

Daily Bible Study

“Seven Letters ~ Laodicea”

Revelation 3:14-22

March 30 – April 5, 2014

MONDAY – We arrive now at the last of the 7 churches in our study; we’ve seen: the loveless church of Ephesus, the persecuted church in Smyrna, the compromising church in Pergamos, the corrupt church in Thyatira, the dead church in Sardis, the faithful church in Philadelphia, and now close with the lukewarm church in Laodicea. Jesus gives no commendation to this church but rather the threat of condemnation. With nothing good to say to them He still lovingly warns them to be zealous and repent. In 1987, Steve Camp sang a song entitled, “Living in Laodicea”. I would like to use the lyric as our introduction for this week and then you will find our Scripture text. “Oh Lord, take Your plow to my fallowed ground let Your blade dig down to the soil of my soul, For I've become dry and dusty, Lord I know there must be richer earth lying below. For I've been living in Laodicea and the fire that once burned bright, I've let it grow dim and the very Word I swore that I would die for all has been forgotten as the world's become my friend. We have turned from Your Law to try to find a better way each man does today what is right in his own eyes, we will pay the price for our sinning we can never know true living, we've exchanged His truth for lies. It is no small of a thing that He's done for you by shutting the gates of hell upon the cross, we were sentenced once but now we are pardoned, and He chooses to use us though we fall. So while we're living in Laodicea keep the fire burning bright, don't let it grow dim for the very One we swore that we would die for, He must not be forgotten. Fear the world become a friend. For the very One we swore that we would die for, He must not be forgotten.” Read: **Revelation 3:14-22**:¹⁴ “*And to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write, ‘These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God:’*”¹⁵ “*I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot.*”¹⁶ “*So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth.*”¹⁷ “*Because you say, ‘I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing’—and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked—*”¹⁸ “*I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see.*”¹⁹ “*As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. 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 dine with him, and he with Me.*”²¹ “*To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.*”²² “*He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.*” ’ ’

Suggestion for Prayer: God, help me to be zealous & repent as I live this life You’ve given me.

TUESDAY – Revelation 3:14-16 ¹⁴ “*And to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write, ‘These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God.’*”¹⁵ “*I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot.*”¹⁶ “*So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth.*” Laodicea was located about 43 miles to the southeast of Philadelphia, 11 miles west of Colosse and 6 miles south of Hierapolis (**Colossians 4:13**) in the Lycus valley. It was important due to its location. The Romans made it a judicial and administrative center and they built a road system from east to west and north to south with the crossroads being Laodicea. The city expanded in size, became a leading commercial center, and gained much wealth and influence. Major industries in Laodicea were black wool, the manufacturing of both common and costly garments, and the invention of an eye salve for treating inflamed eyes that was developed in the city’s world famous medical school that specialized in ear and eye care. The earthquakes of A.D. 17, came upon Laodicea like other cities in Asia and the Roman government provided them financial aid. In A.D. 60 a second earthquake struck the city, and the Roman government offered financial aid to rebuild but the city fathers turned down the offer making it known that they themselves had sufficient resources for reconstruction and they also contributed to the rebuilding of neighboring cities. This was a wealthy and “successful” place. The church like the city, was immersed in material wealth, was content to live a life of ease, and failed to live for and proclaim the gospel of Jesus. Jesus describes Himself as *the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God*. The word *Amen* derives from the Hebrew text of the Old Testament. “Amen” conveys the idea of that which is true, firmly established, and trustworthy and it was a word familiar to worshipers who like today add and join in with an “Amen” to affirm and confirm what they have heard (**1 Chronicles 16:36, Psalm 106:48**). It also adds an emphatic “Yes” to a prayer or a doxology (**Romans 1:25, 9:5, 11:36, 16:27, Galatians, 6:18; Revelation 1:7, 5:14, 7:12, 19:4**). In the Hebrew text when it has the definite article it becomes “personified” as “the God of Amen,” or literally, “the God of truth” (see and compare **Isaiah 65:16** and **2 Corinthians 1:20**). Jesus says He is this one and only God who is *the faithful and true witness* which both are also translations of the Hebrew expression *Amen*. This means that what Jesus speaks, He speaks as God and it is true for He is the truth (**John 14:6**), the true obedient Israel, the faithful witness. He says He is the *Beginning* (Greek *arche* “one who or that which constitutes an initial cause”) *of the creation of God*. He isn’t saying He was created by God, but rather as God actively caused the creation by calling it into being (**John 1:1, Colossians 1:15–18, Hebrews 1:2**). Jesus is showing that He made, possesses and controls all things. All things were made to serve Him but the Laodiceans preferred to serve themselves, their riches, their wisdom, etc... One last item should be mentioned in this brief survey. The water supply for Laodicea came from a distance of six miles at Hierapolis via an aqueduct and its source was hot water springs so when the water reached Laodicea, it was lukewarm. It also had calcium carbonate in it which had a nauseating effect on the people who drank it. Hot springs had medicinal and

health spa value but Jesus compares the lukewarm waters near the city to the lukewarm spiritual life of the Laodiceans. “*I could wish you were cold or hot.*”— what a terrible condemnation of a church’s condition, the Lord preferring even a cold Christianity to the sort He actually finds here in Laodicea. They were lukewarm; no fire, enthusiasm, gospel proclamation, apathetic, indifferent, and unconcerned about the things of the Lord (**Hebrews 4:2, 6:4**) all the while being “in and at church”. Now he says because of their state, *I will vomit you out of My mouth*. The Greek for “*I will*” is actually ***mello*** which literally means “to be about to”. Jesus doesn’t vomit out true Christians and the warning He gives here is that these lukewarm “Christians” may be vomited out and in fact find out they are not *true* and *faithful* Christians at all. Lukewarm water laced with calcium carbonate induces vomiting and nominal professing Christians void of spiritual works are totally distasteful to the Lord Jesus and will induce vomiting by Him.

Suggestion for Prayer: Father, help me to really understand and believe that without You I am nothing. May I find satisfaction in knowing You and being fervent in love and service to You. Be pleased with my life and help me obey and know my security in Jesus.

WEDNESDAY – Revelation 3:17-19: ¹⁷ *Because you say, ‘I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing’—and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked—*¹⁸ *I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see.* ¹⁹ *As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent.*” Notice Jesus said He was about to vomit them out and therefore gives grace to them giving time to repent after they have read His letter. **You hear me, now what will you do about it?** God wants us to hear His words and change from lukewarm attitude’s to eager, zealous work for Him. This church had become indifferent and ineffective because they believed they were spiritually well-equipped. They like Ephriam in **Hosea 12:8** said, *we are rich, wealthy, and have need of nothing*. Without Christ the church is dead and this city and church had riches, doctors, clothing and fashion, but were without Jesus, the true riches, health, and righteous covering and therefore, broke, sick, and naked. This condition is arguably worse than Sardis. The only good thing in Laodicea is the church’s thoroughly good opinion of itself—and that is false and a lie. She claims to have everything, and has nothing. Jesus says, “You make me sick”. That may be hard to hear but *the Amen, the faithful and true Witness*, is not about mincing words. Notice how he mocks (**Psalm 2:4**) their sinful human wisdom saying you need some real *eye salve* and it’s from me not your world famous medical school. What is incredible and praiseworthy of our God beloved is that even Laodicea has a chance. This fact is seen in that *As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten*. The threat of vomiting out and total rejection if she will not repent is balanced by the promise of total reinstatement if she will. Remember He spoke at the beginning of His being the *arche*, the creator of life? He can go down into the blackness of

death and sin even here in Laodicea and make her new like He once made the world. **But** she must *be zealous and repent* and very key here is that in repenting she is turning **TO HIM** (*I counsel you to buy from Me...*) This is what true repentance looks like; turning from self and sin to Jesus. Borrowing marketplace language (**Isaiah 55:1**) Jesus invites them to buy from Him *refined gold* (**1 Peter 1:7**) and *white garments* (**Isaiah 61:10**); in other words, real faith with the impurities of sin removed and dealt with. These people were blinded by self-deception and unable to see with spiritual eyes. With the *eye salve* that Jesus provides, the Laodiceans would be able to see their own sins in the light of God’s Word and to walk with Jesus, who is the light of the world. So they are to *be zealous and repent*; to be ***zestos*** (from which we have the derivative “zest”) for Jesus with a passion that generates spiritual fervor. Zeal is a necessary component of love for God as we are reminded from Jesus words on our church bulletin cover every week (**Psalm 69:9, John 2:17**).

Suggestion for Prayer: Father, keep me from being confident in myself but rather place all my trust and confidence in You. Help me be eager to follow You, doing & thinking right.

THURSDAY – Revelation 3:20: 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 dine with him, and he with Me.*” Jesus alone provides the riches, robes and ointment and He counsels the church in Laodicea to accept His offer. Divine sovereignty is not negated here as Jesus comes, *stands at the door and knocks*. His sovereignty has been established in this text as we read earlier of His being the “***arche*** of creation”, (this truth has been heard before from the Apostle Paul to these very people ~ see **Colossians 1:15–18, 4:16**). But the question for them and us is whether *anyone* will *hear His voice and open the door*. You and I are told to hear Him and open the door. Not the door of our “heart” per se but in context the door of the church and as individuals the door of our total lives. The cure for lukewarmness is the admission of Jesus. Even if the church as a whole does not heed the warning the individual may.

Suggestion for Prayer: Father, help me open the door and fellowship with You always.

FRIDAY – Revelation 3:21-22: ²¹ *To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.* ²² *“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.” ’ ’* Grace is extended to a church that received **NO** praise as Jesus promises all *overcomers* the privilege of being seated with Him on His throne. This symbolical language is almost beyond our human comprehension as to the significance of the privilege to sit next to Jesus on the throne. Jesus’ promise is based on the vision that Daniel received in **Daniel 7:27**. Jesus looks back to His suffering, death, and resurrection and says that He too overcame and took a place on the throne at the right hand of the Father (**Hebrews 1:3, 8:1, 12:2**). If we overcome, we will take a place next to Jesus at His invitation, reigning with Him at the Father’s right hand (**2 Timothy 2:12**).

Suggestion for Prayer: God, thanks for such love & such an incredible promise. Hallelujah!