

**TITLE: #7: LAODICEA**  
**SERIES: 7 Lessons from 7 Churches** (7 of 8)  
**Text: Revelation 3:14-22**

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## INTRO

Our series is: 7 Lessons from 7 Churches. We are looking at 7 actual churches mentioned in Revelation Chapters 2 & 3. Christ wrote letters to each of these 7 churches.

Today we look at the 7<sup>th</sup> church: LAODICEA. Let's listen to Joe Stowell, president of Cornerstone University, who is on location at the ancient ruins of this once great city.

[VIDEO - Laodicea]

Let's look now at the letter of Jesus to the church in Laodicea: Revelation 3:14-22.

## GREETING

**Revelation 3:14** - To the angel of the church in Laodicea write: These are the words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God's creation. NIV

Laodicea was located about 45 miles southeast of Philadelphia. It was the wealthiest of the seven cities. The city was known for its banks, its manufacture of a rare black wool, and a medical school that produced an ointment or salve for the eyes.

Laodicea lay at the juncture of two major trade routes between Rome and East Asia. The main road from Ephesus on the coast into Asia ran through Laodicea, as did the route from the capital of the province in Pergamum to the Mediterranean coast.

The great earthquake of A.D.17 that had destroyed Philadelphia and Sardis also destroyed Laodicea. But while the other cities had accepted financial help from Rome for rebuilding, Laodicea had enough wealth to rebuild on its own.

Laodicea was also a center for the imperial cult as well as for the worship of Asclepius (god of healing) and Zeus (chief god). The city also had a fairly large Jewish population.

Unfortunately, the city had a very poor water supply. A six-mile long aqueduct brought water to the city from the south, so by the time it reached the city, the water was lukewarm.

We believe the church may have been founded by Epaphras (see Col 4:12). We don't know if Paul ever visited the city, but Colossians 4:16 tells us that Paul did write them a letter, and the letter to the Colossians was read by the Laodiceans.

To this church, Christ is described as the Amen, the faithful and true witness. Christ was true and faithful, but the Laodiceans were not. They were rich and powerful, but they were not "faithful and true."

## COMPLAINT

**Revelation 3:15-16** - <sup>15</sup> I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! <sup>16</sup> So, because you are lukewarm — neither hot nor cold — I am about to spit you out of my mouth. NIV

This allusion to the Laodicean water supply is a fitting metaphor for the activities of this church. Laodicea had always had a problem with its water supply. The city of Hierapolis, to the northwest, was famous for its hot mineral springs. Laodicea decided to build an aqueduct to bring water to the city from the hot springs. But by the time the water reached the city, it was neither hot nor refreshingly cool — only lukewarm and filled with minerals, so it tasted terrible.

According to Christ, these believers were neither cold nor hot; That is, they were not refreshingly cool like a glass of ice water, nor hot like a morning cup of coffee. Instead, they were merely lukewarm, as bland as the tepid water that came into the city.

Christ wished that the church had cold, refreshing purity or hot, therapeutic value, but it had neither.

The Laodiceans were "lukewarm." The church had become distasteful and unusable like the city's water. The believers didn't take a stand for anything; indifference had led to idleness. By neglecting to do anything for Christ, the church had become hardened and self-satisfied. As a result, Christ was about to spit them out of his mouth.

The problem seems to stem from their wealthy and prosperous lifestyle.

**Revelation 3:17-18** - <sup>17</sup> You say, 'I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.'<sup>1</sup> But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked. <sup>18</sup> I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see. NIV

Evidently, the church in Laodicea was a wealthy church. Its people were prosperous. And like many Christians, they probably assumed that their wealth was a sign of God's blessing on them.

They may have had an attitude of self-sufficiency - they didn't need anyone's help. Their possessions made them feel safe and secure. But Jesus reveals to them their true condition. They may have been wealthy, but in reality they were "wretched, pitiful, poor, blind, and naked."

Christ told the Laodiceans to buy their gold from him; then they would have real spiritual treasures. They had fool's gold in their bank accounts, gold from this world with no spiritual or eternal value. Only with Christ's gold would they be eternally rich.

The city was proud of its cloth and dyeing industries. They had developed a black wool that had become famous all over the Roman Empire and was bringing huge prices. Although they had wealth in their clothing, they were still naked before God.

But Christ told them to purchase white robes signifying his righteousness - they were to be clothed with the righteousness of Christ. That alone would keep the shame of their spiritual nakedness from being seen.

Laodicea prided itself on its precious eye ointment that healed many eye problems, but yet they were spiritually blind. Christ told them to get salve from him to heal their eyes so they could see the truth (John 9:39).

Christ was showing the Laodiceans that true value is not in material possessions but in a right relationship with God.

## REMEDY

**Revelation 3:19-20** - <sup>19</sup> Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest, and repent. <sup>20</sup> Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me. NIV

Christ offers them the opportunity to repent - to change their ways. It's because he loves them so much that he doesn't want to see them spiritually anemic. His desire is for them to be a strong, healthy, passionate church that faithfully proclaims the good news of Jesus.

The last thing he wants to do is spit them out of his mouth. But that would become necessary if they continue to disobey him.

The Laodicean church was complacent and rich. They felt self-satisfied, but they didn't have Christ's presence among them. Christ knocked at the door of their hearts, but they were so busy enjoying worldly pleasures that they didn't notice him trying to enter. The pleasures of this world — money, security, material possessions — can be dangerous because their temporary satisfaction can make people — even believers — indifferent to what God desires.

The picture here is of Christ knocking on the door of an entire church. He is specifically speaking to individual Christians - desiring that they open the door so he can have great fellowship and relationship with them. That's what Christ wants.

Christ closes his letter to the church in Laodicea as he has each of the seven letters - with a promise for those who are victorious and an admonition to listen to what the Spirit of God is saying.

## PROMISE

**Revelation 3:21-22** - <sup>21</sup> To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne. <sup>22</sup> He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches." NIV

## LIFE LESSONS

### Money isn't everything

The Christians in Laodicea were wealthy, but lacked the spiritual wealth. Some believers falsely assume that numerous material possessions are a sign of God's spiritual blessing. In

fact, there are many preachers and churches that espouse a "Health & Wealth" gospel. That is a false gospel... a lie from Satan.

Laodicea was a wealthy city, and the church was also wealthy. But what they could see and buy had become more valuable to them than what is unseen and eternal. Wealth, luxury, and ease can make people feel confident, satisfied, and complacent.

No matter how much you possess or how much money you make, you have absolutely nothing if you don't have a vital relationship with Jesus Christ. Instead of centering your life around comfort and luxury, find your true lasting riches in Jesus. That's what counts!

## Light the fire!

ILLUSTRATIONS: Wuhan restaurant; Gardening; Winter

There is nothing worse than being lukewarm. Cold can refresh you. Hot can invigorate you. But lukewarm? Spit it out.

Dictionaries define lukewarm as: indifferent; boring; uninterested; not very enthusiastic; lacking zeal or passion

God says in verse 15, "I know your deeds." He's looking at you - at every Christian. And he's determining if we are passionate followers of Jesus... or apathetic Christians.

Passionate follower... or disinterested believer?

Passionate follower... or bored?

Maybe you need to light a fire... the fire of the Holy Spirit to heat up the spiritual temperature in your life. What Christ desires is passionate, zealous, committed, followers who are totally in.

The rest who are lukewarm he wants to spit out. So.....

## Open the door

Jesus is knocking on the door of our hearts every time we sense we should turn to him. You probably have sensed it - maybe resisted it. But Jesus wants to have fellowship with us, and he wants us to open up to him.

He's patient and persistent in trying to get through to us — not breaking down the door, but knocking. He allows us to decide whether or not we are going to open our lives to him.

It's up to you. Do you intentionally keep his life-changing presence and power on the other side of the door? Keeping God at a safe distance?

I challenge you this morning to open the door of your heart to Christ. It's the only way to stop being lukewarm in your relationship with him.

And it will be the beginning of a fantastic journey of faith with God at the steering wheel of your life.