

# The Church at Laodicea

Introduction:

## I. The Description of Christ

### A. He is the faithful and true witness of God.

Revelation 3:14 (ESV) "And to the angel of the church in Laodicea write: 'The words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of God's creation.

Revelation 1:4 (ESV) John to the seven churches that are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before his throne,

Revelation 1:5 (ESV) and from Jesus Christ the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of kings on earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood

### B. He is the risen conquering Lord.

Revelation 3:14 (ESV) "And to the angel of the church in Laodicea write: 'The words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness,the beginning of God's creation.

Revelation 1:5 (ESV) and from Jesus Christ the faithful witness,the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of kings on earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood

Colossians 1:18 (ESV) And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent.

## II. The negative assessment of the church

Revelation 3:15 (ESV) " 'I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were either cold or hot!

### A. Their condition.

Revelation 3:15 (ESV) “ ‘I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were either cold or hot!

1. To be cold is to be icy cold and to be hot is to be boiling hot.
2. To be cold is to be actively opposed to the gospel.
3. To be hot is to be actively adhering to and disseminating the gospel.
4. They are neither.
  - a. That is to say they are lukewarm
  - b. To be lukewarm is to be non-committal, indifferent, apathetic to the things of God.

B. Christ's lament.

Revelation 3:15 (ESV) " ‘I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were either cold or hot!

1. Christ would prefer that they would be either hot or cold as opposed to lukewarm.
  - a. That is not to say that being spiritually cold is just as good as being spiritually hot.
  - b. Certainly, it is better to be spiritually hot as opposed to being spiritually cold.’
  - c. Rather, the emphasis is that to be spiritually lukewarm is even worse than being spiritually cold.
2. How could Christ say that being cold is preferable to being lukewarm.

Leon Morris presents a common answer to this dilemma.

- a. View one.

“The deeds of this church are summed up in the accusation you are neither cold nor hot. The imagery may be derived

from the water-supply of the city which appears to have been drawn from hot springs at some distance, so that it arrived at the city lukewarm. This forms a contrast with the hot springs at nearby Hierapolis and the cold, refreshing water at Colosse. 'Hot water heals, cold water refreshes, but lukewarm water is useless for either purpose, and can serve only as an emetic.'

b. View two.

"Alternatively the words may mean that the Christianity of this church was lukewarm, when the meaning would be 'outright denial is better than phoney piety' (Orr). To prefer a rejection of the faith to the way the Laodiceans professed it is startling to say the least (cf. 2 Pet. 2:21). But to profess Christianity while remaining untouched by its fire is a disaster. There is more hope for the openly antagonistic than for the coolly indifferent. 'There is no one farther from the truth in Christ than the one who makes an idle profession without real faith' (Walvoord). Their coolness was a denial of all that Christ stands for.

Morris, Leon. Revelation: An Introduction and Commentary. Vol. 20. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1987. Print. Tyndale New Testament Commentaries.

c. I would also assert that being lukewarm is a greater detriment to the church than persecution.

d. To be lukewarm is also the greatest disgrace that can be brought against Christ.

C. Christ's Rejection:

Revelation 3:16 (ESV) So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth.

The word translated spit is literally to vomit.

Leviticus 18:25 (ESV) and the land became unclean, so that I punished its iniquity, and the land vomited out its inhabitants.

III. The reason for their lukewarmness

A. They have a faulty assessment of themselves.

1. The Laodiceans are immensely wealthy.

Revelation 3:17 (ESV) For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked.

Laodicea was a notably wealthy city. It was the center of banking for Asia Minor.

2. The Laodiceans increased in wealth over time.

Revelation 3:17 (ESV) For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked.

In A.D. 17 Laodicea, Sardis and Philadelphia were all severely damaged by an earthquake. Tiberius the Roman Governor provided the financial assistance for them to rebuild.

3. Laodicea was a self-reliant city.

“Laodicea was a self-reliant city. It did indeed receive help from the government in AD 17, but when it was destroyed by the earthquake in AD 60, Tacitus could say the city ‘without any relief from us, recovered itself by its own resources’

Morris, Leon. Revelation: An Introduction and Commentary. Vol. 20. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1987. Print. Tyndale New Testament Commentaries.

IV. Their true condition

Revelation 3:17 (ESV) For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked.

A. The Laodiceans were self-deceived.

Revelation 3:17 (ESV) For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked.

B. They were in fact very needy.

1. They were in distress as opposed to secure.

Revelation 3:17 (ESV) For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked.

2. They were in an unenviable position rather than an enviable position.

Revelation 3:17 (ESV) For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked.

3. They were poor as opposed to rich.

Revelation 3:17 (ESV) For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked.

4. They were blind as opposed to seeing.

Revelation 3:17 (ESV) For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked.

5. They were naked as opposed to finely dressed.

Revelation 3:17 (ESV) For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked.

C. Application:

1. How sad it is that individuals who are at ease and prosperous are often blind to their spiritual bankruptcy.
2. They are self-confident and see no need for God.
3. In reality their need is tremendous.

V. The Remedy to their situation:

- A. Christ now gives the church some investment advice. They are to purchase from Him some valuable spiritual commodities.

Revelation 3:18 (ESV) I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire, so that you may be rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself and the shame of your nakedness may not be seen, and salve to anoint your eyes, so that you may see.

Now there appears to be an allusion to many of the commodities that Laodicea was known for exporting. These were things that people normally came to the city of Laodicea for.

1. They were to buy gold that is refined so that they would be spiritually wealthy.

Revelation 3:18 (ESV) I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire, so that you may be rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself and the shame of your nakedness may not be seen, and salve to anoint your eyes, so that you may see. Remember they were the center for banking.

2. They were to buy white precious garments.

Revelation 3:18 (ESV) I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire, so that you may be rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself and the shame of your nakedness may not be seen, and salve to anoint your eyes, so that you may see.

Laodiceans would doubt that they were “naked”; their city was famous for its production of textiles, especially cloth and carpets woven from black wool. Thus some commentators observe that Jesus’ offer of “white clothes” probably provides a stark contrast with this notorious black wool of Laodicea

Keener, Craig S. Revelation. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1999. Print. The NIV Application Commentary.

Revelation 7:13 (ESV) Then one of the elders addressed me, saying, “Who are these, clothed in white robes, and from where have they come?”

Revelation 7:14 (ESV) I said to him, “Sir, you know.” And he said to me, “These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation. They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

3. They were to buy salve for their spiritual blindness.

Revelation 3:18 (ESV) I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire, so that you may be rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself and the shame of your nakedness may not be seen, and salve to anoint your eyes, so that you may see.

They may also experience surprise that they need Jesus to supply them spiritual eye salve. Ancient sources report a first-century medical school located in Laodicea, ear ointment made there, a famous eye doctor practicing there, and eye salve made of Phrygian powder (probably abundantly available there).

Keener, Craig S. Revelation. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1999. Print. The NIV Application Commentary. The application of the Remedy

- VI. Christ’s rebuke is a token of His love for them.

Revelation 3:19 (ESV) Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent.

Revelation 3:19 (ESV) Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent.

- VII. Christ’s invitation:

- A. Christ is seeking entrance into their lives.

Revelation 3:20 (ESV) Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me.

- B. Christ is extending the promise of fellowship with them.

Revelation 3:20 (ESV) Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me.

Revelation 19:6 (ESV) Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, crying out, "Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns.

Revelation 19:7 (ESV) Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready;

Revelation 19:8 (ESV) it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure"— for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.

Revelation 19:9 (ESV) And the angel said to me, "Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb." And he said to me, "These are the true words of God."

VIII. The promise of reward for the faithful.

Revelation 3:21 (ESV) The one who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, as I also conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne.

Revelation 19:6 (ESV) Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, crying out, "Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns.

Revelation 19:7 (ESV) Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready;

IX. The universal call to repent.

Revelation 3:22 (ESV) He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.' "

Revelation 2:11 (ESV) He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. The one who conquers will not be hurt by the second death.'

Revelation 2:17 (ESV) He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, with a new name written on the stone that no one knows except the one who receives it.'

Revelation 2:29 (ESV) He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'

Revelation 3:6 (ESV) He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'

Revelation 3:13 (ESV) He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'