

Session 8 Laodicea: Spiritual Pride and Lukewarmness (Rev. 3:14-22)

¹⁴“To the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write, ‘These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God: ¹⁵“I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. ¹⁶So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth. ¹⁷Because you say, ‘I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing’—and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked—¹⁸I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see. ¹⁹As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent. ²⁰Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me. ²¹To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne. ²²He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”” (Rev. 3:14-22)

I. THE PRIMARY MESSAGE

A. Jesus promises the prestigious wealthy church of the Laodiceans deep fellowship and a position in His eternal kingdom, along with gold, garments, and revelation. However, to receive this He required that they zealously repent of their lukewarmness in their relationship with Him. Their problem was spiritual blindness and pride that led to lukewarmness in their love for the Lord.

B. One root problem they had came from misinterpreting why God gave them financial blessing. The Lord releases financial blessing as part of the covenant that He has made with His people. There is much emphasis on the biblical promise of receiving financial blessing from God (Deut. 28:1-14). When our finances grow faster than our heart, then negative dynamics occur.

¹⁸“**You shall remember the LORD your God, for it is He who gives you power to get wealth, that He may establish His covenant which He swore to your fathers.**” (Deut. 8:18)

C. We must not allow financial prosperity to hinder our heart prosperity nor our heavenly treasure. The church of Smyrna was financially poor because of persecution, but was spiritually rich. The Laodiceans had the opposite condition.

²**I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers.**
(3 Jn. 2)

D. It is more difficult for a person who is rich in money or honor to enter (experience) the kingdom. It requires much time and energy to manage increase in God-given money and honor. In being preoccupied with wealth and reputation, it is easy to neglect our spiritual life. The Laodiceans spoke of being financially rich without being in need of spiritual depth. Their financial increase led to losing their hunger for Jesus. This does not have to happen, but it usually does unless one is careful and zealous. The word of the Lord to the church of the Laodiceans is needed in the Church across the US. There are many rich believers and churches that are spiritually shallow, but do not know it. It is rare to see believers with a lot of money maintaining their fire for Jesus.

²¹“If you want to be perfect...sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven...²³It is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven.” (Mt. 19:21-23)

II. THE CHURCH OF LAODICEA

- A. Laodicea was a wealthy city, a center of banking, manufacturing (soft wool), and medicine. It was located by three major highways, making it a wealthy city. The city was the judicial seat of the district. A famous school of medicine developed treatment applied to cure eye diseases.
- B. Its great weakness was in lacking a water supply. An aqueduct brought them water from neighboring Hierapolis (known for its hot springs) and Colossae (known for its cold springs).

III. JESUS’ REVELATION OF HIMSELF

¹⁴“These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God...” (Rev. 3:14)

- A. This description reveals aspects of Jesus’ personality and ministry. It emphasizes His tender care over our lives and His intervention to help us walk closely with Him and receive His promises.
- B. **The Amen:** means to be true or established. Jesus is the Amen because His promises are certain and sure. John used the word “amen” (Gr., *amhn*) 25 times. It is translated as “truly, truly, I say to you.” The God of truth (Isa. 65:17) is literally “the God of Amen.”
 - 1. *Amen* was pronounced when one agreed with the promises and consequences of an oath (Num. 5:22; Deut. 27:15; Neh. 5:13; Jer. 11:5). Being the Amen, Jesus lived in perfect agreement with His Father. As the head of the Church, He requires that we agree with Him to release the certainty of His blessings. We have to relate to Jesus on His terms. We must do it His way. Jesus is the One who agrees with God and requires that we agree with Him to release His purposes.
 - 2. All of the promises of God are yes and amen. All the promises of God are *yes* because they are true. They are *amen* because we must agree with them. God’s promises for increased blessing are invitations to partnership, not unconditional guarantees.

²⁰For all the promises of God in Him are Yes, and in Him Amen. (2 Cor. 1:20)

- C. **The Faithful and True Witness:** what He speaks is reliable and truthful (Rev. 3:7). He was about to tell them the truth in both positive and negative ways. He revealed such great promises in Rev. 3:18-21, along with negative truths about their spiritual problems in Rev. 3:17-18. He does not ever exaggerate or flatter. Most only preach and prophesy of positive things.
- D. **The beginning of the creation of God:** He is the beginning or first in cause (source) and authority. The power and authority of creation begins with Him (Jn. 1:3; Col. 1:16-17; Rev. 1:8; 21:6). He is the uncreated God, like the Father and the Spirit. There was never a time they did not exist. This was meant to arouse the Laodiceans into zealous repentance instead of being so impressed with their financial prosperity. The Creator of the earth was speaking to them.

IV. AFFIRMATION FOR FAITHFULNESS: NONE

V. CORRECTION FOR COMPROMISE

¹⁵“I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. ¹⁶So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth. ¹⁷Because you say, ‘I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing’—and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked.” (Rev. 3:15-17)

- A. ***You are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot.*** The spiritually cold are in a better position to see their great need. At least they know they are in trouble. They are easier to convert. When a person feels the emptiness of a cold heart, he searches for answers.
- B. ***Because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth.*** The Greek word *emew* is to vomit. He loves them and has not lost interest in them (v. 19). Jesus’ heart was sick (His stomach hurt) with concern about them and what they were losing in their relationship with Him. Jesus knew all the lost eternal opportunities they were missing out on.
- C. Jesus quoted the warning of judgment seen in Leviticus 18. The land of Israel was said to vomit the people out of the land in judgment.
²⁵“For the land is defiled; therefore I visit the punishment of its iniquity upon it, and the land vomits out its inhabitants. ²⁶You shall therefore keep My statutes...²⁸lest the land vomit you out also when you defile it, as it vomited out the nations that were before you.” (Lev. 18:25-28)
- D. ***You say, ‘I am rich and have become wealthy.’*** They claimed God’s financial blessing, but it turned out to injure their heart.
- E. ***You say, ‘I have need of nothing,’*** instead of being desperate for more. “I have need of nothing” expresses their spiritual complacency.
- F. Many wished they were more on fire for Jesus, but decided to wait until later to make zealous changes. They were too proud to clearly see their true condition. They were intoxicated with their financial blessing.
- G. Self-satisfaction is often promoted by financial abundance, with its power and comfort.
- H. What we gain in God today (heart reality and ministry impact) is often lost tomorrow. Over the years, one may develop a larger profile with greater influence, while his/her heart reality is less than it was ten years before. Our lifestyle decisions declare how we feel about our spiritual condition. Most of us say, “I need more of Jesus,” yet the way we spend our time and money is the real proof of how desperate we are.
- I. ***You do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked.*** This is one of the most disturbing things that Jesus can say to a born-again believer.

1. **Wretched:** This is from the Greek meaning “calloused and hardened.” They were calloused and spiritually dull.
2. **Miserable:** Spiritual sickness resulting in loss of appetite for the Word and prayer. Believers in the “spiritual ICU” have no spiritual appetite. Hunger is a sign of recovery.
3. **Poor:** Being spiritually deficient is the opposite of being “poor in spirit” (Mt. 5:3). Many believers have nothing in their eternal bank account. How much is in yours?
4. **Blind:** Spiritual blindness means lacking revelation of God and one’s spiritual condition.
5. **Naked:** Without garments in the age to come, which express their love for Jesus in this age.

VI. EXHORTATION TO RESPOND: BUY GOLD AND GARMENTS AND USE EYE SALVE

¹⁸“I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see. ¹⁹As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent.” (Rev. 3:18-19)

A. Jesus gave three exhortations with promises that each carry temporal and eternal applications. He was not speaking to believers about receiving salvation, but about a new quality in their walk with God.

B. ***Buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich.*** The gold of godly character makes us rich in this age by tenderizing our heart to feel more of God’s love and enlarging our desire for Him and for righteousness.

⁷That the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold...though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus... (1 Pet. 1:7)

¹²Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you. (1 Pet. 4:12)

C. Purified gold does not come easily or without fire. Gold must be dug out and then put in the fire. Gold refined by fire involves a costly and painful process to remove the dross.

²“Who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner’s fire and like launderer’s soap. ³He will sit as a refiner and a purifier of silver; He will purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer to the LORD an offering in righteousness.” (Mal. 3:2-3)

D. Acquiring gold with its richness refers to more than what is in our heart in this age. It also speaks of eternal gold or treasure that will be seen in the heavenly mansions, crowns, garments, etc. Gold is only one facet of our eternal reward, but it is a real one. This eternal gold is given according to the measure of our love and obedience.

- E. ***I counsel you to buy white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed.*** Righteous living results in the reward of eternal garments. Our garments begin with the gift of righteousness that is imputed to us by faith (2 Cor. 5:21). However, here Jesus is speaking of experiential righteousness or acts of righteousness.
⁸To her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. (Rev. 19:8)
- F. To be naked or shamed in eternity is to be devoid of the reward of heavenly garments. All believers have the robe of righteousness, yet Jesus warns us of the shame of nakedness or lacking the reward of added clothing, that reveals one's commitment to Jesus in this age. To receive the reward of clothing as a statement of honor is what Joseph received from Pharaoh (Gen 41:42) and Mordecai received from King Ahasuerus (Esth. 6:6-11).
¹⁵"Blessed is he who watches, and keeps his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame." (Rev. 16:15)
⁴"You have a few...who have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with Me in white, for they are worthy. ⁵He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments." (Rev. 3:4-5)
²⁸Abide in Him, that when He appears, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming. (1 Jn. 2:28)
- G. ***Anoint your eyes with eye salve that you may see.*** People put eye medicine (eye salve) on their eyes when seeking to be cured of eye disease. Laodicea's famous medical school exported a powder used as an eye salve. This Phrygian powder was applied to the eyes as doughy paste.
- H. Jesus was saying that we must take action to cure our spiritually sick eyes. Only the Holy Spirit can give us revelation of Jesus and His Word. However, we can take natural steps as we take time to feed on the Word and turn our eyes away from worthless things that dull our spirit.
- I. ***I counsel you to buy from Me.*** Jesus exhorts us to "buy gold," or to engage in the God-ordained process of acquiring a deep relationship with Him. In buying gold or garments, we do not earn them, but we invest ourselves in a costly way to position ourselves to receive them. "Buy" is from Isaiah 55:1-3. No one can literally buy anything from God.
- J. We value our relationship with God enough to invest in it in a costly way as David did.
²⁴The king [David] said to Araunah, "...I will surely buy it from you for a price; nor will I offer burnt offerings to the LORD my God with that which costs me nothing." (2 Sam. 24:24)
- K. ***As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten.*** Jesus promises to discipline all of us so that we may have gold and garments and so that we may be rich. Jesus promises to discipline us to bring us out of passivity and self-sufficiency. The Greek word for love here is *filevw* (phileo), meaning enjoyment. *Phileo* is never used of God loving unbelievers; the word used in that context is *agape* (Jn. 3:16).
- L. ***Therefore be zealous and repent:*** Be radical in our resolve to make changes.

VII. PROMISE FOR OVERCOMERS: TWO PROMISES

²⁰*“Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.* ²¹*To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.* ²²*He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”* (Rev. 3:20-22)

- A. *If anyone hears My voice and opens the door:* Jesus invites all individuals who hear. Much of the Church is content to have His name and do His work without His presence in their midst.
- B. *I stand at the door and knock:* Jesus continually beckons us to draw near to His heart as He patiently waits for us. Jesus can open all doors (Rev. 3:7-8), except the door of our heart.
- C. *I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me:* to feast speaks of intimacy or deep fellowship as the Spirit tenderizes our heart to feel more of His love by increasing our revelation of Jesus and zeal for righteousness. The eternal application of this refers to the marriage supper of the Lamb (Rev. 19:9; Lk. 22:16, 29, 30; Mt. 26:29; Mk. 14:25). Eating with the Messiah and ruling with Him are regularly brought together; thus, we rule with affection.
- D. *I will grant to sit with Me on My throne.* This promise is offered to all Christians in the Millennium (Rev. 5:10; 11:15; 20:4). Jesus promised the apostles that they would eat and drink with Him and sit on thrones, judging the 12 tribes of Israel (Mt. 19:28; Lk. 22:29-30).
²⁹*“I bestow upon you a kingdom...³⁰that you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.”* (Lk. 22:29-30)
- E. *As I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.* This distinguishes between two thrones, Jesus’ and the Father’s: the Father’s throne is in heaven and Jesus’ throne will be on earth as the son of David (Ps. 122:5; Ezek. 43:7; Lk. 1:32). Jesus’ earthly throne is turned over to the Father at the end of the Millennium (1 Cor. 15:24-28). We will sit on Jesus’ earthly throne after He comes back to earth (Dan. 7:13-14; Mt. 25:31; Heb. 2:5-8). Jesus overcame at the cross (Rev. 5:5, 9; Jn. 16:33). Jesus sat down at the Father’s right hand after His resurrection and ascension to heaven (Ps. 110:1; Mt. 22:44; Acts 2:34; Eph. 1:20; Heb. 1:3; 8:1; 10:12; 12:2).

VIII. THE TIME PERIOD PROPHETICALLY SPOKEN OF BY THE CHURCH OF LAODICEA

This church speaks to the modern Church that is spiritually dulled by materialism and consumerism. The Laodicean period covers approximately AD 1850 to the end of the age.