

## Letters from Jesus: Laodicea!

### Revelation 3:14-22

How do we measure the greatness of our country? Some will point to the strength of our military while others will cite the financial wealth of the country as the testimony of its greatness.

How do we measure the greatness of a church? Some will point to the attendance number while others will look at the giving statements.

How does God measure the greatness of a country or that of a church? Today we will get a glimpse into whether wealth has anything to do with how we are doing spiritually as we look at the last of the 7 churches from Revelation, the church of Laodicea.

#### I. Correspondent, church, city

Revelation 3:14, "To the angel of the church in Laodicea write: These are the words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God's creation."

Once again, we are given various titles that describe Jesus. In this case we have 3 divine titles.

#### 1. The Amen!

Amen is a transliteration of a Hebrew word; that's English letters to the Hebrew sounding word. This word in Hebrew refers to the God of truth. It refers to the qualities of God in which He is firm, fixed and unchangeable.

In the New Testament it is used as an affirmation of the truth. This is why when the pastor states a truth some will respond with a hearty "Amen."

#### 2. The faithful and true witness!

Everything Jesus says is true. He is completely trustworthy and accurate. He reminds His readers of this especially in light of the hardness of the message He is about to give them.

#### 3. The beginning of the creation of God!

This phrase is a little ambiguous in English, but it's clear in Greek. It doesn't mean Christ was the first created, but rather that Christ Himself is the source of origin of creation.

Jesus says this about Himself in:

Revelation 22:13, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End."

This concept of Jesus as the source of creation is also found in:

Hebrews 1:2, "but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe."

John 1:3, "Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made."

This is important because at about the same time Gnosticism was on the rise. It claimed that Jesus was the first creation. They would also claim that they had a secret, higher spiritual knowledge which came to them apart from Scripture.

We hear claims like this today with phrases like 'second blessing' and tends to be steeped in experientialism. It is covered with spiritual language but separates believers into the haves and have nots. But let me tell you, if you have Jesus, you have all that you need.

Jesus' sacrifice was enough and is complete. You don't need a second blessing when you truly have Jesus.

Back to the city and church in Laodicea. Laodicea was near the two cities of Colossae and Hierapolis. It was in the Lycus valley about 100 miles east of Ephesus.

It was the southeastern most city of the 7 churches in Revelation. It was about 40 miles from Philadelphia.

Laodicea was the center for banking, making it a very wealthy city. It was also famous for a soft black wool and for an eye salve that they had developed. All of these will be reflected upon in Jesus' letter.

II. Commendation!

None!

III. Concern

Revelation 3:15-17, "I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! 16 So, because you are lukewarm—neither hot nor cold—I am about to spit you out of my mouth. 17 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."

Jesus says, "I know your deeds." Deeds always reveal peoples true spiritual state. And here the church is neither hot nor cold.

Laodicea received its water through an aqueduct, and the water would arrive lukewarm and dirty. It was terrible, not like the cold refreshing stream waters you could get in Colossae. Neither was it like the relaxing and restoring hot springs like you could find in Hierapolis.

No, in Laodicea your water was lukewarm...yucky! The kind of water you would spit out of your mouth, the kind that Jesus spit out of His mouth. This water would make you sick.

This church made Jesus sick, He would spit them out of His mouth. Ouch!

You see, they 'did' church, but their pride made them smug and self-righteous hypocrites. They were so hardened that it was easier to bring the unchurched to Jesus than it was to bring this brood to Him.

They are guilty by their own statement, "I am rich...I don't need a thing." They think that because they are rich that they don't need Jesus.

This attitude is what Jesus refers to in:

Matthew 19:24, "Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God."

Wealth, a life of ease blinds us to our real condition. In reality we are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked.

No matter how our life is going we need to realize that without Jesus we are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked. Is your wealth and good fortune blinding you to this reality?

#### IV. Command

Revelation 3:18-20, "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.

19 Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest and repent. 20 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."

Jesus says that they should 'buy' from Him. Buy here means the invitation to salvation.

Do you remember the 3 products of Laodicea? Banking, wealth. Black wool and eye salve. Jesus uses a metaphor to explain true redemption. Here He provides 3 things which symbolize true redemption.

1. Gold refined by fire!

True redemption, like gold which has been refined, is free of impurities. It's complete, requiring nothing else.

2. White garments!

Their black wool symbolized filth and sin. The white garments from Jesus symbolizes the righteous deeds that come with salvation.

3. Eye salve to anoint their eyes!

Their pride caused blindness. Our pride prevents us from changing from our sinfulness into the image of Jesus. Even the smallest, tiniest speck of pride holds onto at least one characteristic opposite from the character of Jesus.

This eye salve from Jesus allowed them to see their need. Do you need some of this salve?

Often, we use those words in verse 19 and apply it to times when we are reprovved and disciplined, but that is out of context. Here Jesus is referring to the lost, notice that he tells them to repent and that He is standing at the door knocking. Open the door!

We also tend to think of the door He is knocking on as being the door of the individual, but I believe in this context He is talking about the door to the church in Laodicea. That church needs repentance and salvation. How are we doing?

#### V. Counsel

Revelation 3:21-22, "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. 22 Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches."

Did you hear that? If you overcome, you will sit on the throne with Jesus.

Mom & Dads, do you remember sitting in a chair and having your child sit with you? That is what Jesus is

doing with us. We don't let just anyone sit in a chair with us, do we? JESUS IS GOING TO HAVE US SIT IN HIS CHAIR WITH HIM!

This is only one of the many promises that we have seen in the 7 letters to the churches of Revelation.

He who has an ear, let him hear...

Do you have an ear? Have you heard the messages of these letters? How are you doing? How is the church doing? What would a letter to the Log Church say about us?

Will we hold to the truth? Will our deeds reflect that we hold to the truth? What does the truth tell us to do?

1. Make disciples
2. Pray without ceasing
3. Do the work of an Evangelist
4. Store the Word in our heart so you don't sin against God
5. Be holy
6. Encourage one another
7. Give a gentle answer
8. ???

When you are approached by someone who has noticed a behavior in you, how do you receive them? Do you thank them for pointing out a blind spot or do you get defensive? How do you think Jesus would want you to react?