

**The Church in (Palm Beach County) Laodicea
Jesus Wants Dangerous Christians
Revelation 3:14 – 22**

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We are in Revelation 3:14-22 and we are covering the last of the seven churches that Jesus writes to, the church at Laodicea.

We learned, so far from verse 14, that Jesus is deliberate in the terms He uses as He begins His letter. He wants to make it crystal clear who He is to this church.

As we have previously discussed, each of the churches is a church that existed in Asia Minor in 90AD when the letters were written. We have had examples of each of the churches extant throughout history.

As we examine churches around us today, we can clearly see examples of each of these churches in the world today. We also learned that the arrangement of the presentation, as superintended by the Holy Spirit, also provides the impression that these also project a view of church history.

They were literal historical Churches, existing at the time John wrote, but, at the same time, representative and comprehensive of all other Churches of all nations, places and ages—a complete sample of the whole body, in the entirety of its character and career. And it is the same with reference to these seven Epistles. They are neither exactly nor only prophetic. They were really messages to these particular Churches, in view of their several conditions, to stir them up to hold fast what was right, and to amend what was wrong, as also all other Churches in like conditions. But as the seven Churches were representative and inclusive of the entire Church, these Epistles also give Christ's judgment of the entire Church, and are necessarily anticipative of its entire history. (Seiss 1901, 151-152)

What We Know So Far

The church of Laodicea is one which is ruled by the people who are in the church. The people call the shots, not the Holy Spirit. It is a church where people can come and hear a nice comforting message and never be challenged with things like sin, correction or an actual study of the scriptures. But they will feel good about themselves and be comforted in their chosen lifestyle without being challenged by the Word of God, or the need for repentance or sanctification. This is a church where serious Bible study does not exist.

This is a church in a very affluent environment.

To this church Jesus has identified Himself as the one capable of answering prayers, He is the God of Amen.

He is the faithful and true witness, faithful unto death and then rose again to validate His claim of being Messiah, the man who is also God.

And He is the creator of everything, not the evolver of everything, but the creator of everything.

Jesus literally says in the Greek that He is the agent or cause of creation and He does not itself have a cause. After all, He is eternal and has always existed.

He has always been and always will be, He is the I Am. This church would be one that has gone whole hog into market studies and people pleasing so folks can have their best life now. They need to know that now is not the time to be targeting, they need to be looking at where they will be spending eternity

Revelation 3:14–15

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: “I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot; I wish that you were cold or hot.” (NASB95)

Jesus is saying, clearly, “I see you, know you intimately and I know exactly what you are doing and the true motivation of why you are doing it.” There is no hiding place, none

Hebrews 10:31

“It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God.” (NASB95)

This church does not know it completely yet, but they are on the wrong side of the God of the universe. Just as God pursued Jonah when he went the wrong way, He is pursuing this church which has lost its way.

Again, this is a specific church at a specific time, but this problem exists today in almost every church, in some it is in control, in others, it is in a fight with Philadelphia, but the spirit of Laodicea is alive and well. Yes, even in your church no matter how hard you are working to keep it out.

Yes, there are fallen divine beings who want to destroy the work of God in the church and they will stand at nothing to achieve their purpose.

Ephesians 6:12

“For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.” (NASB95)

There are fallen divine beings searching within the body of believers of every church as well as the staff of every church for the weakest link.

2 Peter 2:1–3

“But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves. Many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of the truth will be maligned; and in their greed they will exploit you with false words; their judgment from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep.” (NASB95)

Who can be compromised? Who can be sold the latest church growth program which excludes prayer and the moving of the Holy Spirit? Who can the enemy find that is influential and can move the church away from the primary task of making disciples? How many decisions are truly based on prayer?

Peter tells us in 2 Peter 3 that it begins with questioning the validity of the second coming of Jesus and moves to the theory of uniformitarianism, a denial of the flood and of creation. Welcome to the church of the 21st century.

We are there right now

Most of the church has rejected the supernatural and is “okay” with things as they are now.

They want to get along with the culture and deal with social justice issues rather than the issues that all of us deal with, sin and its perverse hold on us.

The question the Bible answers is a question being asked today, “How should we live?” The Bible has the answer, but no one wants to hear it as it involves the use of a scalpel on those things we like and do not want to put away from us. We love our sinful lifestyles.

The Laodiceans professed Christianity and were self-complacent and self-satisfied. They were unconscious that they were wholly, or all but wholly, out of communion with Christ (3:20), at all events they felt no need of repentance. Hence the startling declaration that the absolute rejection of religion (3:15) were preferable to the Laodicean profession of it. As a Church and as individuals they dwelt with complacency on what they had achieved (17a), whilst they were serenely unconscious of what they had left undone. (Charles 1920, 95)

Examples of Laodicean creep in the church today.

Per George Barna, most churches no longer have a mid-week Bible study and many have also dropped Sunday night studies as well.

Most churches have eliminated their Sunday or Wednesday evening services— and many have scratched both. In many churches, those events have been replaced by “small groups” that meet in people’s homes, but attendance at those gatherings has also dropped from 23 percent to just 10 percent in the past decade. Further, Christians across the nation indicate that the emphasis in these meetings is more on developing a sense of community than providing insightful biblical instruction. (Barna 2016, Kindle Locations 567-571)

The way we have done church in the past is failing, and in order to prop up the way we have done church in the past, we produce ways to attract people into buildings and programs that are not in themselves the wrong solution, but are perceived by many not to be meeting the needs of the people, so we move to entertainment.

Again, we have lost our way and moved from discipling, the call of Jesus, to entertaining and the idea of repentance is gone.

There are many church growth models out there today that are theft models or feel good models.

How do we reach a digital generation? What is it that the Holy Spirit is telling us that we are too blind to see or hear?

The church in Laodicea thought they were moving the right direction by looking like the culture, but they lost the primary mission in the process.

How do we as the 21st century church morph into what it is that will communicate the word of God effectively but do so in a manner that will reach the intergenerational group we see in the church?

Do we continue to do church as we have, or do we begin looking for more ways to communicate truth?

The danger, as we look for and implement new technology and processes, we must keep our eye firmly on the mission of Matthew 28:19

Matthew 28:19

“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit,” (NASB95)

2 Thessalonians 2:3–4

“Let no one in any way deceive you, for it will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God.” (NASB95)

Do we see this today? Yes, everywhere.

Is revival still possible? Absolutely, Josiah led a revival just before the nation of Israel went into captivity, but the overall trend is down.

The word is repentance, but the word for Laodicea is even more pointed as they do not even know Jesus. They have programs, they have all they need, they have everything fully funded, but they do not know Him, they just simply talk about Him.

Remember the issue that Laodicea has with water?

They had no water source of their own and had to pipe it in

To the north, standing high on a dramatic cliff, is the city of Hierapolis. It boasts to this day a set of hot springs to which tourists come from all over the world; the hot, chemically charged water comes bubbling out of the ground (channelled, today, into the bathing pools of various hotels), and spills over the cliff, leaving a white mineral deposit visible from miles around. (Wright 2011, 38)



(Bolen 2012, Used with Permission)

To the south-east of Laodicea was the town of Colosse. It, too, had suffered badly in the earthquake of AD 61, but had not been rebuilt. Colosse, however, had a splendid supply of water, flowing down from high, snow-capped Mount Cadmus: fast-flowing, chilly streams of almost Alpine quality. But by the time the water reached Laodicea, 11 miles away, the normal Turkish heat meant that it, too, had become lukewarm. (Wright 2011, 38)



(Bolen, Colossae stream of cold water 2012, Used with Permission)

Wherever it came from, by the time it arrived in Laodicea, it was no longer hot and no longer cold, but lukewarm and laden with minerals.



(Bolen, Laodicea pipe with calcium 2012, Used with Permission)

Jesus uses that as an object lesson, hot water or cold water is refreshing, depending upon your needs, lukewarm water...not so much.

There are a couple of ways to look at this section of Revelation, but the primary view is to look at the water temperature as a spiritual barometer.

Cold = unsaved and uninterested in spiritual things, someone who is cold can be made hot by the church exercising its primary mission, sharing the good news about Jesus and then discipling those who believe.

Hot = boiling, this is as a result of outside influences, the Holy Spirit; they are saved and all about service to the King. This is unrestrained fervor for the Lord or, in other words, Satan's worse nightmare; a fully engaged dangerous believer who is Spirit empowered and on active duty engaging the enemy.

ζεστός, from ζέω, to boil or seethe, R. 1097 regards as an active verbal "boiling," but we prefer the view of Liddell and Scott who regard it as the passive "boiled," heated hot. The Word heats us hot in faith and works. Cold does here not mean once hot and now grown cold. This is the meaning of νεκρός, "dead" (v.

2). Cold = never converted, never touched by the gospel fire; hot = really converted, actually heated by this blessed fire. (Lenski 1935, 154)

Revelation 3:15

“I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot; I wish that you were cold or hot.” (NASB95)

This church is not dangerous, they are not on fire for the Lord, that crazy church down the road, Philadelphia, is on fire but here in Laodicea; well that can cause issues when engaging with the culture, it's offensive to imply there is only one way to heaven, it's offensive to establish objective standards for morality and behavior, it's offensive to really believe what God said.

Jesus makes it clear, they are not hot, they are not cold, the folks in Laodicea know all about that as that is a picture of the water, they receive. He wishes that they were one or the other, but they are not.

Imagine how that hits the church, I wish you were either dangerous to the enemy, or a pagan. This church is professing to be of Christ, they are professing to be Christians, but they have not been touched by the fire of the Holy Spirit, they are not saved, they are cultural Christians only.

This is not to say they have not been baptized or empowered by the Spirit, this is not the case.

The normal transition is from a state of coldness to a state of spiritual warmth and is manifested in the experience of many prominent servants of God. The Apostle Paul himself at one time was cold toward Christ and bitter in his persecution of Christians; but once he met Christ on the Damascus Road, the opposition and lack of interest were immediately dissolved and replaced by the fervent heat of a flaming testimony for the Lord. (Walvoord 2008, 91-92)

This is a cultural Christianity, in Bible school we called it Churchianity.

This is from an actual job description for a church that I read recently:

The Senior Pastor of XXXXXX Church will provide overall direction and vision for the congregation, perform pastoral duties, supervise and lead staff, and be a voice for spreading the Gospel.

The Senior Pastor will also work in the confines of the leadership structure of the church by serving as a voting member of the team, offering guidance, installing regularly elected members and administering discipline and boundary setting when necessary.

2 Timothy 4:1–5

“I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths. But you, be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.” (NASB95)

2 Timothy 3:1–7

But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come. For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; Avoid such men as these. For among them are those who enter into households and captivate weak women weighed down with sins, led on by various impulses, always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. (NASB95)

A common theme I see in requirements from churches to be a pastor is wholly academic in nature; something that is rarely mentioned, spiritually gifted to teach. That is simply not showing up. The number one criteria, being saved, not there very often either.

With XXXXX church, they wanted someone to come in, be answerable to the people, stay within the narrow borders the people have defined, and make them essentially feel good about it while watching the church continue to die.

There are numerous churches with great operational facilities, that appear to be stagnant or dying and all appear to be run by the people rather than the Lord.

Many have succumbed to the church growth model of theft. That model advocates making your church and the buildings better looking and bigger than those other churches, like in Philadelphia, so since we have money, build buildings and **steal the flock** from other shepherds. This is a common practice today.

The biggest problem though is a lack of sound teaching; or even following the primary mission that Jesus gave us called making disciples.

If you teach the word, those who are not being fed will naturally look for the pasture with the food, no matter what the buildings look like. The issue is not the appearances of the place, the issue is the food being served.

I attended a church in Texas that had become a churchianity church. They had a great building, there used to be a lot of ministry going on, but they had a board of elders who were either nominal Christians or not even saved, and the world crept in. They had always done church one specific way and were locked into that...they are dying today if not dead. The church was lukewarm when I was there last and the messages, forgetful...but at one time the church was hot. There are some in that church today who love the Lord and deeply want to see Him move, but they are outnumbered and after all, the debt load must be serviced.

Steven Kosar

"The American Evangelical Church has abandoned God's Word. It almost never comes right out and says so, but it has. But that's why it's so hard for most Christians to see what's right in front of them: everyone assumes that everything is Biblical and, therefore, everything is okay. Almost never do these false-teachers come right out and proclaim their abandonment of the Bible, because that would set off alarms and they would lose their audience. So a very thin facade covers up a very obvious and overwhelming issue: False-teaching (of many varieties) is the new normal. And the thin facade covering up this obvious false-teaching? Often, it's just the use of the adjective "Biblical." As long as a false-teacher sticks the word "Biblical" in front of their twisted teaching, most people smile and nod in agreement.

I truly wish more people would say things like:

"I wonder if what this guy is saying is really Biblical?"

"I wonder why this pastor sounds exactly like a motivational speaker with Jesus tacked on at the very end?"

"I wonder if this teacher is being accurate with the text? It seems like he's inserting his own meaning into what the Bible says."

"I wonder if this guy is just proof-texting the Bible to make it say what he wants it to say?"

"I wonder if this lady really knows what she's talking about-she talks so fast I can't even keep up with half of what she's saying! I'm gonna check my Bible and test what she's saying."

"I wonder why this supposedly 'new and better' version of Christianity never existed for all of church history... until now?"

"I wonder why this guy always hears a 'fresh new word from God' at exactly the same time as his latest book comes out?"

"Isn't it a strange coincidence that this pastor suddenly changed his view about an important issue and adopted the exact same viewpoint of the surrounding culture?"

"If it's so important for me to emotionally experience the "Presence" of God, why didn't Jesus or the Apostles ever mention it? Why is the church now sounding like the New Age movement??" (Kosar 2018)

Acts 17:11

"Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so." (NASB95)

Revelation 3:16

"So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth." (NASB95)

Doctor Walvoord provides a definition for us. "This state refers to those who have manifested some interest in the things of God. They may be professing Christians who attend church but have fallen far short of a true testimony for Christ and whose attitude and actions raise questions concerning the reality of their spiritual life. They have been touched by the gospel, but it is not clear whether they really belong to Christ." (Walvoord 2008, 92)

They do not indulge in pagan idolatry and vices, nor do they express their redemption through Christ in Spirit-empowered conduct. They are complacent, "wishy-washy" Christians, as insipid as their water supply, and Jesus will have none of it. Would that you were cold or hot! Here Jesus is saying something that no preacher would dare to say if the Lord had not spoken it first, namely, that ice-cold atheists and pagans are preferable to him than lukewarm Christians. For them, the gospel has degenerated into "opium for the people." The living faith has shrunk to liturgical incantations and recitals of formulas without conviction. (Krodel 1989, 142)

Going back to the water problems of Laodicea, if you drank the lukewarm water coming out of the water system in Laodicea, without doing something further with the water, like boiling it, the minerals and other things in the water would make you vomit. Jesus is now moving back to the imagery.

The word Jesus uses in verse 16 for lukewarm is κλιαρὸς (kliaros) which does mean lukewarm. Because of the lukewarm condition, a reference back to the water, Jesus then comments on what will occur with Him as a result of dealing with one who is lukewarm.

The word used is ἐμέσαι (emesai) which comes from the word emeo

ἐμέω - vomit, throw up (contrasted w. πτύω=spit out). (Arndt, et al. 2000, 322)

Ἔμέω - to spew out, eject from the stomach, to reject with loathing... (Bloomfield 1840, 121)

The NET Bible catches the emphasis here.

Revelation 3:16

"So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I am going to vomit you out of my mouth!" (NET)

I agree with a comment from Dr. Michael Heiser who says that many times the translators of the scriptures have used terms to make what the text says just a bit more palatable, here, in many translations, is an example of that.

Since a term meaning 'to vomit' often carries somewhat vulgar connotations, ἐμέω in Re 3:16 has frequently been translated as 'to spit out of my mouth.' It is also possible to interpret 'to vomit out of the mouth' as an idiom meaning 'to reject.' (Louw and Nida 1996, 254)

So, to catch the full impact of the statement, Jesus is saying He would rather have those who are lukewarm, who are playing at church, who look religious but have no relationship, He would prefer that they be pagans. His view of many churches today, as this is a picture of the last days church, is one of total rejection, He is violently vomiting them out of His mouth.

They showed an interest in spiritual things but not enough interest to accept, live, and defend the truth (illustrations: The Pharisees, the Galilean multitudes, and the moralists and cultists of our day). They had a form of godliness but no power, lip-praise of Christ but a far-away heart, church membership but no salvation, outward profession but no real possession. The Sardis church was a dead orthodox church but the Laodicean church was a dead apostate church. Believers should strengthen the one and come out of the other. (Gingrich 2001, 31)

It is much worse than what we have read up to this point, they have developed excuses for their current state.

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," (NASB95)

When looking at it from the outside, the church at Laodicea at it all. They had it all together. They had the reputation, the influence, the "gifted" men, the numbers, the buildings, the programs, the media, the exposure, the money. They were rich.

Πλούσιος (plesios) - having an abundance of earthly possessions that exceeds normal experience, rich, wealthy. Being plentifully supplied with something. (Arndt, et al. 2000, 831)

Remember Smyrna? They were poor in material things, they reflected what it says in 1 Corinthians 1:26.

1 Corinthians 1:26

"For consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble," (NASB95)

Jesus was not and is not looking for the academically qualified, for the rich, for the influential, for those who had the right background and the right look. He was and is looking for sinners who come to Him in faith and then walk in obedience faithfully following Him.

Romans 5:6-8

"For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." (NASB95)

And as we obey Him and walk with Him, we become more like Him and He is the one who does it

1 Peter 1:1-5

"Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who reside as aliens, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, who are chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood: May grace and peace be yours in the fullest measure. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade

away, reserved in heaven for you, who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.” (NASB95)

For Laodicea, we see they determined they needed to be measured by a different set of metrics. For them, the basic metric is wealth, it was all about the numbers. It was all about “butts in seats” and unfortunately that is what we see in many churches today.

Worldly wealth is the measuring rod for the modern church. Spiritual values have been lost sight of or are entirely ignored. The church as a whole is not only rich in earthly goods, but it actually is in the business of accumulating wealth. People are urged to make their wills in favor of so-called Christian organizations. Some radio and television programs and other professed Christian works are operated as promotional schemes to raise money to provide luxurious care for the promoters. (McGee 1997, 923)

In Laodicea, they played at church.

Ye call Me Master and obey not, Ye call Me Light and see Me not, Ye call Me Way and walk not, Ye call Me Life and desire Me not, Ye call Me Wise and follow Me not, Ye call Me Fair and love Me not, Ye call Me rich and ask Me not, Ye call Me Eternal and see Me not, Ye call Me Noble and serve Me not, Ye call Me Mighty and honor Me not, Ye call Me just and fear Me not.

—Found on an old slab in the Cathedral of Lubeck, Germany (Osbeck 1996, 302)

Their pretentious claim was not only that they were rich but that they had achieved it on their own. And beyond that, they had need of nothing. Like the farmer in Jesus’ parable who counseled his soul to eat, drink, and be merry for he had laid up many good things for many years to come (Luke 12:19), the Laodiceans felt they were secure in their spiritual attainment. (Mounce 1997, 110)

Material riches do not equal spiritual riches.

The problem, however, was not wealth per se but the smug self-satisfaction it engendered. (Osborne 2002, 206-207)

Hosea 12:7–8

The businessmen love to cheat; they use dishonest scales. Ephraim boasts, “I am very rich! I have become wealthy! In all that I have done to gain my wealth, no one can accuse me of any offense that is actually sinful.” (NET)

In the wider context of the book Israel attributes its material welfare to the benevolence of its idols (e.g., Hos. 2:5, 8; 12:8; cf. Hosea 11 and 13). They, like some Christians in Asia Minor, may have thought that idolatrous syncretism was not inconsistent with their belief in Yahweh and that their material riches indicated their good relationship to Yahweh. But Yahweh’s indictment of them is that they are in reality “worthless” (Hos. 12:11). (Beale 1999, 304)

Jesus is not making this up, He is quoting the church’s own statement “I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing.”

They believe that they are ok and that they are having their best life now. Jesus tells them the truth...they are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked. They had sold out to the culture, just like many have done today.

The word for wretched, *ταλαίπωρος* (talaiporos), appears here and in one other place, both adjectives, in the new testament, Romans 7:24.

Romans 7:24

“Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?” (NASB95)

Wretched = unsaved?

Wretched and pitiful is what the NET translates this as.

They do not deserve pity but serious counsel, and that is just what they receive in the next verse. (Osborne 2002, 208)

The full context

Romans 7:21–8:1

"I find then the principle that evil is present in me, the one who wants to do good. For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man, but I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members. Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, on the one hand I myself with my mind am serving the law of God, but on the other, with my flesh the law of sin. Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." (NASB95)

We will see, as we continue next week, that the church in Laodicea is unable to see the condition they are suffering from, they are no better than the Pharisees.

Unfortunately, that is also a condition we find in many churches today. They are incapable of seeing their own condition.

We will continue with this next week.

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