**LUKEWARM LAODICEA**

**REVELATION 3:14-22**

The downward slide that began with a loss of first love in Ephesus culminates with total apostasy in Laodicea.

This church had gotten so far away from what the Lord founded it to be that it literally made Him sick.

It is largely the church as we see it in the world today. It is the apostate church.

If we are going to understand our Lord’s words to this church a little background on the city of Laodicea is in order.

This city was founded by Antiochus II sometime before 253 BC. It was named after his wife Laodice.

The city was located on a high plateau and was very secure from enemy attack.

The one defensive problem in Laodicea was the fact that there was no ready source of water in the city. Water had to be piped in through aqueducts. Water from the hot springs in Hierapolis 6 miles to the north was brought into the city. Water was also piped in from Colossae, which was located 10 miles to the east.

This fact will be important as we move into the passage.

Laodicea was destroyed by an earthquake in 61 AD. The city was so *wealthy* and so *self-sufficient* that they rebuilt their city with their own resources, refusing an offer of aid from Caesar.

The city was famous in its day for 3 primary characteristics.

**1.** ***Finances*** - It was a center of banking and finance, known through the Roman Empire for its wealth and financial power.

**2. *Fashion*** - It was renowned for the soft, black wool produced there. This wool was considered a luxury item and was sought after for clothing and rugs. Laodicea was the center of fashion in its day. The newest styles appeared here first.

**3.** ***Pharmaceuticals*** - There was a famous medical school in Laodicea which produced a tablet that was sold all over the Roman Empire.

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This tablet was crushed, mixed with water to form a paste. This paste was rubbed into the eyes and was supposed to cure a variety of eye problems.

With this background in mind, let’s look into these verses and consider our Lord’s words of condemnation and warning to this church.

Let’s see if there is a word here for our church and for us as individuals.

**I. THE PROBLEMS IN LAODICEA (vs. 14-17)**

Jesus comes to this church without a single word of commendation.

As He considers their works and their way,

He has nothing good to say to them at all.

He simply *comes* to them and *lays out* the problems as He sees them.

**A. THE PROBLEM OF POSSESSION (vs. 14)**

Notice the words “*the church* ***of*** *the Laodiceans*”.

If you will take a moment to look at each of the other letters in **Revelation 2 and 3**, you will see the words, “***the church OF*** or ***IN…***”, and then the name of the city.

In the other cities, it was the Lord’s church in that city.

In Laodicea, it was their church, and not the Lord’s!

He identifies a problem of possession.

It was their church and they did as they pleased, not considering the will of the Lord.

We must never forget why the church exists.

It is not a platform that allows us to become well known in our world.

It is not a forum for us to advance our agendas or our ideas.

It is not a place we can “***run***” or “***dominate***”.

This church is not “***our church***”; it is His church!

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Jesus died for the church. He purchased it with His Own blood, **Acts 20:28**. He builds it and He sustains it, **Matt. 16:18-19; Eph. 2:19-22**. The church exists for His glory. We are here for Him and for Him alone!

Our duty is to *preach* Him; *praise* Him; *promote* Him; and *publish* Him.

This is not your church! This is not my church! It is His church!

No man, no group of men and no congregation are qualified to take His place.

We need no one like ***Diotropheses*** – **3 John 9**.

We must ever keep this church and this ministry centered in Him!

**B. THE PROBLEM OF PASSION (VS. 15a)**

Jesus tells them that like the water in their city, they have become lukewarm.

Remember that water problem I spoke of earlier? Water from the hot springs in Hierapolis 6 miles away was brought into the city by aqueducts. By the time it reached Laodicea, the water was no longer hot; it was lukewarm.

Cold water from Colossae was also piped in; by the time it reached Laodicea, this water was lukewarm as well. This tepid, lukewarm water made getting refreshment in Laodicea difficult.

The church had also become lukewarm.

This means that they had lost their passion for the things of the Lord.

They had become *indifferent* and *apathetic*.

They had reached a place where they were going through the motions, but they were unmoved by the things of the Lord.

These folks were not burning hot with passion for Jesus, neither were they totally dead and cold.

They were somewhere in between. Their condition makes Jesus sick!

Church people in our day are no longer moved by the cross!

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They *read* about the crucifixion, they *hear* about it, and they sit unmoved!

Church people in our day are unmoved by the plight of the lost! They know people are lost and they know that lost people are going to Hell; but they really don’t care. They say, “***That’s terrible, I wish they would get saved.***”

But, they don’t pray or witness; they don’t care!

The average church in our day is a study in apathy!

They are not exactly dead because they are *praying*, *preaching*, *singing*, etc. But, they are not exactly on fire either.

There is no excitement and no passion about Who they *serve*, what they *hear*, and what they are *doing*.

They are somewhere in the middle of the road.

People enter the church, take their seat, fold their arms and say, “***Bless me if you can!***”

How can you hear about Jesus; His love for your soul; His death for you and all that He has done for you and remain unmoved?

There are some major problems with a church that reaches this point.

**1.** **It Is The Hardest Kind Of Church To Pastor**.

The people believe right; they come in and out of the buildings; but they are indifferent. They’ve heard it all and are totally unmoved by it. This kind of indifference is hard to take! I’d rather have an ice cold church under which the Lord could build a spiritual fire; or one that had too much zeal, which the Lord could tone down a little that I had to try and pastor a bunch of people that are satisfied! You can’t move them!

**2.** **It Is The Hardest Kind Of Church To Move For The Lord**.

They just don’t care! If folks are saved, fine. If they aren’t, that’s fine too. If the preaching is good, great! If not, well, that’s OK too. That’s a tough attitude to handle!

**3.** **This Kind Of Church Misrepresents The Lord**. Jesus was a Man of passion! He was on fire an it showed in His life and ministry.

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His disciples were passionate men and they lived lives burning with passion for the Lord Jesus.

When we are indifferent and unmoved and unconcerned, it gives a false impression of Jesus and what He is all about!

C.S. Lewis hit it right on the head when he said, “***A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic - on the level with a man who says he is a poached egg - or he would be the devil of hell. You must take your choice. Either this was, and is, the Son of God, or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us.***”

**C. THE PROBLEM OF PERCEPTION (vs. 17)**

When the people in Laodicea looked at themselves, they saw the perfect church. They were wealthy, powerful and they felt they had all they needed.

They looked at their position, their possessions and their power and they said, “***We have arrived***!”

There they sat, indifferent, apathetic, and unmoved and they thought they were in good shape.

The problem with this attitude is that it is based in blindness. Jesus tells them that they are totally wrong about what they *have* and where they *are*.

We need to remember that how we see ourselves and how He sees us may be two different things altogether.

The sad truth is that some people get more excited about money in the bank than they do souls on the altar.

They get more stirred up about a big number on a board than they do about sincere worship of the Lord.

They are more blessed by what they have than by the Lord showing up and moving in a service!

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***How do we see ourselves? How does He see us?***

I will tell you what we need more than *money*; more than *crowds*; more than *buildings*; more than *recognition* in the community; more than many of the things we place such great value in: ***we need Jesus and we need what He can do for us!***

I would rather have Him, His presence and His power than anything material you can name! We need Him!

We must *seek* Him! We must *welcome* Him! We must *worship* Him!

I. **The Problems In Laodicea**

**II. THE PRESCRIPTION FOR LAODICEA (vs. 14-19)**

This church is in trouble, but not all hope is lost. There is hope! Jesus comes to give them His cure for their ailment.

***His cure comes in the form of…***

**A. A DIVINE APPEARANCE (vs. 14)**

Notice how Jesus comes to this wayward church.

**1.** **He Comes As The Confirming One** – He comes as the “***Amen***”. This is a Hebrew word that means “***So be it; let it be so; or it is so***”. It was used to express the ideas of faithfulness and truth, **Isa. 65:16; Deut. 7:9**.

When we use it to end our prayers, we are saying, “***Let it be so!***” When we use it to respond to a message, we are saying, “***It is so, or it is true!***” It is a word of confirmation and finality.

When Jesus comes to this church, He comes as God’s final word to humanity, **Heb. 1:2**.

He comes as the confirmer of all God’s promises, **2 Cor. 1:20**.

Regardless of how this church saw itself, Jesus comes to tell them the truth, He comes to have the final say to Laodicea.

**2.** **He Comes As The Confronting One** – He also comes as “***the faithful and true witness***”. This church had a vision of itself what was flawed.

Jesus wants them to know that He knows them as they really are and that He has comes to reveal their true state.

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**3.** **He Comes As The Controlling One** – He is also called “***the beginning of the creation of God***”. This identifies Jesus as the Creator and the Controller of all things. Not a speck of dust can move in this universe without His permission! He is in control.

He comes to a church that thought it was running its own show. Jesus comes to remind them that in spite of what they might think, His hand is still on the wheel and He is the One Who controls the church.

It would do us well to remember Who Jesus is! He is still God’s final word to the church. He is the One Who knows us better than we know ourselves. He is the One in control, in spite of what some people may think!

**B. A DIVINE ANNOUNCEMENT (vs. 15b-16)**

He has a word for this church.

**1. v. 15b** **The Lord’s Desire For The Church** – The water situation in Laodicea is reflected in the church. By the time the water reached Laodicea, it no longer possessed the therapeutic properties of the hot water out of the springs in Heirapolis; nor did it provide the refreshing quality of the cool waters from Colossae.

The waters were *tepid* and *undesirable*.

The late Dr. William Arnot, of Edinburgh, used to tell of his being at a railway station, where he grew weary of waiting for the train to move. He inquired if the trouble was want of water. “*Plenty of water*,” was the quick reply, “*but it’s no’ bilin’*.”

We have no lack of religious machinery in Church.

The engines are on the track, and the trainmen are in their places.

If there is little or no progress, may it not be that the water is “no’ bilin’”?—boiling.

Jesus tells His church that He wants them to be either “***hot or cold***”.

He wants His church to be a place people can relax and find healing, like a trip to a hot spring.

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He wants His church to be a place people where can be refreshed by His worship and His presence.

Our church should be an oasis.

**2. v. 16** **The Lord’s Disgust With The Church** – Because of their condition, the Lord tells them, “*I will spue thee out of my mouth.*”.

The word “***spue***” is a strong word. It means “***to vomit, to throw up***”.

Jesus tells this church that, like a drink of lukewarm water, they make Him want to vomit them out of His mouth.

What He means is this: He *cannot* and *will not* tolerate their indifference and apathy!

I do not want to be a part of any church that brings disgust to our Lord!

**3. v. 17** **The Lord’s Description Of This Church** - According to **verse 17**, they thought they had it all. He looks at them and tells them they have nothing!

They were proud of their achievements. Jesus calls them “***wretched***”, which means “***troubled***”; and “***miserable***”, which means “***to be pitied***”.

They were proud of their wealth. Jesus tells them they are actually “***poor***”. This word means, “***destitute and reduced to begging.***”

They were proud of their vision of themselves. Jesus tells them that they are “***blind***”. They cannot see themselves as they really are. Someone said, “***There is no one so blind as he who will not see.***”

They were proud of their fashions and fine clothing. Jesus tells them that they are “***naked***”. They are totally exposed and revealed for what they really are.

To be naked in that society was the ultimate humiliation. Now, it is a badge of honor!

**C. A DIVINE ADVERTISEMENT (vs. 17-18)**

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Jesus tells this church exactly where they can find all they need.

**1.** **Come** **For Spiritual Value** – If they will come to Him, put Him first and live out the Word of God, they will know true riches. He calls them to get on the “spiritual gold standard” and live out a genuine faith before a lost world. They might see their wealth disappear down here, but they will be laying us treasures over there, **Matt. 6:19-21; 1 Pet. 1:3-5**.

**2.** **Come** **For Spiritual Vesture** – He invites them to adorn themselves in spiritual garments. This is an invitation to come to Him for salvation. They are naked and lost in their sins. If they will come to Him, He will cloth them in robes of righteousness and they will be no longer naked an exposed in the sight of God, **Isa. 61:10; Rev. 19:8**.

**3.** **Come** **For Spiritual Vision** – He invited them to come to Him so that He can restore their spiritual vision. When that spiritual vision is restored, they will be able to see themselves as they are and they will be able to see Him as He is. This will lead the *repentance*, *obedience* and humble *service*. We need that spiritual vision!

Why are people dead, dry, and indifferent spiritually? Because they cannot see themselves or the Lord as either truly is! Jesus can open the blinded eyes, **2 Cor. 4:4; Luke 4:18**.

**D. SOME SPIRITUAL ADVICE (vs. 19)**

Jesus invites them to come to Him, then He gives them a much needed word of advice.

**1.** **A Word Of Compassion** – “***as many as I love***” – In spite of their indifference toward Him, He still loves them! What a blessing! Jesus doesn’t just write people off when they don’t do as He pleases, but He calls them and continue to love them even what they reject Him and His love.

**2.** **A Word Of Caution** – “***I rebuke and chasten***” – Jesus tells them, and us, that just because He loves us *like* we are, He loves us too much to *leave* us as we are.

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In an effort to get our attention, He will use 2 methods to turn us to Him.

First, He will “***rebuke***”. This word means “***to convict, or to correct***”. He will speak to us in our condition. He will send His Word and He will convict us in our hearts through the ministry of the Holy Spirit, **John 16:7-11**. If we come to Him, He will receive us.

**If we fail to heed His rebukes, He will use more direct methods**. The word “***chasten***” means “***to correct with blows***”. He may touch any area of life to get our attention; He might even use death, **1 Cor. 11:30**.

Those who refuse to walk in God’s path will encounter trouble in their lives, (Pro. 13:15; Jer. 2:19; Pro. 15:10).

**3.** **A Word Of Counsel** – “***be zealous…and repent***” – The word “***zealous***” gives us the word “***zesty***”. It means “***to come to a boil***”. Jesus is calling this church to “***get on fire for Him***”. When they see their need and turn to Him, it will manifest itself in genuine repentance. Remember, repentance can be defined as “***a change of mind that results in a change of direction.***”

We need to hear and heed the voice of the Lord in these days, and went need to repent.

We need to ask the Lord to let us see ourselves as we really are.

We need to be able to see Him as He really is.

We need to “come to a boil”; to get on fire for Him and repent of our indifference, our apathy our lack of conviction and concern.

God help us to get to Him before His judgment falls on us, (1 Pet. 4:17).

I. **The Problems In Laodicea**

II. **The Prescription For Laodicea**

**III. THE PROMISES TO LAODICEA (vs. 20-21)**

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Our Lord closes this letter with some truly blessed promises. The sad truth is that Laodicea has evicted Jesus Christ from their church. He is on the outside trying to gain admission.

**A. A PRESENT PROMISE (vs. 20a)**

He says “*Behold, I stand at the door, and knock:*”

In His effort to get back into this church, Jesus stands there and knocks. These verbs are in the Present Tense. It could be stated this way, “***Behold, I am continually standing at the door, and I am continually knocking on the door…***” He never gives up in His efforts to enter the lives of those He loves.

I am glad that He never gave up on me!

**B. A PERSONAL PROMISE (vs. 20b)**

“*if any man hear my voice, and open the door,*”

Jesus does not need for the whole church to get on fire so that He can come in; He merely needs just one person to hear him and to open the door.

Jesus is a gentleman! He will knock and He will call, but He will not break down the door.

It must be opened by an act of the will.

**C. A PRECIOUS PROMISE (vs. 20c)**

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

The ancient Greeks enjoyed 3 meals. They usually ate a large breakfast, a much smaller lunch, and then a leisurely evening meal, which they called “***supper***”. At this evening meal, the family would take their time, talk and fellowship. It was a time of intimacy for the family.

Jesus says, “***If you will just open the door, I will come in and have fellowship with you!***”

If you will open the door to Jesus, He will come in to you.

You can have revival in your life while everyone else sits around in *deadness* and *apathy*.

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**D. A POWERFUL PROMISE (vs. 21)**

Revelation 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.*”

This verse is a promise that all the benefits of salvation will be given to the person who overcomes.

The converted person will become identified with Jesus; His heavenly Father and His heavenly Home.

Those who come to Jesus are promised that they will reign with Him and rejoice with Him in His heaven some day.

That is a powerful promise!

When Jesus speaks to the church of Laodicea, He is speaking to a church filled with lost people. He is inviting them to be saved and His promises to them make coming to Jesus worthwhile.

  I am glad that He made that offer to me one day, and I am glad He gave me grace to accept Him.

Have you been saved? You can be if He is calling you to come to Him!

**CON:**

Where does this message find you?

Are you saved by His grace?

Are you zealous and committed to the Lord and His work?

Or, are you indifferent and apathetic toward the things of the Lord?

Can you hear His voice calling: “*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.*”

Is the door open? Does it need to be? He wants our fellowship with Him; does He have it?

Sermon Seed: Alan Carr, The Sermon Notebook

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