

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: ¹⁵ “I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. ¹⁶ So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth. 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— ¹⁸ 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. ¹⁹ As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. 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 dine with him, and he with Me. 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. ²² “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.””

Introduction

We now come to the last of the letters to the 7 churches.

The letter is addressed to the church at Laodicea.

The importance of the city of Laodicea was entirely due to its position.

Due to the geographical conditions of the area, every road had to pass through the Lycus valley where the city of Laodicea stood.

It was one of the great commercial cities of the ancient world.

The city had one main handicap. It’s water supply had to come by underground aqueduct from springs that were 10 kilometres away.

This was O.K. in peace time, but in a time of war it was easy for the enemy to cut off their supply of water. Because the water had to travel such a distance to get to the city it was usually lukewarm by the time it got to the city.

This fact added weight to the spiritual significance of the condition of the believers in that city.

The city was famous for its banking, the manufacture of clothing, the medical centre situated in the city and also because there were a large number of Jewish people living in the city.

(At least 7,500 males)

The Church at Laodicea was the only Church that Jesus had nothing positive to say about its spiritual condition.

Like all the other letters, it begins with a series of titles of Jesus Christ. This is where we will begin.

1. The Great Titles of Jesus Christ – v. 14.

a) Jesus is called the “Amen”. This is a strange title.

This title has two possible origins. Firstly, in Isaiah Chapter 65 verse 16 God is called the “God of Truth”. In the Hebrew language he is called the “God of Amen”.

Amen is the word which we often put at the end of a solemn statement in order to guarantee its truth.

If God is to be called the God of “Amen” then he can be totally relied upon.

This means that the promises made by Jesus Christ are true and beyond doubt.

The second possibility is found in John’s gospel.

The statements that Jesus makes in this letter often begin with the words “Truly, truly, I say to you...John 1:51,3:3, 5, 11.

The Greek for “truly” is Amen.

In other words, the words Jesus speaks and promises He makes can be relied upon.

Whatever origin you choose, the outcome is the same.

b) Jesus is called the faithful and true witness.

A witness must satisfy three essential conditions.

Firstly, he must have seen with his own eyes the thing that he tells us about.

Secondly he must be 100% honest to repeat with accuracy that which he has heard and seen.
Thirdly a witness must have the ability to tell something that leaves a true impression on those who hear.

Jesus Christ fulfilled all these conditions.

Jesus can tell us about God, because He has come from God.

We can rely on His words.

c) Jesus is called the beginning of the creation of God.

The word for beginning in the Greek is "arche".

The word means origin.

The meaning here is that everything in this world has its origin in Jesus Christ.

John1: v. 3

³All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.

Colossians 1: v. 15,18

¹⁵ He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.

¹⁸ 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.

2. Jesus Challenges the Church about their spiritual state – v.15-17

Jesus rebukes the church in two ways.

Jesus tells the Church that they are neither cold nor hot. We use the word lukewarm. Jesus is so upset about their spiritual state that he wants to vomit them out of His mouth.

Recently some Church members have had a vomiting illness. It is not nice. For 24 hours your stomach can't even keep down water.

Jesus says that He detests lukewarm spirituality so much that it is like vomiting. This is horrible.

We already know that the water in this city was a bit lukewarm which is probably why Jesus used this illustration.

Also on the other side of the city stood a famous hot spring.

If you drank the mineral spring water it made you want to be physically sick.

This attitude of Jesus Christ is a big challenge to all of us.

Are we lukewarm in our Christian life?

Q. We might ask the question, why is Jesus so upset with Churches who are lukewarm?

What does "Lukewarm" Christianity look like?

It is important that we understand what Jesus is saying here.

The first thing we need to realise here and that is that true Christianity is about a "Relationship" with God, through Jesus and by the power of the Holy Spirit.

We need to view this text with relationship eyes.

The second thing we need to note and that is that Jesus said that he wishes that the Church was "cold" or "hot".

We can understand hot, but why is cold acceptable too?

The answer can be found by going back to our "relationship"

Relationships are all about honesty.

Nobody likes a relationship that is dishonest.

Jesus wants us to be honest in our relationship with Him.

We may be a little cold because we have had a big disappointment in life.

We can be honest and go to Jesus for "help" that is O.K.

We might be on fire for God and want to serve Him and make sacrifices for Him. That is O.K. But we still need His help.

If we are "lukewarm" we are saying that we are O.K.

We don't really need God's help we can manage without Him.

We put on a show, come to Church, sometimes give etc. but really we have no living relationship with Jesus.

Nobody likes a fraud. Jesus certainly doesn't.

People who say they are a Christian but do not obey the Bible and don't having a living relationship with Jesus are people that Jesus detests.

However, there is a solution for these people and we will deal with that later.

This leads us on to the second challenge by Jesus to the "lukewarm" church.

In v. 17 Jesus reveals that the Church was wealthy and did not need anything from God.

We know that the city was wealthy due to its banking and clothing trade.

Prosperity is always a challenge to the true Christian life.

This is one of the reasons why Christianity seems to flourish more in poorer countries than in wealthy countries.

The Church thought that they were rich because they wrongly compared their physical wealth with their spiritual wealth.

Money and physical goods are not a sign of spiritual maturity.

We only have to read the account of the rich man and Lazarus in Luke chapter 16: v. 19-31 to discover that truth.

A spiritually healthy life is a life that is totally depended upon Jesus.

One of Aesop's fables,(an ancient Greek story teller) tells the story of the dog who saw his image reflected in a pool of water beneath his feet.

Though he already had a bone, he was jealous of the bone he saw in the "other" dog's mouth.

He opened his mouth to snarl at the reflection and of course as he did this his bone fell into the water.

The dog lost everything trying to chase something that was not real.

How accurately this gives us a picture of the Church in Laodicea.

The Church was not satisfied with the promises of God. They acquired earthly power through wealth.

Yes they became rich, but in reality they became poor spiritually.

In the end they were going to lose both their wealth and gain nothing spiritually.

I hope that there is nobody here that is searching after material wealth at the cost of their spiritual life?

If you are "let this be a warning"

3. Jesus offers a solution to the lukewarm church v 18-20

Let us examine verses 18-20 to discover what the solution is for the "lukewarm" church.

The first thing we need to notice is that Jesus loved the lukewarm church with a love that wanted it to change.

The idea of Jesus rebuking people whom He loves runs throughout the Bible.

Proverbs 3: v. 12v in the N.K.J.

¹²For whom the LORD loves He corrects,

Just as a father the son *in whom* he delights.

In the Greek translation the word love which is used here has been changed from Agape Love to Philein love.

This word describes a more affectionate love.

One Scottish Commentator has paraphrased it is this way.

"It is the people who are dearest to me on whom I exercise the sternest discipline."

The second thing we need to note is the word "rebuke".

The Greek word that is used here describes the rebuke which compels a person to see his error.

An example of this can be seen in the Old Testament.

Turn with me to 2 Samuel 12: v. 1-14

Then the LORD sent Nathan to David. And he came to him, and said to him: "There were two men in one city, one rich and the other poor. ²The rich *man* had exceedingly many flocks and herds. ³But the poor *man* had nothing, except one little ewe lamb which he had bought and nourished; and it grew up together with him and with his children. It ate of his own food and drank from his own cup and lay in his bosom; and it was like a daughter to him. ⁴And a traveler came to the rich man, who refused to take from his own flock and from his own herd to prepare one for the wayfaring man who had come

to him; but he took the poor man's lamb and prepared it for the man who had come to him." ⁵ So David's anger was greatly aroused against the man, and he said to Nathan, "As the LORD lives, the man who has done this shall surely die! ⁶ And he shall restore fourfold for the lamb, because he did this thing and because he had no pity." ⁷ Then Nathan said to David, "You *are* the man! Thus says the LORD God of Israel: 'I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you from the hand of Saul. ⁸ I gave you your master's house and your master's wives into your keeping, and gave you the house of Israel and Judah. And if *that had been* too little, I also would have given you much more! ⁹ Why have you despised the commandment of the LORD, to do evil in His sight? You have killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword; you have taken his wife *to be* your wife, and have killed him with the sword of the people of Ammon. ¹⁰ Now therefore, the sword shall never depart from your house, because you have despised Me, and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife.' ¹¹ Thus says the LORD: 'Behold, I will raise up adversity against you from your own house; and I will take your wives before your eyes and give *them* to your neighbor, and he shall lie with your wives in the sight of this sun. ¹² For you did *it* secretly, but I will do this thing before all Israel, before the sun.'" ¹³ So David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the LORD." And Nathan said to David, "The LORD also has put away your sin; you shall not die. ¹⁴ However, because by this deed you have given great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme, the child also *who is* born to you shall surely die."

The rebuke of God is not so much punishment but 'illumination'

It is much better if WE can SEE where we are going wrong.

Spiritual sight is different from physical sight.

Just as we should discipline our children, so God disciplines us because He loves us.

If you want your own children to waste their lives, don't discipline them. If you want them to learn and grow up as useful citizens you must train them and discipline them.

It is a fact of life that the best athlete and the finest scholar receive the most demanding training.

The discipline of God is not something which we should resent, but something that we should be thankful for.

The third thing is that Jesus tells the Church to be zealous and repent. – v. 19.

Repentance starts when we change our mind about ourselves.

We see ourselves as God sees us and not how we see ourselves.

The Church at Laodicea were rich and wealthy and thought that they had no need of God.

They needed to change their mind about that attitude.

Maybe today you don't think that you need Jesus Christ in your life? If that is what you are thinking then you need to change your mind about that.

There is nobody else who can save you from your sin.

Jesus is the only one. (Acts 4: v.12)

Repentance is not just a change of mind but it also means turning around and going in another direction.

You must start going in the right direction.

The Bible and its teaching can help you go in the right direction.

Jesus counsels the Church in v. 18 to buy gold from Him which has been refined in fire.

Gold is the most precious metal.

It is boiled to a very high temperature and then the impurities rise to the top and then they are scooped out.

This leaves gold as a pure metal.

Jesus is the only one that can take away our impurities and prepare us for Heaven.

4. Jesus offers a reward to the Church at Laodicea if they repent.

In v. 20 Jesus makes an offer to the members of this Church.

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 dine with him, and he with Me.

Here we have one of the most famous pictures in the New Testament.

Here we see the pleading of Jesus Christ. He stands at the door of the human heart and knocks.

There is no other religion in all the world that has a vision of a seeking God.

The National Christian Council of Japan many years ago in a documentary were trying to explain some of the differences of Christianity from all other religions.

They explained it like this.

‘Man not seeking God, but God taking the initiative in seeking man.’

No matter how early we rise for prayer, we will always find God waiting for us.

Maybe Jesus is knocking at the door of your heart today?

Will you let Him in?

The handle of the door is on your side, you need to open it and invite Jesus into your heart and life.

The promise Jesus makes is that He will come in and dine with you.

The Greek word used here is for the main evening meal of the day.

Jesus promises us a full and nourishing meal.

Jesus is giving us an illustration of the full and satisfying life that He offers us.

Yes you can choose to go your own way, but it will not result in a full and satisfying life and eternity in Heaven.

If you refuse Jesus, you will keep searching for the meaning to life, and never find it.

The final reward offered to the repentant person in this Church is that they can sit with Jesus on His throne.

Q. What does this mean?

To get the picture correct we must remember that the eastern throne was more like a sofa or couch than a single seat.

In other words, we will be Jesus wherever He is situated.

Finally in v. 22 Jesus says

²² “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.””

The reason for this saying is to remind the reader or hearer that **“THIS MEANS US”**

So often we can listen to a sermon or Bible message and say that applies to someone else and not to me.

If Jesus has spoken to your heart today, then this applies to YOU.

These letters were written to Churches 2,000 years ago but they still have application in Churches today in 2016.

May God help us to apply these messages to our lives.

Amen.