

Message to the Church of Laodicea: Let Christ Come In

Revelation 3:14-22

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Introduction: Illustrate: "I don't know & I don't care." The city of Laodicea, founded in 250 B.C. by Antiochus II, was named after his wife Laodice. It was located 100 miles from the Aegean coast (due east of Ephesus) & 40 miles SE of Philadelphia. As this city was bound geographically to Hierapolis & Colosse, so too were the churches bound in the bonds of Christian fellowship (see Col. 4:13). It was a great commercial city, having an active wool industry (famous for its black wool); noted for its manufacture of an eye salve; & famous as a banking center. Laodicea was destroyed by an earthquake (like Philadelphia & Sardis) in A.D. 17, & aided in rebuilding by Emperor Tiberius. The city was again destroyed in A.D. 60, but this time rebuilt by its own people who refused any outside help. It was situated on 3 major trade routes & would have stood guard over them except for one major weakness: it had no source of good water nearby, so it depended on an aqueduct to feed water into the city. Their enemies could easily cut off their water supply in a siege & force them to surrender. As a result, the city became quite diplomatic so that instead of warring, Laodicea reached agreements with its enemies & lived mainly in peace, even before the Pax Romana. Because of such peace, the people became immensely wealthy & lived in confidence and security, needing 'nothing'. What about the church there? Look for the evidences of Christ's absence as well as for the results of His presence as I read this text.

I. The Command (3:14)

A. *"The Amen"* - 'so be it' >

1. "Christ is picturing Himself as the confirmer of all truth; but more than that, He is the truth. John 14:6" (Neal).
2. This indicates the Sovereignty of His Person & the certainty of His promises.

B. *"The faithful & true witness"* >

1. "He testifies to the truth of God. He makes known to us the will of God for our salvation & growth in grace" (Neal).
2. He is in contrast to this church, which was neither faithful nor true.

C. *"The beginning of the creation of God"* >

1. *"Beginning"* - meaning: "source" or "origin."
2. Christ is the fountainhead of creation - cf. John 1:3; Col. 1:15-17; Heb. 1:2-3.

To the lifeless, unfaithful, & indifferent church at Laodicea, Christ speaks as the One Who is the source of all life, the faithful & true witness, Who speaks with authority & certainty.

II. The Condemnation (3:15-17) - Note, there is no Commendation! [cf. Sardis]

'Lukewarmness' - consider its imagery, its indictment, & its illustrations.

A. No sense of need (:17) >

1. What?

- a. Because they were materially wealthy, they became spiritually indifferent & complacent.
- b. Yet, "the wealthy Laodiceans were poor! Manufacturers of eye salve were blind! Producers of beautiful woolen garments were naked!" (Neal).

2. Who?

- a. Those religious but lost - cf. Matthew 21:28-32.
"The result is churchianity, membership in an organization without Biblical Christianity & without membership in the Body of Christ accompanied by the miracle of the new birth" (Walvoord).
- b. Those saved but lax - cf. Matthew 24:12.
"We have just enough Christianity to ease our conscience & still our fears of judgment but not enough to keep us dissatisfied with ourselves & seeking to grow in the Christian life" (Neal). [cf. Ezekiel 16:49] – content & satisfied? no persecution nor opposition?

B. No enthusiasm ('zeal') >

1. An explanation: not excited; not very much for nor very much against anything; blasé.
2. An example: Acts 18:17, "...and Gallio cared for none of these things." - (indifferent).

C. No vision >

1. They were blind to their own spiritual need, but they were "*wretched, miserable, & poor, & blind, & naked.*" (:17b) – [“*naked*” – without proper clothing, Isa. 64:6].
2. They were blind to the needs of others.
 - a. They had no persecution from the Jews or Romans (obviously they had not tried to reach them with the Gospel).
 - b. Compare the condition of the Church after the "conversion" of Constantine.

III. The Correction (:18-19)

A. Christ's counsel (:18) >

1. Buy gold from Christ; true riches, available through suffering & fidelity to truth (I Pet. 1:7).
2. Put on white raiment; the righteousness of Christ, to cover one's sinfulness & shame before God (contrast the black wool of Laodicea).
Where is the shame of nakedness today? cf. II Sam. 10:4-5; Isa. 20:4; Ezk. 16:37-39; Na. 3:5.
3. Anoint eyes with eye salve; need of spiritual discernment as to one's nature & needs.

B. Christ's chastening (:19) >

1. The expectation - for those Christ loves.
 - a. "*I rebuke*" - expose, convict, or punish.
 - b. "*I chasten*" - to train, discipline, or educate.
"It is evident that Christ has in mind here those few in the Laodicean church who are actually born again but whose lives have taken on the same lukewarm characteristics as those about them who are merely professing Christians. The fact that they are rebuked & chastened is evidence that they are true children of God, as such a program is not addressed to those who are unsaved. cf. Hebrews 12:3-15" (Walvoord).
2. The exhortation - for those Christ loves.
 - a. "*Repent*" - aorist (past) imperative: single act or at a point in time - change of attitude and action – [“*repent*” is last in the sentence, for emphasis].
 - b. "*Be zealous*" - present imperative: a continual process or a series of actions - "living continuously in harmony with the will of God" (Neal).

IV. The Challenge (:20-21)

A. The invitation (:20) - three applications >

1. Christ stands outside the door of the Laodicean church, pleading for admittance. The cure for lukewarmness is Christ's presence in their midst.
2. Christ stands outside the door of the heart of the sinner, awaiting entry (Solman's painting).
3. Christ standing at the door, ready to return - Luke 12:35-38; Matthew 24:33.

B. The inheritance (:21) >

1. The promise to the overcomer: sit with Christ on His throne - Mt. 19:28; II Tim. 2:12.
2. The parallel to the overcomer: Christ was victorious - Mt. 26:64; John 16:33.

Conclusion: This message ends (:22) as has the previous 6 messages. Anyone willing to hear is challenged to hear & heed the message. The Laodicean church had no sense of need, no enthusiasm, & no vision. How are you today? Are you lukewarm? Are you religious but lost? The Savior says He will spue you out of His mouth. Are you saved but lax? Do you sense your need for Bible study & prayer? Do you desire to be in every service you possibly can that you might grow? When were you last excited about your relationship to Christ & His blessings & gave praise to the Lord for His goodness? When was the last time you witnessed to a lost person? Do we as a church hear Christ seeking entrance into our midst? Do you as a lost person hear His knocking at your heart's door? Why not come today & be saved? While the absence of Christ leads to apathy & earthly self-sufficiency, Christ's presence results in victory & eternal satisfaction.