

Revelation 3:14:22

"The Lukewarm Laodiceans"

We come today to the final of the 7 churches physically; representing equally the last link in church history, what we might call/consider the age of apostasy, a drifting from sound biblical theology. The church of the Laodiceans: it would seem to me that ultimately these last 2 churches will dwell simultaneously on the earth (a time in history that I believe we're in presently).

One living out God's word obediently, seeking to reach people evangelistically to be taken out in the rapture; the other growing more & more liberal in their theology, casting doubt on the scriptures legitimacy, being cast into the great tribulation. The former being represented by the church of Philadelphia, the latter by the church of the Laodiceans; all of which claim to be Christian churches however some having very definitely departed from the position of the inerrancy, infallibility & inspiration of the Word of God.

They'll make a departure from things like the deity of Christ, the miracles of the bible, the things that the bible identifies as sin. They'll say things like homosexuality isn't sin, Paul just had a personal prejudice, that a God of love would never condemn anyone; that we can simply love one another, accept diversity & live in unity.

But listen, to compromise purity for the sake of unity isn't love; it's sin. The bible says, *"But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy."* James 3:17 You see purity, personal holiness & a desire to please God are paramount prior to true unity being able to happen. It's true that God is a God of love, but He's also a God of holiness & righteousness; it's true that He wouldn't condemn you. *Jesus didn't come into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. But we condemn ourselves by rejecting the word of God, the way that God has made for us to obtain salvation through faith in the Person of J.C.*

Now I'm not trying to isolate homosexuality, that's simply an example that happens to be prevalent in our society presently. Sin is sin; & as such it separates us from God. But the Laodicean church is a church that blurs the line, it's the I'm ok, you're ok, we're all ok kind of "feel good" church.

To be honest w/you I'm not sure why people even go to church that doesn't believe the bible is the word of God. You're espousing a book of allegories or fairytales at that point; instead of God's word being in authority over you, you're in authority over the word.

You pick and choose what you think is really God's word, & that which is a man's personal opinion. If you don't like what it says you say, "Well, that's not really what happened." Or "Well, that was just his opinion, not God's word." And in so doing you become the authority, you may as well throw it out & do what you want, why even reference the bible? It's either the Word of God or it's not; we either except all of it, or none of it. Because who's to say if faith in Christ is really the way to be saved if we can't be sure which parts are really God's word? You see there are all kinds of problems w/that kind of thought process & position...

As for the historical city; Laodicea was incredibly wealthy, it was a banking city, it was famous for it's textiles & black sheep that they cultivated black wool from. They were also famous for an eye salve that they manufactured at their (also famous) medical school.

They were such a wealthy/independent city that when (in 60 A.D.) their city was destroyed by an earthquake (the region had plenty) that they refused Roman aid in rebuilding. It would be like unto our entire city (as opposed to 1/3 of it) being destroyed by a tornado & then telling F.E.M.A. we're not interested in any federal funding to rebuild, we got it covered; then doing it ourselves. They rose from their ruins via their own resources exclusively; they were that wealthy... Let's look at the church of the Laodiceans.

Vs 14-22

Quite the contrast from the church of Philadelphia huh? However here's the warning; if you *think* you're like the church of Philadelphia, but you're *not* like the church of Philadelphia, you're probably like the church of Laodicea...

As w/the church of Philadelphia Jesus gives us 3 qualities or characteristics *about* Himself in order to *identify* Himself to this church. He calls Himself the "Amen", the "Faithful & True Witness" & the "Beginning of the creation of God."

This is the only place in scripture whereby the word "Amen" is used as a proper name; and it's the name of Christ. In the OT book of Isaiah we find it alluding to God in a couple of different passages; & of course we read in 2 Cor 1:20 "For all the promises of God in Him are Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us." As we discussed in our faith fundamentals group it's impossible for God to lie, so when God makes a promise; there's no speculation, no reservations it's a guaranteed fact. The promises of God are Yes & Amen in Him, that is in Christ who is the Amen.

Of course the word Amen is a word of agreement, a word meaning, "so be it"; the final word (so to speak). Jesus is the final word, the Alpha & Omega.

The One who fulfills every promise; every pledge of the Word of God, #2 He's the Faithful & True Witness. You place a witness on the stand you need someone who is trustworthy, someone who has integrity who will be a faithful witness, who speaks the truth, the whole truth & nothing but the truth. Jesus says, "That's Me; I speak accurately, honestly, w/integrity; My evaluation will be given correctly, no conjecture, no misinterpretations, I am the Faithful & True Witness." He accurately reveals all & tells us, man looks to the outward appearance, Jesus knows the heart; the media rarely gives you the truth, educational institutions will obscure the truth. Jesus won't do that; He won't twist it, spin it, dilute it or falsify it. He will give you the truth, even if it means administering a faithful wound. The bible says, *"Faithful are the wounds of a friend, But the kisses of an enemy are deceitful."* Proverbs 27:6

"The Beginning of the creation of God", now you've got to watch this because cults love to grab this Vs & say, "See, Jesus isn't God; He's the 1st created being of God, the beginning of God's creation!" That is what we call very poor exegesis (or analysis & interpretation of the text). Because the word "beginning" here doesn't mean 1st in a sequential order; it's a word ("Arche") that means literally, "source" or "origin". Jesus is saying that He is the source of God's creation; that creation has it's origin in Him. John put it like this; *"All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made."*¹ How many things were made through Him? How much was made w/out Him? He's the origin of the creation of God. Paul told the Colossians, *"For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist."*² Creation had it's beginning in Him... Vs 15-16

One of the weaknesses of the city of Laodicea was it's water supply; it didn't really have anything sufficient of it's own. The nearest city (Heiropolis) was 6 miles away. However the water it supplied was from Hot Springs; so as you might imagine by the time it reached Laodicea it was a rancid warm water, wasn't hot, wasn't cold. The nearest city w/cold water would've been Colossae but it was 10 miles away so again by the time it was piped to Laodicea it was tepid & warm. So Jesus speaking to them in a way they can readily identify with.

¹ The New King James Version. 1982 (Jn 1:3). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

² The New King James Version. 1982 (Col 1:16-17). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

He says, "I know what you're about; you're about being comfortable & content in indifference & compromise. You're not hot or cold, you're right in the middle, your blurring the line & in seeking to be neither thing you've effectively become good for nothing." Jesus says (in essence) to the one who tries to please both sides, "You make Me sick". He says, "I wish you would get on or get off; but this playing both ends against the middle stuff is absolutely nauseating."

If you're on fire for Jesus He can use you greatly, if you're totally cold at least He can deal w/you so that you'd see your need, but when you're lukewarm you're nearly impossible to reach from either side. You've got "enough Jesus" (if you will) to satisfy some sort of religious craving, but not enough so as to have eternal life. **The thief of the cross was cold toward Jesus, but was readily brought to see his need for Jesus; Judas was close enough to be considered a disciple but his heart didn't totally belong to Jesus & in the end he didn't make it to heaven!**

These are those who as Paul the apostle said in describing the last days would be lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God. He said, **"having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!"**³ Last week we spoke of hearing the word of God attentively but failing then to respond to it appropriately. That's Laodicea; they are like those found in Ezekiel 33. (Leave Rev 3, turn to **Ezek 33:30-32**)

Lukewarm, willing to hear it, unwilling to respond to it or be changed by it; empty religion; Laodicea...tax collectors & harlots were more open to Jesus than were the scribes & Pharisees...just religious enough to numb you to your need for Jesus. It's no wonder the bible exhorts us to make our calling & election sure... (2 Pet 1:10). Make sure that you know, that you know that you're fostering a relationship w/J.C. not playing religious games.

Hey listen, if Baal be god then serve him! If your flesh is worth serving than serve the flesh! But if the Lord be God than serve Him w/all your heart, w/all your strength, w/all your mind & w/all your soul. Be hot or be cold but to be lukewarm only destroys both yourself & those around you.

The "Prince of preachers" Charles Spurgeon describes some characteristics of the lukewarm church. He said, "They have prayer-meetings, but there are few present, for they like quiet evenings home."

³ *The New King James Version*. 1982 (**2 Ti 3:5**). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

“When more attend the meetings they are still very dull, for they do their praying very deliberately and are afraid of being too excited. They are content to have all things done decently and in order, but vigor and zeal are considered to be vulgar. They have deacons and elders who are excellent pillars of the church, if the chief quality of pillars be to stand still, and exhibit no motion or emotion. The pastor does not fly very far in preaching the everlasting gospel, and he certainly has no flame of fire in his preaching. The pastor may be a shining light of eloquence, but he certainly is not a burning light of grace, setting men’s hearts on fire. Everything is done in a half-hearted, listless, dead-and-alive way, as if it did not matter much whether it was done or not.” Makes you think doesn’t it...

We desire to identify w/Philadelphia but I fear there may be more Laodicea in us than we care to admit...

Vs 17-19

The mindset of independence so prevalent in the city of Laodicea had taken root in the church. They were mindful of the things of this world & measured success through material gain. Sounds a lot like American pop culture doesn’t it? We pride ourselves on being “self made men” “don’t need no help or handouts from anyone” yet Jesus said, *“I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.”*⁴ Far from being independent we are completely dependent upon Christ. You take a branch and sever it from the vine, how much fruit does it bear? It can do nothing outside of the vine, the necessary nutrients to be fruitful flow into it from the vine & fruit is simply the byproduct of abiding. Jesus says, “That’s you & Me.” As it pertains to anything of any value spiritually we cannot function apart from Christ.

They held themselves in high esteem because of their wealth materially & they were unable to discern where they truly were spiritually. As far as they were concerned they were wealthy & had need of nothing; as far as Jesus was concerned they were in deep spiritual poverty. Wretched, miserable, poor, naked, & worst of all blind to it all... The polar opposite of the poor in spirit whom Jesus said were so blessed in Matt 5:3.

Jesus is the Faithful Witness; refusing to pull punches so as to sober them spiritually. You feel fine presently but inwardly you’re filled w/cancer spiritually & need treatment immediately.

⁴ The New King James Version. 1982 (Jn 15:5). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

What's the treatment? "Buy from Me gold, refined in the fire." Oh it's not as though you can purchase it literally, but the implication is that there will be a cost to you personally. The refiners fire; they were too comfortable & needed the dross in their lives brought to the top & skimmed off through the smelting process of being broken down & purified before God. Peter said it this way: *"In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ,"*⁵

The word of the Lord to this church is to cease focusing on the *external* & begin to focus on the *eternal*.

You may be famous for your black wool; but you need to be robed in white garments (which is [as we'll see later on] the righteous acts of the saints); "That the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed." If it's righteous acts that make for the white garment, yet these people are naked what does that tell us? They're doing nothing as it pertains to the kingdom; again focused on externals, not eternal.

Jesus says, "You need the Holy Spirit to open your eyes to these things" "Anoint your eyes w/eye salve; that you may see" quite the slap in the face for a people famous for their eye salve huh? Jesus tells them they're blind & in need of the Holy Spirit to open their eyes to these things. There was something wrong... wrong w/their values, their vesture, & their vision; but Jesus isn't saying these things to rip them apart, He's seeking to rescue them from the error of their ways and lead them to repentance. All this rebuke needs to be considered w/in the context of His love, notice.

Vs 19

You see w/all this rebuke we might think that Jesus has lost His love from them, but put that thought far from you; it's His love that has *led* Him to rebuke them. If He didn't love them He'd just let them go their own way w/out warning to destruction.

BTW the word for "love" here in Vs 19 isn't agape, it's Phileo. It's that brotherly love we spoke of last week, this is the faithful wound of a friend; it's out of intense personal affection for them that the Lord warns & rebukes them.

"It's time to quit leading lukewarm lives but rather let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works & glorify your Father in heaven." (Matt 5:16)

⁵ The New King James Version. 1982 (1 Pe 1:6-7). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

“Be zealous and repent.” The word for zealous here comes from the same root word as the word “hot” found in Vs 16. He’s saying, “be on fire for Me, quit looking to your own riches & resources (that’s bankruptcy), turn around & look to Me.”

Vs 20

It’s to this lukewarm church that Jesus offers what we call “The Great Invitation”. “Behold I stand at the door and knock”, we use this evangelistically and certainly there’s appropriate application but concerning it’s specific interpretation the sad reality is that Jesus says these words to the church...

He wants to fellowship w/us intimately, to know us deeply but the only way that will happen is if we will respond to His initiative, hear His voice & open the door.

Notice the appeal, it’s not to the body collectively, but to each person individually, “If *anyone* hears My voice” not “any church” the church will be transformed corporately as we respond individually to the voice of J.C. He won’t force entry into our lives; He appeals to us personally and awaits our response. He calls us to make a decision, open the door & accept Him, or leave the door shut and reject Him...

The idea of opening the door to Jesus goes out to sinner & saint, believer & non believer alike... “If *anyone* opens... I will come in” the idea is unto intimate fellowship & a deepening relationship.

Vs 21-22

“If you will turn from your sin & trust in Me (Jesus says), repent of your indifferent frame of mind and be on fire for Me, I will grant you the highest state of glory; to sit w/Me on My throne.” Can you imagine being seated on the very throne of God Himself? Yet that’s what Jesus says...

We desire affiliation w/Philadelphia, but if the truth be that we’re of the Laodiceans then let’s humble ourselves accordingly, repent of our lukewarm self sufficiency & trust in Jesus whole heartedly...

Prayer Points:

Lord God deliver us from indifference & self sufficiency; teach us to trust You whole heartedly, to be on fire for you radically, may we be zealous & repent, God how we long to be in the # of overcomers; we open the door of our heart & invite you in afresh. We long for intimacy w/You, clothe us in white, help us to be willing to count the cost, to pay the price of being refined in the fire; purify your bride Lord Jesus. And now that we’ve heard Your word attentively, may we respond Your word appropriately, use us for Your glory...

Jesus stands at the door doesn't He? He draws us w/gentle cords; w/bands of love unto repentance. Even His rebuke is couched w/in the context of Love, He longs to fellowship, to cultivate a relationship w/us, to forgive us. **If you need to be forgiven of your sin, to have Jesus come into your heart & you're ready to open the door then why wait, do it now; don't be lukewarm, simply seeking a religious experience, be on fire for Christ, enter into a relationship w/Him by grace through faith.**