

Christ's Letter to Laodicea
(Revelation 3:14-22)

- A. Preliminary thoughts.
1. This letter may be the most critical of the seven letters to the churches. There is no commendation for them. **ct/w REV 3:1-4.**
 2. For them is reserved a rarely seen attribute of God: disgust.
 3. They were fat, satisfied, indifferent fence-straddlers lacking zeal and who were ignorant of their poor spiritual condition.
 4. "There was no tribulation in Laodicea, no persecutions, no synagogue of Satan to molest them. They were having a very easy and comfortable time. No doubt the church-machinery was of the most approved pattern, the equipment all up-to-date, and the appointed routine of services regularly carried out. Such churches are numerous, and to make them realize their actual spiritual state is ever a matter of stupendous difficulty." (Philip Mauro, Things Which Soon Must Come to Pass, p. 132)
 5. Yet their candlestick was still in place. They were the objects of God's love. There was hope for them; they had not used up their *space of repentance*. **c/w REV 2:21.**
- B. This was a church for which Paul had had a great conflict. **COL 2:1; 4:15-16.**
- C. To this church of waffling, indifferent fence-straddlers, Christ presents Himself with titles that speak of solidity and absolutes. **v. 14.**
1. He is *the Amen*. **c/w 2CO 1:20.**
 - a. amen: Sure; abstractly, faithfulness; adverbially, truly: so be it, truth.
 - b. With Laodicea, it was "so it could be..." but with Christ it is "so be it!"
 - c. There is absolute truth!
 2. He is *the faithful and true witness*. **c/w REV 1:5.**
 - a. Christ witnessed a good confession before Pilate. **1TI 6:13 c/w JOH 18:37.**
 - b. He stood on principle and for principles, not prosperity.
 - c. By contrast, Laodicea was not standing for anything. They were wafflers who equated gain with godliness. **1TI 6:5.**
 - d. They were a poor witness of Kingdom principles. **MAT 6:31-33; ROM 14:17.**
 - e. A church's good witness in the world is not based upon its material prosperity!
 - f. That Christ is a faithful and true witness suggests that there is an absolute benchmark by which belief and conduct is measured. **JOH 14:6 c/w 1JO 4:6.**
 - g. That Christ is a faithful and true witness should remind churches that He in righteousness judges and makes war. **REV 19:11.**
 3. Christ is *the beginning of the creation of God*.
 - a. Christ is not the beginning of the creation in the sense that He was the first thing that Jehovah created (as JW's affirm). That would make Him a formed god, which Jehovah denies ever could be. **ISA 43:10-11.**
 - b. Creation owes its existence to Jesus Christ. **JOH 1:1-3; COL 1:16-17.**
 - c. Creation itself had an absolute beginning. No room for waffling here. Perhaps Laodicea was wavering on the doctrine of beginnings, a common trend of "fat and full" Christianity.
 - d. Christ is also "...the beginning, the firstborn from the dead..." (**COL 1:18**), the firstfruits of the resurrection family that is His new creation. **1CO 15:20, 23.**
- D. Christ knew their works. They were *neither cold nor hot*. **vs. 15-16.**
1. They were lukewarm, which means: "Of persons, their actions, attributes, etc.: Having little warmth or depth of feeling, lacking zeal, enthusiasm or ardour, indifferent."
 2. Christ is repulsed by lukewarm Christianity. He would prefer them cold or hot. If they

were cold, at least their pretense of heat would be gone. If they were hot, they would be where saints ought to be spiritually.

- a. They were not cold. They were keeping up the form of religion.
- b. They were not hot. That would be too fanatical.
- c. They had the form of godliness while denying its power. **2TI 3:5.**
- d. God is not impressed with fence-straddlers or divided allegiances. **1KI 18:21; 2KI 17:41; EZE 20:39; MAT 6:24; 12:30.**
- e. The gospel is meant to push people one way or the other: either towards sincerity and zeal for Christ or away from any pretense of religion.

3. God wants us to serve Him hotly, passionately, fervently. **PSA 119:139; JOH 2:17; ROM 12:11; JAM 5:16; 1PE 1:22; 4:8; JUDE 1:3.**

- a. If Christianity is real, it deserves our passionate zeal.
- b. If Christianity is not real to us, we should drop the pretense.

E. Their claim was, "I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing..." (v. 17).
c/w **HOS 12:8.**

1. The "prosperity gospel" was having its heyday in Laodicea.
2. They had strong self-esteem.
 - a. Note a connection between riches and having too high an opinion of self. **1TI 6:17.**
 - b. Self-satisfaction breeds lukewarmness. If you think you've got everything, why look for improvement?
 - c. Those who think that because their barns are full they have need of nothing are on a dangerous precipice. **LUK 12:16-21.**
3. Their word was "wow!" Christ's word to them was "woe!" **LUK 6:24-25.**
4. This is an example of a false standard of righteousness.
5. This is an example of man's assessment of self being at odds with God's assessment of man.
6. They were ignorant of their true condition: wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked.
 - a. What they could not see because of their errant focus, Christ was exposing to them (and the world): their shame.
 - b. These words were obviously not intended to bolster their self-esteem.
 - c. How dare Christ use such hurtful language to a beloved church?! Ans. Because they were in error and He loved them.

F. Christ counsels them to buy from Him the things they lacked. v. 18.

1. High self-esteem churches need counselling.
2. They were to buy from Him. There is no other supplier of grace. **ACT 4:12.**
3. The things that they should buy from Him do not cost money. **ISA 55:1; PRO 23:23.**
 - a. Their source is the word of God.
 - b. The word of God is tried in the fire. **PSA 12:6.**
 - c. The word of God makes rich. **PRO 8:10-11, 18-19.**
 - d. The righteousness that God's word teaches will cover our shame if we put it on. **ROM 13:14 c/w COL 3:10-14.**
 - e. The word of God will enable our eyes to see. **PSA 19:8; ACT 26:18; EPH 3:8-9.**

G. "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent" (v. 19).
c/w **HEB 12:5-8.**

1. It is the sons, the loved of God whom He chastens.
2. If one is not chastened of God for waywardness, he is not loved by nor a son of God.
3. rebuke: To beat down or force back; to repress or check (a person); to repulse; to reprove, reprimand, chide severely.
4. Notice the proper response that rebuke should generate: zeal and repentance, not bitter

resistance or withdrawal.

- a. zeal: In Biblical language, denoting ardent feeling or fervour (taking the form of love, wrath, jealousy or righteous indignation); in a specialized sense: Ardent love or affection; fervent devotion or attachment; ardent, earnest, or eager desire; intense ardour in the pursuit of some end; passionate eagerness in favour of a person or cause; enthusiasm as displayed in action.”
- b. Lukewarm repentance is inadequate. **2CO 7:10-11.**

H. Christ was standing at the door and knocking. **v. 20.**

- 1. This is not Christ standing at the door of the unregenerate sinner's heart and knocking to provoke an invitation.
- 2. This appeal is to a church made up of saints whom Christ loves, has washed from their sins and has made kings and priests to God. **REV 1:4-6.**
 - a. The letters to the seven churches accord with the fact of Christ exercising His judgment in the house of God, His house. **1PE 4:17 c/w 1TI 3:15.**
 - b. Thus, “...the judge standeth before the door” (**JAM 5:9**).
 - c. It is notable that the One Person Who is not in the assembly of a self-absorbed church is Jesus Christ. They presume to engage in service without Him and shut the door against Him.
- 3. Christ is on the outside of this self-satisfied church seeking entrance so as to sup with such as would open.
 - a. This supping together implies fellowship.
 - b. Christ is promising fellowship to any that answer His call.
 - c. That could result in either a revived church or faithful penitents eventually withdrawing themselves from an obstinately impenitent church. **2TH 3:6.**

I. As with the other letters, the overcomer is given a promise. **v. 21.**

- 1. The overcomer will sit with Christ in His throne even as Christ overcame and was set down with His Father in His throne.
- 2. Christ overcame temptation, death and the grave to gain David's throne. **ACT 2:29-36.**
- 3. David's throne is the Father's throne. **1KI 2:12 c/w 1CH 29:23.**
- 4. Christ and His Father are one and reign over all things. **JOH 10:30 c/w 1CO 15:25-27.**
- 5. The overcomer reigns now through Christ. **ROM 5:17 c/w 1JO 2:14; 5:4.**
- 6. The overcomer will reign with Christ in glory. **ROM 8:17; 2TI 2:12.**

J. “He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches” (**v. 22**).