

HARVEST ROCK CHURCH

A CHURCH ON FIRE THE CHURCH THAT PLEASES GOD SERIES

Dr. Ché Ahn

November 29, 2020

TEXT: Revelation 3:14 “To the angel of the church in Laodicea write: The Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God, says this: 15 ‘I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot; I wish that you were cold or hot. 16 So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth. 17 Because you say, “I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing,” and you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked, 18 I advise you to buy from Me gold refined by fire so that you may become rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself, and that the shame of your nakedness will not be revealed; and eye salve to anoint your eyes so that you may see. 19 Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline; 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 will dine with him, and he with Me. 21 He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down 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.”

INTRO: Out of all the letters to the seven churches in Asia Minor (Turkey), the letter to the church of Laodicea may be the most famous and the most quoted throughout church history.

First, a little background: Laodicea was an extremely rich city. It was the center for banking, soft wool clothing manufacturing, and eye medicine that was exported throughout the Roman Empire. A famous school of medicine there developed a treatment to help cure eye diseases. Because the city lacked an adequate water supply, just like Los Angeles in the early 1900s, they built an aqueduct to bring them water from neighboring Colossae (known for its cold springs) and Hierapolis (known for its hot springs). But they found out that by the time the hot water came down from Hierapolis to Laodicea, it was lukewarm.

They were so rich that when an earthquake devastated the city in 60 AD, they were the only city in Asia Minor that did not ask Rome for funds to rebuild the city. They also had a large amphitheater that sat 30,000. They had a production every night. It was like the LA and Las Vegas of their time, the entertainment capital.

The city of Laodicea was due east of Ephesus and the southernmost city of the seven churches in Asia Minor. They received one of the circular letters along with the letter to the Colossian church and the letter to the Ephesian church (Colossians 1:7, 2:1). All of the seven churches were birthed by the revival that was started in Acts 19.

The church that started in revival became lukewarm. Some of the synonyms that come to mind are that they became nominal, religious (“having a form of godliness but denying the power”), seeker-sensitive, flabby, and anemic Christians.

I. THE REVELATION OF JESUS

A. Revelation 3:14 “To the angel of the church in Laodicea write: The Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God.”

1. This description of Jesus gives us the solution to the sins of Laodicea.

2. **Revelation 3:14a “The Amen”**: *Amen* means to be true. Jesus is “the Amen” since all His promises are true. Amen is also translated as “Truly, truly, I say to you.”
3. **Isaiah 65:16 “Because he who is blessed in the earth will be blessed by the God of truth”** is literally “the God of Amen.” As “the Amen,” Jesus lives in agreement with His Father. He requires that we agree with Him to release the certainty of His blessings and promises.
4. **Revelation 3:14b “The Faithful and True Witness”**: What He speaks is reliable and truthful (3:7). Jesus is faithful. **2 Timothy 2:13 “even if we are faithless, He remains faithful.”** God is committed to your success.
5. **Revelation 3:14c He is the True Witness**. Truth is emphasized again. **John 8:32 “and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.”** He wants to set you free from lukewarmness.
6. **Revelation 3:14d “The Beginning of creation”**: He is the beginning or the “first” cause of creation. Some translate the “Beginning” of creation as the “Originator” of creation or the “Ruler” of creation (NIV). And because He created us, He knows what is best for us, and what will make us happy, and we learn that being lukewarm is being in a miserable state.

II. THE REBUKE

- A. **Revelation 3:15 “I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot; I wish that you were cold or hot. 16 So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth.”**
 1. **Revelation 3:15a “I wish that you were cold or hot”**: Those who are spiritually cold are in a better position to see their great need. Cold: you’re not saved. One who feels the emptiness of a cold heart often searches desperately for God. Hot: you are on fire for God. Polycarp, who was burned at the stake, reportedly said, “You can’t burn me. I am already on fire for God.”
 2. **Revelation 3:15b “Lukewarm”**: This is the opposite of walking in the first commandment to love God with all their heart. It doesn’t say, “Love God with some of your heart, some of your soul, some of your mind, some of your strength.” I like my coffee hot or iced, but there is nothing worse than lukewarm coffee.
 3. **Revelation 3:15c “I will vomit you out of My mouth”**: Jesus’ heart was sick (His stomach hurt) with concern over them and what they were losing in their relationship with Him. He is not “repulsed” by the people who are lukewarm, but He feels anguish for them because of His love and investment in them.
 4. I remember when I almost died in 1997 because I ate a poisonous fish in Korea. I was vomiting all night. The fish was delicious, but my body was vomiting the poison. God is lovesick, and the lukewarmness is nauseating to God.
 5. God feels the pain of those He disciplines while still considering them His dearly beloved. The Holy Spirit can feel grieved or sick at heart over the lives of believers. Love is proportional to hurt. The more you love, the more you can be hurt, in pain over the relationship.
- B. **Revelation 3:17 “Because you say, ‘I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing,’ and you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked.”**

1. **Revelation 3:17a “I am rich and have need of nothing”:** They misinterpreted God’s financial blessing on their church as His approval of their spiritual life and lack of hunger for Him. Most of the churches in America are prosperous because we live in the richest nation in the world, but that doesn’t mean your church is not lukewarm. One of the dangers of revival is that it brings financial prosperity. **We call it “redemption and lift.”** Unless that prosperity is channeled in the right direction by giving, it can cause your heart to grow cold. Look at the church in Korea. I am concerned about the church in Brazil, Nigeria, and China. What is helping the church stay pure in China is the persecution by the Communist Party.
2. **Revelation 3:17b “You do not know you are wretched”:** This is a most disturbing thing for Jesus to say to a believer. *Wretched:* This Greek word means “calloused or hardened,” that is, to be spiritually dull. You are no longer on the cutting edge.
3. **Revelation 3:17c “Miserable”:** They were unhappy and miserable. **“There is nothing more miserable than a backslidden Christian.”**
4. **Revelation 3:17d “Poor”:** Being spiritually poor is not the same as being “poor in spirit” (Matthew 5:3). This is speaking of being a beggar. In His kingdom, you are on the low rung of His Kingdom hierarchy. E.g. “Great is the servant of all.”
5. **Revelation 3:17e “Blind”:** Being spiritually blind includes not seeing the truth about God or one’s own sins. Ironically, known for healing eyes, the Laodiceans were blind.
6. **Revelation 3:17f “Naked”:** Being spiritually naked speaks of believers who will lack being rewarded with heavenly garments in the age to come.

III. THE RECOMMENDATIONS:

Revelation 3:18 “I advise you to buy from Me gold refined by fire so that you may become rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself, and that the shame of your nakedness will not be revealed; and eye salve to anoint your eyes so that you may see.”

- A. **Revelation 3:18 “I advise you to buy from Me gold refined by fire so that you might become rich.”**
 1. The gold refined in fire is allowing God to purify you and embrace the discipline and the trials. During COVID-19, we are being disciplined. In “buying” gold, we do not “earn” it, but we invest ourselves in a costly way to position ourselves to receive “gold.” Isaiah called the people “to buy food” by listening or being attentive to the Spirit, then responding to what we hear (Isaiah 55:1-3). **Isaiah 55:1 Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you who have no money come, buy and eat. Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost.** We are talking about spiritual disciplines.
 1. Purified gold does not come easy. People mine for gold and then put it in the fire to refine it. Gold refined by fire involves a painful process to remove the dross. **Philippians 2:12 “work out your salvation with fear and trembling.”**
 2. **Malachi 3:2-3 He is like a refiner’s fire... He will purify the sons... as gold and silver that they may offer... an offering in righteousness.**
- B. **Revelation 3:18b “I counsel you to buy white garments so that you may clothe yourself, and that the shame of your nakedness will not be revealed.”**
 1. Jesus exhorted us “to buy” or acquire garments by righteous living that will result in being rewarded with heavenly garments (Revelation 19:8).

2. This is the language for you to “lay up treasures in heaven.” Buying garments means to “let your light shine before men that they will see your good works.”
- C. **Revelation 3:18c “Eye salve to anoint your eyes so that you may see.”**
 1. Anoint your eyes with eye salve: People in Laodicea put eye salve (medicine) on their eyes to be cured of eye diseases. Laodicea’s famous medical school exported a “powder” used as an eye salve. Only the Spirit can give us revelation of Jesus as we feed on the Word (Ephesians 1:17).
- D. **Revelation 3:19 “Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline; therefore, be zealous and repent.”**
 1. Jesus’ jealousy calls us to wholehearted love and obedience. Just like to the churches in Ephesus and Sardis, He calls us to *repent*. We should not be afraid of this word. It appears over 105 times in the Bible. It is the key to personal and corporate revival. **Proverbs 3:12 For whom the LORD loves He reproves.**

IV. REPENTANCE – THE KEY TO OVERCOMING LUKEWARMNESS. FOUR THINGS TO REPENT OF:

1. **ALL KNOWN SIN.** I take responsibility for my sin and resolve that I will no longer do this. Evan Roberts: “If you want personal revival, you must repent of all known sin.” God is calling us to radical obedience. E.g. The Pyongyang Revival of 1907 was “the Repentance Revival.”
2. **NOT READING THE BIBLE.** Read one chapter a day. Discipline will become a delight.
3. **NOT PRAYING.** Praying is carrying a conversation with God. It is talking to Him and listening to Him.
4. **NOT WITNESSING.** E.g. Sharing the gospel at In-N-Out and with a DirecTV technician.

V. THE REWARD THAT COMES BY FAITH

- A. **Revelation 3:20 “Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in and will dine with him, and he with Me. 21 He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down 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.”**
 1. **Revelation 3:20a “I stand at the door and knock”:** Jesus can open all doors (Revelation 3:7-8) except the door of our heart. Jesus will not violate our free will. This is written to believers and not unbelievers. He wants to abide with you (John 15). In the famous picture of Jesus knocking at the door in St. Paul’s Cathedral by William Hunt, they said, “You made a mistake. There is no handle on the door.” He said, “It was not a mistake. Only the person inside can open the door.”
 2. **Revelation 3:20b “If anyone who hears and opens the door”:** Jesus invites all individuals who hear and **obey by faith**. John 10:27 “My sheep hear my voice. I know them and they will follow me.”
 3. **Revelation 3:20c “I will come in and I will dine with him, and he with Me”:** He will restore the deep fellowship as the Spirit begins to cultivate a love relationship. Jesus promises to manifest Himself in a greater way to those who love and obey Him. **John 14:21 “He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me;**

and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will disclose Myself to him.”

4. **Revelation 3:21 “I will grant to sit down with Me on My throne”:** All believers are offered the opportunity to rule with Jesus in the new heaven and new earth to come. “And have made us kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign on the earth” (Revelation 5:10).
5. Jesus promised the apostles that they would eat and drink with Him and sit on thrones, judging the 12 tribes of Israel (Matthew 19:28; Luke 22:29-30).
6. But I believe that those who are on fire for Jesus now receive a greater authority. They are promoted on earth and in the new heaven to come.
7. Eating and ruling with Jesus are regularly brought together, and express intimacy with Him and authority that He will give in the life to come.