

*We exist to make disciples who delight in God and make Him known
by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.*

The Dying Church **Revelation 3:14-22**

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PowerPoint Presentation included: None

SermonAudio Blurb:

I. Introduction.

A. Read 3:14-22.

B. Laodicea:

1. Laodicea was the chief city of Phrygia in the Lycus valley, strategically located where three highways converged
 - a. It was thereby a highly commercial and wealthy city. It was a city of wealthy bankers and financiers.
 - b. The many millionaires combined to build theaters, a huge stadium, lavish public baths, and fabulous shopping centers.
2. An example of the extreme wealth of the city is in A.D. 60 there was a great earthquake that destroyed the city along with others around it.
 - a. The Roman government offered to give financial aid to help it rebuild.
 - b. Though the other cities took the aid, Laodicea turned it down, for their wealth was easily sufficient to have them rebuild the entire city without feeling the cost.
 - c. Along with that fact, this city also helped the other cities rebuild, all out of its own wealth.
3. In addition to being a banking center, it was a manufacturing center for a special type of soft, black woolen garments and medicinal eye salve and powders. (3:17-18).
4. It too, like Philadelphia, was designed to be a missionary city to spread the Greek culture to the surrounding areas.
 - a. The difference is that though Philadelphia succeeded, Laodicea failed miserably.

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- b. It is an interesting parallel between these two cities. One succeeds both secularly and spiritually while the other failed. One is tempted to think that there was a character issue in the people themselves that helped create the two different situations.
- C. Jesus' self-description.
- 1. The letter starts out the same as the others, with specific terms that Jesus attaches to Himself and their meaning naturally overlap with one another.
 - 2. "The Amen."
 - a. Notice that it is actually not a title, but a name for Jesus.
 - b. There is a meaning within this name, just as other names are attributed to Him. Example would be "Emmanuel."
 - c. What does it mean?
 - (1) First, it is a statement of deity once again—Isaiah 65:16 (God of truth, literally, of Amen).
 - (2) Second, it means that which is fixed, true or unchangeable, established and trustworthy.
 - (3) What purpose might be present by using this term for this church?
 - (a) Here, we find Jesus looking at a church that is messed up, though it thinks it is fine and He is about to speak truth into their situation.
 - (b) It also speaks of the certainty of what He says is true and that it shall be accomplished. This is both a blessing and a warning.
 - (c) As used of Christ, it points to Him as the end, the finality and certainty of all things. With Him one needs no substitutes, no subtractions or additions. With Jesus there is no further search needed for truth for in Him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (Colossians 2:3).
 - 3. "Faithful and True Witness."
 - a. This clause actually is modifying/explaining the "Amen."
 - b. But it also is contrasting itself with what is said later in vs. 17.

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- c. It goes again to the idea of the final judgment as well, where all things shall be made plain.
 - (1) Hebrews 4:12-13.
 - (2) Psalm 33:13-15.
 - (3) Romans 2:1-6.
 - (4) John 17:17 with John 14:6.
- 4. “The Beginning of the creation of God.”
 - a. “Beginning” has two possible meanings:
 - b. The first would be “first in time.” This emphasizes the temporal aspect of being first.
 - (1) This is how you will find people such as the Jehovah Witnesses will take it.
 - (2) The desire is to diminish the person of Jesus Christ to make Him less than God, less than the preeminent one.
 - (3) But this will not work for it is John who wrote this final book and it is John who also wrote the gospel and the letters which so diligently and unapologetically proclaim Jesus as God.
 - c. The second would be “the one with whom a process or event begins.”
 - (1) This emphasizes the quality of Jesus as being primary, or preeminent over Creation. It is not interested in time as much as preeminence. This is best understanding.
 - (2) John 1:3.
 - (3) Colossians 1:16-17.
 - (4) Revelation 1:8; 21:6.
 - d. What relation does this title have to do with what Jesus then says to this church?
 - (1) As with the world today and many, many believers, Laodicea was occupied with and trusting in the things of this fallen creation that is now passing away and slated for destruction.

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- (2) They were trusting in the details of this life rather than in the Creator and in heavenly treasures.
- (3) They were assuming that earthly comfort meant that all was good regarding God. So common and so deadly is this way of thinking.
- (4) They were guilty of Romans 1:18ff.

II. The Dying Church.

A. Jesus's observations regarding that church (15-17).

1. The most critical observation is one that is not said. In no way does He praise this church.
 - a. This is a frightening situation to even consider.
 - b. The place has the name of being a church. It has people belonging to it.
 - c. But the Lord of all grace cannot find anything to praise.
 - d. As I thought on this my mind went to 1 Corinthians 1 where Paul gives thanks to God for the church in Corinth, even though it was filled with so many problems.
 - e. When the Lord will not give you any commendation whatsoever you know that you are in grave trouble.
2. Instead Jesus describes two key problems regarding them: Lukewarm and they think they need nothing though they actually are in desperate need.
3. Their spiritual temperature.
 - a. What is the issue between these terms "hot," "cold," and "lukewarm?"
 - b. Hot.
 - (1) This is the easier to understand of the two descriptions.
 - (2) *zestos*, we get the word zest from it.
 - (3) It refers to boiling hot.
 - (4) Acts 18:25; Romans 12:11.

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- (5) So the desire of the Lord is to see a genuine devotion rather than at best a half-hearted, reluctant one.
- c. Cold—two views.
- (1) First is that it refers to openly rejecting Jesus Christ and the Christian faith. The point is that you know where they stand and they know they stand. There is more hope to see one who rejects Christianity later come to faith than those who are vaguely warm to it.
 - (2) The second is to see it as a good thing, just as being hot is. The point is that both hot and cold accomplish something in the sense of refreshment.
 - (3) It is like Matthew 10:40-42, “He who receives you receives Me, and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me. He who receives a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet’s reward; and he who receives a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man’s reward. And whoever in the name of a disciple gives to one of these little ones even a cup of cold water to drink, truly I say to you he shall not lose his reward.”
 - (4) I believe the second view is the better view. This city did not have its own water supply, it had to come via aqueducts from Colossae (very cold and refreshing water) and Hierapolis (hot mineral rich water). By the time the water got to the city it was neither cold nor hot. The mineral rich water even tended to make you sick if you drank from it.
- d. Lukewarm.
- (1) The term is such that it is something that is disgusting to Jesus.
 - (2) The term “spit” is actually to vomit. There is nothing about this church that commends itself to Jesus, the Head of the Church! It makes Him sick to consider it.

C. S. Lewis said, “Christianity, if false, is of no importance, and, if true, of infinite importance. The one thing it cannot be is moderately important.” (Preaching Today Citation: “C. S. Lewis,” Christian History (65.19.1), 27).

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4. So, what does it mean to be lukewarm?
 - a. Vs 17 is the answer.
 - b. We are not talking about being comfortable, but rather their situation was one of lavishness. And it is not necessarily just money, but the sense of self-sufficiency.
 - c. Christians who are trusting in themselves and their wealth or what they thought their wealth could buy them. Note their threefold claim:
 - (1) “I am rich”—they had an over abundance of material blessings, but by this statement, it shows they were proud and trusting in that richness as though wealth had the power to give them security and happiness.
 - (2) “... and have become wealthy”—they continued to add to their wealth. Not only was wealth a sign of security, happiness, and success, but the truth is, it never really satisfies and people want more.
 - (3) “... and have need of nothing”—They were so well off they thought they needed help from neither man nor God. They had bought into the satanic delusion that money can buy anything. They didn’t need to trust God. They could simply go out and buy whatever they needed or desired. There was no need to wait on the Lord, no need to put Him first.
 - (4) It is my opinion that in many ways this is the greatest danger to the church in America today. It is not persecution, it is wealth and comfort.
 - d. How aware are you of your intense, constant need of God’s grace in your life? You know the correct answer, but is that answer true for you?
 - (1) Let me do a spin on an old question. If you were arrested and put on trial for needing the constant grace of God in your life what would the evidence be to prove you guilty of it?
 - (2) Matthew 11:27-30.

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- (a) We are called to be learners of Christ here.
- (b) The clear implication is that this is a great need that we lack.
- (c) To take on the yoke is an image of submission and service. It is coming to Jesus and seeing your need to learn from Him.
- (d) Jesus shows us two reasons for this call to submit and learn from Him:
 - i) He alone has access to the knowledge and wisdom that truly matters. “And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.” (John 17:3)
 - ii) The second is that in submitting to Him we find that we have life and rest for our souls.
 - a) The school Jesus Christ calls us to enter is not one of performance and perfectionism.
 - b) It is not the school where we are grinding out heart-killing rule keeping.
 - c) It is a school that demands 100%. But it is also the school where the entrance exam and the final exam is taken not by you but by Him.
- e. The great need for every person is to see their constant need for God’s soul-saving, peace-giving, spirit-strengthening grace.
 - (1) It is when we say we are fine that we should be very, very careful.
 - (2) When you say you need nothing, beloved it is then that you need much.

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- (3) When you find little or nothing to pray about. When your mind see little need to think biblically. This is when you are most needy.
- f. Even though Jesus' description of this church is brutal, it is also incredibly gracious.
 - (1) He knows their true state and He is not willing to let it just be that way.
 - (2) By speaking truthfully into their situation He is able to also point them to its solution.
- B. Jesus's Counsel (18-22).
 - 1. He advises true wealth and true garments (18).
 - a. Very similar to the idea given in Isaiah 55:1-3, "'Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy? Listen diligently to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food. Incline your ear, and come to me; hear, that your soul may live; and I will make with you an everlasting covenant, my steadfast, sure love for David.
 - b. But how do you buy from Jesus when you have nothing? How do you resolve your nakedness and poverty when you lack the very ability to do so?
 - c. It begins by seeing that you are loved by Jesus (19).
 - (1) This is why He speaks so hard to them. It is not to harm them but to heal them.
 - (2) Jesus strips us down to who and what we truly are. And in those moments we often find ourselves simply dumbstruck as eyes that were blind suddenly see and you become silent . . . and you weep . . . and you fear . . . and you are ashamed for you see what you have become.

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2. Having described their need and expressed that it is driven now out of rejection or hate, but out of His true love for them that He gives the invitation.
 - a. This is not a passage of salvation. It is not Jesus hoping you will open the door of your heart to Him.
 - b. It is a invitation to reenter into that intimate and true fellowship. It is how you “buy” the things needed in vs 18. They are “from” Him and only Him.
 - c. You buy these things through the only way possible, by trusting the truthfulness and faithfulness and goodness of Jesus. He says that He will come to you.
- C. The promise is simple and yet profound.
 1. To persevere to the end; to rekindle your heart towards Him; to realize your need for His enduring grace, brings you the ability to see the true goal. The right and privilege to reign with Him.
 2. To see again that the fleeting promises of this world, however grand they may be, will never truly satisfy for they shall not stand under the fire of Jesus’ judgement.

III. Conclusion.

- A. We are finish with two of the three sections of this important book. “Therefore write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after these things” (Revelation 1:19).
- B. From here we are moving into what is too come.
 1. It will challenge some of you in how you view God and how He interacts with people.
 2. It is a hard message but it is also a true one.
- C. But there is a consistent theme that showed itself repeatedly in these letters to the churches. The certainty of a coming judgment by God.
 1. Repeatedly Jesus has said, “I know your deeds.” And that was both good and bad for the hearer.
 2. Repeatedly Jesus has said in one way or another that He is true, faithful and righteous.

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3. And repeatedly Jesus has said that He shall mete out either reward or punishment.
- D. There is a purpose behind this all and it is simply to learn to live under the gaze of our Lord.
1. The scourge of habit and routine help to make us dull to the reality that all things are hurtling toward God's ordained end.
 2. Train your mind to know that He sees you. He knows your every thought and act.
 3. But also train your mind to hold fast to the reality that the Father loves you more than your mortal mind can comprehend.
 4. Close your eyes and let these words from God Himself speak to you:
 - a. For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believe on Him shall not perish but have eternal life.
 - b. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.
 - c. What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things? Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies; who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Just as it is written, "For Thy sake we are being put to death all day long; We were considered as sheep to be slaughtered." But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

IV. Benediction/Doxology.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

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Small Group Questions

- **What are ways we become blind to our spiritual situation and maturity?**
- **How can you help one another in maintaining a spiritual healthiness that is grace-filled?**
- **Take the verses I read at the end of this message and work together to write up prayers that reflects the reality of the words back to God. Make this a group project and give it careful thought.**