

“THE CHURCH OF LAODICEA”

REVELATION CHAPTER 3:14-22

Each of these seven churches can be framed with historical reference:

(2:1-7) *Ephesus*- The Apostolic Church (1st Century)

(2:8-11) *Smyrna*- The Martyr Church (A.D. 100 – A.D. 314)

(2:12-17) *Pergamum* - The Worldly Church (A.D. 314 – A.D. 590)

(2:18-29) *Thyatira*- Church of the Dark Ages, “Romanism” (A.D. 590 – 1517 & continues today)

(3:1-6) *Sardis*- The Protestant Church, “Reformation” (A.D. 1517 – A.D. 1800)

(3:7-13) *Philadelphia*- The Revived Church (A.D. 1800 to Rapture)

(3:14-22) *Laodicea*- The Apostate Church (Last Days & into the Great Tribulation)

> **LAODICEA** - Of the several cities named Laodicea in Syria and Asia Minor, only one is mentioned in the Scriptures, namely, the one situated in the confines of Phrygia and Lydia, on the banks of the Lycus, and about ninety miles E of Ephesus-not far from Colossae. After having been successively called Diosopolis and Rhoas, it was named Laodicea in honor of Laodice, the wife of Antiochus II (261 BC - 246 BC), who rebuilt it. It was destroyed by an earthquake (A.D. 66, or earlier) and rebuilt by Marcus Aurelius. It was the seat of a Christian church (Col 2:1; 4:13,15-16; Rev 1:11). It is now a heap of ruins, called by the Turks Eski-hissar, or "old castle." The town was located on a flat-topped hill. A wall (about a kilometer long on each of its four sides) surrounded the crown of the hill. Gates pierced this wall on the N, E, and NW. At the SW edge of the plateau stood a stadium, built and dedicated to Vespasian in A.D. 79. Near the stadium was a stone aqueduct, five miles long and probably dating to the second century A.D. Adjacent to the stadium on the N is a structure probably to be identified as baths and built during the reign of Hadrian (A.D. 117-38). Remains of two rather badly ruined theaters stand on the NE of Laodicea. Ruins of numerous other unidentified structures may be seen at the site. ¹

Bible commentator M.F. Unger writes about the CHURCH AT LAODICEA – “Among the residents of this city at the time of the apostles were many Jews; and it is probably owing to this fact that a Christian church was planted here at so early a date. It appears from the epistle to the Colossians (Col 4:15-16) that Paul never visited Laodicea, but hearing, most probably, from Epaphras of the false doctrines spread in that city, he wrote to the Colossians desiring that his epistle to that church should also be read in Laodicea. The message of the Spirit (Rev 3:14-22) to the church of Laodicea was an awful warning. See Laodiceans, Epistle to the. The Laodicean condition describes the spiritual lukewarmness and worldliness that will prevail in the professing church of Christ at the end of the age. Rich, cultured, religiously ritualistic-this church will have become so self-satisfied and worldly as to have ostracised Christ completely. He is represented prophetically as standing on the outside knocking for admission (Rev 3:20). No longer is He admitted by the corporate body, but stands outside extending an invitation to individuals. The awful spiritual condition, so utterly abhorrent to God, calls forth one of the boldest figures used in the NT. *"So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth"* (3:16; cf. **2 Tim 3:1-8** for the spiritual and moral conditions at the end of the church age).” Laodicea has been interpreted to mean **“rights of the people.”**

> **Warren Wiersbe writes**, “The name “Laodicea” means “the rule of the people” and suggests a democratic church that no longer follows spiritual leaders or the authority of the Word of God. The church is lukewarm, a condition that comes from mixing hot and cold. It is a church with truth that has been diluted with error. The tragedy is that this church is “rich” and knows not that it is poor, pitiful, blind, and naked. What a picture of the apostate church of today, with its prestige, wealth, and political power, yet all the while spiritually poor.”

I) Jesus the Author! (v14)

(14a) Jesus, “the Amen”- The final authority. The fulfillment of all the promises **2 Cor 1:20** -*For all the promises of God in Him are Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us*. Also an Old Testament title for God is **“Amen”** in Hebrew means **truth**, (Is. 65:16).

(14b) Jesus, “the Faithful & True Witness”- Jesus is completely **trustworthy** & perfectly accurate.

(14c) Jesus, “the Beginning of the creation of God”- **“Beginning”** is **arche** (Gk.)- Arche does not mean that Christ was the first person God created, but rather that Christ Himself is the **source, origin or active cause of creation**. **John 1:3**- *All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made*. **Heb 1:2-3**- *has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds*; **Col 1:15-17**- *He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by Him all things were created that are in heaven*

¹ (BIBLIOGRAPHY: W. M. Ramsay, The Cities and Bishoprics of Phrygia (1895), 1:32-83; D. Magie, Roman Rule in Asia Minor (1950), 1:127; J. S. Rudd and E. M. B. Green, Expository Times 69 (1957-58): 176-78; C. J. Hemer, Buried History 11 (1975): 175-90; W. M. Ramsay, The Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia (1978), pp. 413-33.)

and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. (The word “firstborn” is *prototokos* and is not limited to the first one born chronologically, but refers to the supreme or preeminent one, the one receiving the highest honor. Christ is the source (arche) of the creation, and the supreme person (prototokos) in it.)

II) Jesus the Revelator! (v15-17)

(v15) Observe three spiritual conditions a person can be found in: (1) What does it mean to be *cold*? Those who don't know Christ as their Lord & Savior. (2) What does it mean to be *hot*? Those who know Him & live for Him through a transformed life! (3) What does it mean to be *lukewarm*? **> Those who are lukewarm will produce false fruit- Mt. 7:15-23; false righteousness- Mt. 21:28-32; false teachers - 2 Peter 2:1-14; false churches - 2 Tim 4:1-8 - I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom: Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables. But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry. For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.**

(v16) What happens to those who are lukewarm? Jesus will vomit them out of His mouth! **Matt 15:14** - “They are blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind leads the blind, both will fall into a ditch.” **1 Cor 6:9-10** - Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. **Gal 5:19-21** - Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

(v17) What did this church say about itself? “*I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing*” This statement reveals that Laodicea was arrogant, prideful & self-centered. How did Jesus describe this church? “*Wretched, miserable, poor, blind & naked.*”

> William Booth of the Salvation Army said, “I consider that the chief dangers which confront the coming century will be religion without the Holy Ghost, Christianity without Christ, forgiveness without repentance, salvation without regeneration, politics without God, and heaven without hell.”

> There's an inscription at an old cathedral in Lubeck, Germany that reads,

*Ye call Me Master and obey Me not.
Ye call Me Light and see Me not.
Ye call Me Way and walk Me not.
Ye call Me Life and choose Me not.
Ye call Me Wise and follow Me not.
Ye call Me Fair and love Me not.
Ye call Me Rich and ask Me not.
Ye call Me Eternal and seek Me not.
Ye call Me Noble and serve Me not.
Ye call Me Gracious and trust Me not.
Ye call Me Might and honor Me not.
Ye call Me Just and fear Me not.
If I condemn you, blame Me not.*

III) Jesus the Counselor! (v18-19)

Jesus counsels Laodicea to do four things:

#1- “Buy from Jesus gold refined from the fire”- 1 Peter 1:7-8- *that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, whom having not seen you love. Rom 10:17 - So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. Let’s read **Psalm 19:7-11***

#2- “Buy from Jesus white garments & be clothed”- Rev 19:7-9- *Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready." And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. Then he said to me, "Write: 'Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!'*

#3- “Anoint their eyes with eye salve, that they may see”- Acts 26:12-18 (Saul to Paul)

#4- “Be zealous & repent”- Be zealous means “to be hot,” get on fire for God! - Heb 10:24-25 - And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching. Repent - Matt 4:17- From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Acts 2:38-39 - Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call."

> How does a child of God produce fruit? By reading, studying, and staying in the Word of God! One author writes, “The **Holy Spirit of God** works through the **Word of God**, in the **Child of God**, to conform us to the **Image of God**, that is **Jesus Christ the Son of God**, that we may manifest the **Righteousness of God**, to the praise and **Glory of God**, as children of the **Kingdom of God**, anxiously awaiting our **Redemption by God!**”

IV) Jesus the Rewarder! (20-22)

(v20) What will Jesus do when a person hears His voice and opens the door of their heart to Him? “He will come into him & dine with him, and he with Me!”- Rev 19:9-10 - Then he said to me, "Write: 'Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!'" And he said to me, "These are the true sayings of God."

(v21) What does the overcomer get to do? To sit with Jesus on His throne! Rewards to the overcomers of all the churches: “to eat from the tree of life” (2:7); “the crown of life” (2:10); “protection from the second death” (2:11); “the hidden manna” (2:17); “authority to rule the nations” (2:26-27); “the morning star” (2:28); “white garments” (3:5); “to be made a pillar in God’s temple & to have written on them the name of God, of the new Jerusalem, and of Christ” (3:12); “to sit with Jesus on His throne” (3:21)!!!

(22) Is anybody listening? We are, we will, and we want to be sizzling hot! AMEN!