

Embarrassment RICH CITY > lacked Basic Resource > WATER TO DRINK
No Doubt > Laodician Citizens felt like SPITTING OUT their Tepid Water
STINGING REBUKE > Jesus : “That is how I feel about your Half-heartedness”
Their Tepid Religion is NAUSEATING to the Lord of the Church

“The Laodicean church was blind to its own needs and unwilling to face the truth. Yet honesty is the beginning of true blessing, as we admit what we are, confess our sins, and receive from God all that we need. If we want God’s best for our lives and our churches, we must be honest with God and let God be honest with us.”
Warren Wiersbe

3. Jesus Counsels

a. Experience: Been There, Done That

v. 14 "To the angel of the church in Laodicea write: These are the words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God's creation.”

Hebrew term: ‘Amen’ = What is Firm and True

“...the God whose name is Amen... the God of Amen”

Isaiah 65.16 New English Bible

“the faithful and true witness” Trustworthiness > Sharp Contrast to Laodiceans

“For no matter how many promises God has made, they are ‘Yes’ in Christ. And so through him the ‘Amen’ is spoken by us to the glory of God.” 2 Corinthians 1.20

Jesus speaks to Laodiceans like he spoke to Nicodemus: “I tell you the truth, we speak of what we know, and we testify to what we have seen” John 3.11

“the ruler of God’s creation” > “the beginning” & “the firstborn over all creation”
Close Geographical Proximity > Colossae & Laodicea > familiar with *Colossians*
Self-Designation > Most Explicit Ref. in Revelation to Preexistence of Christ

Dynamic agent of God’s Creation > thru whom Created Order brought to Existence

“For the sake of this disastrous church, Jesus presents himself as the beginning, the origin of God’s creation, the one who is able to go right down into the chaotic abyss of Laodicea’s failure and make her anew, as he once made the world.”

Michael Wilcock

v. 19 “Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest, and repent.”
Biblical Demand > Repent and Believe > Turn from Sin and Turn to the Savior

God’s Stern Hatred of Evil > Necessary part of his Love for People
Best Athletes & Finest Scholars > get Hardest & Most Demanding Training

Letter contains STRONGEST REBUKE > & SWEETEST ROMANCE from Jesus

b. Expensive: Spend More, Get More

v. 18 “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.”

Need to buy from Christ > “gold refined in the fire” > become Genuinely Rich
JESUS TALKS BUSINESS WITH THESE FOOLISH TRADERS
Gold = Spiritual Wealth passed thru Refiner’s Fire > Totally Trustworthy

White clothes > Cover shame of Nakedness > Contrast with Black Wool of City
Confident of Clear Vision > Never Imagined they Needed Christ’s Eye Salve

“For judgment I have come into this world, so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind” John 9.39

“Any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple”

Luke 14.33

“I cannot afford to buy the cheap stuff”?? WHY? Spend MORE > Get ANOTHER
 Poor > Christ has Gold // Naked > Christ has Clothes // Blind > X has Eye Salve

BUY? PURCHASE GOD’S GRACE? EARN SALVATION? Buy w/ No Money!
 “Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money,
 come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost.”

Isaiah 55.1

4. Jesus Calls

Uganda BAD MANNERS to POUND on Someone’s Door > Say “Hodi?”

If the Householder wanted to WELCOME you > Response “Karibou!”

Jesus stands outside CHURCH > your HOME > your HEART “Hodi?”

Will you RESPOND with a WARM > “KARIBOU!!”

a. To be Refreshed by Him

v. 20 “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.”

AMAZINGLY Jesus is on the OUTSIDE of this CHURCH in Laodicea
 BORN > An OUTCAST placed in Animal’s Feeding Trough
 REJECTED > Only place world had for Jesus HANG HIM ON A CROSS
 EXPECTED from WORLD > Here is CHURCH LOCKED its LORD OUT!

“The only cure for lukewarmness is the readmission of the excluded Christ.”

G. Campbell Morgan

“Our home becomes his home; the lordship we had assumed becomes his lordship; the guest we invite in proves to be the true host: his dining with us becomes our dining with him. For it is only through his abiding in us that we truly abide in him: the one abiding is inseparable from the other.” Philip Edgcumbe Hughes

Our Life WILL BECOME ‘hid with Christ in God’

Perhaps the WHOLE CHURCH will not Repent > But IF ANYONE HEARS...
 What about YOU > You will STAND BEFORE GOD ALONE > Ready??

Come and Feast!! > Symbol of Intimacy > Joy in His Messianic Kingdom

b. To Reign with Him

v. 21 “To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne”

Incarnate Son > Raised from Death > Exalted in Glory > Enthroned at Father’s
Right Hand

“If we endure, we will also reign with him” 2 Timothy 2.12

Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.”
Matthew 19.28

v. 22 “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”

7th and last time > Exhortation to hear what Spirit says to the Churches
To Churches of every Place & every Age, therefore to Us in Our Day and Place

“Seven churches, different in so many ways from one another. Seven churches, similar in so many ways to the churches in which we live and serve Jesus. What one thing do all these churches need to fortify them against the enemy’s frontal assaults, to make them savvy to his subtle stratagems, and to make them loyal to God and compassionate toward their oppressors? They need Jesus voice. His voice comforts our weak and wounded hearts, diagnoses our diseases, shatters our dreams of ease here and now, and calls us forward to the consummation of his victory in the new Jerusalem. His voice addresses us today in his letters to the seven churches of Asia, for each letter is what the spirit says to the churches.”

Dennis E. Johnson

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¹⁹ Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest, and repent. ²⁰ 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. ²¹ 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.

²² "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."

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