

# CHALLENGING SPIRITUAL APATHY

## Revelation 3:14-22

Church	Summary	Verses	Praise	Condemn	Cure
<b>Ephesus</b>	Loveless	2:1-7	Serving, Steady, Sound, Suffering	Forsook 1 <sup>st</sup> Love	Remember, Repent
<b>Smyrna</b>	Persecuted	2:8-11	Endure Persecution	[None]	Fearless, Faithful
<b>Pergamos</b>	Compromising	2:12-17	Not Deny Faith	Tolerate Heresy & Sin	Repent
<b>Thyatira</b>	Corrupt	2:18-29	Works, Love, Faith, Service, Endurance	Tolerate False Prophetess	Hold Fast
<b>Sardis</b>	Dead	3:1-6	Live Reputation	Dead (Few Alive)	Awake, Strengthen, Remember, Repent
<b>Philadelphia</b>	Faithful	3:7-13	Witness, Kept Word, Endured	[None]	Hold Fast
<b>Laodicea</b>	Lukewarm	3:14-22	[None]	Apathetic, Materialistic	Zealous, Repent, Hear, Open

### I. We Are Measured By Christ's \_\_\_\_\_, Not Worldly Acceptance

<sup>14</sup> "And to the angel of the church in Laodicea write: 'The words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of God's creation. <sup>15a</sup> "I know your works:

### II. We Are Acceptable To Christ Through \_\_\_\_\_ The Truth, Not Rejecting It

<sup>15b</sup> you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were either cold or hot! <sup>16</sup> So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth.

### III. We Are To Go To Christ For \_\_\_\_\_ Riches, Not The World For It's Riches

<sup>17</sup> For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked. <sup>18</sup> I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire, so that you may be rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself and the shame of your nakedness may not be seen, and salve to anoint your eyes, so that you may see.

### IV. We Are To Eagerly \_\_\_\_\_, Not Remain Spiritually Apathetic

<sup>19</sup> Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent.

### V. We Are To Answer Christ's \_\_\_\_\_ To Receive Salvation And Riches From Him, Not Keep Him Outside Of Our Hearts

<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 eat with him, and he with me.

### VI. We Are To Find True \_\_\_\_\_ In Sharing Christ's Glory, Not Self-Achievement

<sup>21</sup> The one who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, as I also conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne.

### VII. We Are To \_\_\_\_\_ And Obey God's Warning, Not Remain Apathetic

<sup>22</sup> He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.' "

### Conclusion:

1. What do you value? No spiritual value (poor) – seek the eternal purpose, fellowship and glory through Christ
2. Where do you want to go? No spiritual perspective (blind) – open your eyes to Christ's truth and warning
3. What do you want to represent? No spiritual righteousness (naked) – be clothed in the gifted clothes of righteousness from Christ

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### I. We Are Measured By Christ's Truth, Not Worldly Acceptance (14-15a)

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### Introduction:

- Ancient mariners feared the doldrums when they were out at sea. This was the phenomena of being caught in the wrong latitude too long without having any wind. The sailors would die of thirst and starvation if they were caught in the doldrums too long.
- Ie/ The 2<sup>nd</sup> Law of Thermodynamics states that in a closed system, everything eventually moderates so no more energy is produced. Without outside energy, everything will decay or die.
- “I grew up in a Christian home, but it wasn’t until I went to camp ...”
- “Ugh – another Sunday with these people”
- “I’m too busy to invest in ministering to others right now”
- “God is great, God is good, thank you Lord for this food” (3x a day)

- Define apathy.
- How would you define “spiritual apathy”?
- What characterizes spiritual apathy in the church today?
  - Sitting in the pews with serving others
  - See
- How causes spiritual apathy in the church today?
  - Lack of love for Christ
  - Not really saved
  - Hidden sin
  - Lack of spiritual feeding
  - Lack of spiritual interest
  - Grudges

## 1. The City

- Founded by the Seleucids in 250 BC. Antiochus II (ruled 261 – 246 BC) named the city after his wife “Laodice” – whom he eventually
- Modern name: Eskithsar (which means “old castle/fortress”)
- Location: Lycus Valley, Province of Phrygia
- Built on the banks of a major trade river called Lycus, a tributary to the Maeander River
- Possessed 3 major trade routes – easier to travel in valleys than the mountains
- As population grew, their water supply was not sufficient
- The local river was too dirty
- So they piped in water that was so chalky
- City was destroyed in 17 AD by a great earthquake and was rebuilt by Rome with the aid of Emperor Tiberius
- City was destroyed again in 60 AD, but this time the Laodicean citizens were so rich that they refused the help of Rome and rebuilt the city with their own money
  - Tacitus, ancient roman historian, wrote “Laodicea arose from the ruins by the strength of her own resources and with no help from us.”
- They were the center of Banking (financial hub), Medicine (famous medical school, temple to Asklepios, god of healing) and Fashion (glossy black wool used for clothing and carpets)
- Vulnerable to attack because it depended upon a water supply several miles away. Invading army only needs to cut off water supply. Instead of depending on military, they emphasized diplomacy. They had a fine record of reaching agreements with their enemies and lived in peace.
- Proud city with great resource

## 2. The Church

- No one is really sure when the church in Laodicea started, though many scholars believe **Epaphras** started it because of his ministry in the Colossae area (Col 1:7)
- Colossae was only 10 miles away

**Colossians 4:12-13** <sup>12</sup>Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ Jesus, greets you, always struggling on your behalf in his prayers, that you may stand mature and fully assured in all the will of God. <sup>13</sup>For I bear him witness that he has worked hard for you and for those in Laodicea and in Hierapolis.

- But Paul is concerned for them 30 years before John (Colossians was written in 60 or 61 AD). Paul is not recorded as having been to Laodicea.

**Colossians 2:1** For I want you to know how great a struggle I have for you and for those at Laodicea and for all who have not seen me face to face,

**Colossians 4:16** And when this letter has been read among you, have it also read in the church of the Laodiceans; and see that you also read the letter from Laodicea.

- John writes this around 90AD
- Laodicea most likely struggled with the same problems Colossae struggled with – an early version of Gnosticism
  - Gnosticism infiltrated Greek philosophy with aspects of Christianity
  - Major Greek philosophies saw the material as bad and the immaterial as good
  - So when integrated with Christ, they liked the spiritual aspect of Christ, but denied He came in the flesh
  - Gnosticism is an anti-Christian cult
  - The Gnostics attacked the deity of Christ and attempted to infiltrate the church telling believers that their Gospels and their Christ were unreliable
  - “gnosis” = knowledge, claim an exclusive knowledge of God
  - Anything material was evil, anything spiritual was good
  - The Gnostic influence on Christianity emphasized that Jesus could not have been human, because flesh is bad
  - Jesus is so divine, he can’t be human (Gnostics despise the material and elevate the spiritual)
  - “Cosmological dualism was also a feature of the system—opposed spiritual worlds of good and evil. The material world was aligned with the dark world of evil.” (Norman Geisler, *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics*, p. 273)
  - Creation done by demiurges
  - “From the standpoint of traditional Christianity, Gnostic thinking is quite alien. Its mythological setting of redemption leads to a depreciation of the historical events of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Its view of man’s relationship to God leads to a denial of the importance of the person and work of Christ, while, in a Gnostic context, “salvation” is not understood in terms of deliverance from sin, but as a form of existential self-realization” (J.W. Drane, “Gnosticism,” *The New Bible Dictionary*)
- **Q: What are the current things today that the church is doing that causes the Head of the Church, Christ, to throw up?**
  - Churches that call themselves Christian and abandon the Gospel
  - Several Christian denominations have abandoned the Gospel long ago
  - Several churches in the area have had to leave their denominations because they have forsaken the Gospel
    - John MacArthur made a point that some churches today are leaving their denomination because of the Gay marriage agenda – but his question is why didn’t they leave when these denominations starting forsaking the Gospel?

- One of our missionaries left the church he was helping out at because the leadership is now forsaking objective truth
  - Gnostics denied God as the Creator – Today, churches have abandoned God as Creator, Genesis as history and Adam as a real person
  - Gnostics denied Christ coming in the flesh – Today, many churches deny that Christ is nothing more than a good teacher, or an example, or not the Eternal Son of God
  - Gnostics contributed false Gospels to twist Christianity to their own error – there are many people reading in Shamanism, Occult and Witchcraft forms into their Christianity with the Name It, Claim It Prosperity Gospel or Oprah’s promotion of “The Secret”
  - Angels are worshipped more than Christ
  - The Holy Spirit is worshipped at the expense of the Father and Son
  - Rationalism is heralded over Revelation
  - Liberal Churches, Cults, Prosperity Gospel
  - **Apostasy – the willful rejection of God’s truth**
- **There was nothing good said to Laodicea**
  - **You make me throw up!**
  - **What else made Christ throw up?**
    - **Finding significance in the things of the world, not Christ**
    - Laodicea: Center of banking, medicine and fashion
    - How much do we rely on our bank accounts, intellect (technology, business acumen, personal experience) and visible forms of acceptance (what we wear, social media)?
    - Laodicea did!
  - **Summary: Laodicea struggled with Apostasy and Idolatry!**
  - **Crazy Rich CHRISTIANS!!!**
  - How is our Bay Area culture similar to Laodicea?
  - How does our current immersion in our modern culture make us vulnerable to “luke-warmness”?
  - What are the spiritual results of spiritual luke-warmness listed at the end of v.17? Give examples of each of these in today’s church?

## **I. We Are Measured By Christ’s Truth, Not Worldly Acceptance (14-15a)**

*<sup>14</sup> "And to the angel of the church in Laodicea write: 'The words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of God's creation. <sup>15a</sup> 'I know your works:*

- What is the significance of Christ’s self-designated titles in v. 14 (Amen, Faithful & True Witness, Beginning of the creation of God”) in light of Laodicea’s spiritual reputation?
- **Amen** – “let it be true” – Christ is Truth to a hypocritical church

- Ie/ Aesop's "The Boy Who Cried Wolf" – we teach our kids to stop lying because we don't know when we can believe them anymore
- Christian lies:
  - I'm okay on my own.
  - I'm a good person.
  - I did so much good in my past, I can rest on my laurels.
  - As long as I attend church, I'm accepted by Christ
  - I can contribute to or earn my salvation
- **Faithful & True Witness**
  - Christ was faithful through His suffering & His death on cross (Phil 2:8)
  - Christ is also the true witness –
    - E.g. false witnesses in the court of law vs. True Witness
  - Jesus is the basis for our spiritual validation – not Greek philosophy in Colossae, not human rationalism, not atheistically biased science
- **Beginning of God's Creation**
  - Christ is their Creator whom they are accountable to
  - Where the Gnostics deny the value of the physical – Christ the Creator is the preeminent One in creation who created all things, visible and invisible, for Himself

**Colossians 1:15-17** <sup>15</sup>He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. <sup>16</sup>For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. <sup>17</sup>And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.

- Laodicea thought they were their own Lord
- They lived up to the meaning of their name: "the people's rights"

## II. We Are Acceptable To Christ Through Keeping The Truth, Not Rejecting It (15b-16)

*<sup>15b</sup> you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were either cold or hot! <sup>16</sup> So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth.*

- What does Christ mean by "hot" and "cold"? I don't think we need to stretch an analogy that "hot" means "on fire for Christ" and "cold" means "unsaved"
- Why would "cold" or "hot" be preferable to "lukewarm"? Because "lukewarm" just made Christ vomit!
  - Even if cold means unsaved and hot means spiritual fervor, it is still worse to have the truth and willfully turn away from it
  - Apostasy is greatly condemned
- Why is "lukewarm" so displeasing?
  - In Laodicea, water from the hot springs was piped in from Denizli & Hieropolis which is 6 miles away. By the time it got to Laodicea, it was lukewarm.

- The water was also full of calcium – evidenced by the chalky white mineral sediment
- Turks call it *Pamukkale* or “cotton palace” because of this lime sediment
- **So not only was the water lukewarm but chalky tasting too**
- Lukewarm water could make you upchuck, gag, vomit.
- The spiritual apathy of the church at Laodicea made the Lord gag
- What synonyms would be fitting for “lukewarm”?
- Describe a lukewarm Christian?

### **III. We Are To Go To Christ For Spiritual Riches, Not The World For It's Riches (17-18)**

*<sup>17</sup>For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked. <sup>18</sup>I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire, so that you may be rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself and the shame of your nakedness may not be seen, and salve to anoint your eyes, so that you may see.*

- What things listed in v.17 made the Laodicean Christian lukewarm?
- Laodicea was the chief city in the Phrygian region and wealthiest too
- **Center of Trade** – 3 major highways intersected city
- **Center of Banking** – not need Rome’s help to rebuild
  - Cicero cashed bank drafts
- **Center of Fashion** – fertile Lycus Valley produced beautiful black sheep with glossy wool – famous throughout the world
- **Center Of Human Rights** – “Laodicea” lit. means “People’s Rights”
- **Center Of Medicine** – famous teachers of medicine: Zeuxis and Alexander Philaethes (both found on ancient coins from that regions); place where ointment from spikenard for the ears and an eye salve (called “Tephra Phrygia” or “collyrium”) for many eye ailments were invented
- **Crazy Rich Christians!!**
- **“Wretched”** – burdened, oppressed
  - Yet God called them:
    - **Poor** (bank) – God is not impressed with our portfolio
    - **Naked** (fashion) – God is not impressed with our appearance, fashion or social media
    - **Blind** (medicine) – God is not impressed
  - Money, fashion, business and medicine are good things, but they became preoccupations for them
  - They became a burden and oppressed them
  - Materialism oppresses us
  - Peer pressure oppresses us
  - Coming up with the next big idea oppresses us
- **“Pitiable”** – feel sorry for



- In the Asian church I pastor, our students are under great pressure by their parents and culture to study hard and to pad their transcripts
- It's a shame if you don't make it into a prestigious university
- It's a shame if you don't become a doctor or engineer
- So our students struggle with the pressure academia and materialism and it can preoccupy them from the things of God
  
- **"Buy" (18) – acquire,**
  - go to Christ as our source, our store – not the world
  
- **Gold** – emblem of faith, spiritual riches that comes from God only – the Gospel, eternal glory
  - **Refined by fire** – tested and purified. Gold is refined by heat separating the metal from the dross (impurities)
  
- **White Garments (purity) vs. Black Wool (materialism)** –
  - What jersey do we want to put on to represent? (Warriors, Niners, Giants, Elephant, Donkey)
  - Clothed in the righteousness of Christ
  - He gives us His righteousness – our clothes aren't sufficient to impress God
  - We need to wear what He's wearing
  
- **Eye Salve** – Christ opening our eyes, not human technology, human intellect, etc.
  - Blindness prevents us from going the right way
  - Let Christ open our eyes to His eternal and righteous direction
  
- ◆ What 3 things does Christ challenge Laodicea to pursue?
- ◆ Why are they told to "buy" these items? What is the exact cost?
- ◆ What is the significance of the imagery of each of those 3 elements to the Laodicean culture?
- ◆ What do those 3 items depict for the Christian?
  - gold – eternal values (vs. wood, hay, stubble – seek gold, silver, precious stones – 1 Cor 3:12)
  - white garments – righteousness
  - eye salve – spiritual vision - see God (Mt 5:8)
- ◆ How should a Christian pursue these three things in our every day life?

#### **IV. We Are To Eagerly Repent, Not Remain Spiritually Apathetic (19)**

*<sup>19</sup> Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent.*

- ◆ Christ gives 2 commands in v.19 – what are they?
- ◆ How is "zeal" necessary to cure spiritual apathy? What kind of zeal is Christ talking about? How do we develop this type of zeal?
- ◆ What precisely is to be "repent"(ed) of for the lukewarm Christian? Why is "lukewarmness" a sin?

**V. We Are To Answer Christ's Knock To Receive Salvation And Riches From Him, Not Keep Him Outside Of Our Hearts (20)**

*<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 eat with him, and he with me.*

- To the apostate unbelievers, they need to come to the Gospel in Christ alone
- Not redefining the Gospel as human effort, social justice or escape from poverty
- But Christ as Savior
- To the Crazy Rich Materialist – come to Christ as the source of blessing
  
- **Eat** = sweet fellowship with Christ

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*<sup>21</sup> The one who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, as I also conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne.*

- Overcomes (Gr. *Nikao*)
- Sit with Christ on His throne

◆ How is this a better alternative than what the lukewarm Christian is pursuing presently?

**VII. We Are To Hear And Obey God's Warning, Not Remain Apathetic (22)**

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- God is not calling on those who are deaf to Him, obstinate to Him
- But those willing to hear what He says

**Conclusion:**

- 1. What do you value? No spiritual value (poor) – seek the eternal purpose, fellowship and glory through Christ**
- 2. Where do you want to go? No spiritual perspective (blind) – open your eyes to Christ's truth and warning**
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