

The Book of Revelation

Study 7

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The Church at **Laodicea**

And to the Angel of the Church in Laodicea write: These things says the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God.

Who then is the Amen? The Hebrew root meaning of the word Amen is “what is firm and true”. God and His Son are truth, very truth. Christ affirmed this when He wanted people to take particular note of what He was about to say to them, in John 1:51 He says “verily verily” which means Amen and Amen or Truly Truly I say unto you. Because the promises of God are yes and Amen to them that believe, those who have been purchased by the blood of Christ will add their Amen through Christ to the glory of God (2 Cor. 1.20). So because the Lord had some strong things to say to this church at Laodicea He wanted to establish again His authority so they knew it was God talking to them and not some false prophet. He tells them He is the Faithful, not one of the Faithful but *the* Faithful and a true witness. This is in contrasted to the church to which this letter was sent, they were not faithful nor were they true to their God so they had to be reminded what truth and faithfulness was they had lost their faithfulness when taking on board the Devils programmes and not those of Christ.

The sad thing about this is the Pastors and Leaders did not wake up one morning and agree to take the church they were responsible for down a road that would ultimately make Jesus sick! Little by little the deception of Satan began to infiltrate into the life of the church, and at each stage the people took the things that were not of God and took them to heart and so became contaminated. If you were to bring this to their attention they would probably not recognise it, Satan blinded their eyes to the good things of God and His righteousness and they opened their hearts to ungodly ways. Ask them about it and they would be very indignant and very upset at the question! That’s the subtlety of Satan, he puts into our minds the belief that everything is acceptable. Talk to many of the Pastors and Leaders of our churches today, you will find they are busy with their yearly church programmes, organising this and that to keep the people happy, to show the town or city they live in that their church can keep up with the rest and best of them, but if Jesus was to visit their church one Sunday morning would they offer Him their pulpit in the first place and would they allow the set programme to be interrupted?.

Furthermore Jesus declares Himself to be the *Beginning of the creation of God*. This phrase is an unfortunate render. It could be read that Jesus, God’s Son was God’s first creation, not so. It simply means, the One who began creating all things with God in the very beginning. He is an uncreated and eternal being. He is the First and the Last, He is the Alpha and Omega, He is the Beginning and the End. Paul speaks of Christ as the Firstborn of all creation, (Col. 1:15) John wrote of God, in his first chapter, “In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God.” So Jesus, being the Amen has the right to know all about these

churches and what went on in them. He says to the Laodicean church **I know** your works that you are neither hot nor cold.

I would that you were cold or hot, so then because you are lukewarm and neither cold nor hot, I will spue you out of my mouth.

The waters of Pamukkale

Many mineral springs are connected to a big underground fault that spread for miles around Laodicea. The wonder of this fault resulted in many hot springs of different temperatures. The main spring of hot water is managed by the Turizm Motel and in their large swimming pool there are antique columns which the swimmers swim round. There is another spring that was opened up by an earthquake in the nineteenth century. The temperature of both these springs is about 35°C. The waters leave its dredges on a platform about 150m high and several miles long. The waters contain large amounts of Carbon dioxide, calcium and lime compounds which come up from deep underground and as the waters cascade down the mountain they leave white dregs on the soil. The continual flowing of these waters in the form of small cascades has resulted in canals of limestone and the chemical compounds which form saucer-like 'cups' which hold enough water to paddle or bathe in. My wife and I have enjoyed a great afternoon in such a 'cup' with room enough for both of us. The waters of Pamukkale are clear, soft, a little bitter but drinkable, they were supposed to contain healing properties which were attributed to the gods, so the city acquired a holy status supported by the number of churches and temples being built. Another quality of the waters at Pamukkale is that it cleans dirt, bleaches wool and fixes the colour of dyes. Wool that has been dyed in alizarin turns to purple after being washed in Pamukkale water. History tells us that the city became rich and prosperous in antique times all because of this precious water!

Also from the same area, a spring of water comes up with plenty of cold fresh clear, clean water taking much the same route as the hot springs. The two waters intermingled in Laodicea to form the lukewarm salty emetic mixture that Jesus was referring to when He talks about spewing them out of His mouth, the Laodicean church knew exactly what Jesus was talking about, He did not leave them in any doubt.

The condition of the Laodicean church was extremely unhealthy. The members had lost their zeal and commitment for the cause of Christ. Their attitude was one of boredom, nauseating, indifference and self-satisfaction. In that state they were of no use to God at all and Jesus said the church at Laodicea made Him sick.

When we consider that God the Father *"did not spare His only son but delivered Him up for us all"* (Rom.8.32) and Jesus the only Son of God *"came to give His life a ransom for many"* (Mark 10:45). *He who had left His home in Glory to present Himself a living sacrifice, Holy and acceptable to God* (Romans 12:1) He who endured all including the cross for our sakes and to take away the sins of the world has the fullest justification in announcing: *"He who does not take up his cross and follow me is not worthy of me.* (Mathew 10.38) Because of the lukewarmness of the church at Laodicea they were not worthy of the Lord with whose name they were associated. Their Godly walk, self-renunciation, their cross bearing had all been driven out by complacency. They got to a spiritual condition that made God sick! Much like the church in Sardis they took the Lord for granted, but He will not tolerate that, He will remove your name from His book of life and that is a very dangerous position to be in.

Verse 17

Because you say I am rich and increased with goods and have need of nothing, knowest not that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked.

These are pretty strong words that Jesus used to highlight the churches spiritual condition. The church thought they were doing well and to hear Jesus telling them that He thought they were wretched, miserable, poor and blind was not what they wanted to here. It is very easy for a church; even a thriving church to become Religious, Religion causes us to operate in our own strength and to put on an act in front of others, we devise programmes that we can manage on our own instead of stepping out in faith and reliance on the Holy Spirit, our programmes keep us safe and secure in what we know. We ignore our own emptiness and our need to rely on God. We see some degree of manmade success and think all is well. As we get used to our own Religion we enter a form of deception that makes us lukewarm and we hardly notice it

This church was closing their hearts to the fact that *every good and perfect gift comes from above* (James 1.17) The Laodiceans had been blessed by God, but their pride in their achievements, their self-preoccupation and ingratitude had severed their relationship with God which resulted in blindness and nakedness. The condition of this church in the eyes of Almighty God was the complete opposite to what they had persuaded themselves to believe it was. God said they were blind they were wretched, they were poor, they were naked. In the **knowing** of this church and its works God saw it was passed redemption they had chosen and had chosen the wrong way and their actual spiritual state was nothing like they thought it was.

This church that believed itself to be rich and increased with this worlds goods which would, in the end prove to be counterfeit and wanting for nothing, could not understand the Lord's counsel to buy from Jesus gold tried in the fire. We note this was a counsel not an invitation; there was no alternative as far as Jesus was concerned, that they might be rich, not in this worlds goods but rich in imperishable wealth towards God.

Mathew 6. 19

Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth where moth and rust does corrupt and where thieves break through and steal. But lay up for yourselves treasure in Heaven.

Philippians 3. 7

But what things were gain to me I counted loss for Christ. Yes doubtless I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.

Swop your wretchedness and nakedness for a white garment of Righteousness.

In the light of eternity all else is worthless, and because of the infinite cost at Calvary paid in full by Jesus, our nakedness and wretchedness can be replaced with a white garment recognised by all in Heaven that we are one of His and have His mark on our foreheads.

The church at Laodicea was exalted to buy *white raiment that you may be clothed that the shame of your nakedness does not appear*. The white garment refers to Righteousness which comes exclusively through our acceptance of the shed blood of Jesus at the cross. Note that it was the white garment of Righteousness that covers our shame and nakedness and without that we are still in shame and miserable, poor and blind. God sees and accepts us through the shed blood of His precious Son Jesus.

Verse 18

I counsel you to buy of me gold tried in the fire that you may be rich and white raiment that you may be clothed and that the shame of your nakedness does not appear, and anoint your eyes with eye salve that you may see.

God employs them to buy gold tried and tested, that authentic wealth proved by the Lord of heaven and earth. They were to anoint their eyes with the eye salve of the Holy Spirit which would show them the truth and lead them in the right path. The Laodicean church would know about eye salve too because it was made in Laodicea. All this was an encouragement to get themselves ready to meet their God. Jesus shows them what they must do, the tools they must use, and what garments to wear so He can reignite their passion for God again.

Verse 19

As many as I love I rebuke and chasten be zealous therefore and repent.

This verse implies a remnant but God can do so much with the remnant. When all seems lost and failure seems inevitable, when the crowd has gone its own way often following each other in ever decreasing circles, there remains a remnant. A faithful few, and there always appears to be a few, but these are the ones who do not give up, do not give in. These are the overcomers, those that are patient in tribulation, who fight the good fight of faith, press in to God when life gets dark. It is these who receive special attention from the Lord. He first says He loves them, and because He loves them He corrects them to bring them in line with His Word. So He encourages them to continue to be zealous and repent and keep short accounts with Jesus.

Verse 20

Behold I stand at the door and knock if any man here My voice and open the door I will come in to him and sup with him and he with Me.

We always apply this verse to the sinner. I remember as a young man going out with many others from the church into the villages to take meetings in the open air. At some point the Pastor would ask us to shout out scripture texts (they were called gospel shots) and this one was high on the list...*Behold I stand at the door and knock...* We would shout out hoping and praying people within ear shot would take notice. We seem to forget that Jesus was standing outside the door of the church when He said this. A church that needed Him greatly but they were quite content with their own way of life and ignored Him, so the great Saviour of the world, who came to die for us was reduced to standing outside the door of His church in Laodicea and had to call to His people from the other side of the door.

He says that if any man hears My voice, there is so much religious noise going on in His Churches today that Jesus recognises it is difficult to hear what He has to say. That is why He says he who has an ear to hear let him hear what the Spirit says, It is only those who *want* to hear what Jesus has to say will hear His voice, the others...well?

John 18:37 says everyone who is of truth hears My voice.

In these last days of which we are studying we cannot afford to be complacent with our time or allegiance like the Laodicean church was. It is only *those who endure to the end shall be saved.*

2 Tim. 2:12 says

If we suffer, (or endure) we shall also reign with Him.

Phil. 3:14

Paul says; *I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.*

To the believer and his status in Christ is the promise that to him who overcomes that he will sit with God on His throne where He who once died on the Cross for our sins and has been raised from the dead, now sits with the Father in His throne.

We have studied the seven churches and we now know that these churches in Asia Minor are typical of the church age we are living in right now. We should all, as Christians seek after God not to be found wanting before Him. The Pastors of our churches should be diligent with the Word of God to teach and disciple their congregations to be ready for the Rapture which will come upon us in the twinkling of an eye. And because we do not know when that great event will come upon us we should be prepared as though it might happen today! For the congregations, we should encourage and pray for our Pastors, pray and uphold them because to preach on this subject is not easy at all. One of the greatest blessings you can be to your Pastor is to encourage him, thank him for his efforts to help you understand Revelations, talk about the subject, swop notes over coffee, share notes in your house groups, don't look for mistakes you may not agree with all that is written, but be clear in your own mind of the things about these seven churches. As we do our best to uncover the mysteries of the rest of the book pray one with the other that understanding will come.

Thank you very much for your interest so far may God bless us as we go further into the Word of God.

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Be blessed
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