



# The Church at Laodicea

A Bit of History



**Ruins at the city of Laodicea**



Laodicea was an ancient city in Asia Minor (Turkey) that was founded by the Syrian king Antiochus II. It was situated on one of the major regional trade routes that made it a prosperous commercial and banking center of the time. The city used to be known as Diospolis (City of Zeus), but Antiochus II colonized it at the beginning of the Christian era and renamed the city after his wife Laodice. The city is located about 100 miles east of Ephesus.

The small city grew rapidly under Roman rule and became very wealthy. This is demonstrated by the fact an earthquake in A.D. 60 destroyed the city and the city refused imperial financial aid to rebuild. The chief export of the city was a seamless garment made of glossy black wool. The city was also known for its water system. An aqueduct was built from large, tightly fitted stones which channeled the water from mountain springs into the city.

Laodicea had an international population including Roman colonizers, the original Phrygians, Jews and immigrant Syrian settlers. The wealth of the Jewish population is demonstrated by Cicero who reported giving 20 pounds of gold as an annual contribution to Jerusalem in 62 B.C.

The Christians at Laodicea have long been used as an example of those whose faith became "lukewarm" because they put as much trust and faith in their financial wealth as they had in God. They sought temporary worldly wealth, while largely forsaking true eternal riches.

## The Seventh Message to The Church at Laodicea

(Revelation 3:14-22)

The Lukewarm Church – A.D. 1866 to the Rapture

The church that is weak, lukewarm and complacent.

The Complaint: “I know your works, that you are neither hot nor cold: I would rather that you were cold or hot. So then because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew you out of My mouth. Because you say, I am rich and increase in goods, and have need of nothing, and know not that you are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.”

The Counsel: “I counsel you to buy from Me gold that has been tried in the fire, that you may be rich; and clothed in white raiment, and that the shame of your nakedness does not appear; and anoint your eyes with eyesalve, that you may see.”

The Chastening: “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.”

The Promise: “Behold I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him and sup with him and he with Me. To him that overcomes will I grant to sit with Me in My throne, even as I also overcame, and sit down with My Father in His throne. He that has an ear let him hear what the Spirit says unto the churches.”

## A Closer Look at Laodicea

**C**hrist has no “commendation” for this Church, but much to complain of. Revelation 3:16 “I know your works, that you art neither cold or hot; I would that you were cold or hot. So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold or hot, I will spew you out of my mouth.”

There is nothing more disgusting or nauseating than “tepid” water. So there is nothing more repugnant to Christ than a “**TEPID**” church. He would rather have a church “frozen” or “boiling.” It was the “chilly spiritual atmosphere” of the Church of England that drove John Wesley to start outside meetings, which became so noted for their “religious fervor.” It was the same “chilly atmosphere” of the Methodist Church that drove William Booth, in turn, to become a “Red-hot” Salvationist.

Our churches today are largely in this “**LUKEWARM**” condition. There is very little of warm-hearted spirituality. There is much going on in them, but it is largely mechanical and of a social character. Committees, societies, and clubs are multiplied, but there is an absence of “spiritual heat.” Revival meetings are held, but instead of waiting on the Lord for power, evangelists and paid singers are hired and soul winning is made a business. The cause of this “Luke warmness” is the same as that of the Church of Laodicea – Self Deception.

Revelation 3:17, “Because you say I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and know not that you are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind and naked.”

They thought they were rich, and outwardly they were, but Christ saw the poverty of their hearts. There are many such churches in the world today. Many of these churches have cathedral-like buildings, stained glass windows, eloquent preachers, paid singers, large congregations. Some of them have large real estate and property interests and are well endowed, and yet they are poor. Many of the members, if not the majority, are worldly Christians. The poor and the saintly are not wanted in such churches because their presence is a rebuke. These churches do not see that they are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked.

If we were to visit such churches they would take pride in showing us the building, they would praise the preaching and singing, they would boast of the character of their congregations, the exclusiveness of their membership, and the attractiveness of all their

services. The Church at Laodicea was not burdened with debt, it was burdened with **WEALTH.**

The trouble with the church today is that it thinks that nothing can be done without money, and that if we only had the money the world would be converted in this generation. The world is not to be converted by money, but by the Spirit of God. The trouble with the Church of Laodicea was that its “gold” was not of the right kind, and so it was counseled to buy of the Lord “**gold tried in the fire.**” What kind of gold is that? It is gold that has no taint upon it. Gold that is not cankered, or secured by fraud or the withholding of a just wage.

What a description we have of these Laodicean days in James 5:1-4. The Church of Laodicea was not only poor, though rich. It was blind, or to put it more accurately, “Near-Sighted” as to heavenly things, so the Lord counseled them to anoint their eyes with “Eye-Salve.” Their merchants dealt in ointments and herbs of a high degree of healing virtue, but they possessed no salve that would restore impaired spiritual vision. Only the prompting of the Holy Spirit could do that.



But the Church was not only poor and blind, it was naked. Their outward garments were of the finest material and the latest fashionable cut, but not such as should adorn the person of a Child of God. So they were counseled to purchase of Christ “**White Raiment,**” in exchange for the “raven black woolen” garments for which the garment makers of Laodicea were famous. Then a most startling revelation was made to the Church of Laodicea. Christ said “**Behold, I stand at the Door and Knock.**”

These words are generally quoted as an appeal to sinners, but they were not. They are addressed to a Church, and to a Church in whose midst Christ had once stood. Now found Himself excluded and standing outside knocking for admittance. This is the most startling thing recorded in the New Testament, that it is possible for a church to be outwardly prosperous and yet have no Christ in its midst, and be unconscious of the fact. This is a description of a Christ-less church. Oh the **EXCLUDED CHRIST**, excluded from His own nation, for they rejected Him; excluded from the world, for it Crucified Him; excluded from His church for the sake of wealth, for He stands outside its door knocking to be let in.

How did Christ come to be outside the church? He had been within it once or there never would have been a church. How did He come to leave? It is clear that at some time they stopped trusting in Him, for they do not seem to have missed His presence. They continued to worship Him, to sing His praises, and engage in all manner of Christian service, yet He had withdrawn. Why? The reason is summed up in one word – **Worldliness.**

But how is Christ to get back into His church? Does it require the unanimous vote or invitation of the membership? No. *“If any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come into him, and will sup with him, and he with Me.”* The way to revive a lukewarm church is for the individual members to open their hearts and let Christ re-enter, and thus open the door for His reappearance.

The character of the church today is Laodicean, and as the Laodicean Period is to continue until the church of the “New Born” is taken out, we cannot hope for any great change until the Lord comes back. What do these “messages to the churches” teach us? They clearly teach the **DECLINE OF THE CHURCH**. That the professing church, instead of increasing in spiritual and world-converting power, will become lukewarm, faithless, and **CHRISTLESS**.

As the Laodicean Period closes the “Church Age,” the church disappears at the end of chapter three, and Israel comes again into view.