The Church In Laodicea

Intro: The record of the church in Laodicea is found in Revelation 3:14-22: "14 And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God; 15 I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. 16 So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. 17 Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: 18 I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see. 19 As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent. 20 Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me. 21 To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne. 22 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches."

I. BACKGROUND
   A. The city:
      1. Founded:
         a. Third century B.C.
         b. Founded by Antiochus II and named in honor of his wife—Laodice.
      2. In the Southwest of Phrygia.
         a. Called Laodice on the Lycus (the river on whose banks the city was built) to distinguish it from other cities by the same name.
         b. Situated between
            (1) 6 miles south of Hierapolis
            (2) 11 miles west of Colosse
            (3) 100 miles east of Ephesus
            (4) 50 miles southeast of Philadelphia.
         c. It was on a plateau between two small rivers: Asopus on the west, Caprus on the east.
         d. Water had to be piped in from hot springs and probably arrived lukewarm.
      3. Great Asian travel routes ran through it; thus, it was assured of commercial success.
      4. The city was wealthy; one of the wealthiest in the world.
         a. Bankers, exchangers, and millionaires lived there.
         b. They had a medical school there and manufactured a special type of ointment used as a balm for diseased, afflicted eyes.
         c. It became a clothing and fashion center early because of a type of cloth from black wool of sheep grown there.
         d. After a disastrous earthquake in A.D. 60, they rebuilt the city without Roman aid even though it was offered.
      5. There were hot springs nearby emitting lukewarm water.
   B. Its citizens
      1. Complacent
      2. Self-reliant
      3. These qualities disastrously spilled over into the Laodicean congregation.
C. The church
   1. While there is no mention of its origin, Epaphras may have been the one who founded it.
   2. The only other reference is in Colossians.
      a. Col. 2:1 "I For I would that ye knew what great conflict I have for you, and for them at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh;"
      b. Col. 4:13, 15-16 "I bear him [Epaphras] record, that he hath a great zeal for you, and them that are in Laodicea, and them in Hierapolis. 14 Luke, the beloved physician, and Demas, greet you. 15 Salute the brethren which are in Laodicea, and Nymphas, and the church which is in his house. 16 And when this epistle is read among you, cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodicceans; and that ye likewise read the epistle from Laodicea."

II. The Speaker
   A. As He did with the other congregations, He addressed it to the angel (which means messenger) of the church.
   B. His Messianic attributes.
      1. He is the Amen.
         a. It means truly, surely, so be it. It indicates affirmation. It is asserting or confirming something.
         b. It is used of Christ in that what He says will be; His promises can be relied upon.
      2. He is the faithful and true witness.
         a. Rev. 1:5 "And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood,"
         b. He is a witness in that He testifies of God and the Truth.
            (1) When we see Jesus, we see the Father.
            (2) Mat. 11:27 "All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him."
            (3) John 14:9 "Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father?"
         c. He is faithful in that everything He witnesses is reliable and trustworthy.
         d. He is a true witness in that nothing He witnesses is false; it is genuine.
         e. John 14:6 "Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."
      3. He is the beginning of the creation of God.
         a. Does not mean that He is the first thing God created.
            (1) That does not harmonize with His eternal nature.
            (2) Mic. 5:2 "But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting."
            (3) John 1:1-3 "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made."
b. **Beginning**
   
   (1) It is from the Greek ἀρχή (arche).
   
   (2) Here it means the originating source.
   
   (3) It is not the beginning as to order, but to cause.
   
   (4) It is saying that He is the cause of the creation of God.

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**III. THE LAODICEAN’S WORK**

**A. Jesus knew their work.**

1. As God, He is omniscient.
   
   a. John 2:24-25 “24 But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men, 25 And needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man.”
   
   b. Jesus knew Judas would betray Him and Peter, along with all the disciples, would deny Him; Mat. 26.

2. Likewise, He knows our works and will righteously judge us; Acts 17:31 “31 Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.”

**B. He could find nothing to commend.**

1. Here is a sad statement regarding a once faithful congregation.

2. When Jesus judges us in righteousness, what will He find to commend (and condemn)?

**C. The condemnation:**

1. They were lukewarm in their religious attitudes and activities.
   
   a. They were like the lukewarm waters coming into the city.
   
   b. They were neither cold nor hot.
      
      (1) They were not guilty of some great evil.
      
      (2) This is an attitude that is listless, unconcerned, indifferent and heartless.
      
      (3) They were self-satisfied.
      
      (4) They had an “I don’t care” disposition.
   
   c. Jesus preferred their being:
      
      (1) Hot (fervent for the faith)
      
      (2) Cold (no link at all with the Lord)
   
   d. Why does Christ prefer cold or hot?
      
      (1) We can easily understand why the hot.
         
         (a) *Hot* expresses the idea of boiling.
         
         (b) Rom. 12:11 “11 Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord;”
         
         (c) Gal. 4:18 “18 But it is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing, and not only when I am present with you.”
         
         (d) Tit. 2:14 “14 Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.”

      (2) Why cold:
         
         (a) *Cold* expresses icy cold.
         
         (b) The person with no link to Christ will not bring a reflection upon His cause that the lukewarm pretender will.
         
         (c) The cold person is more honest than the lukewarm person.
         
         (d) Mat. 12:30 “30 He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad.”
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The lukewarm state:
(a) If it is a transitional stage to a hot stage, is desirable.
(b) It is fatal if it is an abiding state; it is normally mistaken for a safe state.
(c) It is a state of indifference.
   (i) Of all attributes, this is possibly the most difficult to combat.
   (ii) It robs us of giving proper attention to and involvement in spiritual matters.
(d) It is a state of neutrality.
   (i) Mat. 6:24 “No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.”
   (ii) They were like Israel of old: 1 Kings 18:21 “And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? if the LORD be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word.”
(e) The closer a counterfeit bill is to the original, the more dangerous it is.
(f) Far too many Christians today are lukewarm.

The leaders of the congregation represent the congregation.
(1) JFB points out: “It is remarkable that the Greek adjectives are in the masculine, agreeing with the angel, not feminine, agreeing with the Church.”
(2) While all members of the congregation are responsible, the leaders bear a special responsibility for the tenor of the congregation.

2. They claimed they were
   a. Self-sufficient (possibly these are about spiritual and not worldly possessions)
      (1) Rich
      (2) Increased with goods
         (a) Some believe this has reference to spiritual riches, which were brought about by their worldly wealth.
         (b) They were the opposite of the church in Smyrna.
   (3) Did not need a thing.
   b. The self-sufficient will never come to God.
   c. We are to beware of covetousness.
      (1) Mat. 6:19-21 “Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”
      (2) Luke 12:15-21 “And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth. And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.”
      (3) Col. 3:5 “Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry:”
3. Jesus’ appraisal:
   a. Wretched (one in pitiable, distressed, afflicted condition)
   b. Miserable
      (1) One totally void of real heavenly hope; one is pitiful, full of misery.
      (2) BDAG says, “deserving of sympathy for one’s pathetic condition.”
      (3) Worse yet, they did not even realize it.
   c. Poor
      (1) This poverty is such that it reduces one to begging and a state of dependency on others for support.
      (2) Spiritual poverty, utter helplessness, completely destitute.
      (3) Their worldly property could not meet the wants of the soul.
   d. Blind
      (1) Spiritually blind; figuratively used as being unable to understand, ignorant.
      (2) They did not see the reality of their spiritual condition.
      (3) Laodicea was known for a salve to put on the eyes for healing them.
   e. Naked
      (1) Salvation often represented as a garment.
      (a) Mat. 22:11-13 “11 And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment: 12 And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless. 13 Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”
      (b) Rev. 6:11 “11 And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellowservants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled.”
      (2) They were without spiritual garments of holiness, sobriety, righteousness, godliness, etc.
   f. Lenski states that “these five adjectives with the one article present five aspects of one and the same condition…. Worst of all, these people who are in this condition do not know their state but boast of being rich.”

4. Their appraisal and Jesus’ appraisal (the right one) is a stark contrast.
   a. They were blind to their true condition.
   b. They thought:
      (1) They were a huge success, great, working, happy, and growing congregation.
      (2) They were great in their own eyes and possibly in the viewpoint of some outsiders.
   c. We must judge righteously even regarding ourselves.
   d. John 7:24 “24 Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment.”
   e. 2 Cor. 13:5 “5 Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?”

D. The curse
1. Their lukewarmness was sickening to Jesus.
   a. Jesus threatens to literally vomit them out of His mouth.
   b. This is the only sin we read about that produces such reaction from Christ.
2. “I will” indicates that he was about to do so.
   a. It also implies the possibility of the threat not being executed.
   b. If they will repent, the threat will not be carried out.

E. The stipulations
1. Buy gold from Christ.
   a. This is gold tried or purified in fire, thus pure gold.
   b. It does not have any impurities in it.
   c. This is true, pure spiritual wealth; 1 Pet. 1:7 “That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ:”
   d. This will make them rich.
      (1) This is spiritual wealth.
      (2) Laodiceans boasted of wealth, but it was a counterfeit wealth.
      (3) Physical wealth cannot:
         (a) Bring happiness.
         (b) Bring health of body or mind.
         (c) Bring comfort in sorrow.
         (d) Bring fellowship in loneliness.

2. Wear white raiment (clothes).
   a. These are garments God provides.
      (1) Rev. 19:7-9 “Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God.”
      (2) The righteousness of saints comes by the faith; Phi. 3:9 “And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith:”
      (3) We put on Christ; Gal. 3:26-27 “For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.”
   b. It is so their spiritual nakedness will be covered.
      (1) Nakedness was a shame.
         (a) Isa. 20:4 “So shall the king of Assyria lead away the Egyptians prisoners, and the Ethiopians captives, young and old, naked and barefoot, even with their buttocks uncovered, to the shame of Egypt.”
         (b) Nah. 3:5 “Behold, I am against thee, saith the LORD of hosts; and I will discover thy skirts upon thy face, and I will shew the nations thy nakedness, and the kingdoms thy shame.”
         (c) Oh, that we would learn this today.
      (2) Fine raiment was a great honor.
         (a) Pharaoh honored Joseph; Gen. 41:42 “And Pharaoh took off his ring from his hand, and put it upon Joseph’s hand, and arrayed him in vestures of fine linen, and put a gold chain about his neck;”
         (b) Dan. 5:29 “Then commanded Belshazzar, and they clothed Daniel with scarlet, and put a chain of gold about his neck, and made a proclamation concerning him, that he should be the third ruler in the kingdom.”
(c) When the prodigal returns; Luke 15:22 “22 But the father said to his servants, bring forth the best robe, and put \textit{it} on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet:"

3. Put salve on your eyes.
   a. That they might have clear vision.
   b. We need to see ourselves as we truly are.
      (1) 2 Cor. 13:5 “5 Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?”
      (2) Jam. 1:23-25 “23 For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: 24 For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. 25 But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.”

4. Be zealous.
   a. This would be the opposite of their lukewarmness (it is also opposite of cold).
   b. They must get out of their soul-damning lethargy.
   c. Zealous is present tense so continue to be zealous.

5. Repent
   a. Literally repent is to change the mind and is an aorist imperative.
   b. Here they must change their mind regarding the spiritual condition from being lukewarm to being zealous.
   c. The result is an amended life.

6. Open the door of Christ knocking at the door.
   a. They had rejected Christ by their lukewarmness, yet He is still at their door knocking.
      (1) Christ’s knocking expresses His effort through the Word to be admitted.
         (a) We must hear His voice.
         (b) This is abiding in Christ’s doctrine.
            (i) John 8:31-32 “31 Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, \textit{then} are ye my disciples indeed; 32 And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”
            (ii) 2 John 9 “9 Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son.”
      (2) They are the ones who excluded Christ.
         (a) They are the only ones who can allow Him back in.
         (b) The artist was right when he portrayed Christ as being outside the door knocking but there was no doorknob except on the inside.
   b. Some lessons:
      (1) Christ never forces Himself on anyone as per Calvinism.
         (a) Man is the one who chooses to allow entrance or reject entrance.
         (b) Jos. 24:15 “15 And if it seem evil unto you to serve the \textit{LORD}, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that \textit{were} on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the \textit{LORD}.”
      (2) No one can answer the door for me; I must do it myself.
(3) Christ will always be ready to enter our heart.
   (a) It shows the love of God and Christ that they are always willing.
   (b) Christ is taking the initiative in seeking sinful man.
   (c) Luke 19:10 “10 For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.”
   (d) There comes a time when all knocking shall cease.
      (i) Death
      (ii) Second Coming

F. The blessings
1. Christ will come in and eat with him (fellowship).
   a. John 17:21, 23 “21 That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. 22 And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: 23 I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.”
   b. 1 John 1:3 “3 That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.”
2. Sit with Christ on His throne.
   a. Sitting on the throne implies a rulership.
   b. Christ is ruler.
      (1) He is King of kings; Lord of lords.
         (a) 1 Tim. 6:15 “15 Which in his times he shall shew, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords;”
         (b) Rev. 17:14 “14 These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful.”
         (c) Rev. 19:16 “16 And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.”
      (2) Acts 2:36 “36 Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.”
      (3) 1 Cor. 15:25 “25 For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet.”
      (4) Heb. 1:8 “8 But unto the Son be saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom.”
   c. We rule with Christ.
      (1) Rom. 8:37 “37 Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.”
      (2) 1 Cor. 4:8 “8 Now ye are full, now ye are rich, ye have reigned as kings without us: and I would to God ye did reign, that we also might reign with you.”
      (3) Rom. 6:12-14 “12 Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. 13 Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. 14 For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.”
         (a) We reign over sin.
            (i) Letting God’s Word dwell in us: Psa. 119:11 “11 Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.”
            (ii) Gal. 2:20 “20 I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.”
We reign over Satan and death.

(i) 1 Cor. 15:54-57 "54 So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. 55 O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? 56 The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. 57 But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

(ii) Phi. 1:21 "21 For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain."

(iii) Rev. 14:13 "13 And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them."

(iv) 2 Tim. 4:7-8 "7 I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: 8 Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing."

Conclusion: We are to hear what the Spirit says. The Spirit is speaking through the Word (the only way He works today). Let us make sure we hear what the Spirit is saying to us.