

Can Laodiceans Lose Salvation?

How It All Ends

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Bible Text: Revelation 3:15-22

Preached on: Sunday, December 16, 2012

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Revelation 3. Remember, Jesus being the one who begot all things, who also is the Creator of all things, is the one who is totally self-sufficient. There is not another person in the universe that is self-sufficient. That's important.

So, we have seven churches and remember, Jesus refers to himself as the faithful witness. All of these introductions to these seven churches that take place in chapters 2 and 3 of Revelation begin with Jesus saying, "I am" and he fills in the blank. In this particular, he reaches back to chapter 1, the faithful witness. So Daniel 7 is where Revelation 1 reaches back to, and then Revelation 2 and 3 reach back to Revelation 1, which reaches back to Daniel 7. So none of this is new material. It's so important that we get that. This book comes unlocked when we see the Old Testament inside of Revelation.

Then to remind ourselves here: Jesus gave compliments to five of the seven churches. Laodicea is not one of them. Then, I also want to say that of these five churches, there is also five that were told to repent. Interesting isn't it? That five churches in black were told to repent. One of them, of course, is today's, Laodicea. Told to repent of their particular sin.

Let's read Revelation 3 and let's look at verse 14,

"And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write." Now, we need to understand who is speaking here. It's interesting to note that we have a couple of bookends. Alright, very important that we understand we have one person writing here. I want you to see chapter 1:10 and then I want you to see chapter 4:1 and you're going to see that one person is speaking and it is to all seven churches. This is no exception.

Verse 14, "And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write." Well, who is speaking because it's someone saying, "Okay, to that angel in charge of that church, John, you need to write." Who is it? Well, it was the voice of a great trumpet in chapter 4:1. By the way, I should probably point out to you that next Sunday, if you're on time for Sunday School, you're going to be all alone. There is no Sunday School the 23rd or the 30th. So the next time that we'll be in here is the January 6. Remember, the 23rd and the 30th, there is only a 10:45 service. So, we're going to take a few weeks off here from

Revelation. Of course, you know that that doesn't mean that you're not going to hear from me. Okay. Some of you are rolling your eyes and checking out the back of your skull from the inside but I just like to communicate.

Verse 14, the person who is speaking in 1:10 and 4:1 says, "Write to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans. These things saith the Amen," that's the final word, "the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God." So he's the final word and he's the beginning. He's the first word and the last word. Alright, then we look at verse 15,

"I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth." In just a moment, we're going to ask the question, question #2, can believers lose their salvation or does Christ intend on indicting the whole church?

Verse 17, "Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods," you think you're self-sufficient, "and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." Remember in verse 7, we talked about the eye salve. "You guys think that you can see." Well, look at verse 18,

"I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and," buy of me, "white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and," and buy of me, "that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and," buy of me, "anointing for thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see." Of course, the town of Laodicea was well-known for their ophthalmology. They had lots of eye aids and healing aids and so to look at them and say, "You're all blind," was no question taken, as an insult, at the very least, a rebuke. Jesus would not have been called a really sweet and caring and understanding preacher until you get to verse 19 when he says,

"As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent." We talked about that last week. What does it mean to be zealous to repent?

Verse 20, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: 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." So the question that I wanted to answer out of verse 20 is: is this discussing salvation or is this discussing fellowship with Christ? That was my third question.

By the way, you might notice in verse 19, "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten." That is a quotation from Proverbs 3. Good students of the Bible read their Bibles with a pen so you could, right next to chapter 3:19, you could write Proverbs 3:11-12. "My son, despise not the chastening of the LORD; neither be weary of his correction. For whom the LORD loveth he correcteth." That's what it says in Proverbs 3:11.

In view of that, let me just remind you that every one of these seven churches received a reference from the Old Testament. Every one of them. Now, take a minute and look at that. You've been with me now, I think this is our 16th lesson in Revelation. It's hard to

believe, isn't it? So, all seven churches have received a reference from the Old Testament. Do you think that the reader of Revelation was expected to know the Old Testament? That will become very, very important as we determine what some of these things mean. It's very important. This is not some kind of, "Well, I'm just going to write to a group of ignoramuses and they're not going to know anything about the Old Testament." That's not the case at all. In all seven churches, he references the Old Testament.

So, the question in chapter 3:20 is: does this verse belong on the back of a gospel tract? Because is it discussing salvation? Then fourth, out of verse 21: how is it possible for us to share the throne of Christ? Look at verse 21,

"To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." That is found to all seven churches, isn't it? All seven churches.

So, we have some things cut out for us to do. In about three weeks, we'll be back in here and we'll be starting with, "Come up hither," in chapter 4:1, discussing what is happening in chapter 4:1.

Let's ask our first question concerning chapter 3:15-16. Look there with me. Let's read it again and then let's ask the question,

"I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth."

Again, if we were to live in that day, we would have known the author was referencing the hot waters that were brought in via aqueducts from Hierapolis and/or the cold waters being brought in via aqueduct from Colossae and we would have known, based on that – let's just get right down to it: if on Father's Day this coming June, I write a note to my three children. I have two in heaven. If I have three children, I write a note to all of them. Here's the question: in about, oh I don't know, ten years, if you open up a letter from me to, let's just say, my oldest child, my daughter, Bethany, and you read it, there are going to be some things there that you are going to need to know what was going on from you to understand about that which I am writing. I might reference the game on Friday. I might reference the car that she wishes she could drive. I might reference the license that she hopes to obtain. All of these things: that disgusting boy that likes her. You know, all of these things. You would need to know whatever it is I'm talking about for the letter to make sense, wouldn't you?

Now, you would hope to learn a lot from the letter and you could learn a lot from the letter like: what does a hypertensive father look like? You might learn that. You might learn several things from the letter about the writer and you'll learn lots of things about the original reader by reading the letter. In other words, you can learn a lot from someone

else's mail but that doesn't mean it's your mail. The Bible was written to particular people at a particular time and we glean learning from those letters but not a single person in here can say, "I was the first generation intended recipient of that letter." So we can learn things from the letter but it is not right for us to say, "Uh, hey, I don't need to know the history behind that."

I looked across the table at someone I really care dearly for a couple of Thanksgivings ago and I said, "I think it's important that we know the historical context of the passages that we're reading." And that dear person to me said, "I think that's stupid." And I'm saying to you that the reason that we have so many cults and sects and groups that would all line up and say, "I believe the Bible," is because they don't understand or are not willing to acknowledge the historical context. Now, of course, it makes me look arrogant and pompous and anyone else who is with me to say, "We think we have the truth." Of course, it makes us look that way but I believe what I believe and I would suggest that you probably believe what you believe on purpose. Okay? You didn't fall into your present day belief system, hopefully.

So, the question is: John is writing the words of Christ to the messenger of the church of Laodicea. We need to talk. Is this a proof text that a person who is lukewarm will go to hell? No. Now, we say that but why are we certain that this is not a proof text about someone losing their salvation? Because at first glance, if we don't know that we're referencing healing waters from Hierapolis or cold thirst-quenching waters from Colossae, then we might come away with thinking that John the Apostle is saying, "I wish you were all out for God or not for him at all. If you can't make up your mind, you make him want to puke." Is that what John is saying? "It'd be better for you to go to hell than for you to be on the fence?"

It sounds like – since we know that one town produced healing, warm, mineral waters and one town produced cold, thirst-quenching, satisfying waters, it sounds like John is saying, "I wish..." of course, Christ is the one speaking the words, "I wish that you were healing people or satisfying people but you're not doing either. You're not accomplishing anything. You're rancid, tepid and disgusting." We don't have the freedom to yank those two Scriptures and say it's to everyone. Well, hold on, no it's not. It's to believers in a local church and, can I just say, that Christ is saying the entire local church is like that. Can you imagine even supposing that Christ is threatening to send an entire local church who was saved to hell? That's what we're left with if we believe that that's what that Scripture is teaching.

And if Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures, and if you can put faith in Christ, I understand where you're going with that. It seems like we've identified a group of people that believe you can lose your salvation and don't believe that they're doing anything to keep it other than their faith. My point is: that they get the glory all of a sudden because it was their faith to keep in Christ. The glory is wrestled out of God in Arminianism or this system that believes that you can just work up the faith and keep working up the faith to keep on believing. All I'm saying is: salvation all of a sudden is about me then and I do have a reason to boast. "Hey, I held out until the end. I didn't lose

my faith in Christ.” So, Ephesians 2:8 is completely defeated, “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast.” I didn’t get my faith by working, I didn’t get salvation by working and all of a sudden, I have a reason to boast because I was smart enough to believe on Christ.

(And a paraphrase of it is, “It ain’t about you. It’s about Christ.”) Yeah, and we have Scriptures, Philippians 1:6, “He that hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ,” that faith is a gift from God, then there’s nothing for me to maintain or keep stirred up. But that’s a good point there, Brother Corban. It could be that they’re not saying, “I have to keep going to church and being a good guy to stay saved.” It could be that they’re merely saying, “As long as I keep on believing in Christ, I’ll stay saved.” But the glory then is, once again, theirs and not God’s who gave the faith.

(Also that passage again in John where it says, “My Father who has given them to me.” So the Father is the one that is giving the believers to the Son and the believer has nothing to do with it.) That’s right. We need to remember, folks, that if you have ever had a day where you believed on Jesus and were saved, it was because God gave you the faith. You can’t take credit for anything any more than you can take the credit for being born. Okay? You had nothing to do with that.

Alright, let’s move forward to our next question. Look at Revelation 3:20 and we’re going to ask the question of whether or not this is speaking of salvation. Let me ask you a question: who is Jesus speaking to through the pen of John? Who is he speaking to? To a particular church made up of, what? Believers, that’s right. So when we see in verse 20, “Behold, I stand at the door, and knock,” if you’ve watched Billy Graham or Evangelism Explosion, just pick, maybe with the exception of The Way of the Master, I haven’t really met very many evangelism programs that don’t use Revelation 3:20.

Right off the top: can you tell you me why it wouldn’t be about salvation? Mary? (When a person is saying here a new creation...even though you’re not saved by...your desires are more in line with...) Sure. Maybe my question wasn’t clear: how do we know that Revelation 3:20, Jesus is not saying, “Let me come into your heart and let me save you.” I heard it over here. I want you to say it again, Robin. (...) He’s talking to saved folks. What kind of sense does it make to look at people who are sitting on a dock and saying, “You want to come out of the water?” It doesn’t make any sense.

So, we know that this is not talking about salvation and this is used often to make Jesus look like this impotent, needy, long-haired, fruit loop, wearing flip flops, hoping you’ll open the door so he can come in and be accepted by you. Give me a break. That’s not anywhere found in the Scripture. He doesn’t need us. We accept him? Let me, please, break down a difference between this idea of the unbiblical idea of acceptance and the biblical idea of reception. Receiving means that you take in as it is. Acceptance means, “Well, you know, I suppose, despite the problems that come with it, okay.” The only time that we find acceptance in the New Testament is the word “accept.” By the way, this is God’s word. We’re not getting here and talking about the latest Nicholas Sparks novel. Who cares. This is God’s word.

So, when we start talking about what God says, that really should be our final authority and if we're dealing here with acceptance, then we ought to find the place in Scripture where the word "accept" is used. In Ephesians 1, we keep going back to Ephesians, it says, "We are accepted in the beloved." We're the ones who get accepted. We're the ones who go like, "Well, despite who you are, I'll take you." That's acceptance. Can you imagine looking at the very Son of God, perfect in every way, and saying, "I'll accept you."

So, we need to fix our little terminology there. You say, "Well, that's not what I learned on Oprah..." Again, who cares what we feel about this. We've got to change us, the Scripture is perfect. James 1 says it's the mirror and either we decide to change us or we decide to change the mirror. I'm not changing the mirror. When you change the mirror, the mirror ceases to show you who you are so I want to continue to be changed. That means that I take the Scripture as it is and fix myself with God's grace, God's help, if I possibly can. Yielding to his influence.

So, now that I know that it's not talking about salvation, what is it talking about? "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." Chris. (It seems to me like he's just saying, "I want to have a relationship with you.") With you, but who is the "you" in the context? (All the people.) All the people in the church. If I can find in this group here, Pastor Shawn kind of messes with me sometimes and he says you have a church within a church and I try not to do that. That's why I try not to get preachy in here because I know you don't need a double-header. But let's just say that this is the whole of Berean Baptist Church here. Alright, Jesus says, "Right now, you make me want to hurl but if one of you will decide to let me into your church, I will come in and fellowship with you among that church." That is a great thing. That means that you can be in the middle of a crowd where people are bored by the things of God and Jesus will sit right on your row and help you to enjoy the goodness of God in the land of the living.

Have you ever been in a service where it looks like you're having the time of your life and Timbuktu over here is checking his iphone and Sally Lee is over here updating her online order and you've got someone messing with their kids behind you and you've got folks in front of you dozing off. They're bored and Jesus is sitting right on your lap because you have opened the door and he is supping with you and enjoying fellowship. That's why it happens, folks. Right there.

Now, let's look at verse 21. Again, I'm sorry, I'm going to have to curtail it here in a few minutes because I need to get over and meet some of the newer members there in first class. Verse 21, "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne." First of all, notice how great it is that Christ is the first overcomer. We're not being commanded to do something here that Christ hasn't already done. He's overcome the wicked one. Remember? Context is king. If you don't listen to the lessons from Sunday to Sunday, you are going to fall behind and there are going to be more questions when you leave the room than when you

came in because I can't reteach every lesson. It's just like Genesis and Matthew and everything else we've done in here. Please try to keep up if you can't be here. But you might remember that in Revelation 12:11 it says that "we overcome by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of the testimony," and "we love not our own lives even unto death." And the reason we're able to do that is because of the Lamb who provided that blood and so Christ overcame.

Now, what does it mean for us to share his throne as he shares his Father's throne? Well, first of all, promises to overcomers are given to all seven churches. Here's the first five and all the promises to the overcomers. Let's talk about, again, what all seven churches have: they have an introduction from the Son of God, five have a commendation; all seven of them are given a quotation or a reference from the Old Testament; all seven of them are told "he that hath an ear let him hear"; all seven of them are told that they have promises as overcomers. Well, in the end of the book, if you'll take time to look at these slides when I email them out later today, all seven of these churches, the promises are shown in fulfillment at the end of the book.

So, let's look at chapter 22 with this one of Laodicea. Chapter 22 of Revelation. Another shameless plug coming at you: this Wednesday night I'll be preaching, not necessarily teaching, but preaching the third in a three part series on Christmas in the Psalms and we'll be looking at Psalm 72 this coming Wednesday night. So I hope you can make it out. My mood is somewhat different when I preach than when I teach. Maybe a little less jovial, I don't know. Maybe not. It really depends on how many cups of coffee I have that day and how many times my wife kisses me in the kitchen so it's on her.

Look at Revelation 22:1, "And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits." Hold the phone. Yeah, I'm in the right place. "And yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. And there shall be no more curse," now look here, "but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him."

Look, I want you to know that there is something that blows my mind right now. You've got to know this, I can't explain it. We're going to get into it in chapter 4 of Revelation. You're going to see one sitting on the throne and the Lamb. Now, that's not the first time it happens. It happens in Daniel as well, Daniel 7. We keep talking about Daniel 7.

So, I don't know what this is going to look like: the Father and the Son sharing a throne. I don't know if it's maybe a throne room, a throne proper. I don't know if it's one throne. I don't have any idea. I think I can shed some light on this though if we'll turn back to Matthew 19. If you're like me, you try to picture what fulfillment of Scripture will look like and I look for how maybe, Brother Dick or myself covered this verse and I couldn't find where we did so I have the notes here that proves that we went through Matthew so I don't know exactly what to make of that but I don't see where we covered this verse in our verse-by-verse. I need to go and look again, maybe.

Look at verse 27, if you would, of Matthew 19, “Then answered Peter,” of course, that implies that we’re not getting the whole context here and I’m sorry for that but we’re short on time, “Then answered Peter and said unto him, Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore? And Jesus said unto them, Verily,” or truly, “I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration,” or the rebirth or the refurbishing or the spontaneous consciousness or...man, there’s just a number of ways that we can paraphrase that but in this thing known as the regeneration, “when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.”

So this is a promise to the 12 apostles that they’re going to rule with Christ on separate thrones. It seems like, today, right here, right now, if I were to best explain the promise to the Laodiceans of sharing the throne of the Lamb, I would say that this is a good piece of light upon that. It seems like that those who suffer with Christ will reign with him, it says in 2 Timothy 2. Revelation 20 talks about that as well. It seems like that they are separate thrones, same throne room so that you can actually say you’re sharing the throne. In Colossians 2, it refers to echelons of power that Christ is exalted above and one of those echelons is known as thrones so it seems like, when it says that if we overcome we’ll share his throne as he shares with the Father’s throne, it seems like there are separate thrones but close enough together where they could be considered the same seat of authority. Same seat of authority.

There are a couple of answers that are possible there: one is that the apostles, the 11 who remained after Judas left that circle, the one possibility is that Matthias who was voted in in Acts 1 to be the replacement – I say voted in and I’m kind of trying to be funny, sort of – they cast lots for him and according to the book of Proverbs, that is an okay, an acceptable way of determining the will of God. In Acts 1, Matthias was chosen by God through the casting of lots to be Judas’ replacement. It could be that he is the 12th. There are very few people who think that that was a legitimate replacement rather than it was just an historical rendering Luke recorded for us, how they thought to replace him.

I have a great book called “The Martyr’s Mirror” where it talks about Matthias and his history of where he died. He did die for the Lord Jesus and he did die as a gospel preacher so if you take just the Bible, we never see Matthias again, I don’t think, after Acts 1. However, church history does say that he had an history of serving and maybe even as much as an apostle. However, if he is not God’s replacement and we could easily say that Paul, the apostle, was and either one of those answers will work as far as I’m concerned but that’s a good question. Who replaced Judas? Either Matthias or Paul.

The reason it could be both and what I mean by that is not 13 apostles but the reason Matthias could be Judas’ replacement and Paul could be an apostle but not part of the 12 is simply because Paul calls himself in 1 Corinthians 15 “one who is born out of due time.” So, he kind of sets himself apart from the other apostles because he was selected as the apostle to the non-Jewish folks, the Gentiles.

