



REVELATION

FOLLOWING THE WAY OF THE LAMB

WEEK 06
Lukewarm Laodicea
Revelation 3:14- 22

Dwelling in the Word

1. Prayerfully read through Revelation 3:14-22 and reflect on the following questions: 1) What words, phrases, or images stood out to you? Why? 2) What does this passage communicate to you about God? 3) How would you like to respond to what God may be desiring to accomplish in you?

Digging Deeper

1. The message to the Laodiceans opens with a description of Jesus as “the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God’s creation” (3:14). All of these describe who Jesus is, not something he does or holds. What ideas do these images convey and what do they say about whom the Laodiceans should trust?
2. The metaphor of Jesus wanting to vomit out the lukewarm water (3:16) is a shocking image of the state of the Laodicean’s spiritual health. It was known that Hierapolis had medicinal water from its hot springs; Colossae had a cold refreshing water supply, while Laodicea had to bring in their water by aqueduct and was lukewarm and putrid, i.e., “neither cold nor hot.” How does this help explain the metaphor? Does it make more sense to you now? In what way?
3. In 3:17, Jesus condemns the Laodicean’s self-sufficiency in ways that reflect the civic pride of Laodicea (wealth, production of textiles, and its medical treatments, including an eye salve). How does Jesus’ condemnation relate to our context in the 21st century?
4. Though Jesus is in some ways is harshest on the Christ followers at Laodicea, wanting to “spit them out of his mouth” (3:16) and calling them “wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked” (3:17), he invites them to let him in and share a meal (3:20). Reflect on what this says about God, particularly his grace and forgiveness.
5. How does the promise in v. 21 for those victorious (i.e., those who persevere in faithfulness) resonate with you?
6. One of the main issues that the seven messages are concerned about is that of the followers of Jesus accommodating too easily to their social and political environment in the Roman Empire (or resisting the call to accommodate and suffering as a consequence). Do you agree? Reflect on this issue of accommodation as it applies to our context today.

For Groups

1. Parallel to questions #2 and 3 above, if there was a message for “the church in Edmonton,” what may it say about how the church in Edmonton has accommodated and reflected the culture of the city, rather than remain faithful to Jesus? Discuss in your group.
2. There have been some consistent themes across the messages that we have looked at. We’ve been reminded that God pays attention to detail, as many of the letters have contained very specific comments and imagery that connect to their specific cities. We’ve been reminded that we, as people, can be prone to putting other things before God and following the ways of our culture more than the ways of Jesus. And we’ve been reminded that there is victory/promise when we follow Jesus. As you spend time in prayer with your group, continue to confess areas in your life that may be getting in the way of your relationship with God and thank him for the ways that he has walked with you and that he is a God that sees the particulars of our lives.

Living it Out

1. In this letter, Jesus is portrayed as outside the house (recall that churches at this time met in houses), asking to be let in (3:20). Henri Nouwen, in his book *Lifesigns*, makes an extended metaphor of abiding or dwelling in the “house of love.” Jesus, in whom the fullness of God dwells, has become our home. “By making his home in us, he allows us to make our home in him. By entering into the intimacy of our innermost self he offers us the opportunity to enter into his own intimacy with God. By choosing us as his preferred dwelling place he invites us to choose him as our preferred dwelling place” (p. 25). Reflecting on this metaphor, how can you open up to Jesus and let him in to your “house” (even the closets!) more fully, more authentically?



LUKEWARM LAODICEA

Revelation 3:14-22
October 15, 2023 | Tyler Williams

PASTORAL-PROPHETIC MESSAGES

1. **Ephesus** (2:1-7) ←
2. Smyrna (2:8-11)
3. Pergamum (2:12-17)
4. Thyatira (2:18-29)
5. Sardis (3:1-6)
6. Philadelphia (3:7-13)
7. **Laodicea** (3:14-22) ←

Both churches are in danger of losing their Christian identity

LAODICEA (3:14-22)

- Prosperous city in the Lycus valley.
- Known for its wealth, production of textiles, and its medical treatments (including an eye salve).
- Also known for its poor water supply.



DESCRIPTION

- “These are the words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God’s creation” (3:14).
- The “Amen” (see Isa 65:16).
 - The “faithful and true witness” (see 1:5; 19:11)
 - The “ruler [or the first] of God’s creation” (see 22:13) – Gk. *arche* (αρχη).

CONDEMNATION

“I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! So, because you are lukewarm—neither hot nor cold—I am about to spit [vomit!] you out of my mouth” (3:15-16).

- “You’re stale. You’re stagnant. You make me want to vomit” (3:16, MSG).
- The metaphors of “cold” and “hot” are often misunderstood.

CONDEMNATION

- Hierapolis was 10 km north and Colossae 18 km east.
- Hierapolis had medicinal water from its hot springs; Colossae had cold refreshing water.
- Laodicea’s water supply was brought in by aqueduct and was lukewarm and putrid, i.e., “neither cold nor hot.”



CONDEMNATION

Craig Koester suggests the imagery has to do with ancient hospitality and the practice of serving either chilled wine or hot wine, not lukewarm wine.

“The Laodiceans are unlike the hot or cold drink that a banqueter might desire. They are tepid, objectionable, and something to be vomited out of the mouth” (Koester, 344).



CONDEMNATION

- “You say, ‘I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.’ But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked” (3:17).
- Condemns their self-sufficiency by describing it in terms of things the city was proud of.
 - One could only become rich through accommodation with Roman culture.

INVITATION

“I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see” (3:18).

- Jesus makes available for purchase authentic and lasting gold (wealth), white robes that will clothe them in righteousness, and salve that will provide genuine sight.

INVITATION

“Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest and repent” (3:19).

- Though they have excluded Jesus from their lives, Jesus loves them affectionately (*phileo* φιλεω; in 1:5 Jesus loves us with agape love);
- And invites them to repent.

INVITATION

“Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me” (3:20b).

- Surprisingly, Jesus is outside the church asking to be invited in!



LAODICEA & BABYLON

- Laodicea has absorbed the values of “Babylon” so totally that there is no longer any resistance.
- Laodicea: “I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing” (3:17).
- Babylon: “I sit enthroned as queen. I am not a widow; I will never mourn” (18:7).
- Babylon: “Come out of her, my people” (18:4).
- Laodicea: Repent and invite him in (3:19-20).



PROMISE

“To the one who is victorious, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I was victorious and sat down with my Father on his throne” (3:21).

- To those who repent and let Jesus in, he will give them the status and honour they so desire.



RESPONSE

- Call to repentance.
- A call to come out of “Babylon.”
- An invitation to let Jesus in.