

Revelation 3:14-22 – Lukewarm Laodiceans

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: This is the 7th and final letter to the churches of Asia Minor. The church in Laodicea was unique because it was **1 of 2 churches of which the Lord had nothing good to say**. What is interesting is this church was not overtly bad like being idol worshippers, murdering people, etc. But this church was just lazy and was neutralized. This was wickedness! So let's examine the warnings Jesus gave this church so she could clean-up her act and so receive his comforts during persecution.

Our headings are:

The **Condemnation**

The **Challenges**

The **Comforts**

Our goals are: That you **will be warned not to become lazy and neutral** now that you are a Christian, but that you will, with the help of the Holy Spirit, **become excited about right living and faithful obedience**.

The Condemnation

14 "And to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write, 'These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God:

1. Laodicea was probably the wealthiest city in Asia Minor.

It had **financial independence** and was a **famous banking center**. It was famous for **making cloths**. And it was one of the great centers for **studying medicine**, and famed particularly for a **famous eye-medicine**.

Laodicea was destroyed in AD62, but quickly and well re-built.

2. Before condemning the church for its sin, (no commendations) Jesus described himself as the "Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation."

a. "Amen" suggested Jesus could either call down the curses of God's judgment on them for covenant breaking, or call for blessings for covenant obedience. Jesus was *the Amen*. He could bring it to pass. You can only say, "May it come to pass."

b. "True and Faithful Witness" reminded the church Jesus took them to "court" and found them guilty of many sins.

c. "Beginning of Creation" reminded the church they were created, body and soul, by Jesus and they owed him obedience. Col 1:15-18.

15 "I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot.

3. Now for the condemnation: For what sins were the Laodiceans condemned?

They were neither hot nor cold. They were lukewarm. Some people wrongly think this was “okay” because “hot is good and cold is bad.” So they see the Laodiceans as somewhere in between – a 50% church. **This is wrong.**

Laodiceans were between 2 famous cities: Colossae and Hieropolis. Colossae was between 2 mountains that had icy cold water that tumbled down to the plains. **Hierapolis was famous for its hot mineral springs** that flowed out of the city.

When those 2 waters met, they were useless and smelly. It was not cold water for drinking, not warm water for bathing. It was good for nothing.

So Jesus meant the Laodiceans were indifferent and useless. They provided “neither refreshment for the spiritually weary, nor healing for the spiritually sick.” God did not want his church to be lukewarm– and blend with the world, but to change it drastically. He wanted them to transform the world through the preaching of the Gospel!

16 "So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, **I will vomit you out of My mouth.**

4. If the Laodiceans would not change their ways and become useful, Jesus promised to vomit them out.

This was a threat that went back 1500 years to the time of Moses.

Leviticus 18:24 ‘Do not defile yourselves with any of these things; for by all these the nations are defiled, which I am casting out before you. 25 ‘For the land is defiled; therefore I visit the punishment of its iniquity upon it, and the land vomits out its inhabitants. 26 ‘You shall therefore keep My statutes and My judgments, and shall not commit any of these abominations, either any of your own nation or any stranger who dwells among you 27 ‘(for all these abominations the men of the land have done, who were before you, and thus the land is defiled), 28 **‘lest the land vomit you out also when you defile it, as it vomited out the nations that were before you.**

The Laodicean Christians failed to make an impact on the world for Christ so they were threatened with excommunication.

17 "Because you say, ‘I **am rich, have become wealthy,** and have need of nothing’ —and do not know that you are **wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked**—

5. The Laodiceans therefore had to change their thinking, and stop thinking they were safe and comfortable.

They were actually wretched, miserable - poor, blind, and naked.

They had the **banks**...but they were **poor**.

They had **doctors and eye-salve** (Phrygian powder), but they were **blind**.

They had manufactured **clothes** and fine glossy wool, but they were **naked** – exposed.

The Laodiceans were bad estimators of their troubles! They only thought they were okay, but they were not.

6. Lessons:

1. “It is an expensive peace if you buy it with spiritual stagnation.” (JFB) It is appealing with “live and let live” and not confront sin, but that is what the Devil does, or rather, doesn’t do. Christians confront sins daily! **Christians aren’t neutral!**

2. Adaptation to the world makes you useless to Jesus. You are different from the world. The world needs you to bring change. You have to be salt and light. You have to heal. This is why you have to have the Gospel on your lips!

3. God is not against wealth, medicines, or fancy clothes, but God is against disobedience! And his judgment will come on his disobedient church!

The Challenges

18 "I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see.

1. Jesus therefore challenged the Laodiceans to buy for free what he was offering to meet their needs.

a. Jesus offered “fine gold” for their purchase...though they thought they knew a good bargain.

This gold was purchased, not with money. (Isaiah 55:1), but with the blood of Christ.

Fine (purified) gold and jewelry were symbols of good works.

1Peter 1:7 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,

b. Jesus offered white clothes. Nakedness was a symbol of sin and disobedience, like drunken Noah! These white clothes were the righteousness of Jesus. So the Laodiceans had to set aside their ideas!

Genesis 3:7 - Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and **they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together** and made themselves coverings.

c. Jesus offered them eye salve to heal their spiritual blindness. Blindness was a symbol of man’s inabilities and lack of direction. So man needed an eye salve to prevent blindness. He needed to see where he is going. Only Christ gave sight! It was what came from Jesus mouth (spittle) that brought sight to the blind!

1John 2:11 -But he who hates his brother is in darkness and walks in darkness, and does not know where he is going, **because the darkness has blinded his eyes.**

Luke 4:18 "The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me, Because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to **proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind,** to set at liberty those who are oppressed;

19 ... Therefore be zealous and repent.

2. And with the comforts, Jesus challenged the Laodiceans to be zealous for right living, and repent of their sins.

You will notice the Lord gave them all the gifts to do the things he wanted them to do.

3. Lessons:

a. In place of man's obsession with earthly possessions and accomplishments, Jesus provided things that really matter!

b. Are you grabbing on to these gifts, purchased for free by the blood of Jesus, or fighting for stuff that will be destroyed?

The Comforts

19 "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten...

1. To comfort and encourage the faithful Laodiceans, Jesus confessed his love and his promise of discipline among them.

Hebrews 12:6 - For **whom the LORD loves He chastens,** And scourges every son whom He receives."

Job 5:17 "Behold, **happy is the man whom God corrects;** Therefore **do not despise the chastening of the Almighty.**

It is the father who hates his children who does not spank them. So said Solomon.

Proverbs 13:24 **He who spares his rod hates his son,** But he who loves him disciplines him promptly.

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 dine with him, and he with Me.

2. To comfort and encourage them, Jesus made a pleading: he wanted to stay with them, and live with them in their hearts.

Jesus doesn't have bastard children that he abandons. This verse is not to be interpreted as Jesus begging for people to believe in him, but must be understood in context: It is Christ speaking to his church to let him guide their lives. It is like the Lord's Supper – fellowship.

It is “delightful reciprocity!” (JFB)

21 "To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.

3. To comfort the Laodiceans, if they remained faithful, Jesus said they would reign with him.

a. Christ had entered into hell already (Colossians 1:13); he has disarmed Satan (Colossians 2:15); you are now kings and priests (Rev 1:6), and so you are going out conquering in his name.

b. Christ commanded his people to make disciples of all the nations, not “in all the nations.”

Matthew 28:19 "Go therefore and make disciples of **all the nations**, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,

c. Christ promised to rule **until all his enemies are under his control.**

1Corinthians 15:25 - For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet.

d. Christ’s kingdom, in which his children were, **would fill the earth.** What comfort! You’ll win!

Daniel 2:35 - "Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver, and the gold were crushed together, and became like chaff from the summer threshing floors; the wind carried them away so that no trace of them was found. And the stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.

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

4. Jesus encouraged the Laodiceans to pay special attention, because he knew “deaf ears on a train track is deadly.”

5. Lessons:

a. Never hate discipline...from your parents, from the elders, or from the state.
Discipline saves lives.

b. Let your heart be open to the working of God’s Spirit. Don’t fight the Holy Spirit. Don’t quench the Holy Spirit! He will reward you in time!

c. Don’t ever think you are alone, regardless of what troubles come your way. You are never alone. It doesn’t matter how bad life gets, you are never alone! Let that sink in.

Conclusion:

Jesus wrote these letters to give “comfort and assurance” of victory to his church. To give comfort and assurance, Jesus had to correct their errors. The Laodiceans were lukewarm, not fulfilling their biblical mandate to promote Christ on earth. Christ was not being exalted. Instead, the Laodiceans compromised and were neutralized. So Jesus **challenged them to change their ways** and get back to good works of faith, and **he encouraged them to do so**. His encouragements were **assurance of his love and presence, and a promise of the church’s expansion**.

Brothers and sisters, it is easy to become lukewarm. What causes lukewarm-ness? 1. Busy-ness – work, school, piano lessons, getting a bigger house... 2. Distractions and deceptions by the Devil stop you from growing. 3. A weak husband or wife or church can cause you to lose your passion. Choose carefully. 4. Weak preaching can make you lukewarm, tickling you ears. 5. Weak leadership in the church and not disciplining makes you weak.

So Christ wants you to examine your life and then pay attention to his correction if you have become stagnant in life. **Don’t stand on the train tracks with your hands in your ears**. Get away from the danger and be faithful and obedient. And if you keep your fire and passion, remember you will rule with Christ in his kingdom.

Finally, with Christ, you become a conqueror. Without Christ you will be conquered... conquered by the Devil and sent to hell. Is that what you want? I hope you will join the army of Christ. He welcomes you.