

## ***The Son of Man's Message To The Church In Laodicea***

***(Revelation 3:14-22 NASB) “To the angel of the church in Laodicea write: The Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the Origin of the creation of God, says this: 15 ‘I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot; I wish that you were cold or hot. 16 So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will vomit you out of My mouth. 17 Because you say, “I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have no need of anything,” and you do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked, 18 I advise you to buy from Me gold refined by fire so that you may become rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself and the shame of your nakedness will not be revealed; and eye salve to apply to your eyes so that you may see. 19 Those whom I love, I rebuke and discipline; therefore be zealous and repent. 20 Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me. 21 The one who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat with My Father on His throne. 22 The one who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”***

### **I. Cultural Context of the Church In Laodicea**



- a. Laodicea was an important city in Asia minor because it was a major trade city and banking center. It was a wealthy city that exported goods all over the world. Laodicea prided itself on three major things: financial wealth, an extensive textile industry, and a popular eye-salve which was exported around the world. It's economy was so “*booming*” that after an earthquake devastated the region in A.D. 60, Laodicea refused help from the Roman Empire to rebuild, they chose to rely on their own resource.
  - i. Tacitus, A Roman historian writes; “*Laodicea was too rich to accept help from anyone. Laodicea arose from the ruins by the strength of her own resources, and with no help from us*”.
- b. Laodicea was also a center for Caesar worship and the worship of the healing god Asklepios. There was a medical school connected with a temple to Asklepios found Laodicea.
- c. One of the major problems of this city was that they did not have water supply within the city (They had to build aqueducts that would carry water into the city from nearby hot springs) which made them vulnerable to attack. In order to avoid military conflict, Laodicea was very accommodating and would compromise often as through negotiations.

### **II. The Specific Revelation of Jesus To The Church In Laodicea**

***(Revelation 3:14 NASB) “To the angel of the church in Laodicea write: The Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the Origin of the creation of God”***

- a. ***The Amen*** – The “*so be it*” or “*it is done*”, Jesus is the one who is true and will fulfill and complete all He promised He would do.

**(2 Corinthians 1:20 NASB) “For as many as the promises of God are, in Him they are yes; therefore through Him also is our Amen to the glory of God through us.”**

- b. **The Faithful and true Witness** – Jesus is who He says He is. He is reliable and true in how what He says. What He reveals to us about the Father is true, and what He reveals to the Father about us is true. This is a direct statement confronting the fact that the Laodiceans were not “*faithful and true*” in who they thought they were.
- c. **The Origin of the creation of God** – The Greek word for “*Origin*” here, “*arche*”, means, ruler or source. Jesus’ identifies himself to this church as the ruler and source of all creation. He was there in the beginning and has always had all power and authority.

**(John 1:1-3 NASB) “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him not even one thing came into being that has come into being.”**

### III. Jesus’ Correction & Rebuke

**(Revelation 3:15-17 NASB) “I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot; I wish that you were cold or hot. 16 So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will vomit you out of My mouth. 17 Because you say, “I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have no need of anything,” and you do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked”**

- a. Laodicea did not have their own water source so they built aqueducts to bring hot spring water into the city, however, by the time it would arrive it would be undesirably lukewarm. Colossae was a neighboring city that had cold and refreshing mountainous snow melt for water and Hierapolis was another neighboring city that had Hot springs, producing hot “*healing*” water within its city limits. Laodicea was literally caught in the middle of being able to have hot or cold water.
- b. As a result of their water dilemma, we can be sure that Jesus’ correction to the church in Laodicea would be clearly understood. His point in calling them “*lukewarm*” was to say that they had grown stagnant, lethargic, and indifferent in their pursuit of God, and it was reflected in their deeds as a church.

**(Ecclesiastes 10:18 NASB) “Through extreme laziness the rafters sag, and through idleness the house leaks.”**

- c. Their spiritual lukewarmness made the church an ineffective lampstand in their culture; they weren’t useful for His purposes. As a result, Jesus said He would “vomit” them out of His mouth (the same way some would have done upon drinking the lukewarm, mineral filled Laodicean water). The calloused hearts of the Laodicean church led them to spiritual compromise thus keeping them from truly knowing God and making Him known to others.

**(Ephesians 4:11-19 NASB) “And He gave some as apostles, some as prophets, some as evangelists, some as pastors and teachers, 12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the building up of the body of Christ; 13 until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ....15...speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, that is, Christ...17 So I say this, and affirm in the Lord, that you are to no longer walk just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their minds, 18 being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart; 19 and they, having become callous, have given themselves up to indecent behavior for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness.”**

- d. The church in Laodicea had grown content in their wealth and self-sufficiency resulting in spiritual lethargy. Though they thought they were rich, Jesus said they were wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked. They placed more significance in investing in earthly wealth while relying on their own abilities and neglected encountering Jesus at the heart level.

*(Proverbs 24:30-34 NASB) “I passed by the field of a lazy one, and by the vineyard of a person lacking sense, 31 And behold, it was completely overgrown with weeds; Its surface was covered with weeds, and its stone wall was broken down. 32 When I saw, I reflected upon it; I looked, and received instruction. 33 “A little sleep, a little slumber, A little folding of the hands to rest,” 34 Then your poverty will come like a drifter, And your need like an armed man.”*

#### IV. Jesus’ Call for The Church In Laodicea To Repent & Respond

*(Revelation 3:18-20 NASB) “I advise you to buy from Me gold refined by fire so that you may become rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself and the shame of your nakedness will not be revealed; and eye salve to apply to your eyes so that you may see. 19 Those whom I love, I rebuke and discipline; therefore be zealous and repent. 20 Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me.”*

- a. Jesus sternly rebuked the church not because He was furious with them and wanted to punish them, but because He loved them and wanted to accomplish great things with them. God’s Discipline and rebuke are not punishment, but a demonstration of His affection for us.

*(Proverbs 3:11-12 NASB) “My son, do not reject the discipline of the Lord Or loathe His rebuke, 12 For whom the Lord loves He disciplines, Just as a father disciplines the son in whom he delights”*

- b. Gold refined by fire so that you may become rich - Their understanding of success was rooted in the earthly riches, but Jesus wanted them to be “truly rich” in Him. He advised the church to buy from Him, “gold refined by fire” which is a currency of character that has been through the refining fires of Jesus’ leadership. His head is pure gold (*Song 5:11*) which speaks of the purity and perfection of His ways in leadership. The Laodicean church needed to stop trusting in their own abilities, submit to Jesus’ leadership, and invest [time, money, energy, etc...] in becoming like Him.

*(Proverbs 3:5-10 NASB) “Trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. 6 In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He will make your paths straight. 7 Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord and turn away from evil. 8 It will be healing to your body And refreshment to your bones. 9 Honor the Lord from your wealth, and from the first of all your produce; 10 Then your barns will be filled with plenty, And your vats will overflow with new wine.”*

*(Colossians 2:1-3 NASB) “For I want you to know how great a struggle I have in your behalf and for those who are at Laodicea... 2 that their hearts may be encouraged, having been knit together in love, and that they would attain to all the wealth that comes from the full assurance of understanding, resulting in a true knowledge of God’s mystery, that is, Christ Himself, 3 in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.”*

- c. White garments...the shame of your nakedness will not be revealed – White garments speak of the purity and righteous acts of the saints. The church is His bride who will be characterized by holiness, blamelessness, and whole-hearted devotion. Living in the shame of “nakedness” (when sin is exposed) often causes believers to run and hide from God (*Genesis 3:10*), but His desire is to clothe us in purity.

*(Revelation 19:8 NASB) “It was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.”*

***(Ephesians 5:25-27 NASB) “...Just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, 26 so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, 27 that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless.”***

- d. ***Eye salve to your eyes so that you may see*** – Because Laodicea was famous for an eye salve they produced, this would resonate with the church there. Jesus called them blind, because their wealth and self-sufficiency blinded them from seeing their actual spiritual condition. Jesus provides eye salve to help us see with the right perspective (***Ephesians 1:17-19; Colossians 1:9-12***).
- e. The solution for lukewarmness is this; to recognize that we’ve left Jesus standing at the door wanting to come in and share a meal with us, and we should let him in. Though Laodicea had “*kept him outside*”, He didn’t leave them, but stood at their door, knocked, and called out to them (***Song 5:2***) all they had to do was let Him in.

***(Song 5:2 NASB) “I was asleep but my heart was awake. A voice! My beloved was knocking: ‘Open to me, my sister, my darling, My dove, my perfect one!’”***

#### V. The Overcomers Promise

***(Revelation 3:21-22 NASB) “The one who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat with My Father on His throne. 22 The one who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”***

- a. The throne is the place where the King sits, to rule and reign. Jesus’ invitation to sit with Him on His throne is an invitation to rule and reign. He promises governmental authority to the one who overcomes lukewarmness (indifference, compromise, and self-reliance). We exercise the governmental authority of God through “*asking (prayer)*”, this means that our prayers (asks) will be more effective if we stay connected to Jesus with vibrant hearts and avoid lukewarmness.

***(Psalm 2:6-9 NASB) “But as for Me [The Father], I have installed My King [Jesus] Upon Zion, My holy mountain.” 7 ‘I will announce the decree of the Lord: He said to Me, ‘You are My Son, Today I have fathered You. 8 Ask it of Me, and I will certainly give the nations as Your inheritance, And the ends of the earth as Your possession. 9 You shall break them with a rod of iron, You shall shatter them like earthenware.”***

- b. The battle against lukewarmness is prevalent in the body of Christ, especially among the praying church. In the busyness of life, it’s easy to fall into the rhythms of religious motions and half-heartedly “doing the stuff (prayer meetings, leading worship, prayer leading, saying the right things, etc..)” and then realize we’ve locked Jesus outside of a the door of our heart. How much could we truly accomplish through prayer if we were continually willing to expose the genuine state of our hearts before God, admit our desperate need for him, and commit to having a bunch meals with Him (growing in friendship with Jesus).