

Laodicea – Wealthy and yet Bankrupt

Revelation 3: 14-22

Today we come to the seventh and final church Jesus addressed in the book of Revelation. The church in Laodicea had been heavily influenced by the culture in which it was situated. The people there were very wealthy, creating an attitude of self-sufficiency. However, Jesus viewed the church from an entirely different perspective. They may have enjoyed economic wealth, but spiritually the church was facing bankruptcy. Jesus urged the church to rely upon Him rather than the wealth and riches they possessed.

Laodicea was located about forty miles southeast of Philadelphia and about one hundred miles east of Ephesus. It became the leading commercial city in the Lycus River valley, due mainly to its location on a main Roman road that ran from Ephesus in the west to Syrian Antioch in the east. Hierapolis, with its hot mineral springs and white limestone cliffs, was only about eight miles to the north, while snowcapped mountains stood just a few miles to the south. Unfortunately, Laodicea had no reliable water supply of its own...In addition to serving as a leading banking center, the city was well known for manufacturing garments made of soft, black wool and was home to a famous medical school specializing in the treatment of eye diseases. The city was earthquake prone, however, and was virtually destroyed by a massive quake in AD 60. Yet instead of leaning on Rome for money to rebuild as Sardis had done, Laodicea paid for everything itself.ⁱ

The focus of this particular letter is a stinging rebuke for the church's self-reliance and lack of dependence upon the Lord. Jesus desired they return to fellowship with Him, seeking to receive the provision only He could provide. In Laodicea, we see an alarming similarity to the western church in our day. As we discuss the [realities](#) within the text, I want to consider: [Laodicea – Wealthy and yet Bankrupt](#).

I. The Condition of Laodicea (14-17) – Jesus came with no words of commendation for them. In fact, He saw nothing pleasing, only problems. Jesus certainly has the authority to address the church. He is the [Amen](#), the final authority. He is the [faithful and true witness](#), revealing truth about what He sees. He is also the [beginning of creation](#). He is the origin, the founder of the church. All we do is founded upon Him. As Jesus viewed their condition, He mentioned:

A. Their Indifference (15-16) – [I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot.](#) ^[16] [So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.](#) They were neither cold nor hot, but lukewarm. Their lives at church mirrored the water they drank. Remember, they had no viable water source. Hot water was piped in from the north, and

cold water came from the south. By the time either reached the city, it was at an undesirable temperature, neither cold or hot.

- They were not completely cold. They were attending church, but there was no zeal for the Lord, no desire to live for Him. They weren't hot either. They were a miserable temperature of lukewarm. They were satisfied with "their" church and had no desire for change. Jesus warned that He would spew them out of His mouth.
- You know, I don't really care for anything lukewarm. Apparently, many churches in our day love luke-warmness. They come together on a regular basis with no desire to serve the Lord. They are no longer moved by the sacrifice of Christ, the redemption of their soul, the need of themselves and others, or the wicked state of our world. A lukewarm, indifferent church will never grow and prosper for the Lord! I fear that Jesus is sick to His stomach with the modern church!

B. Their Arrogance (17a) – *Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing.* Remember this was a wealthy city. They refused Rome's help in rebuilding the city. They were an arrogant people. They had all they needed and weren't interested in help or input from others. Jesus saw them as lukewarm and pathetic, but they thought all was well.

- May I remind you that God hates pride! If we ever accomplish anything, it will be the result of what Jesus has done for us and through us. We cannot make it without Him. Our spiritual position and the work we need to accomplish are not justified by the buildings we sit in, the clothes we wear, or the money in our building funds. Our service to the Lord isn't about us or our finances; it is all about Him! I pray we will never get to the place that we feel we've arrived and see no need to press on or improve.

C. Their Ignorance (17b) – *and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.* Their perception and their reality were totally different. They thought all was well, but Jesus saw a much different point of view. They were proud, but Jesus said they were wretched, miserable, in need of pity. They were wealthy, but actually they were poor, spiritually bankrupt. They thought they looked fine, but they were blind, with no spiritual vision. They had the highest fashion of the day, but they were naked, uncovered before God, and unclothed in His righteousness.

- We must keep ourselves before the Lord, in His fellowship, so that we don't reach spiritual ignorance. It is a sad day to think all is well, when in reality all is lost!

II. The Counsel for Laodicea (18) – Jesus had addressed the problem and now He offers counsel to achieve a godly solution. These include:

A. A Proper Investment (18a) – I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich. Jesus says to invest in those things that will last, those that are eternal. Physically they were rich and increased in goods, but they hadn't invested in the Lord. **Mat.6:20** – But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal. We are living in a culture that is spiritually bankrupt. Many may be financially secure, but they are lacking in Christ. What good will wealth, houses, and land do for their soul at judgment?

- We must ensure that we instill truth and sound doctrine in our children. The future generations of our families and this church depend on the investments we make. It is time for the church to invest in the Lord! We wouldn't be here today if previous generations hadn't invested in us, being committed to the Lord.

B. A Proper Garment (18b) – and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear. Jesus encouraged them to put on white raiment, clothed in His righteousness. His salvation is the only way to stand acceptable before God.

- All that will feast at the Marriage Supper will be clothed in white raiment. Blood bought salvation cleanses our sin and guarantees acceptance. There is no other hope for forgiveness of sin. The lost need to be clothed in white raiment, holy before the Lord.

C. A Proper Ointment (18c) – and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see. Jesus knew of the pride they had for their eye salve. He wasn't concerned as much with physical sight as He was a spiritual perspective. It is hard to do, but we need to ask God to open our eyes that we might see. We need to see ourselves as we truly are. We need to see this world as it truly is. The church needs those who see through eyes of faith and obedience.

- We have lost our vision. We need a vision for repentance, holy living, humble service, and lost souls. There is far more to our relationship with Jesus than just church attendance. There is a life to live and a work to do outside these four walls!

III. The Consolation for Laodicea (19-21) – Even in their pitiful condition, Jesus loved them. In fact, He loves all of mankind. There is hope and consolation in His love.

A. The Perfection of His Love (19) – *As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.* Jesus' love is perfect love. He loved us too much to allow us to die in our sin. That is why He died on the cross, that men might be saved. He loves the church too much to allow it to stray from Him and continue in sin. His love confronts (rebukes, convicts), it chastens (corrects), it commands us to be zealous, and it changes by leading to repentance. Jesus loves us too much not to discipline our sin.

B. The Intention of His Love (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.* Jesus is standing and knocking. These verbs are in the perfect tense, revealing a continual action. He stood before the church, desiring fellowship with them.

- He continues to stand and knock upon men's hearts today! Jesus wants to dwell within the heart of all men. He wants all to enjoy a relationship with Him. This cannot happen unless we respond to His gracious offer. Jesus wants no one to die lost. He desires fellowship with the redeemed.

C. The Provision in His Love (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.* For those who open the door and receive Christ, there is eternal reward. They will be granted access to His heavenly home. Just forgiving our sin and missing hell would've been enough, but Jesus is preparing a place for the redeemed! That is sure.

Conclusion: *Rev.3:22 – He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.* No doubt, many within the church in Laodicea were lacking in their relationship with Christ. He is calling today, desiring us to hear. Where do you stand with the Lord? If you are lost without the Lord, you can be saved. Christian are there areas that you need to bring before the Lord? Is your life neither cold or hot, just lukewarm? Let's have a pure heart before Him.

ⁱ Duvall, J. S. (2014). *Revelation*. (M. L. Strauss & J. H. Walton, Eds.) (p. 76). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.