

# LAODICEA: THE SEVEN CHURCHES

## The City:

- Wealthy to the point they passed on government disaster relief following an earthquake in A.D. 60. They fully recovered. Tacitus, the Roman historian, inferred it was rare to see a city rich enough to rebuild itself
- It was a banking and commercial trade center. They were not lacking in gold.
- They were known for their black wool.
- It was a center for medical studies. Known for their therapeutic eye powder.
- Through a complex system of aqueducts, water was piped to Laodicea from the two nearest cities: Hierapolis, to the north, was home to Hot Springs with therapeutic mineral waters. In the south, the city of Colossae (as in Colossians) enjoyed the refreshing, cool waters of the Lycus River. Unfortunately, the water would have been lukewarm by the time it reached Laodicea. That's the one basic need Laodicea couldn't offer its residence - cold water. Warm water would have to do.

## The History:

- It is mentioned in [Colossians 4:12-16](#), not only that Epaphras had "worked hard" for them.
- We're not sure. When both Jews and Greeks throughout Asia heard the word in Ephesus ([Acts 19:10](#)).
- Did Jews from Asia ([Acts 2:9](#)) carry the word back home?

## Laodicea:

[vs. 14](#) And to the angel of the church in Laodicea write: The words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of God's creation.

- "So it is" or "Let it be".
- You'll find no issue with Jesus' faithfulness or a lack of zeal when He acted as a witness to God.
- The Father is also called the beginning in [1:8](#) and [21:6](#). Some translate it the "ruler" of God's creation or the "origin" of God's creation. Jesus is preeminent and the reason behind creation. See also [Colossians 1:15-18](#); [Hebrews 12:1-2](#); [John 1:1-3](#).

[vs. 15-16](#) I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were either cold or hot! So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth.

- We hear of God's jealousy. We hear of His wrath. Here's an image that stings. No one likes their water lukewarm (unless you're my wife - weirdo).
- Does "cold" equate to a dead faith and "hot" to a zealous faith? Or, is He saying that they're useless? It may be the latter, but there are truths to both approaches. It's worse to have known the Lord and then turn away than to have never known Him. It's true that faith is supposed to be good and beneficial. Faith without works, James wrote, is useless. What can you do with lukewarm? It's not refreshing to drink like cold water? It's not good like a hot meal. Or it doesn't have healing benefits like hot springs. It's useless.
- Last week we discussed the danger of putting on a front like you're something when you're not. Acting like we're alive when we're dead. However, some people live as though they're barely alive. They don't have enough energy to act alive, that would be too much. They don't have the energy to deal with the attention if they acted dead. So, they just kind of exist. This one scares me because, again, it hits close to home. Perhaps more than any of them. Do you ever feel like you're just going through the motions?
  - Do you talk bible with your spouse or friends? When that happens - are you the one bringing it up? Do you like talking about God's word? Do you study at all? Do you pray with your children? Is talking bible with your kids uncomfortable (for them or for you)?
  - How would wealth affect your reliance on God? Do you need God today? How?
  - What brings you joy and happiness in your life?

- What do you get excited about? What do you like to talk about? What are you beefed up on?
- What impact will lukewarmness have on your family? What does that look like? How does that sit with you? Do you have a lukewarm marriage? Is your relationship with your children lukewarm? If so, does that bother you?

**vs. 17** For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked.

- Satan doesn't need you to identify as atheist or agnostic. He doesn't require the extremes. No, he just needs you to feel like you're okay. Christ can't do that - so He speaks up. He speaks to the real issue. **Pride.** The proud don't do well with such accusations. I'm rich. Tell me you disagree with my financial advice. Say you'd go about it a little differently. But, call me poor and the fight is on. That town was so wealthy - they didn't need anyone's help. Jesus says, "You can't even help yourself! You think you're rich with all your gold, but you're poor. Everyone pats you on your back because of your eye supply to the world, but you're as blind as a bat. How ironic, walking around naked while you supply everyone else with wool clothing. It's not easy being told you're incompetent. Yikes. Pride. We've got to knock those walls down.

**vs. 18** I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined by fire, so that you may be rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself and the shame of your nakedness may not be seen, and salve to anoint your eyes, so that you may see.

- You know you can't buy righteousness. Read **Isaiah 55:1-2**. What is He saying?
- He's saying that they need to do whatever to attain these items. Not gold that perishes. Heavenly treasure. Not black garments. Clothed in Christ and purity. Not physical eye medicine. Open their eyes and truly see. It's all in the spiritual sense.

**vs. 19** Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent.

- **Hebrews 12:7-13**. There's something wrong with the parent who won't discipline their child. There's something missing. God says, "Its love." People don't think that. They think what they're doing is lovely, wise, etc. It's not. Its harmful. Neglectful.
- "Okay, but what do we do! Don't tell me everything that's wrong without helping me!" Listen, I don't think our obstacle is that we don't know what to do. Jesus seemed to think His words were sufficient. "You can't just tell me to be zealous!" Are you sure? Jesus did.
- However, there's a real question in there. "What do I do? How do I do it?" I would hope that some at Laodicea would be pricked in the heart and they would lock arms with some others who wish to do the same.
  - You need to lock arms with someone who is determined to be zealous. You need to seek out those who are zealous. You need to repent - in other words - change your mind and actually make changes. You have to take note of what you do, your routine, your priorities, and then commit to what is better and more important. You have to trust God in His instruction. You have to sacrifice what is worldly to appreciate the kingdom. You've got to invest. Listen, there's no short cut to this. The real problem is that we've lost the desire to change. We're comfortable blending in with the world instead of being transformed into the image of Christ.

**vs. 20-22** Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with Me. The one who conquers, I will grant him to sit with Me on My throne, as I also conquered and sat down with My Father on His throne. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

- Jesus wants to be with you. He wants a relationship with you. He wants to dine with you. But He doesn't kick the door down and force His way in. No, the handle on this door is only located from inside. He knocks and patiently waits your answer. But how long does He continue to knock? How long does He offer friendship and victory by His side? I would assume the most terrifying sound is the silence at the door to your heart. The point when Jesus ceases to knock.