

THE LETTER TO THE CHURCH IN LAODICEA (Rev. 3:14-22)

Read Revelation 3:14-22 (NIV)

REV 3:14 *"To the angel of the church in Laodicea write:*

These are the words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God's creation.

****What Scholars Say****

DESTINATION

Rev. 3:14. The wealthy city of **Laodicea** was located on the road to Colosse about 40 miles southeast of Philadelphia. About 35 years before this letter was written, Laodicea was destroyed by an earthquake, but it had the wealth and ability to rebuild. Its main industry was wool cloth. There is no record that Paul ever visited this city, but he was very concerned about it (Col 2:1-2; 4:16).

In addressing the church Christ introduced Himself as **the Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the Ruler of God's creation**. The word "**Amen**," meaning "so be it." Isaiah 65:16 speaks of "the God of the Amen," that is, "the God of truth." As a personal designation it describes one who is perfectly trustworthy or faithful.

In speaking of Himself as "**the faithful and true witness**" Christ was repeating what He had said about Himself earlier in Rev. 1:5 and Rev. 3:7. **The faithful witness** refers to Christ as a reliable witness of God's message. **The true witness** reveals the content of His testimony. Jesus is the one who reveals the truth about God faithfully.

The NIV uses the phrase "**the Ruler of God's creation**." Most translations prefer words like beginning, origin or source of creation. Jesus is the one through whom God created all things.

Rev. 3: [15] *I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! [16] So, because you are lukewarm--neither hot nor cold--I am about to spit you out of my mouth.*

REBUKE

Rev. 3:15-16. No word of praise was extended to the Laodicean church. They were pictured as utterly abhorrent to Christ because they were lukewarm. This was addressed to the church and also to the messenger or the pastor.

First Jesus states, "**I know your deeds...**" Specific deeds are not mentioned. What Jesus is probably referring to is the manner of life or the behavior of these people. We could say, "I know what you have done, I know the life that you have lived." It appears that their life did not

reflect the faith that they professed. *“They claim to know God, but by their actions they deny him. They are detestable, disobedient and unfit for doing anything good.”* (Titus 1:16 NIV) In referring to the church as **“lukewarm”** Christ had in mind that this was its permanent situation. There is nothing more disgusting than a halfhearted, in-name-only Christian. They are indifferent, ineffective, impotent and half-hearted in their faith. Jesus says, *Because you are only half-hearted in your belief in Me, I will reject you. “So, because you are lukewarm--neither hot nor cold--I am about to spit* (Lit. “vomit”) *you out of my mouth.”* (Rev. 3:16).

Rev. 3: [17] You say, ‘I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.’ But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked.

Rev. 3:17. There is no praise for the Christians of Laodicea. Christ confronts their false claim with the truth about their spiritual condition. They are the opposite of the believers at Smyrna, who thought they were poor but who, Christ said, were really rich. Their being lukewarm spiritually was evidenced by their being content with their material wealth and their being unaware of their spiritual poverty. Christ used strong words to describe them: **wretched, pitiful, poor, blind, and naked.**

Rev. 3: [18] I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see.

EXHORTATION

Rev. 3:18 I (Jesus) counsel you to buy from Me... What you need can only come from Me. This is what they need:

(1) **Gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich...** They need spiritual wealth, they need to become rich in God’s sight.

(2) **White clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness...** White probably symbolizes purity and righteousness. They need Christ righteousness to avoid their shame.

(3) **Salve to put on your eyes, so you can see.** They claim they can see but in reality they are spiritually blind.

And alternative translation would be: “I advise you to buy from Me gold that has been refined (i.e. melted down to get rid of impurities) in order that you may be *spiritually* rich. You must buy white clothes (Christ righteousness and purity) so that you may avoid the shame of people seeing you naked. You must also buy some eye medicine to put in your eyes, so that you may *spiritually* see.”

REV 3:[19] Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest, and repent.

In spite of the wretched condition, Christ loved them and rebuked and disciplined them. Be earnest He said, Do it Quickly! Repent!

Jesus did two things: (1) He told them what they had done wrong. (2) He would discipline, correct and train them. There part was to **be earnest and repent**. **Repent** is in the aorist tense and mean a once-for-all change of mind.

The church at Laodicea is typical of a modern church quite unconscious of its spiritual needs and content with beautiful buildings and all the material things money can buy. This is a searching and penetrating message. To all such the exhortation is **be earnest, and repent**.

Rev. 3: [20] Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me.

PROMISE

Rev.3:20. Dramatically Christ pictured Himself as standing outside and knocking on a door. In a familiar painting the latch is not shown but is assumed to be on the inside. The appeal is for those who hear to open the door. To them Christ promised, I will go in and eat with him, and he with Me. With Christ on the outside, there can be no fellowship or genuine wealth. With Christ on the inside, there is wonderful fellowship and sharing of the marvelous grace of God. This was an appeal to the church-world rather than to the non-church world. This raises the important question concerning the extent of one's intimate fellowship with Christ.

REV 3:[21] To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne.

Rev. 3:21. To him who overcomes... The Christian life is seen as a combat against the forces of evil. Those who with the shield of faith preserve unto the end will have the privilege and honor of sitting with Christ upon His throne. The place of greatest honor and privilege.

Rev. 3:[22] He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

Rev. 3:22. Once again the invitation to listen and respond is given: *“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”*

The letters to the seven churches are a remarkably complete treatment of problems that face the church today. The recurring dangers of losing their first love (2:4), of being afraid of suffering (2:10), doctrinal defection (2:14-15), moral departure (2:20), spiritual deadness (3:1-2), not holding fast (v. 11), and luke-warmness (vv. 15-16) are just as prevalent today as they were in first-century churches. Because these letters come from Christ personally, they take on significance as God's final word of exhortation to the church down through the centuries. The final appeal is to all individuals who will hear. People in churches today would do well to listen.

****My Thoughts****

1. There were three things in which Laodicea took great pride: financial wealth, an extensive industry and a famous eye salve. Wealth with self-sufficiency breeds spiritual disaster.
2. Rev. 3:20 "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." (KJV) This is usually taken as a picture of Christ's knocking on the door of the individual unbeliever's heart. In context, however, the self-deluded members of the congregation are being addressed. The Last Days Bible translation states this, "*Therefore be zealous and in earnest about turning from your luke-warmness.*" (Rev. 3:19)
3. This is the counsel of God to the Laodiceans:
 - (a) "Buy of Me gold tried in the fire" (v. 18). Get spiritual wealth from Me.
 - (b) "Buy of Me white raiment" (v. 18). Receive from Me the righteousness that you need.
 - (c) Anoint your eyes with eye-salve (v. 18). *Turn from your spiritual darkness to the light* (See Acts 26:18).
 - (d) Be zealous to Repent! Be earnest about turning to God.
4. These are the conditions of Christ's invitation:
 - (a) If any man hear (v. 20) Are you hearing what the Spirit says?
 - (b) If any man opens the door. You must respond!
 - (c) If any man is willing to sup with Me. You must be willing to have fellowship with God. (R.A. Torrey tract)

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****Questions****

REV 3:14 "To the angel of the church in Laodicea write:

These are the words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God's creation. (NIV)

1. Who spoke these words and told John to write them down? (3:14)
2. What church was the focus of this letter from Jesus? (3:14)
3. By what unusual description did Jesus identify Himself? (3:14)

[15] I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other!

1. How did Jesus describe the church at Laodicea? (3:15)

[16] So, because you are lukewarm--neither hot nor cold--I am about to spit you out of my mouth.

What response did Jesus promise to the Laodicean church because of its behavior? (3:16)

[17] You say, 'I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.' But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked.

1. In what ways was the Laodicean church deceived? (3:17)

[18] I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see.

1. What counsel did "the ruler of God's creation" give to this church? (3:18)
2. What did the Laodicean Christians need? Why? (3:18)

REV 3:19 Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest, and repent.

1. What reason did Jesus give for His stern warnings? (3:19)

[20] Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me.

1. What invitation was given to individual Christians in Laodicea? (3:20)
2. What did Christ promise to do if accepted and embraced by the Laodiceans? (3:20)

REV 3:21 To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne.

1. What promise was made to "him who overcomes" in Laodicea? (3:21)

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

1. How did Christ conclude His message to this wayward church? (3:22)

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