



Empowering People to Change the World

Laodicea: Lukewarm Christianity The American Predicament Part I

Steve Holt

Laodicea-Lukewarm Christianity: The American Predicament Revelation 3:14-17

Introduction:

- Only the book in the Bible that promises a blessing to those who study it.
- We have now reviewed 6 of the 7 churches in Revelation.
- The past five weeks we have studied this whole concept of how God opens doors as found in Revelation 3:7-8.
- We are now going to finish up chapter 3 of Revelation.
- Each of these churches had some misconception of themselves, all of them, in some way did not accurately understand themselves.
- In some way their self perception was in error, sometimes better and sometimes worst.
- Only the churches at Smyrna and Philadelphia have no criticisms, and it is interesting that these are the only churches that still remain today.

Outline of Revelation

- Remember there are 3 sections to the book of Revelation: Revelation 1:19 **“Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after this.”**
 - **Section 1:** The things which you have seen...chapter 1.
 - **Section 2:** The things which are...chapters 2 and 3. The “lamp stands” are the 7 churches...we are finishing this section today.
 - **Section 3:** The things which will take place...chapter 4-22.

Revelation 3:14

“And to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans”

- Laodicea was:
 - South of Philadelphia, not far from Colossus, it was a large and prosperous city on the banks of the Lycus River.
 - The wealthiest, most prosperous city in the region, because it was strategically located at the juncture of two important roads.
 - Laodicea was on a very wealthy trade route that went all the way to China.
 - Famous for its banking and textile industry.
 - A great earthquake had leveled the city and they had said to the Romans that “they had need of nothing” and had rebuilt the city on their own, with their own resources.
- This is the most dismal letter of all the letters. Nothing good is said of this church.
 - This church represents the last and the worst of all the churches.
 - It has lost its passion for the lost, its desire for God; it had become lukewarm in its spiritual state.
 - Of all the churches, the Laodicean church is the closest to the American Church.

‘These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God:

“The Amen”

- Jesus identifies Himself using four titles:
 - The Amen;
 - The Faithful;
 - True Witness; and
 - Beginning of the creation of God.

- **He is “The Amen:”**
 - We all know this word, we have all sang this word; it is like the period at the end of the sentence.
 - Used only here as a title for Jesus.
 - It is the transliteration of the Hebrew for “truth” or “certainty”; or “so be it.”
 - It actually refers to that which is fixed, unchangeable.
 - Jesus is the Amen, in that He is the unchanging Truth incarnate.
 - This is so important, because we are looking at a church that has lost all objective truth, that is not walking with God anymore, that is changing with the times.

But there is more to this rich title, Paul writes,

- **2 Corinthians 1:20 “For all the promises of God in Him are Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us.” NKJV**
 - **It is through Jesus that all the promises and covenants of God are fulfilled and guaranteed.**
 - All of the Old Testament promises of forgiveness, mercy, and lovingkindness are wrapped up in the life, death and resurrection of Christ.
 - As churches and denominations today are struggling with whether there is a heaven or hell; Jesus says, that He is unchanging, fixed; His truth is truth...sin is still sin...heaven is still heaven...hell is still hell.

He alone is “The Faithful and true Witness:”

- Jesus also identifies Himself as the faithful and true witness, which further elucidates the thought expressed in the first title.
- Because everything He speaks of is truth, whatever he promises, he fulfills.
- **John 14:6 “Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.’”**

The Beginning of all creation:

- The Jehovah Witnesses love to jump on this...
- The English translation is a bit ambiguous here and has led some false teachers, seeking to deny Jesus’ deity, have attempted to use this verse to prove that Jesus is a created being.
- There is no ambiguity in the Greek text: Arche (beginning) does not mean that Christ was the first person God created, but rather that Christ Himself is the source or origin of creation.
 - **John 1:1-3 “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. “**
 - **Colossians 1:15-17 “He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. “**

He wants the Laodiceans to understand that He and He alone ascribes value to spiritual and physical things, and those things never change. There is no debate forever!

Now He moves into His rebuke...

Vs. 15

“I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth.

Thesis: The vexation of the church in Laodicea is the same in the American church today—a lukewarm form of Christianity that Jesus hates. Of the 7 churches in Revelation, the Church in America is closest to the Laodicean church.

- Deeds always reveal the condition of our heart; deeds always reveal our spiritual condition.
- Christ rebukes them for being neither hot nor cold, but lukewarm, for being compromised in their faith.
- This metaphor comes from the water supply of the city.
- Laodicea was part of a triad of cities with Hierapolis and Colosse.
 - Colosse was known for its cold refreshing mountain stream.
 - Laodicea had a twin city, Hierapolis, 6 miles away, that was known for its hot springs.
 - These hot spring waters were delivered to Laodicia, by an open aqueduct.
 - So by the time the water reaches Laodicea it is tepid, dirty, and foul.
- It tastes awful, it is unhealthy, and it has none of the positive effects of clean, cold or hot water.
- Water is made to be either hot or cold. On our well in Black Forest the water comes up cold. When we've been working hard, we love that cold water drink!

- Hot springs are made by God for relaxation and medicinal purposes. We used to love going down to this one island off the coast of Tokyo every summer and sit in the hot mineral springs next to the ocean. Go snorkel in the frigid ocean and then come in to relax in the hot springs next to the sea!
- Lukewarm water is incredibly fowl. Sometimes I have my water bottle in my truck and the water gets lukewarm...I have literally spewed that water out of my mouth...
- God made us to be hot and cold—to be refreshing; to be medicinal, to be joyful, to be fired up, to living off of the “springs of living water” of the Holy Spirit
 - Springs in the earth are never lukewarm! Did you know that?
 - Springs are either hot or cold.
 - Hot springs (Princeton Hot Springs; Glenwood Springs) are hot and people flock to relax and enjoy them.
 - Cold springs feed the South Platte River, the Colorado, and they are full of trout.
 - Living things live in fresh, moving, cold water!
 - Lukewarm water makes you vomit!
 - Hot water is moving; cold water is moving—it’s a stream and there is life flowing in it.
- Jesus is comparing those who are half-hearted. People who have one part of their heart in this world and one part in God.
 - Lukewarm people aren’t flowing!
 - Lukewarm people aren’t producing!
 - Lukewarm people are half-hearted and bored with their spiritual lives

- **Hot People; Cold People** are those who are:
 - Excited and spiritually alive in their faith;
 - They possess a fervency and passion for Christ that speak of a transformed life;
 - They are living out and sharing their faith.

- **Lukewarm People** are most often those who:
 - Once walked closely with Christ but are now rejecting Him.
 - Choosing not to be Spirit filled, not to walk in obedience, not to give their hearts and lives to Christ each day.
 - They are tepid, too comfortable to be worried about their condition.
 - The hardest people to talk to are people who have gone to church all their lives who claim to be Christians and they just don't know Jesus! Never been regenerated. It is really difficult. They know that they are saved...they say, "God is love,"
 - 87% of Americans believe that "God helps those who help themselves."
 - 53% think that is from the Bible.
 - 63% of Americans believe you can pray to Buddha or Mohammed, doesn't matter. All roads lead to God.
 - And they get offended so easily if you talk to them about it.

What are the reasons for a tepid lukewarm form of Christianity?

1. Unbelief. A Flimsy Emotional Faith. A lack of faith to trust God through hard times. Easily manipulated by their feelings and unable to trust God when hard times come.

2. Comfort. A “Just Good Enough” Walk. They don’t want to be challenged, have to change anything. Sounds counterintuitive but the comfortable don’t need God. They are just fine without God. They have all of their comforts and the easy chair is their home.
3. Untrained. An Ignorance from Experience. Never learned to fight; never been around authentic wholehearted disciples. So many Christians today are completely ignorant of the warfare around them. They can’t imagine that they can’t fight in prayer and win the day.
4. Busy. Just No Time for God. We have so filled out lives with good things that we have lost the best thing! So, divorce is on the rise, drug and alcohol abuse is on the rise. Suicides are on the rise!!

“I will vomit you out of my mouth”...that means “puke” or “hurl”

- I hate when that “puke thing” hits our house! It’s gross!!
 - Fevers and buckets...it’s terrible.
 - The noises and toilets...oh it’s awful.
 - Vomiting is when you are violently rejecting something that is vile and ill health or hurting the body.
 - This is what Jesus is saying to this church...God violently rejects this church.
 - It is hurting the Body of Christ.
 - The church today there are no lines drawn...Sophia, the female goddess is being embraced...it makes Jesus sick; He vomits this out.
- Listen: the lukewarm who calls herself/himself a Christian is the most damaging to the Body of Christ. Their hypocrisy hurts so many people who otherwise might come to Christ.

The name of the church: LAODICEA, taken from two Greek words meaning “the rights of the people” points toward democracy and one commentator even said, “assurance and self confidence.”

- We must remember that the Kingdom of God is not a democracy! We don't vote on God every 4 years.
- We entered into an Order, a Divine Order.
- When we think we can vote on the Christian life, we fall into disorder. The people start deciding, that is wrong!!
- Our nation is in trouble because we have lost all objectivity and our piece of the pie becomes more important than the whole and it is destroying us...same in the church.
- We often start cooling in our walk with God when we are demanding our own rights instead of what concerns God...

Vs. 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—

- The Laodiceans were equating their spiritual condition with their material blessing.
- Like it was a sign of God's blessing upon them...this is very OT, the Jew really believed that.
- The church at Smyrna was poor but they were called "rich."
- That is not necessarily true!! God looks at the heart, not the bank account.
- Sometimes the wealthiest are the poorest, because they think they have need of nothing! Sometimes the richest are actually the poorest!! It can be the "Emperor's new clothes."
- I have found that it is actually rare for a wealthy person to be generous to God—with their time, their resources, and their heart—they are already filled up with their needs being met.

Vs. 18

“I counsel you”

- Jesus counsels us...NEXT WEEK, Jesus counsels us on the way out of lukewarm Christianity...

How do we find the fire? How do we come back to the refreshing living waters of Jesus?

Next week!! Our passage is very clear what we are to do to find the hot water, the cold refreshing living waters...