

REVELATION – SERMON 22

LOATHSOME LUKEWARMNESS

Revelation 3:14-16

INTRODUCTION

- Many professing Christians have a form of godliness and seem to have an interest in the things of God, but in their hearts they love the world, and they desire the things of the flesh more than the things of the Spirit.
- They think they can serve God and sin at the same time (Matthew 6:24)
- The Laodicean church was apathetic, self-reliant, proud, deluded, and sickening to Christ.
- There could not be a greater contrast between the Philadelphians and the Laodiceans.
- One church was small, feeble and poor, yet were promised open doors of opportunity by Christ who holds the key of David; the other church was big, strong and rich, yet were threatened with rejection by Christ.
- Laodicea was at the end of the postal route that began at Ephesus. It was located about 60km east of Ephesus and 60km south-east of Philadelphia, and close to Colosse and Hierapolis.
- It was famous for its wealth and was a banking and trading centre
- It was a clothing and fashion centre; the fine glossy black wool of its sheep was known far and wide.
- There was a renowned school of medicine there, and a popular Phrygian powder for weak and sick eyes was manufactured in Laodicea and distributed widely in that day.
- The church in Laodicea is mentioned numerous times in Paul's epistle to the Colossians. (Colossians 2:1; 4:12-16) and at that time it seems to be a sound, flourishing church, under the leadership of Epaphras.
- There is no praise whatsoever to this church.
- In all the other six letters, the churches are referred to as "the church of/in..." followed by the name of the city; but in this case it is "the church of the *Laodiceans*" – it was less of the Lord's church in the city, but the people's church there, doing their own will, regardless of the Lord who was shut outside the door.
- The Laodicean church represents many churches in our day that appear to men to be very successful and prosperous, but are in reality full of unregenerate souls, and in God's sight nauseating.

I. AN INSIGHT OF THE LORD'S TRUTH AND DEITY (14)

A. The Amen

1. Amen means "verily, truly, surely, certainly, so be it"
2. As with *hallelujah*, this word is the same in every language
3. In Isaiah 65:16, Jehovah is called the "God of truth", which is in Hebrew, *Elohim Amen*
4. "The promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen" (2 Corinthians 1:20)

B. The faithful and true witness (Revelation 1:5)

1. This highlights Christ's office as Prophet
2. Every word of Christ can be trusted (cf. Proverbs 20:6)
3. His testimony of their deplorable state is 100% accurate
4. He is true in his decrees, in his promises, in his threatenings
5. Christ sets the example for men of God to speak the truth to the people without fear or favour (Isaiah 58:1)

C. The beginning of the creation of God

1. This does not mean that Christ was the first created being, but that He is the origin, source or *beginner* of the entire creation (John 1:3; Hebrews 1:2)
2. The Laodiceans should have been well acquainted with this truth from the epistle to the Colossians (Colossians 1:15-18)
3. Some think that the Christological heresy that had plagued the Colossians, had also infiltrated the Laodicean church
4. A wrong understanding of the person and work of Christ will corrupt every area of one's life, and will render a church dead and useless to God

II. THE INSIPIDNESS OF THE LAODICEANS' TEPID DISORDER (15-16)

A. Not hot

1. This word literally means *boiling hot* and has the sense of *fervency*
2. To be *hot* spiritually is to be born again through repentance and faith in Christ
3. It speaks of life, vitality, zeal, fervency, warmth, love, power, obedience, and godliness

B. Not cold

1. This denotes the atheist, the openly unbelieving person who makes no pretence of religion
2. Note that Christ does not wish people to be cold *absolutely*, but *relatively*, for there is more hope for the conversion of such people than for the formal hypocrite

C. Lukewarm

1. There is an allusion here to the water that had to be piped to Laodicea through aqueducts, some was from the hot springs of Hierapolis, some was the cool refreshing water from Colosse, but all of it was lukewarm by the time it arrived at Laodicea
2. The spiritually lukewarm are those who profess to be believers but have not been born again
3. They are called hypocrites, professors, formalists and self-righteous (Matthew 7:21; 23:28; Luke 11:39; 2 Timothy 3:5; Titus 1:16)
4. They may have been “enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come” (Hebrews 6:4-5) yet never been saved
5. Many who begin as *cold*, are given repentance and are made *hot* by the grace of God
6. But very few who are *lukewarm* will ever humble themselves before God to be changed
7. The publicans and harlots (*cold*) went into the kingdom of God before the Pharisees (*lukewarm*) (Matthew 21:31)
8. “Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit? there is more hope of a fool than of him.” (Proverbs 26:12)
9. Apostates are such lukewarmers who later abandon their profession (2 Peter 2:21-22)

III. THE INDIGNANCE OF THE LORD’S THREATENING DENUNCIATION (16)

A. Imminent judgment pronounced

1. Note the grace of the Lord in forewarning the church when He had every right to reject them without warning
2. His desire is that they would repent and thereby avert His judgment (Revelation 3:19)

B. Christ utterly loathes their condition and behaviour

1. As lukewarm water is sickening to drink, & therefore good for nothing, so the church had become sickening to Christ and was of no use to Him any longer
2. This threat to *spue* the church out means to reject and discard as something detestable (Leviticus 18:25)
3. It is a more vehement form of warning that was given to the Ephesians, that He would remove their candlestick (Revelation 2:5), and they would cease to be the Lord's church

CONCLUSION

1. The Laodiceans were not indulging in the excesses of sin, but nor were they striving against sin.
2. They were not in open denial of Christ, but nor would they boldly and openly confess Him.
3. Many think they "sit on the fence" when it comes to being a disciple of Christ.
4. Such people are condemned as "double minded" (James 1:8; 4:8)
5. They are like Ephraim, "a cake not turned" (Hosea 7:8), half-baked Christians, one foot in the world, the other in the church, outwardly religious, inwardly lukewarm, and thoroughly abhorrent to God.
6. Throughout the Scriptures, man is called to end his indifference and make a clear, whole-hearted commitment to God.
 - ✓ Moses: Who is on the Lord's side? (Exodus 32:26)
 - ✓ Elijah: How long halt ye between two opinions? (1 Kings 18:21)
 - ✓ Joshua: Choose you this day whom ye will serve! (Joshua 24:15)
 - ✓ Jesus: Will ye also go away? (John 6:67)
 - ✓ Paul: Not just *almost* but *altogether* Christian! (Acts 26:28-29)
7. There is no neutrality when it comes to Christ; you are either with Him or against Him.
8. What is your true spiritual temperature?
9. If you are anything but *hot* in your heart towards God, you must heed the Lord's command to repent.
10. Even true Christians can lose their heat and need to be stirred up and kindled in their hearts (2 Peter 3:1)
11. We are to be fervent in spirit (Romans 12:11), fervent in prayers (Colossians 4:12), and hearts that burn within us in love for the Lord (Luke 24:32)
12. It is an insult to Christ to be lukewarm in our love to Him who has demonstrated such burning love towards us.