



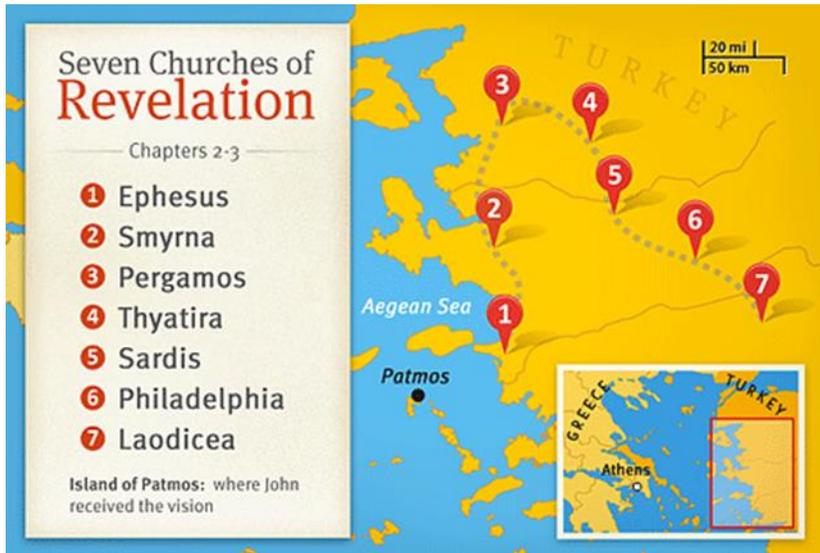
# World Christian Fellowship

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## Seven Churches Laodicea – Lukewarm Church

**Revelation 3:14-22**, *“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: <sup>15</sup> ‘I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. <sup>16</sup> So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth. <sup>17</sup> 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— <sup>18</sup> 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. <sup>19</sup> As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent. <sup>20</sup> 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. <sup>21</sup> 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. <sup>22</sup> ‘He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.’”*

## Laodicea:



Laodicea was ten miles from Colossae. There were three cities in that area: Hierapolis, Colossae, and Laodicea.

Laodicea located in the Lycus River Valley in southwest Phrygia. It's the most easterly city of the seven cities, about forty-five miles away from Philadelphia. Hierapolis is only about six miles away.

The Lycus Valley was one of the most common routes of travel because people didn't travel in the mountains, they travelled in the valleys. Laodicea was an important city. It not only was a place where travel was going east to west, north to south, and so it was an intersection city.

**Antiochus II** founded the city in the 3 B.C. and named it for his wife. Laodice was his wife’s name. He named it for her and then divorced her, but the name remained. The modern name of the Turkish city is **Eski-hassar**, which means in Turkish “the old fortress.”



History records that Laodicea had a very large Jewish population.

### **How do we know that?**

Because each year, the Jews had to pay a temple tax. If you were a male over 21, they paid a tax to the temple in Jerusalem of half a shekel. Made a reference to that even in the gospels.

In **62 A.D., Flaccus**, the governor, put a stop to any exporting of gold from Laodicea. He wouldn't allow Laodiceans to send gold out, and the Jews always paid their shekel temple tax with gold. He needed it to back the currency. The Jews always sent their tax in a lump package of gold. They came together in their synagogues in the city and compiled all their money and turned it into gold and sent the gold to Jerusalem. They were forbidden to do it, but they did it anyway. They disregarded the order of the governor.

It was confiscated, and historians say it weighed twenty pounds. Twenty pounds of gold with all the males paying half a shekel, it had almost 4,000 males. They would have the wives and others. So, there were thousands of Jews living there.

They were in the middle of this pagan culture with all its mixed morality. There is some indicate in the Talmud that they were slack in their Judaism and engulfed by the paganism.

## **1. Water Supply**

Crucial to any city was its water supply. Population grew because it was a hub and it got larger. The local streams were no longer able to supply the necessary water.

So, there had to be built an amazing underground aqueduct. They put it underground so that enemies wouldn't have access to it.

One historian says that they could not use the Lycus or the Meander River because they were too dirty. Besides, the Lycus River often dried up during the dry season. Most of the springs in the area are hot springs full of gasses and other chemicals.

Hierapolis was a place of hot springs even today and people went there for the healing properties of the hot springs.



The Laodiceans had no choice. They had to pipe in water from a distant spring through twin lines of stone pipe. Each stone was about three feet across and hollowed through the middle. The water carried by these pipes was so charged with impurities that it dropped much of its load in the flow the calcium

carbonate gradually clogging the pipes. The water was collected in a central water tower and then distributed through the streets by pipes radiating from the central water tower.

The water tower in the sections of the terracotta pipes are still visible today. It is evident that the water carried in through the pipes was bad, for thick deposits of calcareous impurities can still be seen almost choking the surviving section of the pipes.

Some archaeologists have suggested that the pipes came from five miles away.

## **2. Banking**

Laodicea had great commercial enterprise of banking. The city was very wealthy. It was so wealthy that after the earthquake of 60 A. D. which levelled this city and some of the others in the area.

The people of Laodicea prided themselves on rejecting an offer of financial help from Rome because they had enough money of their own to completely rebuild a beautiful city without any help.

**Tacitus, Roman Historian**, wrote: "Laodicea arose from the ruins by the strength of her own resources with no help from us,"

### 3. Wool

Laodicea was very well known for the wool industry. The major product being a soft wool, glossy black in colour. It was used for carpets and clothing, both locally and then exported.

### 4. Medical

The city also gained much respect and honour for its medical school. A medical school was established in connection with a temple to an ancient god of healing, later identified as **Asclepius**, son of **Apollo**.

We can witness god **Asclepius** in Corinth as well. Famous medical teachers were there and they developed a famous and highly valued salve to be used for eye ailments.

Laodicea: Water supply, finance, black wool, and eye salve. All of these play a part in this letter.

### Church in Laodicea

Colossae was ten miles away. Those two churches were sister churches.

This is a wealthy, self-sufficient city. That attitude found its way into the church, and the heresy concerning the nature of Christ found its way into the church. So soon after the church was

founded, it is a church of nonbelievers, because salvation doesn't come to those who have the wrong Christ. There's no record about the founding of this church.

But in Colossians, chapter 1, we read that **Epaphras** evangelized the Lycus Valley region, so maybe he was the one the Lord used to establish the church.

**Colossians 4:17**, *And say to Archippus, "Take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord, that you may fulfil it."*

**Archippus** being a leader there, and he is mentioned in Philemon.

**Philemon 1:2**, *to the beloved Apphia, Archippus our fellow soldier, and to the church in your house:*

Maybe he was a leader there. We don't know the details about it but by reading Colossians and looking between Colossians and Revelation, we can put some things together. But most notably, the church had been affected by a devastating heresy.

Paul was never actually there, but he knew some of the believers there, because in chapter 2 and 4 of Colossians he refers to believers in Laodicea.

It had a very long sad history. It started out with spiritual life and was soon corrupted.

Sardis was dead, but it had a few living, worthy believers. Thyatira was compromising sinful and idolatrous, but it had some who held to love and the truth.

Laodicea is a church that is not a church. It is the first church of the tares. There is no wheat.

Since Colossae was very near and it is very likely that what plagued Colossae found its way to Laodicea. When we read the book of Colossians, we will find that Paul writes that book to answer those who were denying the deity of Christ.

Christological heresy had infiltrated Colossae. It had attacked particularly the deity of Christ and reduced Him to a created being, some kind of angelic being.

No doubt, the heresies concerning the person of Christ had found their way to this neighbouring city of Laodicea, because here is a church that is lost.

Here is a church that in large measure, no doubt, has been exposed to and bought into the very heresies that poisoned Laodicea.

**Colossians 4:16**, *Now when this epistle is read among you, see that it is read also in the church of the Laodiceans, and that you likewise read the epistle from Laodicea.*

What was going on in Colossae apparently had found its way to Laodicea. Because they had a heretical view of Christ, they were an unsaved church.

They didn't believe that Christ was the Creator of life and all that existed. They didn't believe that. They didn't believe that He was the Alpha and the Omega as Revelation introduces Him.

- ✓ To be the Alpha, He had to be the Creator.
- ✓ To be the Omega, He had to be the Consummator.

He is the Supreme One, the Sovereign One, the One who created everything that exists and everyone who exists. He is the uncreated source of creation.

So, the Lord who created everything, the faithful and true Witness to the Word of God, the One in whom all spiritual promises are fulfilled says this.

It is an unconverted church because it has a distorted view of Christ. Like the Mormon church. Like the liberal churches that deny the deity of Christ, as they universally do.

At the very outset, a powerful Christological statement that demonstrates to us that the church at Laodicea had erred in their view of Christ.

If you have a wrong view of Christ, it has horrendous spiritual effects.

### **Author of the Letter:**

**V 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:*

*"To the messenger who will take this letter back to Laodicea write the words of the Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God. It is He who says this."*

The Lord is writing this letter, and He introduces Himself in each case, in all of these seven letters, by references to His deity.

Here, three things are said about Him:

1. He is the Amen,
2. He is the faithful and true Witness,
3. He is the Beginning of the creation of God.

#### **1. Jesus is the Amen**

What does that mean?

This is a unique title, and actually may reflect a Hebrew thought.

**Isaiah 65:16**, *So that he who blesses himself in the earth Shall bless himself in the God of truth; And he who swears in the earth Shall swear by the God of truth; Because the former troubles are forgotten, And because they are hidden from My eyes.*

“The God of amen.” That’s Hebrew for truth or affirmation or certainty.

God was called the God of truth then, the God of certainty, the God of affirmation.

Whatever God says is true, whatever God says is certain; therefore, He is the God of amen.

The word amen is often used in Scripture to affirm the truthfulness of a statement. It is an affirmation. It is a kind of verbal guarantee that what has been said is true.

We read many times in the New Testament, “Verily, verily, I say unto you,” and then the Lord goes on to say something. Verily at the beginning of a statement affirms the statement that is about to be made and amen at the end of a statement seals its reliability and its certainty.

Our Lord is the firm, fixed, certain, faithful, unchangeable Amen, because He is true all the time, in every way.

Because all that He says is true, and all that He promises is true, and all His covenants are true. He Himself is the guarantee and affirmation.

- Christ is the Amen to God's promises.
- He is the Amen to God's covenants.

**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.*

God's promises are then validated in Christ. They are made certain in Christ.

Jesus is God's Amen, the One who confirms all divine promises. This is to establish His glory, His truthfulness, and His unity with God.

## **2. Jesus is the faithful and true Witness.**

Not only does He validate what God has said and what God has promised, but whatever He says is true, whatever He affirms is true. If He speaks, it is faithful and true.

- He is completely trustworthy.
- He is perfectly accurate.
- He is reliable.
- He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

He is the perfect Witness all testimony which He bears to God, to the character of God, to the purposes of God, the plans of God, the promises of God, the covenants of God. All that He says is a faithful Witness.

**John 3:31-33**, *He who comes from above is above all; he who is of the earth is earthly and speaks of the earth. He who comes from heaven is above all. <sup>32</sup> And what He has seen and heard, that He testifies; and no one receives His testimony. <sup>33</sup> He who has received His testimony has certified that God is true.*

When Christ speaks on behalf of God, His testimony is absolutely true. Jesus is then the Amen of God. The living verification and validation and confirmation of every promise God ever made, every plan God ever established, every covenant He set.

Beyond that everything Himself does is sincere and true. This establishes at the very beginning in dealing with this church, that truth is critical. Truth is the necessary foundation.

### **3. Beginning of the creation of God.**

The English there is frankly ambiguous.

**Colossians 1:15**, *He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.*

He is the '*prtotos*' of all creation. That means not necessarily the first who was ever created, but the premier one of all creation.

**Colossians 1:16-19**, *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. <sup>17</sup> And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. <sup>18</sup> And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence. <sup>19</sup> For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell,*

Christ is the everything of God. All that God is, He is.

He is the Creator.

He is the Author of life, both spiritual life and physical life.

So, when it says, "He is the Beginning of the creation of God," we can interpret as the primary One. He is the Source of all creation.

**John 1:1-4**, *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup> He was in the beginning with God. <sup>3</sup> All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. <sup>4</sup> In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.*

## **Command:**

**V 15,** *“I know your deeds,”*

There is nothing more to commend, so there is no commendation.

## **Rebuke:**

Devastating, severe rebuke!

**V 15-16,** *“I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot.<sup>16</sup> So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth.*

That is the strongest statement that the Lord has made yet to a church.

## **Lukewarm:**

Nearby were the hot waters of Hierapolis, famous for their healing powers. People went there because they were good, because they had properties of rehabilitation and restoration.

In Colossae, there were cold waters. There was a cold perennial stream, which made it the earliest settlement in the area. The water available at Colossae was refreshing and clear.

Contrast to those, there was the dirty, lukewarm water that flowed for miles through a filthy aqueduct. It wasn't hot enough to relax or restore.

It wasn't cool enough to quench. It was foul, and it made people seasick.

That's what our Lord's saying about this church: "You make Me sick."

Some churches make the Lord sick.

- Jesus was disappointed with those that left their first love,
- Jesus was angry with those that compromised.
- Jesus was upset with those compromised with sin.

But with this Laodicea church made Him sick!

Even today churches full of people who have a wrong view of Christ. Therefore, they are unconverted unsaved, and are intolerable to heaven. They make the Lord sick.

There was a hope for a church that has some believers in it. When Jesus wrote the letters to churches, we can see the Lord calls for a repentance because there were some believers in it and maybe things can change.

When it comes to the church in Laodicea there is nothing.

This is the worst of all possible representations of a church. This is just sickening.

Jesus says, “You have no purpose; you just make Me sick.”

**V 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—*

**Hypocrites:**

They say one thing and they don’t know their true condition.

One thing about nonbelievers who have come together in a “church” is they are in no position to assess their spiritual condition. They cannot know reality.

Laodicea was a wealthy city. Wealthy in material wealth, famous for its banking, for its riches.

The church’s opinion of its own identity was a baseless fiction that somehow, they possessed not only material wealth, but even spiritual wealth.

Maybe they were not only those who denied the deity of Christ, but they had been influenced by a source of that kind of denial – Gnosticism. They met together in spiritual pride thinking they were the elevated people.

Gnosticism and pre-Gnosticism comes from the Greek word “to know,” the people who had the secret elevated knowledge.

They had the riches and they saw themselves as transcending to a kind of knowledge that was above everybody else.

Spiritual pride to go along with their material pride.

That is the worst state a person can be in. It would be better to be an atheist. It would be better to be completely ignorant of the church and the gospel.

This is the ultimate apostate hypocrisy.

- You know about Christ and you have created a false Christ,
- You know about God and you have created a false god, and
- You are self-righteously self-confident in that.

There are some Christian universities and seminaries have this kind characteristics. They think they are rich materially; they think they are rich in spiritual knowledge, they have the elevated knowledge, and they don't know their condition.

When a major denomination began to attack the deity of Christ, it was clear evidence that Laodicea had become the norm.

Personally, there are some people leave some denominations because they are opposed to some issues like, same sex marriage, LGBTQ, abortions etc., But what makes me sad is this.

They don't leave the denomination when the deity of Christ is attacked.

They don't leave the denomination when the attack on the infallibility and itinerancy of Scripture.

Once they deny Scripture and deny Christ, it's Laodicea.

*"that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked."*

Christians are not wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked. They are not Christians.

### **Who are these people?**

These are non-Christians in a church.

A church of non-Christians, the sickening condition of thinking,

- They are spiritually rich, when they were bankrupt.
- They are beautiful, when they are wretched.
- They are to be envied, when they are to be pitied.
- They are believing that they can see everything clearly, when they see nothing.

- They are feeling that they are clothed, when they are naked.

They may have your bank account, they may wear your black wool, they may have your eye salve but spiritually, they are miserable, wretched, poor, blind, and naked, and to be pitied. This is the condition of a church of nonbelievers.

Those kinds of churches, even today, are the proudest of churches.

They think they are rich; they think they are clothed in finery; they think they don't need anything, but they have no idea of their condition.

**V18-20**, *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. <sup>19</sup>As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent. <sup>20</sup>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.*

The Lord would offer grace to hypocrites.

**Isaiah 55:1**, *“Ho! Everyone who thirsts, Come to the waters; And you who have no money, Come, buy and eat. Yes, come, buy wine and milk Without money and without price.*

**Matthew 16:26**, *For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?*

What Jesus was saying is this,

- ✓ If you want riches, come to Me.
- ✓ If you want clothing, come to Me.
- ✓ If you want sight, come to Me.
- ✓ I will give you gold refined by fire,” pure gold, no impurities.

This refers to all spiritual blessings, all spiritual wealth that is pure and priceless, and it all comes from God.

**1 Peter 1:7**, *that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honour, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ,*

The book of Revelation mentions the following few times.

Come to Me and buy the true and tested gold so you will not be poor anymore. Come to Me to receive a white garment that you may clothe yourself, and the shame of your nakedness will not be revealed. Get rid of your black robe and come and get a white robe.

The righteousness of the saints, the imputed righteousness of God placed over the saints.

*Isaiah 61:10, I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, My soul shall be joyful in my God; For He has clothed me with the garments of salvation, He has covered me with the robe of righteousness, As a bridegroom decks himself with ornaments, And as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.*

*“since you are blind, come and take the eye salve that I have, and I will anoint your eyes so that you can see.”*

The eye salve was a kind of coarse dough that they put together, and they mixed in it some Phrygian power that had demonstrated that it had soothing effect on eyes that had been irritated.

Obviously, it's not going to correct vision. But it was salve that helped heal wounds that had come to the eye.

Jesus says that If you come to Me then I will make you see.

Jesus says that If you come to Me, then I cover you in a white garment.

Jesus says that if you come to Me, I will make you rich.

So just as poor, naked, blind unbelievers have no idea of what their condition is, our Lord says, “Take this letter and read it to them.”

- ✓ Salvation is that gold which makes us spiritually rich in faith.
- ✓ It is that white robe that covers our sinful nakedness with the righteousness of God through Christ.
- ✓ It is that eye salve which gives us the knowledge of God, illuminating grace and an understanding of God's truth.

This is a call to salvation in a three-fold description!

**V19**, *"Those whom I love I reprove and discipline; therefore, be zealous and repent."*

That first statement has caused some people to think He's talking to Christians here, but the context doesn't allow that. This is just an axiomatic statement about God and about Christ.

Like John 3:16

God does reprove and rebuke unbelievers.

**John 16:8-9**, *And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: <sup>9</sup> of sin, because they do not believe in Me;*

**2 Timothy 2:25**, *in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth,*

God loves unbelievers and sinners, that's why we have ceased to be sinners and been given salvation. That love demonstrated, starts with reproof.

There's a note of tenderness in the whole letter. He has a tender affection for these people.

It's *'phile'* love not *'agape'* love.

*"Therefore, be zealous and repent."*

That's a call to salvation:

Repent!

Repentance means that

- ❖ you realize that you are a guilty,
- ❖ you deserve the wrath and punishment of God,
- ❖ you are hell bound.
- ❖ you begin to realize the sin is in you,
- ❖ you long to get rid of the sin, and
- ❖ You turn your back on it and renounce the world, deny yourself, take up the cross, and go after Christ.

You may have to suffer financially, but it makes no difference. Repentance is only going to come if you realize you are not rich, you are not wealthy and in need of nothing.

*"Repent and do it fast. Pursue repentance with zeal."*

**V20**, *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*

**Who is He talking about?**

Himself.

**What door?**

Not the door of your heart, the door of the church!

**Is there anyone who will hear My voice and open the door?**

I will come into him and will dine with him and he with Me.

This is a church that Christ is not in!

We have heard that all our lives knocking on the heart. That is not the picture here. This is the door of the church.

In the church at Sardis, He was there in the presence of the few that were believers.

Jesus is outside Laodicea church. There are thousands of churches like this thousand around the world. Christ is outside and in compassion He knocks, shut out of church that bears His name.

A shared meal was a symbol of union. A shared meal was a symbol of fellowship. Jesus is saying, that if somebody in

Laodicea, will come and open the door then I will come in and I will save you, and I will have fellowship with you.

This is one final plea!

Jesus is still there outside these churches, in the dark, knocking on the door of sickening, unsaved churches, seeking entrance before eternal night falls and it is everlastingly too late!

## Conclusion

Final promise.

**V 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.*

### Who is an overcomer?

**1 John 5:4-5**, *For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. <sup>5</sup> Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?*

I will not only come in, sit down with you and fellowship with you now, but I will grant to that person who comes in faith to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.

I will take you all the way to glory and sit you on My throne.

The throne of God and the throne of Christ becomes the throne of the penitent believer. This is the supreme elevation to humanity, to have the dignity of sitting on the throne of God and the throne of Christ.

This is the message to the apostates, to the liberals, to the Christ-deniers, the Bible-deniers, who think they are the elevated, scholarly, intellectuals who are far above true believers.

“You don’t know your condition.  
You are poor and blind.  
You are wretched, miserable, naked.”

But Christ, in grace, offers salvation.

All the letters close, *“He who has an ear let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”*

Are you listening?

Are you???