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A0525 -- Jun. 19, 2005 -- Revelation 3:18-22 --Laodicea: The Church of Lukewarmness-Part 2

Let's read vv 14-17 to review last week's lesson.

Revelation 3:14-16 ¹⁴ "To the messenger of the church in Laodicea write: The Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God, says this: ¹⁵ 'I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot; I wish that you were cold or hot. ¹⁶ 'So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will vomit you out of My mouth.

Revelation 3:17 'Because you say, "I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing," and you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked,

Verse 17 is the Laodicean self-evaluation and Christ's evaluation. "Oh look at me, '**I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing**'". The inference is that the Laodicean's thought they were responsible for their own wealth. "Their self-appraisal is at odds with their true condition" (Scott). Spiritual blindness often accompanies material wealth. That's because having a lot of material luxuries leads to complacency. Does this sound like America in general? Does this sound like the American Church in particular? Part of the problem may have been the member's inability to distinguish between material and spiritual prosperity. This is all too often the case. We think because we have material riches that God is blessing us for our spiritual well-being. That is a lie. In fact, it's almost always the reverse.

Material Condition

Abject Poverty
Rich

Spiritual Condition

Rich
Dead, Abhorrent

Example 1: Smyrna

Revelation 2:9 I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich),

Example 2: Philadelphia

Revelation 3:8 That you have a *little power* [little resources], and have kept My word, and have not denied My name.

The two poorest churches were Smyrna and Philadelphia and they were the only two that received no condemnation. The two richest churches were Sardis and Laodicea and they are the two of the seven that are not commended for anything. I don't know what this tells you but it tells me a lot. It tells me that money is closely associated with spirituality. I'm not alone.

Example 3: Jesus

Matthew 19:23-24 "Truly I say to you, it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. ²⁴ "Again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God."

Luke 6:24 "But woe to you who are rich, for you are receiving your comfort in full.

Now, there is nothing wrong with being wealthy. That's not what I'm saying. I'm saying that what counts is your spiritual status and it is plain that Scripture presents the general truth that poverty naturally leads people toward spirituality, towards developing deeper fellowship with God, and riches lead people away from God, toward spiritual laxity and complacency. It's just a fact of life. But there are no excuses

Notice Christ's evaluation. In contrast to their self-evaluation Christ says **and you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked**. In other words, you are ignorant of your true condition. You are so blinded by your material riches you can't even see who you are anymore. You've now identified yourself with the possessions. Folks, that's bondage. A person like this is in bondage to the materials they possess. Their image is defined by what they possess. Christians can get in this kind of problem. Christ, the **Amen** says you are **wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked**. Material wealth blinds people to their true spiritual condition. You may be amazed to find that these five words are descriptions of believers, not unbelievers.

Believers can be **wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked**. Let's look at these words and then we'll close.

The first word, **wretched** is the Greek word *talaiporos*. This was the word that Paul used to describe himself in Romans 7 when he said, "Wretched man that I am, who will deliver me from this body of death?" A believer can be wretched. The second word, **miserable**, is the Greek word *eleeinos*. This kind of a person is a person who deserves extreme pity. Their life situation is so **miserable** that they deserve pity. The third word, **poor**, is a word we've seen before with the Church of Smyrna in 2:7-11. Remember, there were two words for poor in Greek. One meant not having anything extra. The other meant having nothing at all. This is the second word used again. It is the word *ptoichea* and it refers to "abject poverty, having nothing". The picture is of one who crouches and begs, a homeless beggar. This is what they look like in Christ's eyes. Fourth, they are **blind**. This is the Greek word *tuphlos*, not toof-less, although they may have been. This is an ironic description because the city was well known for its famous eye-salve which healed all kinds of eye disorders. The intent of Christ is to say that they are **blind** to spiritual things. They were blinded by their own wealth. Lastly they are described as **naked**, the Greek word *gumnos*. We'll see next week that this nakedness does not refer to the lack of salvation but the lack of righteous deeds which follow salvation. They have no righteous deeds, they are naked.

Exhortation (3:18-19)

Revelation 3:18 I advise you to buy from Me gold refined by fire so that you may become rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself, and that the shame of your nakedness will not be revealed; and eye salve to anoint your eyes so that you may see.

The exhortation in verse 18 is three-fold. Christ **advises** them to **buy** three things. First of all, **I advise you to buy from Me gold refined by fire**. Now, remember that Christ is speaking to those who are **lukewarm**. The **lukewarm** here are genuine believers not professing believers. There were two reasons I hold that the **lukewarm** are genuine believers. First, if they were unbelievers then why is there no clear gospel presentation. If they are without Christ then they need the gospel. Second, there is no NT epistle addressed to unbelievers. These seven letters function as seven epistles. Therefore they are all written to believers within these seven local churches. Therefore, verse 18 is not a call to salvation. If it was then salvation would be based on our purchasing three things from God rather than on Christ's purchase price paid on the cross. So, the first bit of advice or counsel from Christ is that they **buy from Christ gold refined by fire**. The point Christ wants to make

by saying **you buy from Me** is that they need what only He can provide. Their wealth does not make them self-sufficient. They have great need for what only He can provide. The word for **gold** here refers to “pure gold”, gold that has been refined through the refining process to remove all impurities. According to other passages the **gold refined by fire** refers to faith. These lukewarm believers need to live by faith **so that they may become rich**. We become **rich**, not by storing up things that decay but by living a life of faith which results in eternal rewards. It should be apparent that a fruitless Christian makes Christ sick to His stomach. You have been given the great gift of salvation, you have been given every spiritual blessing, you have been given spiritual gifts, you have been given everything you need for a life of godliness and to not take advantage of such gifts makes Christ want to vomit. J. Vernon McGee used to talk about how some Christians will be walking around the Kingdom with smoke billowing off of them. They will have no rewards. They will have gotten in the Kingdom but they will have no reward status. **1 Corinthians 3:15** *“If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.”* Heaven may be all you want but Christ wants much more for you. He detests the spirit that wishes only for heaven and forfeits rewards and He should know their importance. He desires that Christians advance into reward status and not just get saved. Getting saved is apparently the beginning and end of many Christians lives. Christ wishes that we would realize that getting saved is only the beginning and we have from that moment until our physical death or the rapture to learn to abide in Him and produce the fruit of the Spirit building up reward status.

Secondly, **Christ advises them to buy from Him white garments so that they may clothe themselves, and that the shame of their nakedness will not be revealed. white garments** does not refer to “imputed righteousness” but to “righteous deeds” which follow salvation. Turn over to Rev 19:8. Here is the church, the bride of Christ described in heaven just before the 2nd Coming.

Revelation 19:8 It was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright *and* clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.

The righteous acts are what clothes the bride of Christ. Without “righteous acts” we are considered **naked** by Christ. A person who is just saved is still **naked** in the sense that he has no righteous acts to cover his nakedness. He has salvation but he does not have righteous acts which build reward status. The issue here again is rewards not salvation.

Third, **Christ advises them to buy from Him eye salve to anoint their eyes so that they may see**. If you recall, Laodicea had a large medical district. They became famous for a

medicine known as **eye-salve** which supposedly cured all sorts of ocular diseases and disorders. Christ is advising them that they need some serious spiritual **eye salve** to correct their terrible spiritual vision. These believers are so blinded by their material wealth that they cannot see that they are **wretched and blind, and poor and naked**. What they need here is the illuminating ministry of the Holy Spirit. These believers have no spiritual discernment. They are **blind** but the Holy Spirit can open their eyes to see.

Revelation 3:19 'Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline; therefore be zealous and repent.

If the tone of the letter seems harsh so far, Jesus reminds them that **those whom I love, I reprove and discipline**. Christ does not **reprove and discipline** unbelievers.

Hebrews 12:5 "MY SON, DO NOT REGARD LIGHTLY THE DISCIPLINE OF THE LORD, NOR FAINT WHEN YOU ARE REPROVED BY HIM; ⁶ FOR THOSE WHOM THE LORD LOVES HE DISCIPLINES, AND HE SCOURGES EVERY SON WHOM HE RECEIVES."...⁸ But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. ⁹ Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live? ¹⁰ For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He disciplines us for *our* good, so that we may share His holiness.

Reproof and discipline signal God's love for a person. The natural father of a son will discipline his own son. But fathers do not discipline other people's children. In the same way, God disciplines His spiritual sons. But God does not discipline those who are not His spiritual sons. It is plain from this principle that when we turn to the **lukewarm** in Laodicea that they are genuine believers. Otherwise Christ would not reprove and discipline them. It is also clear that Christ does this to bring about holiness in His church. He reproves and disciplines us to stir us up out of our indifference, our lukewarmness, our numbness. If Christ does not **reprove and discipline** you then it is a good sign that you may not be saved.

These words are added in v 19 to assure them that this discipline is due to God's love for them. A parent who does not discipline and reprove his child does not love that child. Because Christ **loves** them **and reproves and disciplines** those He loves, Christ says, **therefore be zealous and repent**. Christ has a two-fold way of dealing with lukewarm believers. First, there is verbal reproof (e.g. Jezebel 2:21-22). This may come from a friend

who recognizes your problem or from Bible teaching in the pulpit. If you don't respond to verbal reproof by **repenting** then Christ moves to divine chastening which will involve physical weakness, physical sickness and even premature physical death (1 Cor 11:30; James 5:20; 1 John 5:16; e.g. Ananias and Saphira in Acts 5:1ff). These believers need to respond to Christ's verbal rebuke before He pulls out the paddle and really lays it on. Christ is serious about His body. He is building His church and He takes it seriously when a believer doesn't take the Christian life seriously. Get in shape or I'll take you out is Christ's way of dealing with His church.

Christ commands them to do two things in response to His love. First, **be zealous** and second, **repent**. Actually **repentance** should take place first. They need to have a change of mind about their spiritual status. Their material wealth has blinded them to their spiritual poverty. They need to change their mind about their spiritual status. In verse 17 they said, "**we are rich, and have become wealthy and have need of nothing**". Their minds need to be changed so that they can say, with Christ, "**we are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked**". This is a great example of what "repentance" is all about. It's a change of mind about someone or something. When we change our way of thinking to Christ's way of thinking repentance has taken place.

Repentance – a change of mind. What goes on in the mind (dianoia) are thoughts developed by reasoning processes. We have had a change of mind when our thoughts conform to Christ's thoughts which means our reasoning processes underlying our thoughts have been altered.

Our Thinking (Human View Point) Christ's Thinking (Divine View Point)

"we are rich, and have become wealthy and have need of nothing" *"we are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked"*

Second, Christ commanded them to **be zealous**. The word *zeleuo* means "to become hot". Christ wants them to become hot spiritually. Remember, Christ wishes that they were **cold or hot**, but their condition of **lukewarmness** was sickening. Anything is better than lukewarmness. Christ wants them to burn with zeal for Bible doctrine. God wants us to burn with zeal for Bible doctrine. This word also has the sense of "jealousy". This is the one area where we should be jealous. We should be jealous for the word of God. You can't let anything else get in the way. You must be jealous for time to study God's word. If you're not I assure you Satan will fill your time with frivolous activities. He will have you do anything except things of eternal value. That is a good way to measure your activities and time management. Ask yourself, "Does what I am doing have any eternal value? If not

your activities are simply leading toward spiritual stagnation, numbness to the things of Christ, indifference to the salvation Christ gave you, ignorance of the spiritual gifts Christ gave you, etc...**Be zealous** therefore and **repent**.

Revelation 3:20 'Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will sup with him, and he with Me.

Verse 20 provides a wonderful promise for believers who respond properly. **Behold**, Christ **stands at the door and knocks**. He has been and is continually standing **at the door and** He is continually **knocking**. This verse is commonly used as support for the wrong idea that we should ask Jesus to come into our heart. In fact, it is very common for adults to use this verse as a salvation verse, telling children that all they have to do to be saved is “ask Jesus to come into their heart”. But that is not taught in this verse at all. In fact, the words “come into” and “heart” aren’t even used in this verse. Nor is this idea taught anywhere in Scripture. Finally, it is not a message that saves. It is a common slogan but one that does not result in a common salvation. One cannot be saved by asking Jesus into their heart. What does that mean anyway? To a child who thinks of his heart as the organ on the left side of his chest? Many a child have laid in bed at night and looked to their heart for assurance by asking “Jesus are you there, can you hear me?” That is not the gospel message. The gospel message is “believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved” not “ask Jesus into your heart.” Besides, as I’ve shown you, this verse is not for unbelievers at all anyway. Who are those in verse 19 who Christ loves and therefore reproves and disciplines? Believers. This verse is a promise for those who are already believers. It has nothing to do with salvation.

Christ is not standing and knocking on unbelievers hearts but standing and knocking to enter into intimate fellowship with **lukewarm** believers. The promise is for **anyone who hears** Christ’s **voice and opens the door**. What one must hear is all that the Amen has written to us in this letter. If we hear that message with understanding and we **open the door**, not the door to our heart, but the door to intimate fellowship. Fellowship, in this letter is conditioned upon repentance, not mere confession of sin. Those are different concepts. Confession of sin means to “name” or “acknowledge” one’s sins to God. Confession is for one time or occasional sins, not long-term habitual sin patterns. Long term habitual sin patterns cannot be merely confessed, they must be repented of. These Laodiceans were **lukewarm** and had been **lukewarm** for a long time. They did not need to merely confess their lukewarmness but they needed to repent of it. They needed to change their mind. They thought they were rich and had become wealthy and were in need of nothing. Their minds must be changed so that they say with Christ, “we are wretched and miserable and poor

and blind and naked. When that takes place Christ promises that He will **come in to** that individual and will **sup with him, and he with** Christ. Notice, it does not say Christ will come **into** but Christ will come **in to**. That's two words. To clarify the confusion what it really means is Christ will come **to** the individual. You can strike out the word **in** because all it does is confuse. Christ will **come to him and will sup with him, and he with** Christ. This is describing the most intimate fellowship. The word **dine** is the word used for the evening meal. The evening meal was a time of relaxation, reclining, fellowship and discussion over dinner. This is therefore describing four things for the believer. 1) The believer's enjoyment of rest. Believers can enjoy rest in who they are in Christ. 2) The believer's enjoyment of relaxation. Believers can enjoy a relaxed mental attitude as they learn to live by grace through faith. 3) The believer can enjoy intimate fellowship. Intimate fellowship means sharing in the riches of Christ, being in close connection with Christ so that one walks in step with Christ. 4) The believer's fellowship is closely connected with daily theological discourse. Believer's should have daily theological discourse. The human responsibility is two-fold. First, prayer, talking to God either by way of praise and request. Second, study of God's word in order to receive answers to our questions.

The closeness of this intimate companionship is described at the close of verse 20 where Jesus says, **I...will sup with him, and he with Me**. That's describing what we call reciprocal fellowship; fellowship both ways. A similar description is provided in John 15 where Christ says,

John 15:4-5 "Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither *can* you unless you abide in Me. ⁵ "I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing. **John 15:7** "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.

This intimate fellowship is dependent on Christ's words abiding in us. When the conditions are met all our prayers will be answered because we will be praying in the will of God.

Promise (3:21)

Revelation 3:21 'He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.

Verse 21 describes the promise to the overcomer. Remember, the **overcomer** is the one who has believed that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God (1 John 5:4, 5). Therefore, all

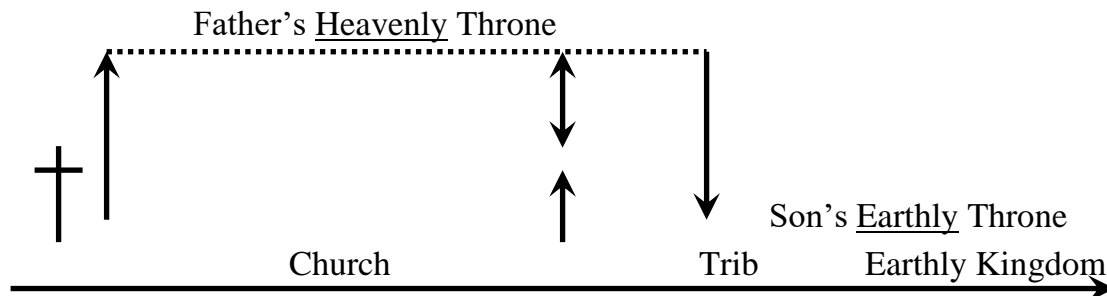
genuine believers will enjoy the promise which follows. Notice, not all believers will enjoy the previous promise in verse 20. Only believers who hear and respond enjoy intimate fellowship. But this promise is for every believer regardless of their spiritual condition. The promise reads, **I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.** This is the enlargement of a promise Christ made to His 12 disciples in Matt 19:28.

Matthew 19:28 "Truly I say to you, that you who have followed Me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man will sit on His glorious throne, you also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

That promise was to the 12 apostles and was limited to their **judging the twelve tribes of Israel** during the Messianic Kingdom. The promise here is enlarged to include all Church saints and the area of rule is enlarged to include the whole earth. What is Christ's throne? Is this a heavenly or an earthly throne? This is the earthly throne of David Of the baby Jesus, the angel Gabriel announced,

Luke 1:32-33 ³² "He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; ³³ and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end."

Since the Davidic throne was an earthly throne then Christ's throne is an earthly throne. This points to the earthly Millennial Kingdom. What is the Father's throne and how did Christ overcome? The **Father's throne** is a heavenly throne. So, there are two thrones being spoken of in this verse. Christ's earthly throne which He has not sat on and the Father's heavenly throne which Christ is now sitting on.



How did Christ overcome? Believers overcome by believing that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, but Christ overcame by being obedient to the Father and fulfilling His earthly mission of living a sinless life and being obedient even to the point of death, death on a cross on your behalf. Have you trusted in Christ alone? All men are born in sin. There is

therefore nothing you can do to save yourself. God is holy and no sin can come in His presence. God is not going to weigh your good works against your bad works. He's going to look to see whether you have the righteousness of Christ. That comes solely by believing in Christ alone. Christ wouldn't have gone to the cross if there was another way of salvation. Jesus said, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life, no one comes to the Father, but by me." He also said, "I am come that they might have life and that they might have it abundantly." The Father may be drawing you today to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. If so then believe upon Him and you will be saved.

Exhortation (3:22)

Revelation 3:22 'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'"

Christ closes with the individual exhortation, '**He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'"** Do you have ears of understanding? Can you hear the wake up call being given to the Laodiceans? Can you hear the wake up call being give to all seven of the churches. If so, blessed is the one who responds to Christ's instructions for he is not unwise but wise. I want to close with an exhortation given by Paul to the Ephesians. This was an early hymn designed to stimulate **lukewarm** believers to advance spiritually.

**“Wake up, O Sleeper,
rise up from the deaths,
and
Christ will shine on you.”**
(Ephesians 5:14)

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