

## **“The Church of the Laodiceans”**

### **Revelation 3:14-22**

Introduction: What will the church be like at the end of the church dispensation? Will they be a lighthouse for the gospel before the second coming of the Lord? Are they a congregation winning thousands of souls to the Lord daily? Unfortunately, as we read about the last church, we see that they are an indifferent, lukewarm, and spiritually malnourished assembly. Apathy and worldliness has crept into their hearts as the fire of God has dwindled down to just a flicker every now and then. Their fervency has been traded for finances and their burden for souls for blindness of their spirit. The Laodiceans have “dropped the ball” when it comes to the Lord’s work and they are a horrible testimony for the cause of Christ. Let us look at their condition and try to avoid this terrible state in our lives.

1. The Announcement v. 14- *“And unto the angel...”*
  - a. A Divine Announcement Revelation 1:11- *“I am Alpha and Omega”*
  - b. A Direct Announcement- *“unto the angel”*
2. The Angel v. 14- *“the angel of”*
  - a. The Meaning of an Angel
    - (1) “angel” (Strong’s)- “a messenger, envoy, one who is sent, a messenger from God”
    - (2) “angel” (Webster’s)- “A minister of the gospel, who is an ambassador of God. Literally, a messenger; one employed to communicate news or information from one person to another at a distance.”
  - b. The Message of an Angel- *“write” Revelation 1:11*- *“write in a book”*
3. The Assembly v. 14- *“the church of the Laodiceans write”*
  - a. The Explanation of the Laodiceans
    - (1) “This city founded by Antiochus II in the middle of the third century before Christ and named after his wife Laodice was situated about forty mile southeast of Philadelphia on the road to Colossae. Under Roman rule Laodicea had become wealthy and had a profitable business arising from the production of wool cloth.” (Walvoord)
    - (2) “Laodicea is a compound word and means ‘the rights of the people’.” (Ironside)
    - (3) “As with some of the previous churches, the Lord adapted His words to something significant about the city in which the assembly was located. In this case, Laodicea was known for its wealth and its manufacture of a special eye salve, as well as of a glossy black wool cloth.” (Wiersbe)
    - (4) “It also was located near Hieropolis, where there were famous hot springs, and Colossae, known for its pure, cold water.” (Wiersbe)
    - (5) “Both the cold water from Colossae and the hot water from Hieropolis would be lukewarm by the time it was piped to Laodicea.” (Wiersbe)

b. The Era of the Laodiceans- A.D. 1900 until the Rapture

Body: While the Lord stands outside the church knocking at the door to come in, the Laodiceans are continuing in their carnal practices. It is hard to recognize the knocking on the door because they are consumed with their wealth, wardrobe, and worldliness. Not even realizing their own condition, the Laodiceans are continuing their religious motions without having the fire of God in their lives. Observe the state that the Laodiceans is in as the Lord tries to woo them back into His bosom.

I. The Overseer of the Church v. 14- *“These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God”*

A. The Trustworthiness of the Overseer- *“These things saith the Amen”* II Corinthians 1:20

1. “The Lord presented Himself as ‘the Amen,’ which is an Old Testament title for God (where the word *truth* is the Hebrew word *amen*).” (Wiersbe)
2. “The Lord was about to tell this church the truth about its spiritual condition; unfortunately, they would not believe His diagnosis.” (Wiersbe)

B. The Truthfulness of the Overseer- *“the faithful and true witness”* Isaiah 65:16, I John 1:9, John 18:37-38, John 14:6

1. “Christ is called the faithful and true Witness in contrast to the church in Laodicea which was neither faithful nor true.” (Walvoord)
2. “He is the faithful witness, which means He will not dilute the truth.” (Phillips)
3. “He is the true witness, which means He will not distort the truth.” (Phillips)

C. The Timeline of the Overseer- *“the beginning of the creation of God”* John 1:3

1. “The beginning of the creation of God does not suggest that Jesus was created, and therefore not eternal God.” (Wiersbe)
2. “The word translated *beginning* means ‘source, origin’.” (Wiersbe)

II. The Occupation of the Church vs. 15-20- *“I know thy works...”*

A. The Condition of their Works vs. 15- *“I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot.”*

1. The Degree of their Labor- *“I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot”*
  - a. The Burning Heart Luke 24:32
  - b. The Cold Heart Matthew 24:12
  - c. The Lukewarm Heart Revelation 3:16

2. The Desire of their Lord- *“I would thou wert cold or hot”*

B. The Consequences of their Works v. 16- *“So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.”*

1. The Slothfulness It Is- *“So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot”*

- a. “The second law of thermodynamics requires that a ‘closed system’ eventually moderates so that no more energy is being produced. Unless something is added from the outside, the system decays and dies. Without added fuel, the hot water in the boiler becomes cool; without electricity, the refrigerant in the freezer becomes warm.” (Wiersbe)
  - b. “The church cannot be a closed system. The Laodicean church was independent, self-satisfied, and secure. But all the while, their spiritual power had been decaying; their material wealth and glowing statistics were but shrouds hiding a rotting corpse.” (Wiersbe)
  - c. “A little girl came home from Sunday school, and her mother asked her to recite the text she had learned. It came out like this, ‘Many are cold and a few are frozen!’” (Phillips)
2. The Sickness It Caused- *“I will spue thee out of my mouth”*
- a. “It is apparent that there is something about the intermediate state of being lukewarm that is utterly obnoxious to God.” (Walvoord)
  - b. “The Lord warns Laodicea that this state of affairs can have only one conclusion. He will spew this church out of His mouth.” (Phillips)
  - c. “It would be hard to find a stronger or more expressive term of revulsion anywhere in the New Testament.” (Phillips)
- C. The Carnality of their Works v. 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”*
1. Their Belief- *“Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing”*
    - a. “Laodicea was a wealthy city and a banking center. Perhaps some of the spirit of the marketplace crept into the church so that their values became twisted.” (Wiersbe)
    - b. “The board at the Laodicean church could proudly show you the latest annual report with its impressive statistics; yet Jesus said He was about to vomit them out of His mouth!” (Wiersbe)
  2. They were Broken- *“and knowest not that thou art wretched”*
  3. They were Blue- *“and miserable”*
  4. They were Broke- *“and poor”* (Compare to Revelation 2:9)
  5. They were Blind- *“and blind”*
    - a. They could not See Self Revelation 3:17
      - (1) “The Laodiceans were ‘blind.’ They could not see reality. They were living in a fool’s paradise, proud of a church that was about to be rejected.” (Wiersbe)
      - (2) “The Apostle Peter teaches that when a believer is not growing in the Lord, his spiritual vision is affected.” (Wiersbe) II Peter 1:5-9
    - b. They could not See the Saviour Revelation 3:20

(1) “These people could not see themselves as they really were. Nor could they see their Lord as He stood outside the door of the church. Nor could they see the open doors of opportunity.” (Wiersbe)

(2) “They were so wrapped up in building their own kingdom that they had become lukewarm in their concern for a lost world.” (Wiersbe)

6. They were Bare- “*and naked*”

D. The Counsel for their Works v. 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.*”

1. Concerning their Riches- “*I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich*” I Peter 1:7

2. Concerning their Raiment- “*and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear*” Revelation 19:8

a. “Like the emperor in Hans Christian Andersen’s story, these Christians thought they were clothed in splendor when they were really naked! To be naked meant to be defeated and humiliated.” (Wiersbe)

b. “Salvation means that Christ’s righteousness is *imputed* to us, put to our account; but sanctification means that His righteousness is *imparted* to us, made a part of our character and conduct.” (Wiersbe)

c. “There is no divine commendation given to this church. Of course, the Laodiceans were busy commending themselves! They thought they were glorifying God, when in reality they were disgracing His name just as though they had been walking around naked.” (Wiersbe)

3. Concerning their Remedy- “*and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see*”

a. “The city of Laodicea was noted for its eye salve, but the kind of medication the saints needed was not available in the apothecary shop.” (Wiersbe)

b. “The eye is one of the body’s most sensitive areas, and only the Great Physician can ‘operate’ on it and make it what it ought to be.” (Wiersbe)

c. “As He did with the man whose account is told in John 9, He might even irritate before He illuminates!” (Wiersbe)

E. The Chastisement because of their Works v. 19- “*As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.*”

1. Concerning the Rebuke- “*As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten*” Proverbs 3:11-12, Hebrews 12:5-6, I Corinthians 11:31-32

2. Concerning the Repentance- “*be zealous therefore, and repent*”

- F. The Communion during their Works v. 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.”*
1. The Standing- *“Behold, I stand at the door, and knock”*
    - a. “What a tremendous view it gives us of the Lord Jesus, the patient, pleading, promising Saviour of men.” (Phillips)
    - b. “There stands the Lord of glory, the altogether lovely One, the chiefest among ten thousand, the one whom angels worship. There He stands, the marks of the nails in His hands, a look of love upon his face.” (Phillips)
    - c. “And this church shrugs its shoulders and offers Him a lukewarm interest at best.” (Phillips)
  2. The Summons- *“if any man hear my voice, and open the door”*
    - a. “But how is Christ to get back into His church?” (Larkin)
    - b. “Does it require the unanimous vote or invitation of the membership?” (Larkin)
  3. The Supper- *“I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me”*
    - a. “Note that when we invite Him in, the supper room becomes a throne room!” (Wiersbe)
    - b. “It is through communion with Christ that we find victory and become overcomers indeed.” (Wiersbe)
- III. The Overcoming of the Church v. 21- *“To him that overcometh...”*
- A. The Position for the Saint- *“To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne”* Revelation 2:26, 5:10, 20:4, Matthew 19:27-28, Luke 22:29-30, I Corinthians 6:2
  - B. The Power of the Saviour- *“even as I also overcame”* Revelation 1:18
  - C. The Place of the Saviour- *“and am set down with my Father in his throne”* Romans 8:34, Ephesians 1:20, Colossians 3:1, Hebrews 1:3
- IV. The Obligation of the Church v. 22- *“He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.”*
- A. The Prerequisites of Hearing- *“He that hath an ear”* Matthew 13:9
  - B. The Purpose of Hearing- *“let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches”* Matthew 11:15

Conclusion: Is there hope for this failing and faltering church? Will they ever recover from their wretched condition? Certainly, the only prospect that this assembly has is to heed the knocking upon the door. They must let Jesus back into His church that they may sup together again. If they do not repent, then their loving Master will chastise them. They must awake out of their slumbering state and return to God if they plan to have future spiritual victories in their lives.