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REVELATION

Laodicea – The Lukewarm Church

Revelation 3:14-22

Rev 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: 15 “I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. 16 So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth. 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—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. 19 As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent. 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. 21 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. 22 “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.” ’ ’ ”

I. The Condition of Our Soul

a. Psalm 23:3 - He restores my soul; - thinking about the soul more

i. What is the soul?

1. ***Gen 1:7 And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.***
2. ***Ecc 12:7 "And the dust returns to the ground it came from, and the spirit returns to God who gave it."***
3. ***Psalm 103:1 "Praise the Lord, my soul; all my inmost being, praise his holy name."***

ii. The soul is what makes you – you

iii. Not the body, not the flesh – it is the part that reasons, that contemplates life, that is unique to every other created thing on this earth

1. It is the part of you that God is primarily concerned about yet we think so little about it
2. Instead, we are wrapped up in the superficial, the temporal – that which is passing away

iv. How’s your soul? Not “How’s everybody doing this morning!” but look beyond your physical condition – into as the Psalmist puts the inner most being – how are you doing there?

1. Finding the answer isn’t always that easy

II. Laodicea

a. The culture that surrounded this church

i. One of the richest commercial centers in the world

1. Extravagant black clothing and carpets made from a special breed of sheep raised in that region
 - a. highly prized and widely exported
 - b. One of the city's major sources of wealth
- ii. Laodicea was also famous in the ancient world for its medical school, one that was known for producing a world-renowned eye ointment called Phrygian powder
- b. As one commentator points out – *“The entire city of Laodicea prided itself on its self-sufficiency.”*
 - i. *After earthquakes caused considerable damage in Laodicea, Roman authorities in the larger region offered to help with repair and restoration. But Laodicea refused the help and boasted that it had recovered entirely through its own resources and powers.*
- c. Despite their self-sufficiency – Laodicea lacked one very important thing – a reliable water source
 - i. Water had to be piped in from long distances via aqueducts (which you can still see today), by the time the water got there it was lukewarm, full of debris and unwanted minerals that caused it to have an unpleasant taste and smell – known to make people nauseous
 1. Mineral deposits are still visible in ruins of the aqueducts today.
 - ii. To the north, Hierapolis was known for its hot springs - healing and relaxation.
 - iii. To the east, Colossae had access to cold and pure mountain water

III. The Character of Christ

- a. ***‘These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God:***
 - i. The Amen -
 1. Truly – it is the truth – most assuredly – verily, verily – truly, truly
 2. Paul would often close statements with this – ***Rom 1: 25 who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.***
 - ii. In a world of conflicting messages and stories about who we are and why we are here and what we should be doing – The Amen!
- b. The Faithful and True Witness
 - i. Martyr – These things says – He is speaking words that are true!
- c. The Beginning (ruler) of the creation of God
 - i. He is the author and authority over all of creation – this is His credentials – why can I be trusted? I created it all and it all belongs to Me
 - ii. Picture we have before us – the central claim of scripture – There is a Creator and He has made Himself known – His name is Jesus
 1. Continues to communicate this message to the world

IV. The Culture, the Character of Christ, and Now the Condition of the Church

- a. ***15 “I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. 16 So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth.***
 - i. There is so much sensationalism in media today
 1. Wall Street in Freefall! Investors Panic as Market Crashes! – actual story
Dow Jones Drops 2% Amid Economic Concerns
 2. Monster Storm Set to Obliterate the East Coast! Actual story - Severe Storm Forecasted for Eastern U.S. This Weekend

3. Hollywood Star's SHOCKING Secret Revealed! – they're on a keto diet
 - a. Sensationalism sells – attempt to cut through the noise
- ii. There are times that it seems that Jesus is sensationalizing things
 1. If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away.
 2. Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you.
 3. It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.
 4. Anyone who does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even their own life—cannot be my disciple.
 5. Many of Jesus' words to the Pharisee's make you blush – whitewashed tombs filled with dead men's bones, offspring of snakes, children of the devil
 - a. These words are not over reactions – Jesus isn't overstating things
 - b. He is calling our attention to the seriousness of the matter – just as He is doing here
- b. One of the most misunderstand verses in the Bible
 - i. Many read this as “pick a side” – be either hot (passionate about Christ) or cold (reject Him) – but don't sit on the fence or He will vomit you out of His mouth
 1. He will reject you – you better keep the fire burning or your gone!
 - ii. Hot and cold are not two extremes in our relationship with Christ
 1. I know your works – Hot has a purpose (cook, clean, healing, relaxation) and cold has a purpose (refreshment, preserves)
 - a. You coffee drinkers know this – we order either a hot or iced coffee – you don't order a lukewarm caramel macchiato
 2. Lukewarm is the temperature of the room – it sat, wasn't used, a became the temperature of its environment – now it is useless
 - iii. This is what Jesus is concerned about
 1. His church conforming to the temperature of the world – having no effect, just existing
 2. Every accusation – everything He had against these churches – came down to cultural conformity
 - a. You are disinterested in Me just like the world, you've adopted the worlds sexual ethics, you water down the gospel to make it more comfortable, less offensive, you live lives of hypocrisy – thinking you are alive but you are dead
 - b. There was still good to be found in these churches – ways they were reflecting Christ
- c. Except for the church in Laodicea
 - i. You could not tell where the world ended, and this church started
 1. Religious activity, ceremonies, prayers, worship – they were going through the motions
 2. But they were not different where it mattered
 - ii. This was a gathering of the religious and not the redeemed

V. You Do Not Know?

- a. Verse 17 – Because “you say” – this is the story you tell yourself
 - i. I am rich – trust in my possessions, place confidence in all that I have acquired
 - ii. Have become wealthy – self-made, you did it, you worked for it and you earned it

- iii. You have need of nothing – doesn't mean they are satisfied – I would argue their lives were marked by greed, always wanting something more
 - 1. But ignoring what God had to offer
- b. This isn't unusual in the world – this is the status quo
 - i. But this was a gathering of people professing to be followers of Jesus
 - ii. Trusting in their wealth, trusting in their efforts – believing the stories they tell themselves – we don't need anything
- c. But the voice of the Amen, the faithful and true witness has something else to say
 - i. And His message is sobering – You Do Not Know
 - ii. Scarier than any hell fire and brimstone message – You are fooling yourselves
 - 1. ***Matt 7:13 "Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. 14 Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it."***
 - 2. ***Matt 7:21 "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. 22 Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' 23 And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'"***
- iii. You do not know the condition of your soul – you do not see yourself for who you really are
 - 1. Wretched – suffering, distressed, afflicted
 - a. Paul knew it! O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!
 - 2. Miserable – pitiful, pathetic – one to be pitied – evoking compassion but now - inadequate, or laughably weak.
 - 3. Poor – needy
 - 4. Blind – you think you perceive things rightly but you do not
 - 5. Naked – vulnerable, exposed, defenseless
 - a. Heb 4: 13 And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.
- iv. You are not who your wealth and possessions say you are

VI. The Lukewarm Church

- a. Is this not the American Church?
 - i. We go to church but we are not part of the church, we want to be saved from the consequences of sin not sin itself, love only those who love us back, driven by guilt not by the Spirit of God
 - ii. We raise our hands in worship but not in gratitude, not in thanksgiving, not in praise – but like a toddler begging for more
 - 1. We say we want more of God but really we want an experience, we want a feeling, we want our blessing, our miracle
 - a. We ask so that we may spend it on our own pleasures
 - 2. How often do we ask for more of His Spirit or more of Him yet we won't allow Him to have any of us
 - a. Praying more of You but unwilling to say less of me
 - b. What are we really asking for

3. *Isa 29:13 Therefore the Lord said: "Inasmuch as these people draw near with their mouths And honor Me with their lips, But have removed their hearts far from Me*
- iii. *"It is not scientific doubt, not atheism, not pantheism, not agnosticism, that in our day and in this land is likely to quench the light of the gospel. It is a proud, sensuous, selfish, luxurious, church-going, hollow-hearted prosperity." Frederic Huntington said that in 1890*
- b. Invitation
 - i. Jesus says buy from Me! There's nothing wrong with desiring fulfillment, desiring satisfaction – wanting a life that has meaning and purpose – we all know we were created for more than the world is peddling
 - ii. Jesus invites us to set our sights higher than the trivial things of this world
 1. Gold refined in the fire – things that are lasting, things that are eternal
 2. White garments – forgiveness, His righteousness
 3. Eye ointment – to see things for what they really are
 - a. These are the things are souls desperately need
 - c. Moments where we get to see through the lies we have told ourselves and hear the truth coming from the source of truth
 - i. Because He loves us – I stand at the door and knock – you hear my voice, will you let me in?

VII. Overcome

- a. To him who has victory, to him who overcomes, to him who conquers
 - i. Let me sit with you and your table and you will sit with Me on My throne
 - ii. I will make you a pillar in the temple of My God, I will write on you the name of my God, the New Jerusalem, and My name
 - iii. I will confess your name before the Father, I will give you the tree of life to eat from in the paradise of God
- b. How do I have victory?
 - i. The foundation of our victory is Christ's victory over sin, tribulation, and death
 1. ***John 16:33 These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.***
 - ii. We share in that victory not by works - but by faith (trust)
 1. ***1 John 5:4 For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith.***
- c. Revelation speaks of the past, present, and future implications of overcoming - which is the same way many of the New Testament authors write about our victory over sin.
 - i. We have overcome the penalty of sin, we are overcoming the power of sin, and one day we will overcome the presence of sin
 - ii. All through the Faithful and True Witness