

Session 8 Jesus' Message to the Church of Laodicea (Rev. 3:14-22)

I. THE PRIMARY MESSAGE: THE CALL TO OVERCOME BEING SPIRITUALLY LUKEWARM

- A. Jesus promised the church of Laodicea deep fellowship and honor now and in the age to come. He required that they repent of their lukewarmness in their relationship with Him. Their problem was spiritual blindness and pride, and they were too easily contented with their financial blessing.

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...¹⁶you are lukewarm...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...¹⁹As many as I love, I rebuke...²⁰Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone...opens the door, I will come...and dine with him...²¹To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne...” (Rev. 3:14-21)

- B. Laodicea was a center for banking, manufacturing clothing (soft wool), and medicine. A famous school of medicine developed a treatment to help cure eye diseases. Because the city lacked an adequate water supply, they built an aqueduct to bring them water from neighboring Hierapolis (known for its hot springs) and Colossae (known for its cold springs).

II. JESUS' REVELATION OF HIMSELF

- A. This description reveals aspects of Jesus' personality and ministry.

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

- B. ***The Amen***: *Amen* means *to be true*. Jesus is “the Amen” since all His promises are true (2 Cor. 1:20). *Amen* is also translated as, “Truly, truly, I say to you.” The “God of truth” (Isa. 65:17) is literally “the God of Amen.” As “The Amen,” Jesus lives in agreement with His Father. He requires that we agree with Him to release the certainty of His blessings and promises.

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 (3:7). Jesus was about to tell them the truth in both positive and negative ways. He revealed great promises in 3:18-21 along with their spiritual problems in 3:17-18. He never exaggerates, flatters, or unjustly criticizes.

- D. ***The Beginning of creation***: He is the beginning or the “first” cause of creation. In other words, all the power and reason for creation “begins” with Him (Jn. 1:3; Col. 1:16-18; Rev. 1:11).

1. Some translate the “Beginning” of creation as the “Originator” of creation (Berean Study Bible), the “Ruler” of creation (NIV), or the “Source” of creation (Contemporary Bible).
2. Jesus is the uncreated God like the Father. There was never a time He did not exist. Thus, the creator of the earth and the One with all authority over the earth was speaking to them.

III. CORRECTION FOR COMPROMISE

- A. In love, Jesus disciplined His people so that they might be rich in God.
¹⁵“...you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. ¹⁶so because you are lukewarm... 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...¹⁹As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent. (Rev. 3:15-19)
- B. *As many as I love, I rebuke*: Jesus rebukes and disciplines His people to free them from passivity. Jesus spoke with tender love for them. Jesus jealously calls us to wholehearted obedience. He zealously insists on that which deepens our relationship with Him and results in our greatness.
¹²For whom the Lord loves He corrects, just as a father the son in whom he delights. (Prov. 3:12)
⁵Do you think the Scripture says in vain, “The Spirit...in us yearns jealously?” (Jas. 4:5)
- C. *I wish you were cold or hot*: Those who are spiritually cold are in a better position to see their great need. One who feels the emptiness of a cold heart often searches desperately for answers.
- D. *I will vomit you out of My mouth*: Jesus' heart was sick (His stomach hurt) with concern over them and what they were losing in their relationship with Him. He is not “repulsed” by the people who are lukewarm but feels anguish for them because of His love and investment in them. The Greek word *emew* translated “to vomit” is commonly translated as “to spit out” (ESV, NIV). He does not despise His people. He boldly declared His love (3:19) and desire that they rule with Him (3:21).
1. God feels the pain of those He disciplines while still considering them as His dearly beloved.
⁹In all their affliction He was afflicted...in His love...He redeemed them... (Isa. 63:9)
⁷I have given the dearly beloved of My soul into the hand of her enemies. (Jer. 12:7)
 2. The Holy Spirit can feel grieved or sick at heart over the lives of believers.
³⁰And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God. (Eph. 4:30)
- E. *“I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing”*: They misinterpreted God's financial blessing on their church as His approval of their spiritual life and lack of hunger for Him.
- F. *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 believer.
1. *Wretched*: This Greek word means “calloused or hardened,” that is, to be spiritually dull.
 2. *Miserable*: They were spiritually bored and without an appetite for the Word and prayer.
 3. *Poor*: Being spiritually poor and deficient is not the same as being “poor in spirit” (Mt. 5:3).
 4. *Blind*: Being spiritual blind includes not seeing the truth about God or one's own condition.
 5. *Naked*: Being spiritually naked speaks of believers who will lack being rewarded with heavenly garments in the age to come— ones that express how they loved Jesus in this age.

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

- A. Jesus gave three exhortations with promises that have temporal and eternal applications.

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...¹⁹Therefore be zealous and repent. (Rev. 3:18-19)

- B. ***I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire:*** The gold of a deep relationship with Jesus makes us rich in this age by tenderizing our heart to feel more love from Him and for Him.

1. Jesus exhorts us to “buy gold” or to engage in the God-ordained process of acquiring a deep relationship with God. In “buying” gold, we do not “earn” it, but we invest ourselves in a costly way to position ourselves to receive “gold.” Isaiah called the people “to buy food” by listening or being attentive to the Spirit, then responding to what we hear (55:1-3).

¹“Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you who have no money...buy and eat. Yes, come, buy wine and milk without money ²...Listen carefully to Me...and let your soul delight in abundance. ³Incline your ear, and come to Me. Hear, and your soul shall live... (Isa. 55:1-3)

2. Acquiring gold and “becoming rich” refers to what happens in our heart in this age. It includes “gold” in context to receiving a heavenly treasure, crown, garments, etc.

¹²If anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones... (1 Cor. 3:12)

⁷That the genuineness of your faith, being 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)

3. Purified gold does not come easy. People mine for gold and then put it in the fire to refine it. Gold refined by fire involves a costly and painful process to remove the dross.

²He is like a refiner's fire...³He will purify the sons...as gold and silver that they may offer...an offering in righteousness. (Mal. 3:2-3)

- C. ***I counsel you to buy white garments:*** Jesus exhorted us “to buy” or acquire garments by righteous living that will result in being rewarded with heavenly garments (Rev. 19:8). Being spiritually naked in the age to come speaks of those believers who will lack being rewarded with heavenly garments. Jesus warns of the shame of lacking garment because it reveals a lack of love for Him in this age.

⁸To her it was granted to be arrayed in fine...the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. (Rev. 19:8)

¹⁵Blessed is he who...keeps his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame. (Rev. 16:15)

- D. ***Anoint your eyes with eye salve:*** People in Laodicea put eye salve (medicine) on their eyes to be cured of eye diseases. Laodicea’s famous medical school exported a “powder” used as an eye salve. God’s people must take action in the grace of God to cure their spiritually sick eyes. Only the Spirit can give us revelation of Jesus as we feed on the Word (Eph. 1:17).

V. PROMISE FOR OVERCOMERS: INTIMACY AND AUTHORITY

- A. Jesus beckons us to draw near to Him and promises great rewards for those who respond.

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. (Rev. 3:20-21)

- B. ***I stand at the door and knock***: Jesus can open all doors (Rev. 3:7-8) except the door of our heart. Jesus will not violate our free will. When we neglect to invest the time and energy to open our heart to Him, we are not loved less by Jesus, but we minimize our ability to enjoy relating to Him, to receive greater understanding of Him, to enjoy godly fellowship, and to receive eternal rewards.

- C. ***If anyone opens the door***: Jesus invites all individuals who hear. You have not gone too far. There is still hope and opportunity for any believer to recover the sensitivity and tenderness that was lost.

- D. ***I dine with him, and he with Me***: To eat together speaks of deep fellowship as the Spirit tenderizes our heart. Jesus promises to manifest Himself in a greater way to those who love and obey Him.

²¹He who...keeps them [God's commands], it is he who loves Me...I will love him and manifest Myself to him...²³If anyone loves Me... We will come to him and make Our home with him. (Jn. 14:21-23)

1. The eternal application of this refers to the Marriage Supper of the Lamb (Rev. 3:20; 19:9; cf. Lk. 22:16, 29, 30; Mt. 26:29; Mk. 14:25).

2. He longs for His people to feast with Him as He makes them lovesick at His banqueting table (Song 2:4-5)

⁴He brought me to the banqueting house, and His banner over me was love. ⁵Sustain me with cakes of raisins, refresh me with apples, for I am lovesick. (Song 2:4-5)

- E. ***I will grant to sit with Me on My throne***: All believers are offered the opportunity to rule with Jesus in the Millennium (Rev. 5:10; 11:15; 20:4).

¹⁰“And have made us kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign on the earth.” (Rev. 5:10)

⁶...they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years. (Rev. 20:6)

1. Jesus promised the apostles that they would eat and drink with Him and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel (Mt. 19:28; Lk. 22:29-30).

²⁸“...when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. (Mt. 19:28)

⁹I 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)

2. Eating and ruling with Jesus are regularly brought together and express intimacy with Him.