

BOOK OF REVELATION

Message to Laodicea: Chapter 3:14-22

I. INTRODUCTION: BACKGROUND OF LAODICEA

We are now going to teach on the address that Jesus made to the seventh church Jesus mentioned in the book of Revelation, the church at Laodicea. There is some background given in scripture about this church.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND: Laodicea was located in Asia Minor (modern day Turkey) and was approximately 11 miles east of Colosse and 100 miles west of Ephesus. Laodicea was founded in approximately 261-253 B.C. by Antiochus II Theos king of the Seleucid Empire, which was the western portion of the former Greek Empire carved out by Alexander the Great. Then the town came under the control of the Kingdom of Pergamon, which the city of Pergamos was its capital, in 188 B.C. In 133 B.C., the King of Pergamon, Attalus III, yielded control of his empire, including the town of Laodicea, to the Roman Empire.

The town was a road junction in the area where several highways came together, which facilitated Laodicea becoming a center of commerce. Laodicea also had a abundance of good grazing land, a strong textile manufacturing industry which was known for its “raven black wool”, and even manufactured “Phrygian powder” which was used as an eye salve. The only thing lacking in Laodicea was a natural water supply. The Laodiceans constructed an aqueduct system approximately four miles long from a nearby spring to bring water into the city.

SCRIPTURAL BACKGROUND: Colosse is the town where the church of the Colossians was located and to whom the Book of Colossians was first written. The Apostle Paul gave the request that the epistle (letter) he wrote to the Colossians, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, be read at the church of Ephesus.

Colossians 4:16: “And when this epistle is read among you, cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans; and that ye likewise read the epistle from Laodicea.”

Nymphas was the pastor of the church during the time the epistle to the Colossians was penned.

Colossians 4:15: “Salute the brethren which are in Laodicea, and Nymphas, and the church which is in his house.”

Some traditions say that Diotrephes, who is mentioned in the epistle of 3 John as loving to be prominent, was the pastor, or a leader in the church at Laodicea. This is however far from certain and scripture does not tell us.

3 John 9: “I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not.”

All this has significance and adds to our understanding of the passage we are studying.

II. EXEGESIS OF MESSAGE TO LAODICEA

A. VERSE 14: COMMENCING THE ADDRESS TO LAODICEA.

VERSE 14: "And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write;"

As in the other addresses that the Lord Jesus Christ is addressing the pastor of the church. The word "angel" means "messenger" in the Greek language. The context of the entire passage here indicates that the "angel" here is a reference to the pastor of the church and not an angelic being.

"...These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness,"

The word "Amen" carries the meaning of firm or trustworthy. If used as an adverb it means, "surely" or "so be it". What a wonderful word that the Lord Jesus uses in this address to refer to Himself. He is the only that is totally firm, meaning He is unmoving and unwavering. He is complete trustworthy and is the source of truth.

He defines the word Amen with the explanation of "the faithful and true witness". What a perfect description of the Amen. He is faithful to his testimony of our standing in his finished work on the cross. Also his testimony is always true and can never lie.

"...the beginning of the creation of God; "

This statement has generated some controversy where there is none. Again the context here is important. The word "beginning" here carries the meaning of "chief". Jesus was NOT the first being created, as some commentators proclaim, but is the architect of creation and was in charge of the acts of creation. The book of Colossians explains the role of the Lord Jesus so well.

Colossians 1:16-17 - "(16) For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: (17) And he is before all things, and by him all things consist."

B. VERSES 15 – 17: CONDEMNATION OF LAODICEA.

VERSE 15: "I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot:"

The Lord Jesus knows the works of the church. The word "works" carries the meaning of intense labor. Notice that he does not have one good thing to say about the labor of this church as compared to all of the other churches that He addressed. The Lord Jesus had some good things to say about them, along with bringing to their attention their problems, and then offering correction. But the church at Laodicea was in the worst condition of all the churches that the Lord Jesus addressed.

“...I would thou wert cold or hot.”

That statement “thou wert” carries the meaning of “you should be”. Thou is noun of singularity, a tribute to the accuracy of the King James Bible. The Lord Jesus went so far as to wish they were hot or cold, which is really amazing. You can sense frustration with the believers here in Laodicea in that statement.

VERSE 16: “So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot,”

Now we see the explanation given by the Lord Jesus for the statement in verse 15. He explains, so there is no doubt, the meaning of lukewarm. Most people do not enjoy drinking, or eating for that matter, that is lukewarm. To consume something that is lukewarm is considered unpalatable by most people. When one consumes something lukewarm it is not considered a pleasant or desirable experience. The Lord Jesus is comparing the spiritual condition of this church here to an unpalatable meal. He is saying their spiritual condition is unpleasant and even sickening.

“...I will spue thee out of my mouth.”

The word “spue” here carries the meaning of “vomit”. These believers at Laodicea make the Lord Jesus feel nauseated, just like one would feel nauseated when consuming something lukewarm. He wants nothing to do with the condition of this church. Bottom line: The church at Laodicea makes the Lord feel sick.

VERSE 17: “Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing;”

Now the Lord Jesus explains why this church makes Him feel sick. Remember the town of Laodicea was known for its material wealth and industry. The people of the town felt they had everything to make life full, complete and even pleasant. This mental attitude had permeated this church as well. They were totally consumed in materialism and felt they were not lacking, even in the relationship with God.

“...and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked:”

Now the Lord Jesus describes the TRUE spiritual condition of this church: (1) Wretched – which carries the meaning of “enduring a trial” and worn out from it as a result (2) Miserable – generally in poor condition following their trial (3) Poor – Beggar or destitute, without any possessions (4) Blind – which carries the meaning of “opaque”, meaning smoky, or fuzzy vision. Having some vision but not very clear, and finally (5) Naked – nude or without any clothing at all to wear, revealing one's true physical condition.

The Lord Jesus is saying that this church is spiritually worn out, in poor condition, bankrupt, cannot see well, and worst of all, nude, without protection from the weather or personal shame. They were worse off than previous church the Lord Jesus addressed. No church or believer could be in any worse condition spiritually than this church.

C. VERSES 18 - 19: COUNSEL OF THE LORD JESUS TO LAODICEA.

The Lord Jesus mentions their first need. They are spiritually poor, or as we would say today, “bankrupt”. They can obtain gold, the most valuable metal known to exist from the Lord Jesus Himself. The word “tried” carries the meaning of “refined”. Fire was used in ancient times to melt gold and thus remove the impurities from it in the process.

*“...and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed,
and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear;”*

The Lord Jesus mentions their next need, clothing. Notice here he counsels them to buy “white raiment” from Him. The wearing of white raiment implies purity of the person wearing this clothing. He will purify these believers of sin, if they allow him. It covers the person's nakedness and prevents them from being ashamed by having their nakedness exposed.

“...and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see.”

Laodicea was well known for its manufacture of the medicinal eyesalve, “Phrygian powder”. The Lord Jesus is counseling them to buy the spiritual eyesalve from Him that will clear their spiritual vision to see where they need spiritual improvement. He is the only one that can sell it to them.

VERSE 19: As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.

The Lord Jesus here is reminding them that they as born again believers are the only ones that he would rebuke and chasten. Born again believers are the only one's who are the adopted children of God. He would not chasten someone who is not His child.

Hebrews 12:6-7 - “(6) For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. (7) If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?”

D. VERSES 20 – 21: RECONCILIATION WITH LAODICEA.

VERSE 20: Behold, I stand at the door, and knock:

Notice where the Lord Jesus is. He is on the outside knocking to get in. This church is so out of communication, out of fellowship with God, due to their attitude of lack of needs, that Jesus is not even in their midst, but on the outside wanting to come back inside. Notice also he is not forcing his way in but is asking for permission to come in by knocking. The Lord Jesus never comes into a life that he is not invited to come into.

VERSE 20 (CONTINUED): *“...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.*

First, the wayward believer here has to be listening for the Lord Jesus invitation to come in. Again the Lord Jesus is not talking to the unsaved but the backslidden believers here at Laodicea. If the backslidden believer is not listening, he will not hear and answer that door. The word “sup” carries the meaning of “dining” or having a meal. Going to someone's home and sharing a meal is not something that is considered casual, but is an act of friendship and acceptance. The Lord Jesus is asking the believers here to let him back into the innermost part of their lives and not to leave him out of their lives anymore.

VERSE 21: *“To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne,”*

The one who overcometh is the same as in the previous verses of this chapter and the second chapter. The only one who can overcome are those who have accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour. Even if these believers did not repent, they would eventually die, and then finally have overcome when their souls departed this life and went on to heaven.

“...even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.”

The Lord Jesus is saying here that the believer will share heaven and the area around God's throne with him for all eternity. That is almost inconceivable to us in our current mortal bodies. The Apostle Paul described it so well in 1 Corinthians. He was quoting from Isaiah 64:4.

1 Corinthians 2:9 *“But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.”*

E. VERSE 22: CLOSING OF THE ADDRESS TO LAODICEA.

VERSE 22: *“He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.”*

We see again that the Lord Jesus gives the same admonition to this church He has given to all the other churches. Only the believer has “ears to hear” and is willing to apply to his life the conviction and comfort that only the Holy Spirit can bring. Notice that the admonition never changed with any of the churches.

III. PROPHECTIC SIGNIFICANCE: LAODICEA (THE PEOPLE'S RIGHTS):

Represents the church of our contemporary age. The period began in approximately 1900 and continues through the present day. We are in the age of Laodicea. The open door of the Philadelphia age is now closing, or is closed in many places. Many Christians in this age are serving God, not in wholeheartedness and zeal, but simply going through the formalities for the sake of appearance. Many Christians in this age think they have all their needs met, but are needy in ways that they are not aware. However there are some who carry for God's work with sincerity and zeal but they are in the vast minority or even a remnant.

LAODICEA:	LUKEWARM CHURCH :
Laodicea – The Peoples Rights.	Many think today their rights and needs are first, putting the needs of other second.
Lukewarm, neither cold or hot.	More and more believers are just going through the motions of serving God without having a zeal or sincerity for God's work.
Makes the Lord sick.	The work of God in many places today is not well and make the Lord sick.
Had everything they need physically and materially but were bankrupt spiritually	Many believers in this period act as if they are self-sufficient and do not need God for anything.
Jesus is on the outside knocking for entrance	Jesus is on the outside knocking for entrance.

The following major events happen during this period:

- Beginning in the early 20th century was the modernist movement: Deviation from the fundamentals of the faith by the main line Protestant denominations. This is the beginning of the great apostasy that is normal at the end of most dispensations.
- Acceleration of the development of technology, industry, and medical knowledge making the lives of many people with any want for physical needs become possible.
- The nations of the developed world going from having a knowledge of God to being most humanistic and without almost any knowledge of God left.

IV. APPLICATIONS

- (1) Jesus is always faithful and true, no matter what our spiritual condition might be.
- (2) What is our spiritual temperature? Are we cold, lukewarm, or hot?
- (3) Being lukewarm spiritually is worse than being hot or cold, it makes Jesus sick.
- (4) Do we think we do not have any spiritual needs or even physical needs?
- (5) Jesus will take care of our all our needs if we ask for His help.
- (6) Even if we are not what we should be in this life, we will be what God wants us to be in the next life. But we should strive to be like Him while we are here.