

ST. PAUL LUTHERAN, CALEDONIA SUNDAY ADULT CLASS

**REVELATION- CHAPTER 3 PART 2 NOTES AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS
(to be discussed on March 19)**

The Seventh Letter: Laodicea Revelation 3:14-22

Laodicea Probably the richest city to which any of the letters were written; it was a banking and financial center as well as a mint. The city was over 300 years old at the time this letter was written. Laodicean sheep produced a soft glossy black wool which was manufactured into cloth, garments and carpets which brought premium prices. As in the time of John, the rich farmland of the area produces bountiful crops. Laodicea was also noted for its medical school which among other achievements discovered a soothing eye salve. Laodicea is also known for its cold and hot springs, located some six miles from the city. This water was piped to the city. As it traveled through the pipes the water cooled, making it neither hot nor cold, and quite nauseating because of its mineral content. As in the other letters, these local features are used by our Lord to illustrate His points.

The city is a little over 100 miles north of Ephesus, 15 miles west of Colossae. The old city is in ruins and the modern city of Pamukkale stands next to the ruins with a population of about 17,000. The church there seems to have been started by one of St. Paul's assistants, possibly Epaphras (see Col. 4:12-13). But the affluent life cooled the peoples love for Christ, their eyes blinded by false, temporary pleasures which gave them a very unreal view of life. The result was that God's Word seemed unimportant to them. The Laodicean problem is characteristic of the lukewarmness of some churches which Christ so clearly condemns. Today there is no Christian church in the area and Islam is the predominant religion.

3:14 The Amen is explained in the next words The Faithful and True Witness. Three things are necessary for a true witness:

1. to personally know that which he speaks.
2. to be able to tell it to others.
3. to speak truthfully.

The faithful and true witness is Christ. As we teach our children about Christ we need to be aware that we can teach them the facts... the truth. But to personally know Christ as one's Lord can never be taught. That saving faith is worked only by the Holy Spirit, through God's Word. Parents and the church can help or hinder that witness to the next generation. They can help the witness if the importance of faith is evident in their way of life which is notably different from unbelievers. They can hurt that witness if the next generation perceives that faith is simply an empty hope that means little, or just another add on...a fringe thing. Hence we say, Christianity is as much caught as it is taught. A generation that was taught by the example of their parent's that faith in Christ is knowing things without their lives being influenced too much, will be lukewarm. They will know some facts but do not personally know Christ and will be very lukewarm church members.

The beginning of the Creation of God (KJV) -- Here the NIV offers the better translation of "the ruler of Gods creation." Christ is not created as is the material wealth of the Laodiceans, but He is the Creator Himself through whom all things were made. The Greek word may be translated as either ruler or first since it can mean first in the point of time or first in rank. These titles apply to the

Laodicean church in this way: Amen and truth are closely tied to sincerity of heart but affluence normally leads a person to forget the Creator. Worship becomes empty ritual when people have forgotten that Jesus Christ is the ruler of all creation.

3:15 neither hot nor cold -- Cold: those whose hearts are not set on fire by the Gospel. Hot: those who follow the Lord in fervent faith and burning love and zeal. The image should have been very clear to these people who had to deal with the putrid, lukewarm mineral water as the city water supply.

I would that you were hot or cold the middle ground between hot and cold is hypocrisy. Saving faith is fervent and full of zeal for the Lord. Such zeal should not be confused with emotionalism. True zeal for the Lord is characterized by true godliness, pervasive love, sincerity of purpose, self-control, and single-minded dedication to spreading the Gospel.

3:16 What is the Lord to do with those who are not against Him, but not zealously for Him? I will spit you out of My mouth! -- The Laodiceans knew how bad their hot spring water tasted when it cooled down. They knew the Lord's imagery.

3:17 You say, I am rich. -- Being a banking center, a mint, and having several very profitable industries the Laodiceans also knew about wealth. But they do not know their real need of those things that God provides. The self-reliance that is engendered when things go well works against faithful reliance on the Lord for all things spiritual and material. So they say that they are rich and have need of nothing. In this way material wealth brings spiritual blindness. Philo Judaeus, a Pharisee who lived at this time, wrote: "No one is enriched by secular things, even though he possessed all the mines in the world; the wittless are all paupers." In reality the Laodiceans who seem to have every possible convenience are wretched, miserable, poor, naked, and blind. -- These conditions are much more serious in the spiritual realm than in the material realm. Who do we normally feel sorry for and desire to help more: those who are spiritually poor and blind or those who are physically so?

3:18 But Christ offers in rich abundance all that is necessary for our most important needs. Gold refined by fire -- riches of heaven by faith, tried, strengthened and purified in the trials of life. Given freely.

White garments -- Laodicea was known for its black wool. White is the color of holiness, nakedness brings shame the garment of holiness covers the shame of our sin and, even more, makes us holy. Eye salve to anoint your eyes -- Materialism, including reliance on their renowned medical accomplishments, had blinded their sight and made their spiritual needs invisible. All their relative comfort gave them a false view of reality. Faith is the eye salve that gives true sight.

3:19 But the Lord is not interested in these lukewarm people being condemned. He speaks to them with the hope that they will become full of zeal of the Lord in living, vibrant faith - living a life of repentance.

3:20 In fact, now is the time to do so, the Lord is waiting Now! If by Gods grace one hears Jesus' Words in faith and opens the door of his heart, he will be saved. But if one rejects faith he is about to be condemned. This passage uses picture language that is not intended to teach that we cooperate with the Lord in coming to faith (synergism). Other passages explain the process of coming to faith in a much more detailed manner, making clear that when Christ stands at the door and knocks, we can

refuse Him entrance, but we cannot open the door under our own power. If we open the door, it is as a result of faith created and not rejected when He first knocked.

3:21 He who overcomes -- Christian faith is not just words - it is lived out in everyday life and involves mastery of feeling and emotions, desires, tastes and opinions. It is this mastery on our part that is involved in the overcoming. While we cannot cooperate in coming to faith, once we have faith we are given the ability and will to cooperate with the Lord's working within us. If we are to overcome, it is essential for us to cooperate once we have come to faith.

To sit down with me on my throne -- Oriental rulers sat on large, wide thrones, almost like benches, and they would allow those who particularly pleased them to sit with them. But the image goes further than that.

Perhaps the best explanation of this is found at the close of Luther's explanation of the Second Article of the Apostles Creed: Christ has redeemed me . . . that I may be His own and live under Him in His Kingdom and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness, even as He is risen from the dead, lives and reigns to all eternity. This is most certainly true! Part of that service to the Lord will involve reigning with Him (see Daniel 7:27 and Revelation 22:5).

3:22 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. -- Notice the plural: churches. -- Each letter has ended with this phrase. While each letter has been specifically addressed to particular problems in individual congregations, these individual messages are universally applicable to all congregations. The word churches appearing in the plural here indicates that our Lord wishes us to understand that there are messages here for us, as well.

Study and Discussion Questions for Revelation 3:14-22

1. Christ refers to Himself in verse 14 as the True and faithful witness. The phrase Christianity is as much taught as caught applies to our witness of Christ, especially to our young people. Give some examples of how we can help our young people catch as well as learn Christianity:
2. Christianity is not simply head knowledge about the things of God. What more is needed?
3. In what ways is modern America like Laodicea?
4. How have these aspects of our culture influenced the church?
5. What characteristics of behavior might indicate a person who is cold to Christ?

6. What characteristics of behavior might indicate a person who is lukewarm to Christ?

7. What characteristics of behavior might indicate a person who is hot to Christ?

8. Which verses of this letter list remedies to these faults, and what are the remedies?