

7 Churches

The Lukewarm Church

Revelation 3:14-22

February 26, 2017

HDBC

One of the most tragic themes in all the Bible is the story of how Israel responded to God's unmerited favor. God gave them land, influence wealth and opportunity. But they continually break His heart by shifting the focus of their devotion from Him to other things.

Sadly, this is not unique to Israel. In a similar way, individuals and churches often drift away from their commitment to God. They may appear to be devoted to Christ on the outside, but are not so, on the inside. This morning we will look at one such church.

I am skipping the sixth church and going to the seventh. We will come back to the sixth in two weeks. In preparation for revival I want us to consider the church at Laodicea.

It is the last and worst of the seven churches to whom the Lord wrote personal letters which are recorded in the early pages of John's great vision. It was a church in need of spiritual renewal. Its members desperately needed revival.

Read the Text (Rev. 3:14-22)

1. The Christ (14)

The Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the Beginning of God's creation

Christ introduces himself to his church by using three descriptive titles.

Amen

This is the only place used as a title for Christ. NT equivalent of the OT word which means ***truth***. Jesus is the sure one, the true one. The word is often used in Scripture to affirm the truthfulness of a statement. We use it in a similar way when we say ***amen*** we are saying ***that's right*** or ***that is true***.

The Faithful and True Witness

In him there is no error or falsehood. Completely trustworthy. This was important to this church, because it affirms that his assessment of their condition was true.

Beginning of the creation of God

The English translation of this phrase is a bit ambiguous and has been used by some to try to say that Jesus was a created being. **Jehovah's Witnesses will do so.**

However, the grammar is clear. **Arche**, translated *beginning* does not mean the first, but the source. Christ is the *source* or *origin* of creation. It was through His power that all things were created.

2. The City (14)

Laodicea was located near the cities of Colossae and Hierapolis at crossroad of two major highways. Very wealthy city. Destroyed by earthquake in A.D. 61 refused assistance offered by emperor. They rebuilt themselves with their own wealth.

Known for its clothing manufacturing. Breed of sheep native to that area, that produced black wool. Fine clothes exported all over the known world.

Known for its Medical Center. Developed a tablet much like aspirin that would dissolve in water and become a salve. Two kinds: One for eyes and one for the ears. These were exported around the world.

Biggest weakness was its water supply. Underground water there was useless. Colossae and Hierapolis had great water. Not Laodicea. Brought in through an aqueduct. They were a city that thought they needed nothing. Church reflected that.

3. The Church (15-17)

Jesus offers his assessment of this church, and it was not good. The words of Jesus are best understood when we consider the situation. Laodicea was one of three cities in the region with Colossae and Hierapolis being the other two. It was the most wealthy and most prominent. But, as I said, it lacked a good water supply.

Hierapolis was famous for its hot springs with their healing qualities.

Colossae was known for its cold, thirst-quenching water.

Laodicea was known for its bad, lukewarm water.

With that in mind, the words of Jesus. **Read verses 15-16.** Strong language. Lukewarm is not what He wanted them to be. Clear up some confusion.

Cold and hot are not meant to reflect the church's passion for Jesus. It is unlikely that Jesus would prefer that a church or an individual be cold toward him.

He is almost certainly using the cold refreshing water from Colossae and the hot healing water from Hierapolis in contrast to the lukewarm water of Laodicea. They were neither spiritually refreshing (cold water) nor spiritually helpful (hot water). They were lukewarm. What does that mean?

In this context to be lukewarm was to think more highly of themselves than they should. Their lukewarm condition was a **self-deceptive pride!**

A. Perception (17) What they thought of themselves.

1) Wealthy

Much money in that little town and probably in that church. Proud of their wealth. Wealth can give a person a false sense of security.

2) Important

Medical developments and the clothing industry made them a major player on the international stage.

3) Self-Sufficient

Just did not need God. "Are we ready to take total responsibility for our church, apart from any need for God?"

C. Reality What Christ said they really were.

- 1) Wretched** - "poor, in rags." Destitute.
- 2) Miserable** - Always the true state of those in sin.
- 3) Poor** - Same as Matt 5:3 Spiritual poverty
- 4) Blind** - Spiritual blindness
- 5) Naked** - Nothing hidden from Christ. Adam and Eve.

4. The Counsel (18-20)

The counsel is to look to Christ for the things that you really need. They thought they had everything they needed. **Christ made it clear that this was nothing but self-delusion.** It seems to me that there were at least two kinds of people in this church. True in all churches, I suppose.

Some were not yet born again. Not saved. There need was to be saved. Jesus addresses them in verse 18. There were some who were truly saved, but who needed to repent of sinfulness, pride, selfishness, arrogance. Jesus addresses them in verse 19.

A. To the Lost, Trust Me (18)

You cannot buy salvation. When you purchase something there is an exchange. Jesus is calling upon those who were lost to exchange their self-sufficiency for faith in Christ. They thought their riches, health and happiness were enough.

Jesus calls the lost to trade their self-dependence for a dependence upon Him.

They needed the riches that would last eternally. Only from Christ.

They needed the righteousness that would enable them to be right with God.

They needed the spiritual medicine that would heal their spiritual condition.

B. To the Saved, Repent (19)

Great statement about hope. He is offering hope of renewal. The very threat of discipline is a good sign. They have not been totally abandoned yet. But they must make radical changes. Calling for full repentance with nothing held back. Only one way to deal with sin, with zealous, aggressive action.

C. To both groups, fellowship with me (20)

Jesus wants sweet, intimate fellowship. He pictures himself knocking and waiting. He will not force Himself onto us. He will not coerce us to have fellowship with Him. But he desires it. He simply knocks and waits.

Even in this final promise Jesus speaks of fellowship. The one who conquers will sit on the throne of Jesus, with Jesus. The important part of that promise is that we will be with Jesus.

One of the great horrors of hell is the loneliness.

One of the great blessings of heaven is the fellowship.

Remember what it means to be lukewarm?

To think more highly of yourself than you really are. Self-deceptive pride.

Affects many who are not followers of Christ. Think they are ok. No need for Christ.

Affects many who are followers of Christ. Slipped back into a self-centered life.

Remember the remedy for being lukewarm?

To the lost, you are called to lay aside your pride and self-sufficiency and trust Christ completely for your salvation. You need the riches only He can offer. You need the righteousness only He can offer. You need the healing only He can offer.

To the saved, you are called to repent. Forsake your sin and renew your allegiance to King Jesus as Lord of your life.