

THE SEVEN CHURCHES OF ASIA

Message 19

Words: 6356

Scripture: Revelation 3:14-22

INTRO: We have now come to the last of the seven churches of Asia. If we are right that these churches show us what the Church age will be like, and we are close to right about the ages they show, this is the church that shows what we are like, so it is a most significant church for us to consider. If you will look at a map of these seven churches you will see we started at the Mediterranean Sea at Ephesus. We went almost due north a number of miles and we were now at the Aegian sea. Then we headed slightly east and inland and came to Pergamos. Here we took a sharp turn and headed mostly east and a little south. From there we went to Sardis, and now we were heading mostly south and a little east. Leaving Sardis we now traveled southeast until we came to Philadelphia. From Philadelphia we move almost due south towards Laodicea.

The name Ephesus means to relax or let go, that which the Christian can never afford to do. Smyrna means bitter, and that is not because they were bitter, but they suffered bitter persecution. But the name comes from the word myrr, which was used to make perfume. And this church became a sweet smelling sacrifice for the Lord. Here Polycarp was martyred for the Lord.

According to J.B. Smith the first part of the word Pergamos comes from the same root as the German word *berg*, a mountain. The church name we are familiar with, Berghthaler, comes from that word. The *gamos* part of this name comes from the word to marry. The ideas presented by this name are one of elevation and the other of marriage or union. So it appears that this city had a high view of themselves though they caused intermarriage or union between true and false teaching.

J. B. Smith again feels that the name of the city is significant. He says the name Thyatira comes from *thuos*, *sacrifice* and *ateires*, *unweary*. In other words, they were unweary in sacrificing. Smith feels that this speaks of the rise of Roman Catholicism during the time period represented by this church.

LaHaye says the name Sardis means, 'Escaping ones' or 'those who come out'. J.B. Smith suggests that this name comes from the Hebrew *sarid*, meaning 'the rest' or 'a remnant'. This would fit well with the fact that in this whole church there are only a few true believers, or a remnant. There was a remnant of believers left even at this time.

The meaning of the name Philadelphia you know, brotherly love. But what of Laodicea? Well, we shall look at that shortly.

VII. LAODICEA (3:14-22)

A. Historically

1. The counselee (3:14a)

So, as our usual procedure has been, we begin with the historical purpose of this letter. And we begin again with the counselee, or the church the Lord is addressing. Verse 14 says:

14 "And to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write,

Let me give once more Barclay's history of Laodicea.

LAODICEA has the grim distinction of being the only church of which the risen Christ has nothing good to say. In the ancient world, there were at least six cities called Laodicea, and this one was called Laodicea on the Lycus to distinguish it from the others. It was founded in about 250 BC by Antiochus of Syria and was named after his wife Laodicē. Its importance was due entirely to its position.

(Let me just insert here before I read further that the road to Laodicea described here is from Ephesus cutting across to Laodicea rather than the route we went going to the seven churches) The road from Ephesus to the east and to Syria was the most important in Asia. It began at the coast at Ephesus, and it had to find a way to climb to the central plateau 8,500 feet above. It set out

along the valley of the River Maeander until it reached what were known as the Gates of Phrygia. Beyond this point lay a broad valley where Lydia, Phrygia and Caria met. The Maeander entered that valley by a narrow, precipitous gorge through which no road could pass. The road, therefore, made a detour through the Lycus valley. Laodicea stood in that valley. It was situated literally astride the great road to the east which went straight through Laodicea, entering by the Ephesian Gate and leaving by the Syrian Gate. That in itself would have been enough to make Laodicea one of the great commercial and strategic centres of the ancient world.

Originally, Laodicea had been a fortress; but it had the serious handicap that all its water supply had to come by underground aqueduct from springs no less than six miles away, a perilous situation for a besieged town.

Two other roads passed through the gates of Laodicea, that from Pergamum and the Hermus valley to Pisidia and Pamphylia and the coast at Perga, and that from eastern Caria to central and west Phrygia. As Sir William Ramsay says: 'It only needed peace to make Laodicea a great commercial and financial centre.' That peace came with the dominion of Rome. When the Roman peace gave it its opportunity, it became, as Pliny, the governor of Bithynia, called it, 'a most distinguished city'.

Laodicea had certain characteristics which have left their mark on the letter written to it.

(1) It was a great banking and financial centre. When Cicero was travelling in Asia Minor, it was at Laodicea that he cashed his letters of credit. It was one of the wealthiest cities in the world. In AD 61, it was devastated by an earthquake; but its citizens were so rich and independent that they refused any help from the Roman government and rebuilt their city out of their own resources. The Roman historian Tacitus writes:

'One of the most famous cities of Asia, Laodicea, was in that same year overthrown by an earthquake and without any relief from us recovered itself by its own resources' (Annals, 14:27). No wonder Laodicea could boast that it was rich and had amassed wealth and needed nothing. It was so wealthy that it did not even need God.

(2) It was a great centre for the manufacture of clothing. The sheep which grazed round Laodicea were famous for their soft, violet-black, glossy wool. The city mass-produced cheap outer garments. It was especially connected with a tunic called the trimita - so much so, indeed, that it was sometimes called Trimitaria. Laodicea was so proud of the garments it produced that it never realized it was naked in the sight of God.

(3) It was a very considerable medical centre. Thirteen miles to the west, between Laodicea and the Gate of Phrygia, stood the temple of the Carian god Men. At one time, that temple was the social, administrative and commercial centre of the whole area. Until the end of the nineteenth century, great markets were regularly held on its site. In particular, the temple was the centre of a medical school which was transferred to Laodicea itself.

Its doctors were so famous that the names of some appear on the coins of Laodicea. Two of them were called Zeuxis and Alexander Philaletes. This medical school was famous throughout the world for two things - ointment for the ear and ointment for the eyes. The Authorized and Revised Standard Versions speak of eye-salve. The word for salve the Temple tax which every male Jew paid, and put an embargo on the export of currency. The result was that twenty pounds' weight of gold was seized as contraband in Laodicea and 100 pounds' weight in Apameia in Phrygia. That amount of gold would be equal to 15,000 silver drachmae. The Jewish Temple tax amounted to half a shekel, which was equal to two

drachmae. This means that in the district there were at least 7,500 male Jews.

In Hierapolis, six miles away from Laodicea, there was a 'Congregation of Jews' which had power to levy and to retain fines, and an archive office where Jewish legal documents were specially kept. There can have been few areas where the Jews were wealthier and more influential.

Barclay, William. *The Revelation of John, Volume One: 1* (pp. 149-151). Westminster John Knox Press. Kindle Edition.

We ask then, what does the name 'Laodicea' mean? Let me quote J.B. Smith and extend the quote because of what he adds. He says, "The name of the city is a compound word derived from *laos* (people) and *dike* (judgment); hence judgment of the people. The literal sense is practically synonymous with the English word 'democracy', " which signifies the people ruling. In other words, here is democracy in religion (91). The Laodiceans therefore present a marked contrast with the Nicolaitanes, so prominent in the church at Ephesus and Pergamos, which denotes conquerors of the people in reference to priestcraft or 'lording' it over the people. Both extremes are to be avoided in religious groups, for the one, as the unerring voice of history declares, leads to priestly domination; the other to Laodicean lukewarmness and latitudinarianism so prevalent in more recent years in religious circles" (91).

Let me just mention that Paul mentions the church at Laodicea four times in his letter to the Colossians. And in a postscript to 1 Timothy it says Paul wrote that letter to Timothy from Laodicea. Colossi is not far from Laodicea and it is the city the letter to the Colossians was written to.

So having read some of the history of the church of Laodicea, and the meaning of the name of this church, we want to look at the description of the counselor, as He Himself gives it.

2. The counselor (3:14b)

We go then to verse 14, the second part:

3:14b 'These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God:

To each church the Lord describes Himself to the recipients. Only in the church to Philadelphia do we not find a decisive reference to chapter one in these descriptions. But in this description we find plenty in chapter one.

First, the Lord says He is the *Amen*. What does that mean? John McArthur says this is probably a reference to Isaiah 65:16. Turn to Isaiah 65:16 to see this verse for yourself. It says, *So that he who blesses himself in the earth Shall bless himself in the God of truth; And he who swears in the earth Shall swear by the God of truth; Because the former troubles are forgotten, And because they are hidden from My eyes. When it says twice the God of truth, it is the God of 'awman', the God of Amen.*

The word here translated 'truth' in the phrase 'the God of truth' is the Hebrew word 'awman'. It occurs 30 times in the OT and 27 times it has been translated 'amen' in the KJV. Twice it has been translated 'truly' and once, 'so be it.'

The online Bible says that when the word 'amen' occurs at the beginning, it means *truly*. It is a *truth*. If it occurs at the end it means, *so it is, or so be it, or may it be fulfilled*. Well, the One described here is the true One. So it is. So be it. There is no use arguing with Him. With Him there is no variableness of turning, no

changing. He is the same yesterday, today and forever. He is the 'Amen'.

Commentaries note that Paul says in 1 Corinthians 1:20: *For all the promises of God in Him are Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us.*

But the Lord describes Himself further as that He is the faithful and true witness. We go to chapter 1 and begin in verse 4. John introduces the letter like this:

4 John, to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from Him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne,

5 and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth. To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood,

The Lord is described to this church as a faithful and true witness, and Laodicea was neither faithful nor true. The Lord's description of Himself does not come as a comfort to this church as it did to Philadelphia. Here it comes as a reprimand.

Now He describes Himself as both a faithful, and a true witness. Here is how Young's literal translation expresses this part of the sentence from the Greek: *These things saith the Amen, the witness – the faithful and true..* The original stresses that He is the witness. Now I ask you, of what did He bear witness? He bore witness to God. When Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life, no man comes to the Father but by Me", here is what I understand Him to say. "I am the way to God; I am the truth about God, and I am the life from God."

Turn to John 14. I don't want to take time to expound on the word *truth* other than to say truth is propositional. For example, this pulpit is not

truth. But if I say, "This is a pulpit." My proposition about it is the truth. And Jesus was the truth about God. He was a true witness about what and who God is. Let me just show that in John 14. In John 14 we are just a short while before His crucifixion. And Jesus is seeking to comfort His disciples because He has told them He is leaving. We begin with Jesus' words in verse 4:

4 *"And where I go you know, and the way you know."*

5 *Thomas said to Him, "Lord, we do not know where You are going, and how can we know the way?"*

6 *Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."*

7 *"If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; and from now on you know Him and have seen Him."*

8 *Philip said to Him, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is sufficient for us."*

9 *Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, 'Show us the Father'?"*

You see, such a faithful witness, so accurate was His portrayal of God Almighty that He could say, "He who has seen Me has seen the Father." Now let me ask you, why was He crucified? Let me tell you why. He lived like God would live. He bore witness to God. It is being a true witness that causes persecution and martyrs. Now go to Revelation 2:13, the church of Pergamos. Look at what it says:

2:13 *"I know your works, and where you dwell, where Satan's throne is. And you hold fast to My*

name, and did not deny My faith even in the days in which Antipas was My faithful martyr, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells.

Now look at the words, "Antipas was My faithful martyr." Let me give you the original word, "Antipas was My faithful martus." Now go to Revelation 1:5. It says, "and from Jesus Christ, the faithful martus..." Now go to our passage in 3:14. It says: 'These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True martus.' You see, the word martyr comes from the word 'witness', martus. Why did Jesus die? He was a faithful martus (witness) and became a faithful martus (martyr). That is why Antipas died. That is why Polycarp died. A faithful and true witness is destined for trouble from the evil one, it does not matter where he or she might be. The devil will do everything he can to shut such a witness down.

I listened to a message the other day of a speaker who showed how demons are destroying churches in America. And he said that one statistic showed that 65% of American Christians do not really believe there is a devil. Paul said that we do not wrestle with flesh and blood. What do we wrestle with, if in fact we are wrestling? Demons. I can tell you this, the majority of Christians in this community are entirely unaware of the workings of demons. We are like the church of Laodicea in many ways as we will see. I wanted to mention a little more here on demonism, but because of time I have to leave it, but I will mention it in the last message.

We go on in verse 14:

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:

Now look at the last words here. Jesus Christ is the beginning of the creation of God! William Barclay explains the difficulty of the words that

Jesus was 'the beginning of the creation of God' like this: This is a phrase about which we must be careful, for, as it stands in English, it is ambiguous. To say that Jesus is the beginning of creations could mean either, that He was the first person to be created, or, that He was the moving cause of all creation, He who began the process of creation and who initiated the word of creation as R.C. Trench puts it, 'dynamically the beginning'" (177).

The Jehovah's Witnesses insist that Jesus was the first one created. He is not God, He is a created being. They use such passages as we have here and Colossians 1:15, which says, *He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.* But when it comes to the meaning of being the firstborn, this is answered in Colossians 1:18 which says, *And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence.* Revelation 1:5, which also says Jesus was the faithful witness says He was the firstborn from the dead. Now listen carefully. Jesus was not the firstborn of God, He was the only born of God. But He was the firstborn from the dead because there will be many more.

3. The criticism (3:15-17)

We are now at the place where we would normally have the commendation, but there is no commendation to this church. None. If this church pictures from say, 1900 or 1950 onward, what does this say about today's church? There is nothing good to say about this time period. We are in the time after the reformation, and there is nothing good to report? What of all the modern missions? What of the huge expenditure of monies in missions? But there is no commendation! If we find something commendable in the modern church today, then we are either wrong about these seven churches picturing the times of the Church age, or the age it pictures is yet future.

So there is no commendation. What we do have is a lot of criticism. So let us read the criticism leveled against this church. We begin in verse 15:

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

Well, our question now is, what do cold, hot and lukewarm mean?

Strauss, and most others, think that cold means totally lost. Of the lukewarm he says, "Thus the Lord is saying to those at Laodicea that, if instead of being lukewarm, they were so cold as to feel the bitterness and severity of that coldness, they would flee to the true warmth for refuge" (97). On the other hand he thinks hot means zealous for the Lord, and the Laodiceans were neither.

Tim LaHaye says of Laodicea, "It is not 'hot,' meaning 'zealous of good works,' nor is it 'cold' meaning 'lifeless.' Instead it is 'lukewarm' or indifferent. What a description of the modern-day church! All kinds of programs, committees, activities - but no power" 86).

John F. Walvoord writes, "The difficulty seems to be that the church was lukewarm rather than cold or hot. The word translated 'lukewarm' (Gr., *chiaros*) is used only here in the New Testament and refers to tepid water. It is obvious that in this portion of Scripture Christ is referring to three different spiritual states which may be enumerated respectively as a state of coldness, a state of warmth of fervor, and a state of lukewarmness" (91). Well, according to Walvoord, the cold are the lost who don't care about Christ, the hot are those who show genuine spiritual fervor, and the warm are what we might refer to as nominal Christians.

Wim Malgo, says of the cold or hot, "In other words, 'I would wish you would be a cold, unbelieving atheist or would burn with the fire of first love'" (161). So they all draw basically the same conclusion.

Now it is a most notable fact that to this church the Lord does not mention any of the kinds of sins that were mentioned in the other churches! To Ephesus the Lord said, "You have left your first love." There is no mention of that here. To Pergamos He said, "You have there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam and he taught people to eat things offered to idols and commit fornication. You also have those who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans. Repent!" To Thyatira he said, "I have a few things against you, because you allow that woman Jezebel to teach and beguile my servants to commit fornication and eat things sacrificed to idols." To Sardis He said, "Remember therefore how you received and heard; hold fast and repent." Now repentance is in order when there is sin. Only in Smyrna and Philadelphia did the Lord mention no sin, and for those two churches he had nothing but commendation.

Now read through this letter to the Laodiceans, what is their sin? It was not leaving their first love. It was not eating things offered to idols. It was not allowing teachers like the Nicolaitans and the Jezebels to teach there. It was not falling into fornication. What was it? It was being lukewarm! It was thinking they were some kind of outstanding Christians, but they were anything but. Now I ask each of us to ask ourselves, what do I think of myself?

Well, we are trying to decide what it means to be lukewarm. Consider once more the historical situation in Laodicea. Kistemaker says, "The hot springs at a distance of six miles near Hierapolis sent water of medicinal quality down to Laodicea. By the time the water arrived there, it had cooled considerably, and because of the

calcium carbonate in the water, it had a nauseating effect on the people who drank it. By contrast, Colosse, eleven miles away, was blessed with the springs producing refreshing water because it was cold and pure" (170). He then concludes that Christ, and I quote, "...prefers to work either with people who are aflame with energy to do his bidding or those who have never been told about the message of salvation and are willing to listen" (170).

How many of you remember when the water in the town of High Level, near to us, had a water problem and it had an odor and tasted terrible? The coffee was nauseating. That is what comes to mind when I read of the lukewarm. Our Lord says in verse 16:

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

Now let me mention something else here, and we'll have to finish on the hot and cold and its meaning in the next message. Here is a matter that J.B. Smith brings up in his commentary on this passage. He says, "...this church, by its position as last of the seven, symbolizes universal church conditions of the last days, the picture just described must necessarily depict the final apostasy mentioned in 2 Thessalonians 2:3, just preceding the coming of the Lord" (93).

So I want to mention here. Do not string me up or tune me out until you have heard it all. I do not find the Scriptures forecasting a final great apostasy. As a matter of fact, it may be worse. Here is what I will do. I will give you the passages Smith lists to show a great apostasy is coming. These are all the major passages that are generally used to show a great apostasy is coming. Write them down. Be honest with them and see what conclusion you come to:

Write down 2 Thessalonians 2:3. This is the main passage used to show this. I'll read verses 1-3:

2 Thessalonians 2:1-3:

1 Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you,

2 not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come.

3 Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition,

The Thessalonians had been taught by some false teachers that the day of Christ is already in progress. The day of Christ, as I understand it, is the time the Church is with Christ in heaven after the rapture. The day of Christ is Christ's day with His bride, the Church, in heaven. So Paul is telling them, "No, the day of Christ has not yet come, as you have been falsely told. Before the day of Christ begins, two things have to happen, and we find these in 2 Thessalonians 2:3 like this:

3 Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition,

And the first thing Paul mentions is that the falling away must come first before the Day of Christ begins. This falling away is generally held to be the apostasy of the Church before the rapture. So before the rapture, an apostasy has to come first.

Let me quote now from my class notes on 2 Thessalonians:

The Greek word here is *apostasia* and it is used only twice in the NT, here and in Acts 21:21. In Acts 21:21 it is to forsake, to defect.

There is a view set forth by some, using Strong's concordance that the word *apostasy* speaks of the rapture. The word *apostasia* is Strong's # 646. This number says it comes from 647, which in turn comes from 868, of which Strong says may mean to depart. Conclusion? That day will not come unless the departure of the church happens first.

Now I have long taught that as far as I can see, that is a somewhat forced interpretation, seeking to make it mean what those people want it to mean. It would greatly simplify the passage, but seems a bit forced.

Then I read an article by Thomas Ice in *The Midnight Call* who believes there is a greater than 50% chance that this is the meaning of this word. Well, after reading his article and considering the evidence given, I would have to say I now believe this view has the most evidence. So let us look at the evidence that this word more likely speaks of the rapture than of the apostasy.

-My difficulty with the word *apostasia* was that it was used only twice in Scripture, here and in Acts 21:21. In Acts 21 it speaks of forsaking Moses' teachings, an apostasy. But what I had never considered or discovered is that the verb form of this word, from which it actually comes as well; is used 15 times in the NT (See Luke 2:37, which departed not; 4:13, he departed from him; 8:13, fall away; 13:27, depart from me; Acts 5:37 drew away; 38, refrain from these men; 12:10, the angel departed; 15:38, who departed; 19:9, he departed; 22:29, they departed; 2 Cor. 12:8, might depart; 1 Tim. 4:1, some shall depart; 6:5, from such withdraw; 2 Thess. 2:19, they departed from him; Heb. 3:12, in departing from the living God.)

In every place where the verb is used and where the noun is used it could be translated 'to depart'

(verb) or a 'departure' (noun). So the translation would most consistently read in 2 Thessalonians 2:3, 'the departure' not 'the apostasy.'

-Furthermore, in the text it says, 'THE departure' or 'THE apostasy.' The article points to some definite event. The best explanation for the use of the article in this text is that it points to something already mentioned earlier. But no apostasy is mentioned at all in either 1 or 2 Thessalonians. However, the departure, or the rapture is mentioned in 1 and 2 Thessalonians and most recently in 2 Thessalonians 2:1. So viewing this word as the rapture is most consistent with the word used and the article used.

-Translation history also stands in favor of this view. I quote from Thomas Ice's article: "The first seven English translations of apostasia all rendered the noun as either a 'departure' or 'departing.' They are as follows: Wycliffe Bible (1384); Tyndale Bible (1526); Coverdale Bible (1539); Breeches Bible (1576); Beza Bible (1583); Geneva Bible (1608). This supports the notion that the word truly means 'departure.' In fact, Jerome's Latin translation known as the Vulgate from around the time of A.D. 400 renders apostasia with the word *discessio*, meaning 'departure.' Why was the King James Version the first to depart from this established translation of 'departure'?"

Here is the problem. Paul has taught the Thessalonians that they will be caught up to heaven and be with Christ during the time of the Day of Christ. Now someone with influence has come along and taught them that the Day of Christ has come and they have been left out. So they have missed out on the rapture. Then Paul says, "Listen, when I was with you I told you that that day would not come unless the departure happened first, AND the man of sin was revealed. So, since the man of sin had not yet been revealed, they could well understand that the rapture had not happened yet either.

So I do not see that as referring to a great apostasy from the faith. I will just read the rest of the verses and comment briefly and you might jot these verses down and study them for yourselves.

Luke 18:8:

8 "I tell you that He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?"

That verse raises a question about finding faith on earth but does not indicate that there will be a great apostasy.

Matthew 24:12:

12 "And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold.

This is a reference to time in the tribulation, not time before the rapture.

Matthew 24:37:

37 "But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.

38 "For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark,

39 "and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.

This is a picture of what it will be like in the world, not in the professing church.

1 Tim. 4:1-2:

1 Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons,

2 speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron,

Note, it says that "SOME" will depart from the faith, not that there will be a great apostasy.

2 Timothy. 3:1-5:

1 But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come:

2 For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy,

3 unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good,

4 traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God,

5 having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!

This speaks of the state of the world, not the Church.

James 5:1-3:

1 Come now, you rich, weep and howl for your miseries that are coming upon you!

2 Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten.

3 Your gold and silver are corroded, and their corrosion will be a witness against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have heaped up treasure in the last days.

This does not speak of a great apostasy in the Church.

2 Peter 3:3-4:

3 knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts,

4 and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation."

Again, this does not speak of a great apostasy.

Jude 17-18:

17 But you, beloved, remember the words which were spoken before by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ:

18 how they told you that there would be mockers in the last time who would walk according to their own ungodly lusts.

Again, we do not have specific statements of a great apostasy in the Church. I am not saying there will not be a great apostasy. I am saying that I cannot find that the Bible says there will be a great apostasy. But, if we are correct that these seven churches picture the church in seven ages, and if we are correct that we are in the last time period, the time of Laodicea, then we do not have a picture of many falling away from the faith. What is the picture given of the age of Laodicea? The picture is this: It is the picture of a church thinking they are spiritually rich and increased with goods and have need of nothing, when in actual fact most professing believers are not even born again! They have all the right words, but they are unsaved!

Remember that when we speak of the Church in general, it includes a wide range of churches we would not even class as Christian at all. But today those who profess to be Christians but never truly got saved has moved deep into the Evangelical churches. The seeker friendly church

and the emergent church, churches of tolerance and love, are not denying the faith. It is amazing to watch. At one time you could pick up a church doctrinal statement, and you knew quite well what that church was like. Now you can pick up that same statement, and it has not changed, but the practice within the church is greatly changed.

Many of these are not apostatizing. You cannot apostatize from something you never had. These professing believers are not denying the faith in words, they are denying it in works, in their lives. We are in the slipperiest time the Church has ever been in. We are not denying the faith. We think we are propagating it. We are not in a church that is apostatizing, we are in a church that by and large is not born again. We are in a church age that is not leaving God. We have mega churches. By and large the modern church has not even known God. John McArthur says that the lukewarm Christianity described here is unsaved. This is not even a picture of carnal Christians.

I listened to a speaker the other day. He spoke of a student who came out of Bible school. He had graduated. And the teacher of a graduating class asked how many of them actually believed what they had been taught, and most of them didn't believe it. And then the professor admitted he did not either. And this student was shocked beyond comprehension. And this speaker said the only good news was this student then spoke to the teacher, and the teacher got saved.

CONCL: Well, we conclude this message. We have been looking at the historical purpose of the letter to Laodicea. We considered the place of Laodicea, as it was 2,000 years ago. We looked at how the Lord describes Himself to this church. He is the Amen. He is the faithful and true witness, and He is the beginning of the creation of God. He is the One who started it all.

We found no commendation at all and began to look at the Lord's criticism of this church and we began with the fact that they

were neither hot nor cold. They were lukewarm. They made the Lord nauseous. And we were considering what this meant. And in that consideration, since Laodicea pictures the last church age, we looked at whether the Bible indicates that there will be a great apostasy at the end of the Church age.

I find, not a great apostasy, but a great number of people professing to be Christians who are not even saved. John McArthur agrees when he says the Laodiceans were not even born again. And so we will seek to finish answering what cold, hot and lukewarm means in the next message.