

Revelation 3:14-22 Answers Do You Make Jesus Sick?

Laodicea:

- 1) Would be at 5:00 on the clock dial, but is it out of the circle, way off the dial!
- 2) Was mentioned in Paul's letter to the church in Colossae (which was 11 miles away). For example:
ESV **Colossians 4:13ff** ...I bear him [Epaphras] witness that he has worked hard ...for those in Laodicea
- 3) Was **a) a wealthy banking center**. For example, when it was completely destroyed by an earthquake in A.D. 60, it was rebuilt by its citizens without outside assistance, an indication its wealth. It was also known for **b) its soft, glossy, black wool**, and **c) its medical school** that produced a famous **eye salve**.¹ These facts arguably come into play later.
- 4) Had to pipe in its drinking water. The nearby Lycus River was not suitable for drinking water. The volcanic activity in the region that caused earthquakes also resulted in hot springs. Another city mentioned by Paul was near-by **Hierapolis (Col 4:13)**, which to this day has spectacular hot springs. The Romans built an aqueduct that piped water five miles from hot springs into Laodicea. By the time it reached the town, it was only tepid (lukewarm).²
- 5) Remained inhabited until it was destroyed by invasions of the Turks and Mongols in the A.D. 1200s. Its ruins are on the tentative list of world heritage sites in Turkey.³

3:14

******In what three ways did Jesus describe himself in 3:14?** Jesus said He is **1) the Amen**, **2) the faithful and true witness**, and **3) the beginning of God's creation**.

- 1) **What does "amen" mean (3:14)?** From *amén* (281), it is a Hebrew word literally meaning "firm," and metaphorically "faithful" or "truly." It was used as an adverb by which something was asserted or confirmed.⁴ Jesus speaks with certainty. His message to this church was factual and accurate.
- 2) **Why might Jesus have wanted to remind the church that He is the "faithful and true witness" (3:14)?** It may have been because they would have a hard time believing the performance review following. It was going to be a hard pill to swallow. The believers in Laodicea couldn't just say, "That's just His opinion."
- 3) **Jesus said that He is the "Beginning of God's creation" (3:14). Jehovah's Witnesses interpret this to mean that Jesus is a created being with a starting point and therefore not God. How do we know that is not what this means?** We must read any such statement in context:
 - a) John made it clear other places in the book of Revelation that Jesus is, in fact, God. For example, in **1:8**, God identified Himself as the Alpha and Omega. In **22:13** Jesus declared: "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end."

¹ Mounce, *Revelation*, 122-125.

² Dennis, *ESV Study*, 2469.

³ "Laodicea on the Lycus", En.Wikipedia.org. Accessed January 11, 2021.

⁴ Thayer, *Lexicon*, entry 281.

b) In Revelation, “the beginning” and “the end” is a way to referring to God’s eternity:⁵

ESV **Revelation 21:6** [He who is seated on the throne]: I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end.

ESV **Revelation 22:13** [Jesus]: I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.

c) “Beginning” (**3:14**) is from *arché*; it can also mean “origin” (as in source, producer).⁶ Jesus is the “moving cause.”⁷ Jesus is the One who created God’s creation. He is the beginner of God’s creation.

ESV **John 1:1-3** In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.

Why might Jesus have wanted to emphasis that He is the source of all creation (3:14)?

Since He made them, too, it again shows His authority to say what He is about to say to the church.

3:15-16

******According to 3:15-16, what temperature did Jesus want the church to be?** Jesus wanted them to be either hot or cold. The problem was that they were neither; they were lukewarm. Perhaps Jesus was making reference to the aqueduct from the hot springs in Hierapolis that delivered lukewarm water that was neither hot nor cold. (There is no archaeological evidence was cold water was piped from Colossae into Laodicea).⁸

In this context, which is better: hot or cold (3:15)? Why? The hot/cold imagery may not be intended to convey that Jesus wanted them to be either hot for Him or cold against Him. Both cold and hot are good temperatures, depending on the situation. In the hot summer, cold water is refreshing. Hot water is relaxing and warms when one is chilly. Jesus said this with reference to their lack luster, half hearted, incomplete works (which of course reflects a spiritual heart problem). Their love for Jesus, as reflected in their incomplete works, was not acceptable to Him.

Example: Imagine you are sipping on a nice, hot cup of coffee. You set it down and get distracted for a while, and when you sip it again, it has turned room temperature. Most people would want to spew it out. Iced coffee is good. Hot coffee is good. Nobody likes room-temperature coffee.

What would it mean to be spiritually lukewarm (3:16)? It means you yawn at spiritual things; you have a pervading indifference; you are metaphysically mediocre. They were comfortably indifferent.

⁵ Dennis, *ESV Study*, 2469.

⁶ Thayer, *Lexicon*, entry 746.

⁷ Barclay, *Revelation*, 177.

⁸ David Padfield, “Colossae, Hierapolis, and Laodicea”, Padfield.com. Accessed January 15, 2021.

What would it mean to be “spit” out of Jesus’ mouth (3:16)—that you lose your salvation?

From *emeo*, it means to vomit or to throw up. Figuratively it means “to reject with extreme disgust.”⁹ It is not that they would lose their salvation. Lukewarm coffee is still coffee. The point is that this church made Jesus sick (nauseated). Their blandness was unacceptable to him.

What should 3:15-16 tell us about half-hearted commitment to the Lord?

Application: *Do you make Jesus sick? Do you make Jesus want to vomit?*

It been said that there is no one farther from the truth in Christ than the one who makes an idle profession without real faith. Their life in Christ was a lie in Christ.

G. Campbell Morgan: “Lukewarmness is the worst kind of blasphemy.”¹⁰

3:17

******Based on 3:17, they labored under a delusion. What was their delusion?** They had the mistaken impression they were spiritually rich, when in reality they were spiritually bankrupt. The Laodiceans had a real blind-spot. The situation with the Laodicean church was the church version of the story of the emperor who had no clothes on! They were clueless.

In what way did they think that they rich, prosperous, and in need of nothing (3:17)? They may have been well-off financially, they weren’t spiritually. It is as if they were so rich, they didn’t need God. They were the exact opposite of the church in Smyrna, which though financially poor, was said to be spiritually “rich” by Jesus. Spiritually, they were **1) wretched, 2) pitiable, 3) poor, 4) blind, and 5) naked.** Spiritually, however, they were poverty stricken. In **Luke 12:21**, Jesus warned of the “who lays up treasure in heaven for himself, and is not rich toward God.”

ESV **Matthew 19:23-24** ... only with difficulty will a rich person enter the kingdom of heaven ... it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God.

Why is it true that it is difficult for the rich to enter God’s kingdom?

Insight: It is often said that one of God’s means of grace is to have the elect born into Christian families so they will hear the Gospel. Perhaps we should add that another means of grace is to have the elect born into poverty.

3:18

******What counsel did Jesus have for them in 3:18?** The city of Laodicea prided itself on three things: financial wealth, textiles, and eye salve.¹¹ Jesus counseled them to buy from Him: **1) refined gold** (as all the conservative radio commentators advise: “Buy gold!”), **2) white garments,** and **3) eye salve.**

⁹ Thayer, *Lexicon*, entry 1692.

¹⁰ Swindoll, *Letters*, 23.

¹¹ Mounce, *Revelation*, 126.

1) What is the significance of the gold that is refined by fire (3:18)? It is purified. Jesus' pure gold would make them spiritually rich.

How were the "poor" (3:17) supposed to "buy" gold? This is a figure of speech.

ESV **Isaiah 55:1** Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.

2) What would these white garments represent (3:18)? This white color is in stark contrast to the black wool produced in Laodicea.

White clothes constitute attire appropriate for the heavenly state, and represent righteousness:

ESV **Revelation 7:14** They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

What would "nakedness" represent (3:18)? It represents the shame of our sinfulness.

ESV **Genesis 3:11** He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?"

ESV **Revelation 16:15** Behold, I am coming like a thief! Blessed is the one who stays awake, keeping his garments on, that he may not go about naked and be seen exposed!

3) What was the purpose of this eye salve (3:18)? Laodicea was famous for its medical should and eye salve. Jesus' salve would allow them to see (spiritually) their true condition.

Amazing Grace: "I once was blind, but now I see"

3:19

******What does Jesus do for those He loves?** Jesus reproves and disciplines them.

ESV **Hebrews 12: 8** ... the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives ... If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons.

Based on 3:19, how should you respond to the Lord's discipline? It calls for zealous repentance.

Why did Jesus tell these particular Christians to be zealous (3:19)? He said this because they were complacent and lukewarm, neither hot nor cold, **3:15**. There were spiritual duds.

Review: What does "repent" mean?

3:20

**** **Philadelphia was the church of the *open* door. Laodicea was the church of the *closed* door! What unusual offer did Jesus make in 3:20?** He offered to eat with those who answered the door. It is as if they had excommunicated Him from the church! Their choice was to either be vomited out by Jesus, or to dine with Him.

What door was Jesus knocking at (3:20)? What did it open into? Evidently it is the door of every lukewarm individual believer's life in Laodicea.

In Jewish culture, what did eating with someone symbolize (3:20)? It denoted fellowship and acceptance. For example, Jews would not dine with Gentiles. This is what made Judas' betrayal of Jesus so shocking to Jewish sensibilities:

ESV **Matthew 26:23** ... He who has dipped his hand in the dish with me will betray me.

Heaven was often pictured in Judaism as a feast:

ESV **Luke 14:15b** "Blessed is everyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God!"

This Jewish idea of heaven being like eating in God's presence may stem from the Sinai experience. Mount Sinai shook as thunder sounded, lightning flashed, a trumpet sounded and smoke clouds enveloped it. God warned that any living thing which touched the mountain would be killed (**Ex 19:16-23**). However, in contrast to this:

ESV **Exodus 24:9-11** Moses ... and seventy of the elders of Israel went up, and they saw the God of Israel ... And he did not lay his hand on the chief men of the people of Israel; they beheld God, and ate and drank.

Wrong Picture: There are many paintings of Jesus standing outside a closed door that has no door knob, knocking, inviting someone to open up. God is a gentleman, we are told, and will not force His way in. The better imagery might be that of the master of an estate coming home, knocking at the door, expecting attentive servants to respond immediately, welcome him home and serve him dinner. However, in **3:20**, rather than waiting on Him as He dines, we, His servants, are invited to sit down and eat with him!¹²

ESV **Luke 17:7-8** Will any one of you who has a servant plowing or keeping sheep say to him when he has come in from the field, 'Come at once and sit down at table'? Will he not rather say to him, 'Prepare supper for me, and dress properly, and serve me while I eat and drink, and afterward you will eat and drink'?

Is this offer being made to believers or unbelievers? Why?

¹² Dennis, *ESV Study*, 2469

What does it sound like for Jesus to knock at your door (3:20)? The Laodiceans heard the knock through reading John's letter to them, the same one we are reading today! We hear His knock through reading the Bible, the conviction of the Holy Spirit, by challenges from other believers, etc.

How can a person open to door so as to eat with Jesus (3:20)? Note that **3:20** follows closely on the last word of 3:19, "repent." Without repentance there can be no fellowship with God.

ESV **John 14:21** Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him.

3:21

******What did Jesus promise to grant those who conquer (3:21)?** He said He would grant them to sit with Him on His throne. Some ancient thrones were more like benches.¹³ Similarly, Jesus had said to the Twelve:

ESV **Luke 22:29-30** ...I assign to you ... a kingdom, that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom and sit on thrones ...

ESV **Ephesians 2:4-6** God ... made us alive together with Christ ... and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus ...

What does sitting on a throne represent (3:21)? It represents kingship, rule, power, authority.

ESV **Revelation 2:26-27** [to Thyatira]: The one who conquers ... I will give authority over the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron ...

This is throne sitting pie in the sky, by and by, or is it a present reality (3:21)? The authority the church has is over spiritual powers behind the nations—the authority to break down *spiritual* strongholds that resist the spread of the Gospel.

ESV **Ephesians 6:12** ...we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

ESV **Colossians 2:15** He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them....

Exactly what was it that needed to be conquered (3:21)? Their lukewarmness and spiritual poverty needed to be conquered (**3:15, 17**).

3:22 So What?

How did Jesus conclude his message to the Laodiceans in 3:22? For the seventh and last time, He concluded it with an appeal to all churches to learn from their situation.

¹³ Barclay, *Revelation*, 188.

What are some of the signs of a “lukewarm” Christian? He yawns at spiritual things, doesn't take the Bible seriously, rarely speaks to unbelievers about Jesus, is minimally involved with church, has a weak prayer life, lacks love for others, is self centered, disobeys Jesus' commands, etc.

If their lives in Christ were compared to a car's transmission, in what gear would the Laodiceans be? First? Second? High? Reverse? Neutral? Park?

In what gear would you be? Are you content with the gear you are in? If not, what can you do to shift gears?

What praise did Jesus have for the Laodiceans (3:14-22)? What were they doing right? This was a church to whom no commendation was given. In contrast, Philadelphia was a church to whom no condemnation was given.

What if Jesus had addressed our church in the book of Revelation? What would He have said? Well actually, in a sense He did write to us. The condition of our church is certainly described by one of the seven churches in Revelation.

Note: If time allows, teach this new expanded outline of Revelation. To make it fun, have someone come up for each section and hold up some props to symbolize each section.

Expanded Outline of Chapter 4 – 22a:

Seven Churches 1-3 (hold up a model of a church building)

Seven Seals, 4-7 (hold up a corporate letter sealing tool)

Seven Trumpets, 8-11 (hold up a trumpet or bicycle horn)

A Woman, A Dragon & Two Beasts, 12-14 (hold up a doll, a plastic lizard and two other stuffed animals)

Seven Bowls, 14-16 (hold up a bowl)

The Babylon The Great, 17-19 (hold up a model tower of play blocks to symbolize the tower of Babel, which in turn represents Babylon The Great.)

The Millennium, 20 (hold up a sign that reads, “1000”)

All Things New, 21-22 (ask the newest person in the group to stand up front)

**** = Ask this question aloud before having someone read the text.

- These lessons are designed for a 45 minute teaching slot and are based on the ESV.
- You can hear this lesson being taught at SermonAudio.com/NTRF.
- Stephen E. Atkerson NTRF.org Revised 01/17/21