

Session Fourteen:

Revelation 3:14-22 The Church Of Laodicea

I) History Of Laodicea

- A) The city of Laodicea was like many other cities Jesus addressed as it was very wealthy and important in the eyes of men. The city's wealth came from its location situated on the convergence of three important trade roads.
- B) The convergence of these roads became a prominent factor to its wealth as it was known for banking and large industry. The city was known for beautiful black woolen cloth used to make clothing and carpets. The city also had a medical school which was particularly known for its ear ointment and for "Phrygian Powder" used to make eye ointment.
- C) Mark Driscoll states *"that recent archeology digs in the city have found ancient housing foundations that are upwards of 3,000sq ft with centralized water system's and indoor plumbing."* This is a huge statement to the wealth of those living in Laodicea.
- D) But unlike most major cities, Laodicea was built about 6 miles away from a water source. This meant that a large 6 mile aqueduct made of stone had to be built to move water into the city. Where the aqueduct started the water coming in was from a hot springs with temperatures upwards of 95+ degrees Fahrenheit.
- E) But because of the 6 mi distance that the steaming hot water had to travel, by the time it reached the city it was only tepid or lukewarm. And because of the long distance, the stone collected large amounts of calcium which induced vomiting in those that drank from it.
- F) The wealth of this city was so great that around 60 A.D. the city was toppled by a large destructive earthquake and the inhabitants actually rebuilt the city without the help of Rome.
- G) The Church isn't noted for struggling from Roman oppression or from Jewish persecution but had rather become much like their city. They were complacent in the Gospel, compromising the truth for acceptance in the community.

II) Jesus' Address To The Church Of Laodicea (Revelation 14-22)

- A) **Revelation 3:14** *"And 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..."*
 - 1) Jesus opens His **Address** to the Church by speaking to the leadership and **Addressing** those who are in charge.
 - 2) From His Address to them, He then reveals various **Attributes** about Himself that are very specific to the circumstances that the Church of Laodicea was struggling with. Jesus says to them *"...these things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God."*

- 3) Jesus is going to level a huge charge against this ministry, and He is making it clear that He all authority both in heaven and on the earth to say the things He's about to say.
 1. Says the Amen = He is declaring Himself to be the *so be it of God*. The truthful One.
 2. The Faithful Witness (Rev 1:5) = Jesus is assuring them that they can trust His words as truth to them in their broken, complacent state. He's the Faithful Witness of God.
 - (a) **Revelation 11:17** "We give You thanks...because of You have taken Your great power and reigned."
 - (b) **2nd Corinthians 8:9** "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich."
 3. The Beginning of the creation of God = Jesus is declaring His Divinity and His Eternality as the One who is equal with God. Don't just trust My words because I'm the Amen of God or the Faithful Witness, but because I am also God.
 - (a) Jesus is letting them know that He is qualified to say what He's about to say.
- B) **Revelation 3:15-16** "I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. So, then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth."
 - 1) The Church of Laodicea is only one of two Churches (**Sardis**) out of the seven Churches mentioned in **Revelation 2-3** that receive nothing positive from Jesus in the form of an **Approval**.
 - 2) Jesus then **Accuses** the Church for their gross complacency and inability to deliver the Gospel of the Kingdom to the city in which they live. Jesus' words in these two verses (**Rev. 3:15-16**) are among the most quoted verses in the Bible.
 - 3) There is no evidence that this statement is found anywhere else in the Bible, but it seems to have an entirely local connection.
 - 4) I believe that Jesus was addressing their elaborate and lengthy aqueduct and what it did to the water by the time it reached the city. Jesus' threat to spit them out of His mouth has more to do with heartsickness, than anger and frustration.
 - 5) The water was neither cold (refreshing) or hot (healing) but rather lukewarm and because of its temperature it was ineffective. He's **Accusation** to them was they were more ineffective than halfhearted.
- C) **Revelation 3:17** "Because 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..."
 - 1) Jesus continues His **Accusation** to the Church by addressing their confession of themselves. The Church was under the judgment of God for the very blessings that had come from God. The blessings of God not stewarded rightly can end up being His judgment against us.

- 2) The Church said that they were rich, but Jesus says that they were poor. This was very different from the Church of Smyrna who said they were poor, but Jesus said was rich.
 - 3) It's not physical possessions that Jesus is talking about, but spiritual possession to which the Church of Laodicea was entirely broke.
 1. **Matthew 5:3** *"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of heaven."*
 - 4) The Church had become independent and didn't need God. It's true that our prayer meetings only thrive in an environment where people actually see their need for God.
 - 5) In the middle of the Churches ignorance about their true spiritual state, Jesus lets them know that their confession of themselves is different than His confession of them.
 - 6) We have to work to make sure that the confession of our lives agrees with Jesus' confession of our lives. Beloved, these Christians didn't know what Jesus thought about them (**Ephesus, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis and Laodicea**). We can't assume, we have to ask.
- D) **Revelation 3:18** *"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."*
- 1) Jesus then gives this Church His **Advice** which is to stop purchasing things in this age to fix themselves and come to Him.
 - 2) The Amen, the Faithful Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God is giving **Advice** from eternity into the present. We must cherish His words, be fed by them and hold them out in this age.
 - 3) Based on the 5 Accusations Jesus gives them (*wretched, miserable, poor, blind, naked*) He gives them **Advice** on how to resolve those various issues in three primary ways.
 1. Buy gold from Me...that you may be rich = Jesus is calling out to this wealthy banking city, that the gold they have (Rich) and are being offered won't do anything in regard to Him or their current state. Their wealth is empowering lethargy towards Him.
 - (a) It's a call to embrace the crucified life, to hold out Jesus' words and no longer go with the flow of society and their culture. That's what's caused their spiritual poverty and compliancy in the first place.
 2. And white garments that you might be clothed so that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed = The city produced a remarkably soft wool that was raven dark, glossy and from it made a great living.
 - (a) A pagan omen in the city had dead people dressed in white and living people wearing black.
 - (b) In light of this pagan practice, Jesus **Advises** them to buy white garments from Him, because the looms of their city were unable to provide them with proper garments.

- (c) And If they continued down the same road, they will suffer loss when they meet Him which includes being found naked before Christ.
3. And anoint your eyes with eye salve that you may see = This is a call from Jesus to not purchase medicine in the city which wont profit them, but to purchase medicine from Him.
- (a) The city profited extensively from an ointment developed locally from certain materials that were most likely kept secret from rival business. To a city that was treating the short sidedness of others they had lost sight of their own life before Christ.
- (b) Beloved, these passage are terrifying. Jesus is speaking to His bride, His beloved, to Christians, to Saints and to those of His household. They were unaware of how God viewed them and in their busy life, they were moving further and further away from Him.
- (c) Jesus' cure for their short sightedness wasn't to purchase ointment in the city, but to come to Him, in the supernatural and purchase it from Him.
- 4) Jesus wants me to be wealthy, clothed and to have perfect eyesight. Therefore He tells me the truth about my life in this age.
- 5) This isn't the purchasing of the spiritual or Jesus with money, but it's about purchasing that which we can't get on our own. It's about purchasing the grace of God through a rigorous lifestyle of prayer, fasting, Bible study, community living and serving.
- E) **Revelation 3:19** "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent."
- 1) Jesus was training the Church of Laodicea in the same way that He trains us, through judgment. That word scourge *literally means to inflict suffering and pain*.
- 2) Jesus knows that this Church will be deeply saddened on that Day when they stand before Him, if they don't repent. So, He doesn't mind inflicting pain upon our present for the purpose of changing our future.
1. **Hebrews 12:3-11**
2. **Hosea 2:5-7** "...for she said, I will go after my lovers, who give me bread and my water, my wool and my linen, my oil and my drink. Therefore, behold, I will hedge up your way with thorns, and wall her in, so that she cannot find her paths. She will chase her lovers, but not overtake them; yes, she will seek them, but not find them. They she will say, I will go and return to my first husband, for then it was better for me than now."
- 3) The mercy of God is actually hidden in the thorns. What looks like pain, is actually the activity of God in the present for the purpose of changing the future.
- 4) Because Jesus loves us, He doesn't mind disrupting our present if it changes our future. This is what **1st Corinthians 3:5-15** is speaking about when it says some will suffer loss.

- 5) From this reality, we can view His activity in the nations not as an angry God, but a God who burns with jealousy for humans, releasing His judgments to remove those things which hinder love. His judgments aren't to stop love, but to cause love to increase.
 - 6) Trusting Jesus with our lives (salvation) should be no different than trusting His evaluation of us right now. When we see God rightly, we cling to conviction as the greatest gift God gives to humans.
- F) **Revelation 3:20** *"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."*
- 1) Jesus is standing before the leadership of the Church in Laodicea, knocking at the door of the heart and asking for entrance. Though the Church often uses this passage to speak to non-Christians, this isn't the context of this passage.
 - 2) Jesus is not asking for entry into a portion of their lives, or a room in their house, but rather into the entirety of who they are. Because Jesus has opened wide the entirety of His heart towards us, He asks that we also open up the entirety of our hearts towards Him.
 1. **Revelation 4:1** *"After these things I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven. And the first voice which I heard was like a trumpet speaking with me saying, Come up here, and I will show you things which must take place after this."*
 - 3) This knock is on a door called voluntary love and it only opens from the inside out, not the outside in. It's not enough to hear Him knock, many hear Him but refuse to open up. Jesus says *"...if anyone hears My voice AND opens..."*
 - 4) Sharing a meal in ancient times had more meaning than it does today. Sharing a meal then, meant sharing intimacy, confidence and affection. Jesus was chided by the religious leaders for eating with people (**Luke 15:2**). Peter was rebuked, not for preaching to a gentile, but eating with him (**Acts 11:3**). And Paul said that Christians shouldn't even eat with other Christians who are in gross unrepentant sin (**1st Corinthians 5:9-13**).
 - 5) Beloved, Jesus is offering to sit down with one of the most broken, spiritually naked and bankrupt Churches of their day to help them sort through their spiritual crisis before Him.
 - 6) **John 21** tells the story of Jesus in His post-resurrection sitting down to share a meal with Peter in the midst of His greatest hour of personal crisis.
 - 7) Hearing Jesus' voice is good, but you must then in turn open the door in voluntary love in order to receiving healing and be restored.
- G) **Revelation 3:21-22** *"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. He who has an ear to hear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the Churches."*
- 1) The Amen (The Truthful One), The Faithful and True Witness (The Trust Worthy One) and the Beginning of the Creation of God (God) is giving **Assurance** of outlandish reward to the overcomer. And He finishes with His **Appeal** to them that they would move from spiritually poverty to outlandish wealth.