



The Church of Laodicea

AND unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God; **15** I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. **16** So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. **17** Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: **18** I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see. **19** As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent. **20** Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me. **21** To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne. **22** He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches. (Rev 3:14-22)

With this devotion, we complete the beginning series on Revelation with the last of the seven churches. There have been numerous attempts to depict these churches as representing different ages of the Church; however, an honest and solemn examination of each will reveal characteristic common to the geographic churches mentioned, as well as representing one or more common characteristics of churches of our day. When God exposes the sins of King David, it is not only his sin that is revealed, but ours as

well since God's whole Word is a mirror on the souls of men and women. The same is true of the churches described in Revelation.

The Church at Laodicea was hot on the issues of social propriety, but only room temperature when it came to the issues of greater gravity such as reverence and obedience to the Word of God. This does, indeed, describe perfectly the condition of most of our modern churches; but, I remind you, it has been a besetting problem for churches of all ages. The edifice, the ornamentation, the public image, the sophistication of the members invited, and considerations of finances today far outweigh the diligent study, and obedience, to Holy Scripture. Men love short sermons and long entertainments at service. They cajole the wealthy members of society to enter on the rolls, and are indifferent to the common man whose soul is every whit the worth of the man or woman of worldly wealth and prestige.

Laodicea was the worst of the line of Seven Churches. The fact that it is last of all mentioned is coincidental, but not completely, to the very similar marks the modern church bears to it in my view; however, it seems legitimate to compare the modern church in its luke-warm ministry to every weakness of the Church at Laodicea. When we view the depravity that characterizes most of the bigger church family, is it any wonder that our Lord asked, *Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?* (Luke 18:8 (KJV))

The Book of Revelation ends with these faithful words. *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.* (Rev 22:21) He is the End and Finisher of all things; but He is also the Beginning of all Creation. *In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.* Gen 1:1 (KJV) *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. 3 All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made.* (John 1:1-3) So, now our Lord opens His greeting to this Church with these words, *These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God.*

I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. If the Lord knows the works, and inner secrets, of the Churches and of nations, how do you suppose He could not know your very thoughts at this moment, and every moment? It is better to be cold dead and lost than to be a marginal believer who professes faith with the mouth, but lives a life that is not differentiated from that of the world and her carnal desires. The pews are more commonly occupied with such marginal professors than with those of deep and living faith. Unfortunately, so are the pulpits. The Judgment will be far more severe for nations (and churches) who have known the blessings of the Lord, and forgotten, than those who never knew the Lord. *America, Beware!*

So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. The Lord castigated the false ministers of the Jewish people – Scribes, Pharisees, and priestly rulers – for their falsely professing the faith of Abraham as their father when their true father was the Devil. *If God were your Father, ye would love me: for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me. Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye cannot hear my word. Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.* (John 8:42-44) What would you say if I told you that Abraham was a Christian? He was that in the truest sense. And so were those of Israel who believed in

the Promise made to Abraham. He looked forward, with unfaltering faith, to the coming Redeemer just as we look back upon the accomplished event. But the Jewish rulers rejected Christ and, I believe, knew exactly WHO He was.

Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked. While God pronounced the material poverty of the Church at Smyrna, He also proclaimed them to be spiritually rich, He pronounces the material wealth of the Church at Laodicea as poor and naked. Moreover, by their own lack of faith and love, they are blind. Look at the monuments to vanity on every main street of America and see if the description fits.

I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see. That *Gold tried in the fire* is not purchased with money or false religion. A man who owns a million acres of land and ten billion in the bank is not a man of wealth compared with the economy of Heaven. His holdings are measured in years, months, weeks, or even days when he will relinquish all to a survivor. But true wealth is deposited in a bank with an eternal future of security. That bank receives the deposits of good and beneficent works of the saints and keeps them on safe deposit for a future without end. Laodicea is exactly like those seven women of Isaiah 4:1 of whom the Lord said; *And in that day seven women* (religious entities) *shall take hold of one man* (Jesus Christ), *saying, We will eat our own bread* (eat our own bread of worldly religion, not the Bread of Heaven), *and wear our own apparel* (trust in our own righteousness, not the righteousness of Christ): *only let us be called by thy name* (Christian), *to take away our reproach* (to give us respectability). (Isaiah 4:1)

As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent. God may send earthquakes, floods, the whirlwind, disease, and captivity upon the nations of His love in order to awaken them of the need to repent. If that chastisement goes unheeded, so will the pleas for mercy at the Last Judgment go unheeded.

Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me. To whom is our Lord speaking? To the churches, and particularly to the Church of Laodicea. Though His words are more relevant to that church than the others, He nonetheless addresses every Church in this counsel of grace – not only at that time, but for all time as long as the world endures. At which door is the Lord standing? He is standing at the door of the Church. Is He standing INSIDE, or OUTSIDE the Church? He is standing outside the Church of Laodicea, and every church that follows in its trail. *Behold, I stand at the door, and knock.* Unfortunately, that is where He is standing today at the greater number of churches. To only those who hear His Voice and respond from the death of sin, will He respond. *I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine.* (John 10:14) In the stone-cold tomb, Lazarus heard His Voice and responded to that call. He was dead, just as all lost in trespasses and sins. We celebrate that Supper of the Lord at each occasion of Holy Communion. We know Him more at the Breaking of Bread just as did the two men on the Road to Emmaus.

To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne. If we take up our cross daily and follow Christ, we will follow every place that cross leads – to service, to compassion, to

sacrifice, to the cross, to the grave, and, ultimately, to the glorious resurrection. *If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.* (Luke 9:23) Even if your ears are dead, as were those of Lazarus, you will hear His Voice if the Holy Ghost draws you to our Lord. *He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.* That is, to ALL the churches!