

The Letter to the Seven Churches of Asia: Laodicea

I. Introduction:

- a. **(Rev 3:14-22)** “And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God; I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent. 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. 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. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.”
- b. The City of Laodicea
 - i. “The city of this name mentioned in Scripture lay on the confines of Phrygia and Lydia, about 40 miles east of Ephesus (Rev 3:14), on the banks of the Lycus. It was originally called Diospolis and then Rhoas, but afterwards Laodicea, from Laodice, the wife of Antiochus II., king of Syria, who rebuilt it. It was one of the most important and flourishing cities of Asia Minor. At a very early period it became one of the chief seats of Christianity” (Easton's Bible Dictionary)
 - ii. Ramsay tells us that there were three reasons that Laodicea was a rich and powerful city
 1. Great banking center
 - a. “In such a situation it only needed peace to become a great commercial and financial centre. It was, as Strabo says, only a small city before the Roman time; but after Rome kept peace in the land, it grew rapidly. Cicero brought with him in 51 B.C. orders to be cashed in Laodicea, as the city of banking and exchange.” (pg. 234, WM Ramsay, The Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia)
 2. Industrial center – Black, glossy wool
 - a. “It was also a manufacturing centre. There was produced in the valley a valuable sort of wool, soft in texture and glossy black in colour, which was widely esteemed. This wool was woven into garments of several kinds for home use and export

trade.” (pg. 234, WM Ramsay, The Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia)

3. Medical center – Phrygian Powder – Eye-Salve
 - a. “...a medicine for the eyes is also described as Phrygian: Galen describes it as having the form of a tabloid made from the Phrygian stone, while Aristotle speaks of it as Phrygian powder; the two are probably identical, Aristotle describes the powder to which the tabloids were reduced when they were to be applied to the eye.” (pg. 236, WM Ramsay, The Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia)

II. Christ Description

- a. **(Rev 3:14)** “These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God”
- b. Jesus sets before the church at Laodicea His credentials
 - i. Amen
 1. Amen – Transliterated Hebrew word into both Greek and English
 - a. 'amen (aw-mane)' sure; abstract, faithfulness; adverb, truly (Strong's)
 - b. “ἀμην” – “Of Hebrew origin; properly, firm, i.e. (figuratively) trustworthy; adverbially, surely (often as interj. so be it)” (Strong's)
 2. God is faithful, sure, and firm – You can count on God
 - a. Both Positive and Negative
 - b. **(Deut 7:9-10)** “Know therefore that the Lord thy God, he is God, the **faithful God**, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations; And repayeth them that hate him to their face, to destroy them: he will not be slack to him that hateth him, he will repay him to his face.”
 3. If God is sure, then is His precepts and testimony.
 - a. **(Ps 111:7)** “The works of his hands are verity and judgment; all his commandments are sure.”
 4. Christ is the ‘Amen’ because through Christ the purpose of God are established
 - a. **(2 Cor 1:20)** “For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us.”
 - b. **(Heb 1:1-4)** “God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath **appointed heir of all things**, by whom also he made the worlds; Who

being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high; Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.”

- i. Christ is the finality and completeness of the God’s promises

- ii. The faithful and true witness

1. Because Jesus is the “Amen” of God’s promises, His witness would be absolute truth and faithful
2. **(Ps 19:7)** “The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple.”
 - a. You can count on His testimony
 - b. The church at Laodicea would do good to listen

- iii. Beginning of the creation of God

1. Not as the Jehovah Witness understand this verse
 - a. Jesus was not the first created being of God
2. Beginning = “αρχη” “that by which anything begins to be, the origin, active cause” (**Thayer’s Greek Lexicon**)
3. Jesus is origin or source of God’s creation
 - a. **(John 1:1-3)** “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.”
 - b. **(Col 1:16-17)** “For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.”

III. Condition of the Church

- a. **(Rev 3:15-16)** “I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.”
 - i. Jesus is giving a lesson using the Second Law of Thermodynamics
 1. “...all spontaneous (natural) events act to increase the entropy within a system. Until a system reaches its maximum entropy, it can do useful work. But as a system does work, its entropy increases until the system can no longer perform work.” (World Book Encyclopedia)

2. Basically everything wants to be uniformed – Hot cools in temperature and cold warms in temperature until both objects are uniformed.
- ii. Example: Set ice cream and hot coffee out on a counter and leave them for a while. Both will become the same temperature, and eventually spoil – no good to eat – causes you to spue it out of your mouth
 1. Outside temp influences the object
- iii. This applies to the Christian life:
 1. If we wrap and engulf ourselves with the world you will spoil as a child of God.
 2. We must be a sacred people – set apart from the world
 - a. **(John 17:15-16)** “I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.”
 - b. You as a Christian must be different than the rest of the world
 - c. **(James 4:4)** “Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.”
 3. If you act like the world you will spoil!
- iv. “I would thou wert cold or hot”
 1. Doesn’t mean that Christ would rather one to have never been obedient to the gospel, but that he would rather for you to act the way that is proper for your standing.
 - a. Coffee you want hot and Ice Cream you want cold
 - b. Christ wants the Christian to act like a Christian and the world to act like the world
 - c. **(Rom 12:11)** “Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord.”
- b. **(Rev 3:17)** “Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked:”
 - i. This is the opposite of the church at Smyrna
 1. **(Rev 2:9)** “I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan.”
 - a. Smyrna gave up material wealth for Christ
 - b. Laodicea conformed with their surroundings
 - i. **(Prov 13:7)** “There is that maketh himself rich, yet hath nothing: there is that maketh himself poor, yet hath great riches.”
 - ii. An example of this city’s sense of self-sufficiency

1. “Laodicea became extremely wealthy during the Roman period. For example, in 62 B.C. Flaccus seized the annual contribution of the Jews of Laodicea for Jerusalem amounting to 20 pounds of gold. Moreover, when the city was destroyed by an earthquake in A.D. 60 (along with Colossae and Hierapolis), it alone refused aid from Rome for rebuilding.” (Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary)

iii. They were in a state of self-delusion

1. Imagine what a shock this letter was to this church!

IV. Divine Advice

a. **(Rev 3:18)** “I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see.”

i. Gold tried in the fire

1. Instead of trusting in the material gold, which will perish, they need to buy gold that will never be destroyed
2. **(Matt 6:19-21)** “Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”
3. **(1 Cor 3:13)** “Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is.”
4. **(1 Peter 1:7-9)** “That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ: Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.”

ii. That though mayest be rich – like the church at Smyrna

iii. White raiment – righteousness and humility

1. Instead of glorying in the black wool that was such a great export in the city
2. **(Rev 19:8)** “And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.”
3. **(1 Peter 5:5-7)** “Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and **be clothed with humility**: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves

therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.”

iv. Anoint thine eyes with eyesalve

1. They were obvious of the meaning here. They were the blind ones. The church at Laodicea was the one with eye troubles – they were blinded by self-deception
2. The eyesalve that Christ is speaking of is the word of God
 - a. **(Ps 19:8)** “...the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes.”
 - b.

b. **(Rev 3:19)** “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.”

i. To be rebuked and chastened by the Lord is a show of His love toward us, not a sign of rejection.

1. **(Prov 3:11-12)** “My son, despise not the chastening of the Lord; neither be weary of his correction: For whom the **Lord loveth he correcteth**; even as a father the son in whom he delighteth.”

ii. If we are wise, we will receive the correction and change

1. **(Prov 9:8)** “Reprove not a scorner, lest he hate thee: rebuke a wise man, and he will love thee.”

iii. We will come repent on the basis of a contrite heart

1. **(Ps 51:17)** “The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.”

iv. When reprov'd, we need to have the spirit of Nineveh

1. **(Matt 12:41)** “The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here.”

V. Divine Promises

a. **(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.”

i. Shows the loving affection of Jesus Christ

ii. He stands and knocks at the door

1. Here it's through rebuking of their acts
2. His word to us is His knocking

iii. “I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me”

1. Communion with Jesus Christ – Fellowship
2. If we are obedient to His word, and walk according to His walking, we will have fellowship with Him

- a. **(1 John 1:7-9)** “But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we

deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

- b. **(Rev 3:21)** “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.”
 - i. **(2 Tim 2:11-12)** “It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him: If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us.”
- c. **(Rev 3:22)** “He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.”