

The Church of the Laodiceans

The Modern Church

Revelation 3:14-22

Introduction: This passage represents the church from approximately 1900 to the present day, and this will be the church that is on the earth when the Lord returns (chapter 4:1). We don't know how long this age will last but it is clear that the church represented by the Laodiceans is the church that will see the rapture.

The city of Laodicea was founded by Antiochus II in the middle of the third century before Christ and named after his wife Laodice. It was situated about forty miles southeast of Philadelphia on the road to Colosse. Under Roman rule Laodicea had become wealthy and had a profitable business arising from the production of wool cloth. When destroyed by an earthquake about 60 A.D., it was able to rebuild without any outside help. Its economic sufficiency tended to lull the church to sleep spiritually; and though there is mention of the church as late as the fourteenth century, the city as well as the church now is in complete ruins.

There is no evidence that the Apostle Paul ever visited the church in Laodicea, but it is evident that he knew some of the Christians there from his reference in Col. 2:1 where he speaks of his "great conflict" for the Christians both at Colosse and at Laodicea and for others whom he had not seen. Salutations are also sent to the church at Laodicea in Col. 4:15. Some believe that the epistle to the Ephesians was also sent to the Laodiceans. In any event the church had had a long history and at the

time this letter was addressed to it by Christ it was a well-established church.

As we study this passage we'll see no commendation for this church, just condemnation. Jesus didn't have anything good to say about it. He tried, and He wanted to, but He couldn't find anything. This is true of only two of the seven letters – Sardis and Laodicea. The letter to the church at Sardis was to the "Dead Church." Here, it is to the "Modern Church" – and I use that term both technically and spiritually.

One thing to point out first is that this letter was written "unto the angel of the church **of** the Laodiceans" rather than, as is the case with the other 6 letters, "unto the church **in** Laodicea." The point to be made here is that this was a church "of the people." This is not a positive, but a negative – the people wanted the preeminence rather than Christ. They wanted to be recognized first. They didn't care about the city or the people, just themselves.

I. THE MODERN CHURCH DOESN'T RECOGNIZE ERROR – VS. 14

This is seen in that the Lord gives Himself as being "the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God" and the church people didn't recognize it.

A. The Lord is the final say – the "Amen"

1. The word for "Amen" means what He says is trustworthy; it is "so." He is the final say.

[Isa 65:16](#) That he who blesseth himself in

the earth shall bless himself in the God of truth; and he that sweareth in the earth shall swear by the God of truth; because the former troubles are forgotten, and because they are hid from mine eyes.

2Co 1:20 For all the promises of God in him *are* yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us.

2. Man wants to have the final say in matters of importance – their life and their death – but that’s not the case.
3. The church at Laodicea didn’t recognize the error of the false ideology and neither does the “modern church” today.

B. The Lord is truth – “faithful and true witness”

1. The idea of being a witness in a trial as an accuser of someone is viewed in Scripture as a serious matter. One needed to be established and credible to be believed – Christ has proven Himself, via His evidential fulfilled prophecies, that He is just that.

Rev 3:7 And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write; These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth;

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,

Rev 19:11 And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him *was* called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war.

Rev 22:6 And he said unto me, These sayings *are* faithful and true: and the Lord God of the holy prophets sent his angel to shew unto his servants the things which must shortly be done.

Isa 55:4 Behold, I have given him *for* a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people.

Jer 42:5 Then they said to Jeremiah, The LORD be a true and faithful witness between us, if we do not even according to all things for the which the LORD thy God shall send thee to us.

2. The Laodicean church didn't recognize Christ and His Word as truth and didn't recognize Him as being faithful to that Word and so He, and His Word, becomes a witness against them.

C. The Lord is the beginning of all things – "the beginning of the creation of God"

1. Not only is Christ the final say, but He is the beginning word.

Joh 1:1-3 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. (2) The same was in the beginning with God. (3) All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.

2. The most important thing for the Devil to tear down today is the truth of creation. If

he can do that, then he has taken away the “first light” that every person has to draw them to “further light” of the Gospel.

3. The church at Laodicea apparently was denying the truth of creation and it is more than obvious that the modern church is today.

II. THE MODERN CHURCH IS INDIFFERENT TO ERROR – vs. 15-18

In the previous point we saw that the modern church doesn't recognize error as error. In this point we'll see that any error they may recognize they are indifferent to it.

A. Indifference is detested by God – vs. 15-16

1. The works they were known for were worthless works. It doesn't say they were necessarily bad works, nor were they entirely good works – just not profitable works.
2. It would have been better for them to be wicked than indifferent – at least then they could be brought to the place of recognizing their error

Deu 5:29 O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever!

Psa 81:11-13 But my people would not hearken to my voice; and Israel would none

of me. (12) So I gave them up unto their own hearts' lust: *and* they walked in their own counsels. (13) Oh that my people had hearkened unto me, *and* Israel had walked in my ways!

This is the case with the church today. They don't recognize what they are doing as wrong, so they continue on – ecumenicism is an illustration.

3. It is so hated by God that he uses a metaphor that the people of Laodicea would understand (because of their great medical facilities there) – drinking something our own body temperature (lukewarm) will often turn our stomach, and can make us vomit.

B. Indifference leads to a false confidence – vs. 17

1. This indifference was precipitated by the people's wealth (and therefore the church's wealth). They no longer needed God.

Pro 13:7 There is that maketh himself rich, yet *hath* nothing: *there is* that maketh himself poor, yet *hath* great riches.

2. It would also indicate in the last part of the verse that they were a health-conscious society – again, no need of God.

C. Indifference can be overcome – vs. 18

1. Recognize that being rich means doing what God wants

1Ti 6:17-19 Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; (18) That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; (19) Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.

2. Recognize being clothed means in Christ's righteousness – "white raiment" means to be pure and right

Eph 4:24 And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.

Col 3:10 And have put on the new *man*, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him:

3. Recognize the importance of the right kind of eyesight – Spirit-led eyesight

Eph 5:18-21 And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; (19) Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; (20) Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ; (21) Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.

III. THE MODERN CHURCH HASN'T REPENTED OF ERROR – VS. 19-20

Although this passage is given as a positive – what happens when repentance is accomplished

– we can see by the church in the world today that they have not repented. We will be able to see, by the theological law of opposites, that if they don't repent then they won't have the blessings of these verses.

A. What leads to repentance for a believer or a church – vs. 19

1. The love of Christ being recognized

Eph 3:14-19 For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, (15) Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, (16) That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; (17) That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, (18) May be able to comprehend with all saints what *is* the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; (19) And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.

2. Loving rebuke by Christ - to convict, to tell a fault

1Ti 5:20 Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear.

Tit 1:9 Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers.

Heb 12:5 And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou

art rebuked of him:

3. Chastisement, when necessary – Deut. 8:5; 2 Sam. 7:14; Job 5:17; Psa. 6:1, 39:11, 94:10; Prov. 3:11, 12, 15:10; Prov. 15:32, 22:15; Isa. 26:16; Jer. 2:30, 7:28, 10:24, 30:11, 31:18; Zeph. 3:2; 1 Cor. 11:32; 2 Cor. 6:9; Heb. 12:5-11; James 1:12

Job 5:17 Behold, happy *is* the man whom God correcteth: therefore despise not thou the chastening of the Almighty:

Pro 3:11-12 My son, despise not the chastening of the LORD; neither be weary of his correction: (12) For whom the LORD loveth he correcteth; even as a father the son *in whom* he delighteth.

Heb 12:5-11 And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: (6) For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. (7) If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? (8) But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. (9) Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected *us*, and we gave *them* reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? (10) For they verily for a few days chastened *us* after their own pleasure; but he for *our* profit, that *we* might be partakers of his holiness. (11) Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but

grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.

Jas 1:12 Blessed *is* the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.

B. What happens when a believer or a church repents in the modern church era – vs. 20

1. We'll see Christ for Who He is – "Behold, I stand at the door and knock"
2. We'll hear what He's saying – "If any man hear my voice"
3. We'll act upon what we hear – "and will open the door"

Joh 14:21-23 He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him. (22) Judas saith unto him, not Iscariot, Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world? (23) Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.

4. We'll have sweet fellowship with Him if we do – "I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me."

Rev 19:9 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.

IV. THE RESULT OF STAYING TRUE TO THE LORD DURING THESE TIMES OF ERROR— VS. 21-22

Simply put, we'll rule with Christ. I believe that our works here will position us then – if we're faithful to Him now in the job we have to do for Christ, we'll have a place of authority then.

Conclusion: The most rebuking of the seven letters is to the church of the Laodiceans. Representing the age we live in today it shows how bad things will get. Even though they may get bad we don't need to be dragged down by them. If we want to, we can stay true and right with Him.