

Andrés Scheffer: Laodicea (31/8/19)

Scripture Reading: Revelation 3:14-22

Introduction:

The message to the church of Laodicea, the last of the 7 churches, has a special relevance for you and I today.

The word Laodicea comes from 2 words in Greek, laos = people and diké (dicae) = judicial hearing or judgement. In other words, Laodicea means “people of the judgement” and according to Revelation 14: 6, 7 and Daniel 8: 14, we are living in that time.

The message to the last church is particularly relevant for us my friends, because it reveals our condition as a people.

“I was shown that the testimony to the Laodiceans applies to God’s people at the present time, and the reason it has not accomplished a greater work is because of the hardness of their hearts.” **Ellen White, Testimonies for the Church, vol. 1, p. 186 (1859) EGW**

The City:

Laodicea was the farthest southeast of the seven cities. It was about 70km southeast of Philadelphia and 140 km east of Ephesus.

The closest cities to Laodicea were Colossae, about 16 km to the east, and Hierapolis, about 10 km to the north.

Because of its location, Laodicea became one of the greatest commercial and financial centres of the ancient world.

As a result, Laodicea was enormously wealthy and they were very proud of that fact.

To give you an idea of how wealthy they were, when an earthquake devastated the city around AD 60, its citizens were so rich and independent, that they rejected offers of financial aid from Rome and rebuilt the city at their own expense.

Part of the wealth of this city came from its garment industry.

They were also famous for its medical school that treated eye diseases in particular.

They had produced this ointment for the eyes made from local ingredients that was giving them great results.

Because of their location and commercial prosperity, this city was a great place for banking and large quantities of gold were stored within.

With all this wealth and prosperity, Laodicea had a great problem. They had poor water supply.

Because of this, they had to import water from the closest city Hierapolis. Hierapolis had plenty of water from hot springs and via a 10 km long aqueduct, Laodicea was getting part of this water to their city.

The problem was that by the time it reached Laodicea the water was lukewarm, distasteful to drink and even cause nausea.

The Church:

The church of Laodicea is mentioned in Colossians 2:1, suggesting that Paul was not the founder. It is believed that Paul’s co-worker Epaphras founded both the Colossian and Laodicean churches.

There was a relationship between the churches at Colossae, Laodicea and Hierapolis.

The Correspondent:

Revelation 3:14 - “... the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God.”

“The amen”

- Originally from the Hebrew language then into Greek in the OT, then into Latin and then went on and on to different languages still on its original form. Amen is directly related to the Hebrew word “aman” which means “believe”. So Amen means “for sure”, “truly”, an expression of absolute trust and confidence! We can trust the message that is about to be given...

“Faithful and True Witness”

- Jesus wanted people who were self-deceived to trust his unpleasant diagnosis.

“The Beginning of the Creation of God”

- The Greek word for beginning is “arche” (arje) which means “that by which anything begins to be” and according to John 1: 1 – 4, 14 the One who created everything we know is our Lord Jesus Christ!

Jesus has the authority to say the things he said in His letter to the Laodicea Church. He has the authority to say these things to you and I.

Unlike many of the others, for this church, Jesus goes directly into the concerns. But you know what? He does this because He truly cares about us, He wants us to wake up and realise our true condition! (Rev 3: 19)

The Concern:

Revelation 3:15–17 - *“I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth. 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.”*

“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.

Laodicea has 2 major issues (we have 2 major issues!):

- a) Laodicea is “lukewarm”
- b) Laodicea is self – deceived

- a) Laodicea is “lukewarm”

The hot waters from Hierapolis had a wonderful medicinal effect; the cold waters in Colossae were very pure and refreshing. Both were good to drink and had a life-giving effect.

Laodicea got their water supply from Hierapolis; I mentioned before that they did it via an aqueduct of at least 10 kilometres so by the time the water reached Laodicea it was not hot anymore, it was lukewarm and that is the worst temperature to drink water, it makes you sick, but that’s not all. The water on their way down also collected a yellow combustible non-metal chemical known as sulphur. The water in Laodicea wasn’t refreshing or medicinal at all. It was smelly, it tasted terrible and the temperature wasn’t right. The natural reaction was to spit it out of the mouth!

Their lukewarm condition indicates that they have become indifferent and self-sufficient. They have lost their original enthusiasm and zeal for spiritual matters! And the effect of their conduct on Christ was like the effect of their own water – Christ wanted to vomit them out of His mouth! Brothers and sisters let us not forget this message is for you and me today!

"To those who are indifferent at this time Christ's warning is: Because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of My mouth." **Ellen G White, Testimonies for the Church, volume 6, p. 408.**

In Revelation 3:16, the figure of spewing out of His mouth means that He cannot offer up your prayers or your expressions of love to God. He cannot endorse your teaching of His word or your spiritual work in anywise. He cannot present your religious exercises with the request that grace be given you.

"Half hearted Christians are worse than infidels; for their deceptive words and noncommittal position lead many astray. The infidel shows his colours. The lukewarm Christian deceives both parties. He is neither a good worldling nor a good Christian. Satan uses him to do a work that no one else can do." **Ellen White, Bible Commentary Volume 7, p. 963**

b) Laodicea is self-deceived

They are blind to their own condition and think themselves the opposite of what they really are...

How do we deceive ourselves?

1. By thinking we are wise in this worldly age.

1 Corinthians 3:18,19 - "Do not deceive yourselves. If any one of you thinks he is wise by the standards of this age, he should become a 'fool' so that he may become wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness in God's sight."

Proverbs 9:10 - "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding"

2. By thinking we are something when we're really not.

Galatians 6:3 - "If anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself" *"Those whom Christ warns have some excellent qualifications, but they are neutralized by all who have a diseased self-love, self-deception, self-justification... They are being weighed by One who never makes a mistake. He tells the result of actions which demonstrate that the love of Christ is not an abiding principle in the soul. God calls upon you all to learn from Christ His meekness."* **Bible Commentary Volume 7, p. 962**

3. By hearing God's word and not doing what it says.

"Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says." **James 1:22**

Sometimes we just want to obey what pleases us instead of obeying to please Him who gave us all. We call ourselves Christians but don't really follow Him!

Even worse ... we hear the Word, but make no application of it to ourselves; instead, we apply the Word spoken to our neighbours!

4. By thinking we can be truly religious but not bridle our tongues.

James 1:26 - "If anyone considers himself religious and yet does not keep a tight rein on his tongue, he deceives himself and his religion is worthless"

How many of us have this problem? We cannot control a small muscle in our mouth. The reason is because we are trying to do it ourselves instead of allowing Jesus to transform us every day!

2 Corinthians 3: 18 - "But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord."

5. By claiming that we are without sin.

1 John 1:8 - "If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us" "our self-righteousness is nauseating to the Lord Jesus Christ." **Bible Commentary, Volume 7, p. 962**

The Counsel:

Revelation 3:18 - "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."

Wasn't Laodicea well known for its marvellous wealth and riches, for their very successful garment industry and for their renowned eye ointment therapy? What is Christ offering then?

Christ offer to Laodicea church, Christ offer to you and me today, is SPIRITUAL gold, SPIRITUAL clothes, and SPIRITUAL sight! Amen?

Ok, how do we buy them?

Isaiah 55: 1 - "Ho! Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat. Yes, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price."

Matthew 13: 44 - "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid; and for joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field."

Luke 14:33 - "So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple." My friends, in order to get what Christ is offering us, we must surrender all to Him!

Sometimes when I sing the hymn "I surrender all", it makes me think while singing... I surrender all...

- But I don't want to stop wasting time on my mobile
- But I just love some music which I know doesn't please you, etc

"Says Christ, By renouncing your own self-sufficiency, giving up all things, however dear to you, you may buy the gold, the raiment, and the eye salve that you may see." **Ellen White, Review Herald, Nov 23, 1897**

"Gold refined by fire"

When you are spiritually poor you need spiritual gold and spiritual gold is nothing else but faith and love!

1 Peter 1: 7 - "that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honour, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ."

"Faith and love are the true riches, the pure gold which the True Witness counsels the lukewarm to buy... The gold here recommended as having been tried in the fire is faith and love. It makes the heart rich; for it has been purged until it is pure, and the more it is tested the more brilliant is its luster." **Ellen White, Testimonies for the Church, V. 4, p. 88**

"White garments"

When you are spiritually naked you need spiritual garments and a spiritual garment is nothing else but the righteousness of Christ!

Galatians 3: 27 - "For as many of you as were baptised into Christ have put on Christ."

"The white raiment is purity of character, the righteousness of Christ imparted to the sinner. This is indeed a garment of heavenly texture that can be bought only of Christ for a life of willing obedience." **Ellen White, Testimonies for the Church, V. 4, p. 88**

This figure of a white garment had a great significance for the Christians at Laodicea because their city was famous particularly for the production of garments made from black wool.

“Eye Salve”

In the original language the word for eye salve is Kollourion (Kalurria) and from this word came the word in English “collyrium”, which is an antique term for a lotion or liquid wash used as a cleanser for the eyes, particularly in diseases of the eye.

When spiritually blind you need spiritual medicine for your eyes so that you can see. The spiritual medicine for your eyes is nothing else but wisdom and grace!

“The eye salve is that wisdom and grace which enables us to discern between the evil and the good and to detect sin under any guise... This divine eye salve will impart clearness to the understanding.” **Ellen White, Testimonies for the Church, V. 4, p. 88**

Talking about the Holy Spirit, Jesus said:

"And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they do not believe in Me." **John 16:8,9**

This spiritual eye salve, this spiritual collyrium, is the heavenly antidote for our spiritual blindness. Its purpose is to open our eyes to our true condition and my dear friends; this is the work of the Holy Spirit in our hearts!

The Command:

Revelation 3: 19 - *“As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent.”*

Repent from what?

- Of our lukewarm indifference and self – sufficiency
- Of thinking we are something when we are nothing
- Of thinking we are wise by worldly standards
- Of hearing God’s Word but not doing what it says
- Of considering ourselves good Christians but can’t even control our tongues

Jesus loves you so much and He wants you to be saved and live forever with Him; and because of that He rebukes you at times so that you change your ways that will otherwise, take you far from Him...

The prophet of the Lord was shown the shaking in God’s church in the last days... She was shown that it would be caused by the straight message given by the True Witness to the Laodiceans.

There are 2 ways in which we can respond to his reproof or rebuke:

A. It will have a positive effect in the heart of the receiver, and will lead him to exalt the standard of the message and will work on them deep repentance making them obey the message and be purified.

B. Some will not bear this straight testimony, they will rise up against it and this will cause the shaking amongst God’s people...

“The numbers of this company (our church) had lessened. Some have been shaken out, and left by the way. “I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of My mouth” ... The careless and indifferent who did not prize victory and salvation enough to perseveringly plead and agonise for it... were left behind in darkness... but their numbers were immediately made up by others taking hold of the truth and coming into the ranks.” **Ellen White, Testimonies for the Church, V.1, p. 182**

When we as a church stop following the world and accept God's message in our hearts, allowing Him to transform us, then, He will use us in a mighty way during the latter rain, to preach the wonderful yet sacred and solemn message of salvation. This will cause a shaking! That is why Christ is constantly calling us to be zealous and repent!

I know the message to the Laodicea is a message that many will see as too hard and even pessimistic, with nothing good to say about us. But remember this: Jesus would have not recommended us buying anything from Him if there was not a chance for us to be healed of our poor spiritual condition! As feeble and in much need of change, this church my friends, is the church that God is using as an instrument to preach the last message to this world! Amen?

Final invitation:

Revelation 3: 20, 21 - *"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. 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."*

Christ is knocking at the door of the church, but His invitation is a personal one. As a matter of fact, God is knocking at the door of your heart right now! He won't force His way in, you must voluntarily open the door and He will help you to repent and surrender all to Him! My friends, we have to truly surrender all to Jesus as that is the only way in which we will be able to sit with Him in His throne and live with our Saviour and friend for eternity.

Jesus is at the door of your heart, what are you going to do?