

Laodicea: The Church That Didn't Need God



"17 You say, 'I am rich. I have everything I want. I don't need a thing!' And you don't realize that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked." Revelation 3:17 NLT

Laodicea is the last of the seven churches of Revelation. Of the seven, it was located in the wealthiest city. It was known for banking and finance, the manufacturing of wool, and a school of medicine that produced eye ointment. However, the city was without water. An aqueduct was built to send water from a hot spring. But the water had to travel a good distance and by the time it reached the city, it was no longer hot, but lukewarm. Jesus used this known situation to address the spiritual condition of the church located in Laodicea.

As a reminder, the purpose of the message of the seven churches is to prepare the followers of Christ to be ready for Christ's second coming and to be united with him (Ephesians 5:25-27). But the church at Laodicea was not ready to meet Christ. The Church of Laodicea was wealthy, self-sufficient, and spiritually apathetic. They were living as if they didn't need God. Pastor and author, Craig Groeschel, wrote a book titled, *The Christian Atheist: Believing in God But Living as if He doesn't Exist*. This is a modern description of the ancient church of Laodicea. This is a description of many Christians today—living as Christian Atheists, living as if God does not exist.

If Jesus should return this week, are you ready? Do you live like a Christian atheist, someone who believes in God but lives as if he does not exist?

Central Lesson

A maturing Christian is fully dependent & devoted to Christ.

1. Church: The Church in **LAODICEA** (3:14).

"14 Write this letter to the angel of the church in Laodicea...."

2. Christ: The **AMEN**, the faithful & true witness, the beginning (or ruler) of God's new creation (3:14).

"14...This is the message from the one who is the Amen—the faithful and true witness, the beginning of God's new creation."

- **Amen** - is a Hebrew word that means "truth." It is used in the New Testament to convey "Truth! So be it!" It refers to Jesus as sovereign and he has the final word based on the truth.
- **The faithful and true witness** - Jesus had some bad news for the Laodiceans and what he was about to say was true from the author of truth.
- **The beginning of God's new creation** - the one who began creation as John wrote in his Gospel of John 1:1-3.

3. Compliment: (**None**) - Christ had nothing good to say for an apathetic, self-sufficient, (Christian-atheistic) church.

4. Criticism: You are like **LUKEWARM** water, neither hot nor cold (3:15). Don't realize poor spiritual health (3:17).

"15 I know all the things you do, that you are neither hot nor cold. I wish that you were one or the other! 16 But since you are like lukewarm water, neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth! 17 You say, 'I am rich. I have everything I want. I don't need a thing!' And you don't realize that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked."

- **Neither hot nor cold...you are like lukewarm** (vs. 15-16) - This is a metaphor. Some mistakenly interpret "hot" as referring to being on fire for Christ and "cold" as being spiritually dead. However, the expression hot and cold were **both positive conditions**. One ancient writer explained that hot water was useful for washing and cold water was refreshing for drinking, whereas, lukewarm was good for neither. Jesus wanted his people to be useful and beneficial—either "hot water" that cleanses or "cold water" that refreshes.
- **I am rich. I have everything I want. I don't need a thing!** (v.17) - They were self-sufficient. They were dependent upon themselves and their resources. They neglected to trust in God. They became a church that didn't need God because they had their checkbooks and personal skills. They should have been thankful and dependent upon God to supply and guide them in using their resources to please God and accomplish His will.
- **You don't realize that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked** (v.17) - they were spiritually blind to their true condition—wretched (*unsatisfied*), miserable (*Gk. to be pitied*), poor (*Gk. one who crouches and cowers like a beggar*), blind, and naked (*Gk. uncovered, exposing shame*).

5. Correction: Buy from Christ gold **PURIFIED** by fire, white garments & ointment for your eyes. Be diligent & turn from your indifference, open your heart's door (3:18-20).

"18 So I advise you to buy gold from me—gold that has been purified by fire. Then you will be rich. Also buy white garments from me so you will not be shamed by your nakedness, and ointment for your eyes so you will be able to see. 19 I correct and discipline everyone I love. So be diligent and turn from your indifference. 20 'Look! I stand at the door and knock. If you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in, and we will share a meal together as friends.'"

- A string of metaphors - obtain from Christ spiritual riches of refined and purified life, white garments of God's righteousness to cover sin, God's eye ointment that opens their eyes to spiritual insights and discernment.
- **Open the door** (v.20) - is this speaking to Christians, non-Christians, or both? We will suggest both! Greek τις if "anyone" (singular pronoun) opens their heart's door for salvation or sanctification. Not all church members are saved!

6. Consequence: I will **SPIIT** you out of my mouth (3:16). **Victors:** will sit with Christ on His throne (3:21).

"16 But since you are like lukewarm water, neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth!" "21 Those who are victorious will sit with me on my throne, just as I was victorious and sat with my Father on his throne."

Conclusion

A maturing Christian is fully dependent & devoted to Christ.

Action Steps: ► Receive Christ as your Savior. ► As a Christian, dedicate your life to Christ. ► Invite someone to next Sunday's Bible study. ► Attend a small group. ► Pray for friends that need Jesus.