

The Revelation of Jesus Christ: Behold I Am Coming Soon

The message today is from Revelation 3:14-22: The Church in Laodicea

Main Principle: **The Lord disciplines those He loves!**

(intro) Remember, the Scripture was written “to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we would have hope.” So, listen carefully today!

Though the Laodicean church was in deep spiritual decline, the Lord wasn’t finished with them yet! He comes to them as the Truth, in the Truth and speaking Truthfully to them. His words drip with parental love and care as we will see! For though they have sinned, and though He wounds them with the Truth, in Truth He assures them that He only disciplines those whom He loves!

I. History: Points of interest concerning the city and church in Laodicea

A. The city

1. A historically wealthy city famous for its wool for fine clothing, its financial prominence in the region, and a medicinal eye salve.
 - a) The wool was a luxurious soft black wool for making fine clothing and costly wool rugs.
 - b) It was a banking center for the region of Phrygia.
 - c) The medicinal eye salve, for which Laodicea was famous, was developed within the medical school associated with the local pagan temple dedicated to the Phrygian god, Men.
2. Laodicea was also an ancient city. But like many of the ancient cities, conquering rulers would take the city, modernize it, and often name it after an honored family member.
 - a) Laodicea was so named by Antiochus II somewhere before 253 B.C. in honor of his then wife, Loadice.
 - (1) Loadice, bitter from her divorce from Antiochus II, poisoned the king in 253 B.C.
3. Jewish presence: There was a fairly significant Jewish population estimated to be around 7,500 not counting women and children.

B. The Church (note: several of the following points were gleaned from MacArthur and Garland’s commentaries.)

1. The Founding: Not much is known about the founding. However, like the other churches in the province of Asia it is possible that this Laodicean church was founded during Paul’s lengthy ministry in Ephesus by others who were sent out.

- a) Acts 19:10 tells us that Paul's ministry during his time in Ephesus reverberated to "all the residents of Asia."
- b) It is possible that Epaphras, who founded the church in nearby Colossae also founded the church in Laodicea. (see Colossians 1:6-7)
 - (1) As of his writing to the Colossian church Paul had not yet visited Colossae as we read in Colossians 2:1.

2. What's in a name?

- a) "Laodicea... means "people rule. This is set in contrast to God's rule of the church. It is a church entirely ruled by men, for the Holy Spirit is not present and doing His ministry of guiding."¹

3. A surprising legacy

- a) There must have been a "hot" repentance in this church. Because there is evidence that centuries later, in 361 A.D., that the Council of Laodicea met concerning among other things the *canon*, or standard of Scripture!

II. (3:14-22) The Letter to the Church in Laodicea

A. (3:14a) To: The angel/ messenger of the church in Laodicea.

1. Remember how interesting it was to learn that it was likely that we know who was the "messenger" of the church in Smyrna? It may interest you to know that many students of the Bible agree that the "messenger" to the Laodician church was Archippus, whose name and position is mentioned in Colossians.
 - a) "And say to Archippus, 'See that you fulfill the ministry that you have received in the Lord.'" Colossians 4:17
 - b) But as you read the letter to the church in Revelation 3, if this is the case, doesn't it make you feel a little sick to the stomach?
 - (1) If it was our friend Archippus, what happened? I think we will learn as we study the problems of this church he pastored.
2. **Personal Request:** Please, please pray for your pastor and elder(s) to keep their spiritual fervor and zeal serving the Lord.

B. (3:14b) From: "The words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of God's Creation.

1. The Amen:
 - a) Hebrew in origin: Amen.
 - (1) Meaning, "Truth," "certainty," with a sense of concrete, firm, settled and unchanging value.

¹ Tony Garland's commentary, p269. Quote attributed to Arnold Fruchtenbaum, "*The Footsteps of Messiah*."

(2) Jesus is the Amen!

(a) 2x in Isaiah 65:16 God is called the “God of Truth,” or *Elohim Amen!*

(b) But, **there is more!** Yes, the Word means Truth unbending and concrete, firm and settled. **But** there is a sense in the Hebrew of “the strong arms of a parent supporting the helpless infant.”²

(c) So, although the leader and church is under discipline, they can be comforted knowing they are loved.

2. “The faithful and true witness”

a) This wonderful description of Himself undergirds His title as the Amen because it affirms that His Words are true and reliable!

(1) The Amen identifies the motivation of His word and works.

(2) The title, “Faithful and True Witness” describes His reliability to identify and address this church's spiritual problems.

b) Combining the meanings of the titles given in this verse, we see the incomparable and priceless value of His words to the church in 3:19-20

c) Not only so, but keep in mind that these titles also encompass the priceless value of His redemptive saving work when He came at His first coming!

3. “The ruler of God’s creation” (NIV).

a) Most versions read, “the beginning of God’s creation”.

b) But NIV does a great job here meaning that The Lord Jesus is the very Source of Creation. He **rules over all** of it! (John 1:3; Hebrews 1:2)!!

(1) **Think** of how profound this title is in the context of this letter addressed to the church in Laodicea. Remember, that Laodicea means, “People Rule”. And here the Lord dispels that myth by saying, “I rule!” He holds title and deed to everything created!

“For in Him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created through Him and for Him...so that in everything He might have the supremacy.”

(Col.1:16-18)

4. Application: The Laodicean church needed a renewed vision for the Supremacy of Christ! **How do you sustain a holy zeal for the supremacy of Christ?**

² Garland commentary. He quotes from *The Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*.

C. The Commendation: **N/A (NONE)**

D. (3:15-17) The Concern and REBUKE

1. (3:15a) "I know **your deeds**"-- He is omniscient! It is important for us to remember that our Lord Jesus knows ALL our deeds whether good or bad and the motivation for the deeds. But here in Revelation 3:15 a commendation is not following His "I know" statement as it does in Revelation 2:2; 2:9; 2:13; 2:19; 3:8 where His commendation follows His "I know". Compare those verses with 3:1 and 3:15.
 - a) **Notice**: There is not one commendation. Here, Jesus goes straight to His concern and His strong rebuke.
 - (1) MacArthur makes a great point by saying, "Deeds always reveal a person's true spiritual state as indicated by the Lord's words 'You will know them by their fruits' (Matt 7:16; Rom. 2:6-8).
2. (3:15b-16) The Lord rejects them for being "lukewarm"-- tepid, pukey.
 - a) Many commentators observe the Lord is bringing to their minds a present disgust these Laodiceans could relate too. Their water came via aqueduct and by the time it reached the city it would be lukewarm water.
 - (1) You could only "wish it were hot or cold" but it was neither.
 - (a) Hot water is useful to relax and restore the body.
 - (b) Cold water is useful to refresh the body.
 - (c) Lukewarm, aqueduct water was neither!
 - b) The Lord **desires** that these believers were anything but lukewarm.
 - (1) "I wish you were cold or hot."
 - (a) "So, b/c you are lukewarm (tepid, pukey), and neither hot nor cold, I will spit (vomit) you out of My mouth."
 - (2) This is a very serious rebuke.
 - (a) It is better to be hot/ fervent/ zealous for the Lord and alive to Him, or
 - (b) To be cold/ indifferent/ rejecting the Lord may be terrible in its own right, but it is not hypocrisy. But...
 - (c) To be lukewarm/ tepid/ pukey is disgusting to the Lord.
 - (3) The danger of not repenting from lukewarm practices:
 - (a) May indicate that you are not saved. (**Matt.7:21-23**)
 - (i) Repent and be saved today!
 - (b) Puts you in the peril described in Romans 1:20-28!
 - (i) "God gave them over to sinful desires..."
3. (3:17) Their lukewarmness was a breeding ground for *self-deception*.

- a) Apparently sensing no need of dependence upon the Lord Jesus, they confidently asserted their own self-sufficiency!³

(1) "I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing..."

- b) But the Lord, the Ruler, cuts to the heart of their self-deception and rebukes them:

(1) "**You...you are**" wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked.

(a) They are so deceived they don't know.

(b) Bless God if you know you are His dependent!

(i) Here is a good model: **See Proverbs 30:8-9**

E. (3:18-20) His Counsel: "I **advise...**" (to **consult** not with force, but rather to draw out the true intention of the heart. To heed the **advice** and to listen to the Lord's **appeal** and repent would reveal the presence of spiritual life. To be indifferent would reveal that there never was a new birth. It would appear that the majority in the church lacked true salvation. Now, the Lord is **advising** them to heed His **counsel** and turn to Him and be saved!!)

- 1. (3:18) What does He advise? (**NOTE:** Keep in mind that the city of Laodicea was known for their wealth, their black woolen garments, and medicinal eyes salve!)

- a) He advises that they come to Him and "buy" spiritual gold, spiritual garments and spiritual sight. (MacArthur)

(1) Sinners are spiritually bankrupt and must only respond in faith, trusting the word of God and the promise of salvation through faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

(a) Receive the gifts of God freely by faith. **See Isaiah 55:1**

(2) Yes, salvation is free because of its infinite value, but Luke 14:33 shows us that salvation and the life that corresponds with believing and following Jesus costs us everything!

(a) Luke 14:33: Jesus said, "In the same way, any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be My disciple."

- b) His counsel to them to "buy gold...garments...eye salve" is for their true redemption and healing from spiritual poverty, nakedness and blindness.

(1) Gold refined by fire: "so that you can be rich". This is symbolic of Christ and His pure gift of salvation, which is He Himself living in us through the Holy Spirit!

³ Remember the meaning of Laodicea? "People Rule". But the Lord is reminding them that He rules.

- (a) Colossians 1:27: "To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the **glorious riches** of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory."

(2) White garments: so as to be clothed, "that the shame of your nakedness may not be seen."

- (a) They had self-deceived thinking they were finely dressed.

- (i) Romans 10:3: "Since they did not know the righteousness that comes from God and sought to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness."

- (ii) However, they were improperly dressed.

(a) Read Matthew 22:1-14

(b) Christ alone is our righteousness (our white garment)

- (i) 1 Corinthians 1:30: "It is because of Him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is our righteousness, holiness and redemption."

- (ii) 2 Corinthians 5:21

- (iii) Romans 3:21-22

(3) "Salve to anoint your eyes", so that you can see"

- (a) The Lord was direct: "You are... blind..." (3:17)

(b) The greatest need of these Laodiceans, and every unregenerate person is to Christ who alone gives spiritual sight to the blind!.

- (i) John 9; Acts 26:17-18

2. (3:19) He advises them to "...be zealous and repent"

a) But, He first reminds them of **His love** for them!

- (1) **"Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so..."**

- (a) See Deut. 8:5; 2 Sam 7:14; **Heb 12:5-8**

(2) "Reprove": to bring under conviction. This is painful.

(3) Discipline: Looks forward. This is painful.

b) "Be zealous and repent"

- (1) Zealous: same root word as "hot" (see 3:15)

(a) Be zealous for God; pursue knowing God!

- (i) Be a God-chaser not just a church-goer.

(2) Repent: with the knowledge given by Christ, change your mind and your direction. This is an essential doctrine!

(a) **Acts 3:19**: “Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord...”

c) PRINCIPLE: The Lord disciplines those He loves!

3. (3:20) He **advises** them (the church) to hear His voice, to open the door, because He will come and dine with Him.

a) Sadly, **Our Lord is standing outside the church and desiring to be invited back in.**

b) Sadly, the fact that they do not respond to His “long time” knocking shows their lack of zeal/ heat for Him. But...

c) **The Hope**: His sheep will hear His voice. There may be few in the church at Laodicea, but His sheep will hear His voice! See **John 10:1-18**

(1) His sheep know His voice!

d) **The Hope**: “I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with Me.”

(1) Great promise of present fellowship: Just open the door!

(2) Great promise of eternal fellowship: Dine at the Wedding Feast of the Lamb! (**see** Matthew 22:1-14; 25:1-13; 26:29; Rev. 19:9)

F. (3:21-22) His Promise

1. Promise to the “overcomer”: (Overcomers are those who are born again!)

a) He gives great promise to those who repent, and those who are unwavering in their faith.

(1) “To sit with Me on my throne!

(a) First, the promise to sit with Him is awesome.

(b) Second, the promise is to sit with Him on His throne.

(c) By sitting with Him on His throne means that we will in some way reign with Him!

(i) 1 Cor. 6:3; 2 Tim 2:12a; Rev. 5:10; 20:6

2. More Advice: He who has an ear let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

a) To Laodicea, and to the “churches” down through the ages.

(1) Repent. Hear. Open the door.

(2) Compromise has been a theme for 5 of 7 of the churches.

Someone said, “Compromise of God’s word is anathema to Christ and is the root of all Christian weakness.

III. Application: **Main principle: The Lord Disciplines those He loves.**

- A. He will discipline the Lukewarm “christian”; this is detestable and pukey to the Lord. If you are “neither hot nor cold repent quickly. There is a limit before He will vomit you out!
 - 1. A right attitude is marked by humility and dependence before the Lord.
 - a) Isaiah 66:2b: “But this is the one to whom I will look: he who is humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at my word.”
- B. The Lord’s discipline is fatherly discipline. He loves those who listen and heed His counsel. If you are lukewarm, zealous repentance, “hot” repentance must happen now. Pray: Lord, I am sorry for my lukewarmness. I have sinned. Please forgive me. I don’t want to be lukewarm anymore. Fill me with fire that my repentance will be pleasing to you..”