

10. Letters to the 7 Churches Rev. ch 3:14-22 Laodicea Part 1

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The Letter to Laodicea

Laodicea

South of Philadelphia, not far from Colossae, stood the large and prosperous city of Laodicea on the banks of the river Lycus, a tributary of the Meander. It was the twin of Hierapolis, six miles away, which was renowned for its hot springs. (The current Turkish government is attempting to harness this geothermal power source.)

Laodicea stood midway between the hot springs of Hierapolis and the cold waters of Colossae. (It was fed by an aqueduct from Hierapolis, the water being lukewarm when it arrived.)

A highly successful commercial and financial centre, remains of a theatre, aqueducts, baths, gymnasium and stadium still survive to testify of its former luxury.

It was never militarily defensible, so its strategic posture was one of compromise. The city was originally founded by the Ionians about 2000 B.C. as a relatively small town of Diospolis, but in the 19th century B.C. the Hittites added it to their expanding empire. A thousand years later it was captured by the Phrygians and soon afterwards by the Lydians.

It was renamed Rhoads, but in about 250 B.C. it was taken by the Syrians, and Antiochus II rebuilt the town and renamed it after his wife, Laodicea. He gave it to her though later he divorced her.

It became part of the Kingdom of Pergamos about 190 B.C. and ultimately passed into the hands of the Roman Empire. According to Josephus, there was a large Jewish colony there.

Church History

The church there was probably founded by Epaphras. **Col 2:1** implies that it was not visited by Paul, although he addressed a letter to it (**Col 4:12-14**), which may very well have been a circular letter, a copy of which has been preserved for us as the epistle to the Ephesians.

Some 30 years earlier Paul had warned Archippus (thought by some to have been the son of Philemon) to be more diligent in fulfilling his ministry (**Col 2:1; 4:16, 17**). There is a tradition

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that Archippus had become the bishop of Laodicea. It may have been his weakness which contributed to the spiritual condition of the church here.

Economy

It was a city of merchants, bankers, and gold refiners. At the junction of roads leading from Ephesus and Smyrna and handling caravan trade as far east as the Yellow River in Punjab by the China Sea, much wealth flowed through Laodicea.

It was a city of merchants, bankers, and gold refiners. Cicero held court there and did his banking there. It became the wealthiest area of that region of the Roman Empire. And the church was known to be the wealthiest of all the churches in Asia Minor and especially out of the seven churches mentioned in the Book of Revelation. The whole area was very desirable to live in and was a very sought-after location. They had the highest annual income per household in Asia Minor and they had key locations of Banking and Medicine.

- Textile manufacturing was also a source of considerable revenue.
- Laodicea was also known for the quality of black wool produced from a particular strain of sheep bred in the Lycus valley and for the cloth and carpets manufactured from it.
- A famous school of medicine was there, especially known for an ophthalmic ointment (a mixture of oil and the collyrium powder—described by Aristotle as "Phrygian powder").

When earthquake destroyed Laodicea in 62 A.D., it was rebuilt by its wealthy citizens, without help from Rome [Tacitus, Annals 14:27.]

The Name Laodicea means The rule of the people. It suggests that there is a system in place of religion, it speaks about man governing over man. Man's power, man's institution, man's ways, man made activities, a man-centric location, a Man controlled location,. As Jesus looks at it we see He is implying a man driven, man supported, man executed church. It's all about man. It's not about Jesus, it's not about doctrine, it's not about missionary work, it's not about preaching or making disciples, instead it's all about a church exalting man and the pursuits of man. Driven by pride.

There is a serious warning to us both theologically and sociologically and that is wherever man's pursuits are held in high esteem they become the focal point of man's existence, then there is a great move to answer to the cry of man. When man wants something bad enough the pressure of the society or culture is to give man what he wants. When man starts to say, this is what I want, then Laodicea, the church, driven by man's wisdom and man's passion, delivered whatever the church community wanted. Whatever the political correctness was,

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they gave in to. It was a church that compromised everything to be all things to all people but not for Bible doctrine. The important thing to them was to be accepted by the world. It was a man-made church, and this will become clear as we progress.

Today we know that many churches have done questionnaires for people to fill in. What kind of church do you want? Because we want to bring it to you. Tick the boxes and we will bring it to you. As though its some kind of social club.

Laodicea is the only church out of the seven that Jesus has nothing good to say about it.

Don't forget that Jesus wrote this letter to them in 95AD through John. What happened at Laodicea before that time? Paul **knew** them and wrote to them. Paul died in 67AD. So they went from good to bad within 30 years.

In Col 2:1 Paul says *'For I want you to know what a great conflict I have for you and those in Laodicea and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh, that their hearts may be encouraged being knit together in love and attaining to all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the knowledge of the mystery of God both of the Father and of Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.*

Col4:13 *For I bear witness that he has a great zeal for you and those who are in Laodicea and those in Heirapolis.*

Col 4:15 *Greet the brethren who are in Laodicea and Nymphas and the church that is in his house.*

Col 4:16 *now when this epistle is read among you (Colossians) , see that it is read also in the church of the Laodiceans and that you likewise read the epistle from Laodicea.*

So the church at Colossae has a letter written to them and then they sent the letter on the postal road to Laodicea and it would have been read in all the churches.

The Lukewarm Church

14 *"And to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write, '*

Lao = people; Diceans = rulers. "Rule of/by the People" = the "self satisfied" church.

Jesus is saying to them, 'I've written to you so why are you not listening to Me'

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Title of Christ

Foundational Character

- Amen = true; verily (Rev 1:6,7,18 Isa 65:16; John 14:6; 1 Cor 1:18-22).
- Faithful and True witness (Rev 1:5; Ps 89:34-37; Isa 55:4; John 18:37).
-

- **"Beginning of Creation of God"**

- The Greek means the beginning, first origin, first cause; ruling power, authority,

ruler: Rev 1:8 , a quote from Isa 41:4.

- Used of rank and honour (unique expression here and Col 1:15).
- Paul specifically instructed that Colossae and Laodicea exchange epistles: A rebuttal to the gnostic errors beginning to make their appearance in the Lycus valley.

1. Why are you not listening

Ch 3 v 14 *These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God:*

Just as He said to the church at Laodicea, He says to the 21st century church.

I AM the Amen, the Faithful and True witness, the beginning of the creation of God, and you are not listening to Me. Don't you realise who I really Am.

Jesus is reminding them here of who He is because they had left off believing in it. Jesus had become watered down, rather than the great I AM. That's why Jesus is having to remind them by telling them who He is.

In Pauls time they started off as a good church but they did not end up this way.

How many churches and leaders of churches today have started off well but have suddenly become so we hardly recognise them anymore.

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The Amen - When Jesus says to the church of Laodicea that He is the Amen it's a declaration by Christ that is theologically undeniable. It's the claim of Deity by Jesus Himself and it cannot be refuted. Jesus uses the Amen from the book of Isaiah that is reserved for Almighty God alone. **Isaiah 65:16** This is so important because to anyone 2,000 years ago would have said that they were the Amen of God they would have been stoned that very day. Blasphemy.

Amen in Hebrew means = this is the truth, let it be done. Or that's it, agreed.

Isa 65:16 in AV The God of Truth. In Hebrew its the God of Amen. Jesus often used amen to put emphasis to His own words translated verily or truly.

When Jesus says Amen it's the great statement of agreement to His Deity.

Jesus is the One. There is no other.

Other cults do not agree that Jesus is the only way. Jesus says He is.

The Faithful - Jesus is reminding them that He is faithful because they were not faithful. Jesus is faithful to *speaking* truth, and to *being* truthful in all things. To speak truth or claim that you know truth or in this case for Jesus to say that in fact He IS TRUTH means that His followers will not only speak truth but do it. So faithful is a declaration based on activity. He is constantly being faithful to us to fulfil all His promises. He is Faithful based on what He has done.

faithful, loyal, and true mean firm in devotion to something. **faithful** is used of someone who has a firm and constant devotion to something or someone to which he or she is united by or as if by a promise or pledge.

True Witness

We have witnesses in court. At a trial witnesses are called to give evidence based on what they have seen. Here Jesus is saying that He will be a witness in the courtroom of God and submit evidence. In the case of Laodicea it would sound like this. I have been abandoned by this church. And here is what I have to say against this church. They do not recognise any more that I am the Amen, they no longer embrace the fact that I am Faithful and they no longer acknowledge the fact that I am the True Witness of the things of God. They have rejected Me and this will now be put on the record.

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I Am the Beginning of Creation

God is the uncreated Creator. Nothing is before Him. He has always been there.

John 1:1 God spoke the world into existence and the Word was Jesus.

Gen 1:1 was the work of Jesus Christ.

John 1:10 He was in the world, and the world was made through Him and the world did not know Him. (They did not recognise Him for who He was)

How do we recognise Church. Every church has a sign outside that says Church but that's not what we go by. Jesus doesn't go by the outward sign. The church may be a spanking new modern building with the best equipment and fancy seats etc. It's not a church until Jesus declares that it is. As born-again believers we should be able to discern what is a true church and what isn't. The Holy Spirit should witness to our spirit if it is.

There are thousands of churches in Britain and worldwide which have the sign outside but when you go in, they are dead. You can tell.

We could ask 'who is Jesus Christ at your church.' We have the Bible as our foundation so what does the church say about the:-

- Authority of the Bible? Is it the inerrant word of God? Or do only some parts get taught. The bits that fit with our view. That's heretical. We are told to teach the whole counsel of God. To teach part of the truth is to promote a lie.
- Will of God? What does the church do in the light of the will of God? Church is much more than listening to a sermon once a week.

Col 1:15-17 *He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. 16 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. 17 And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist.(held together)*

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Heb 1:1-3 *1 God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, 2 has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds; 3 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 at the right hand of the Majesty on high*

This is the wonderful Jesus who is at those churches who are the true church.

This is the Jesus who should have all authority over our homes, our lives our churches. Jesus in this introduction is proclaiming His undeniable authority.

He makes it absolutely clear who He is and revealed Himself to all of mankind.

Rev 1:8 *I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, says the Lord, who is and who was and who is to come, The Almighty.*

Rev 4:8 8 *The four living creatures, each having six wings, were full of eyes around and within. And they do not rest day or night, saying: "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty, Who was and is and is to come!"*

This is the God of the Bible. This is who Jesus Christ is.

Rev 11:17 *"We give You thanks, O Lord God Almighty, The One who is and who was and who is to come, Because You have taken Your great power and reigned.*

Rev 21:22 *But I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple.*

1 Tim 3:16 *And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh, Justified in the Spirit, Seen by angels, Preached among the Gentiles, Believed on in the world, Received up in glory.*

This letter has no "Commendation..." NONE

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Concerns

2. Why will you not honour Me?



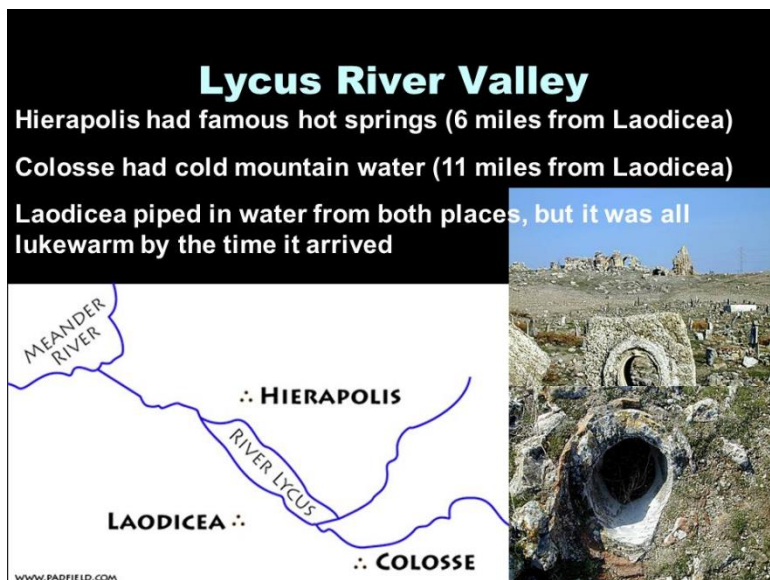
15 "I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot.

16 So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth.

Laodicea was not far from a mountain range that gathered a lot of snow and produced ice cold water. It was beautiful and refreshing

and lovely to quench the thirst. It came off the mountains near Colosse into the Lycus River. In the other direction there were beautiful hot springs full of mineral water and lovely to bathe in.

Great pipes were built to carry the water to Laodicea but by the time it arrived it was lukewarm. It tasted horrible and it was no good to have a bath in either.



The hot springs of Heirapolis were amazingly hot and full of minerals and are still there today. This water flowed out and made its way to Laodicea from SE of Laodicea.

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Jesus is saying if you were like the cold water of Colosse you would have been refreshing and good, if you had been like the hot waters of Heirapolis you would have shown

the fire of God and the warmth of His love, but instead you are neither. Just as the geographical area shows us that all the water reaching Laodicea from both

directions ended up lukewarm and good for nothing, so the church at Laodicea exemplified that in their church life.

"I Know your works": As we have seen before you cannot hide from God... BUT they were indifferent, tepid. The word also implies without movement, without effect and without purpose.

Lukewarm water is an emetic. The only use for it was if you were ill you would sip the water to induce vomiting. Jesus is speaking to this church using all the visual aids that the area provided .

Indifference is not tolerable. Jesus says this church makes Me vomit. He says you are not making a difference, you are satisfied with the way you are. This is the only church for which our Lord expresses a form of disgust.

This is all because they have denied the Deity of who Jesus is. No High view of God. No reverence, fear, awe. They have forgotten the Almightyness of God the Creator of all things.

- Compromised the Authority of Jesus in the church.
- Compromised the Word of God by introducing heresies and twisting the truth.
- Compromised their actions so their behaviour is no longer Godly.

They still had their bibles and still called themselves a church but Jesus is saying He is not there.

Out of all the seven churches they are all still able to call themselves a church it seems that with the others there is a remnant who are true but this one is a show. It's a fake. It's not

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a true church. Of all the other six Jesus never says He has found Himself outside the church. But this one He does.

In order to have hot water there has to be a power source, you can't have it without the power source. And with cold water to keep it icy cold there needs to be a source of energy. But Lukewarm requires nothing. Take away the power source and hot water will eventually

become lukewarm and cold water will become lukewarm. The Churches power source is the Holy Spirit. Take Him away and there's nothing left.

The danger is of disregarded principle; religion enough to lull the conscience, not to save the soul; halting between two opinions, (or two masters) (1 Kings 18:21; 2 Kings 17:41; Ezek 20:39; Matt 6:24).

The hot (at Hierapolis) and cold springs near Laodicea illustrate the simile. The certain barrier to truth is the presumption that one already has it.

[How many of the major denominations manifest a true passion for the Gospel today?] 2 Tim 3:5:

"Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away."

Matthew 7:21-23

Not every one who says to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your Name? and cast out demons in Your Name? and done many wonders in Your Name? And then I will declare to them, I never knew you: depart from me, you who practise lawlessness.

3. Why will you not recognise Me?

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—*

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[The "name it and claim it" bunch are not Scriptural, the prosperity heresy cannot be found anywhere in the Bible at all] Insensitivity to their spiritual need. God always warns the rich. Contrast with Smyrna: poor, but rich (all these churches suffer from erroneous self-perceptions...most of the 7 churches perception of themselves was wrong). Are these prosperity preachers aligning themselves with Laodicea saying 'I am rich, I have become wealthy, I have need of nothing....

So far we have seen that Jesus has said :

1. **you don't listen to Me v14** because you have not acknowledged My Deity and because you don't listen to Me
2. **you don't honour Me v15 & 16** and because you don't honour Me
3. **you don't recognise Me. V17**

This church is actually saying "I'm rich" look at us, we're rich, we've become wealthy, we don't need anything. This is their self-assessment!!!

It's how they see themselves. What about this kind of church today. Are they recognisable? They're prospering in every way, they have huge numbers attending, every piece of equipment to put on entertainment. Let's party everyone.....

When a huge earthquake almost destroyed Laodicea they actually sent a letter to Rome refusing any help to rebuild.

Quote: - we have all that we need Caesar, and we have need of nothing.

This earthquake happened before Jesus wrote this letter. They were so proud in their resources that they boasted that they could do it all themselves.

COLOSSAE, LAODICEA, AND HIERAPOLIS:

The tragic earthquake of AD 60

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Colossae, Laodicea, and Hierapolis were three closely-situated cities mentioned by Paul in the New Testament, each possessing Christians.

These cities were the target of a devastating earthquake around AD 60-62, probably just after Paul wrote his letters to the Christians of that area. According to historians, **all three cities were destroyed**. Barring miraculous intervention, this historic event probably claimed some of the lives of Christians.

Realizing these words were written to Christians who may have been on the brink of disaster highlights the need that we should always be prepared to meet God.

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So when Jesus wrote them this epistle He quoted from **their** letter to Caesar. You say you have need of nothing.....

He wanted to shock them, but they proved to be indifferent.

There are those today who when asked, do you believe in Jesus will say yes I do. And do you believe in the Bible, they'll say yes absolutely. They know theologically how to answer but how they have lived told a different story and their lives deny what the word of God actually says.

The Laodiceans knew it but they did it anyway. They could say Jesus is Lord, without Him actually being Lord of their life at all. It's the same today.

Jesus' response to this was

.....You do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked

Think of each of those words that Jesus Himself is actually saying to this church and to those churches today who think they are churches but are not.

A church without Christ as its Head is just a body of people with no Divine Authority. No guidance to stop them from being totally unscriptural. Men at the top have taken the headship. A totally man driven church.

This is the ultimate rebuttal to affluent contentment and the spiritual complacency that usually results. This church was worse off than any of the previous! It is spiritually poverty-stricken.

Jesus is talking to a church that isn't really His any more. He has been shut out. Jesus would never say these things to a church that was truly His, filled with the Holy Spirit and walking in His will.

He is speaking to something that has become proud and insensitive to the Holy Spirit. They think they are alright and are the best Christians ever and its everyone else who has got it wrong.

He is speaking to a church that has unconverted leadership and a largely unconverted congregation and which is spiritually bankrupt. But they don't know it. They have gone so far off track. They are no longer what they were but don't realise it.

Gal 6:7 *'Do not be deceived, God is not mocked, for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.'*

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James 1:22-24 *But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. ²³ For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; ²⁴ for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was.*

To keep ourselves from going astray we need to keep in the Word. To be humble and broken before the Word of God and never stray from it.

Psalm 119:11 *Your word I have hidden in my heart that I might not sin against You.*

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