

"The Letters to the 7 Churches"

Part 10

Revelation 2:1-3:22

Introduction: Today we return to our study of the book of Revelation and as we do we are again coming back to the last of the 7 churches which is the church at Laodicea. Two weeks ago we started in to this letter and for that reason I want to do a short review of what we had looked at in that study.

History- This city was a very wealthy city and there were several reasons for the wealth.

1. The city was located on a major trade route running from Ephesus to Syria and the route brought many travelers.
2. The city was well-known for banking and it was a money changing center that even minted its own coins.
3. It was a city which manufactured expensive goods. They manufactured glossy black wool that was very expensive and they had a medical school which was known for the development of eye salve that was used worldwide for treating diseases.

This city was so wealthy that in AD 60 there was a massive earthquake and much of the city was destroyed. Rome offered money to help rebuild the city but the city refused the money from Rome and they rebuilt at their own expense.

Now there was a weakness within the city and the weakness was their water supply. The city lacked an adequate water supply and for that reason they had to set up aqueducts. Some of their water came from the cool springs of Colosse and some came from the hot springs of Hierapolis. The aqueducts were some 6 miles long and by the time the water arrived at Laodicea it was lukewarm. The water was too warm to drink and not warm enough to cleanse.

Now because of the water problems the city made many compromises. When an enemy would approach the city fear of losing their water supply would set in and they would compromise with the enemy.

The Church- We do not know how this church was started but we do know that Paul had connections within this church.

Colossians 4:16

¹⁶ *And when this epistle is read among you, cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans; and that ye likewise read the epistle from Laodicea.*

I. **The Evaluation**

Notice Revelation 3:15-16a

This church was neither cold nor hot and Jesus stated that He desired that they were cold or hot.

This church was LUKEWARM. They were saved but they had one foot in the world and one foot in the church. These people knew how repulsive LUKEWARM water was for they had experienced it from their aqueducts.

Let me tell you what had happened to this church. The wealth and the prosperity of the world had stolen away their hearts. They were completely caught up in materialism.

This church was controlled by greed and wealth but at the same time they believed they were walking with the Lord. They were LUKEWARM.

Notice Revelation 3:16b

This would be the same as removing their lampstand.

This now brings us to where we are today.

II. **The Deception**

Notice Revelation 3:17a

These believers at Laodicea had come to believe that material wealth was a sign of God's approval upon their lives. They thought they were walking in a deep relationship with Jesus Christ but the Truth was they had drifted far from God.

The warning:

There is something here that we must pay very close attention to. It was the prosperity of the world that caused their hearts to be turned from God. Throughout the history of the world there has been a revolving wheel which man has been riding.

1. Men suffer lack and affliction and turn to God.
2. God responds to repentance with provision and blessings.
3. Men glory in their condition of prosperity and grow cold toward God.
4. Judgment falls and the wheel goes around again.

Let me show you God's warning to the Nation of Israel before they entered into the land of Canaan.

Deuteronomy 6:4-12

⁴ *Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD:*

⁵ *And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.*

⁶ *And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart:*

⁷ *And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.*

⁸ *And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes.*

⁹ *And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates.*

¹⁰ *And it shall be, when the LORD thy God shall have brought thee into the land which he sware unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give thee great and goodly cities, which thou buildedst not,*

¹¹ *And houses full of all good things, which thou filledst not, and wells digged, which thou diggedst not, vineyards and olive trees, which thou plantedst not; when thou shalt have eaten and be full;*

¹² *Then beware lest thou forget the LORD, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage.*

Application:

We must be very careful in our personal lives. The world will try to convince us that in order to be happy and successful in this life we must make lots of money and gather much of this world's goods. Many have bought into this and then went on to believe that the greatest thing which they can give to their children is the riches of this world. They say they desire to see their children have what they did not have. So we have a younger generation that grows up saturated with STUFF from this world. Just in case you have bought into this lie let me show you something very sobering.

Matthew 19:16-24

¹⁶ *And, behold, one came and said unto him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?*

¹⁷ *And he said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God: but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.*

¹⁸ *He saith unto him, Which? Jesus said, Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness,*

¹⁹ *Honour thy father and thy mother: and, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.*

²⁰ *The young man saith unto him, All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet?*

²¹ *Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me.*

²² *But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions.*

²³ *Then said Jesus unto his disciples, Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven.*

²⁴ *And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.*

So instead of striving to gain the wealth of this world we are to learn the Words which Paul wrote to Timothy.

1 Timothy 6:6-10

⁶ *But godliness with contentment is great gain.*

⁷ *For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out.*

⁸ *And having food and raiment let us be therewith content.*

⁹ *But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition.*

¹⁰ *For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.*

Now let us get back to Revelation. The church at Laodicea was deceived. They believed they were THE EXAMPLE of what a church was to be but they were wrong.

III. The True Condition

Notice Revelation 3:17b

Jesus describes the true condition of this church with 5 words:

1. Wretched
2. Miserable
3. Poor

4. Blind
5. Naked

Let me explain what each of these words means.

1. **Wretched** - This word means "TO BE OPPRESSED WITH A BURDEN". These people had no idea but the wealth which they so highly prized had become a heavy burden and they had no idea that it was weighting them down.

This is what happens when people begin to gather the wealth and the goods of this world. The wealth becomes a burden. When we get caught up in the goods of this world then we can start to become consumed with how we are going to keep them. This is exactly what was happening in the church at Laodicea.

2. **Miserable** - This means "TO BE PITIED". These people were weighted down with a burden which they did not even know they were carrying and for that reason they were a pitiful group of believers.
3. **Poor** - This church was the opposite of the church at Smyrna.

Revelation 2:9

⁹ I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich)

The church at Smyrna had very little of this world's wealth but they were rich in spiritual wealth. The church at Laodicea was the opposite. They had great wealth from this world but they had NO spiritual wealth at all. They had no testimony and they had no influence on the world around them. This church was spiritually bankrupt.

This church was popular and prosperous but they were also POWERLESS.

Application:

Let me just remind you that this is what happens when we live for the wealth of this world. We may become popular and prosperous but we will also be POWERLESS. Our testimony will be nothing.

We are to live so that others will know that this world is not our home. We are to live by faith in the promises of God and we are to live FOR the promises of God.

Hebrews 11:1

*Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, **the evidence of things not seen.***

To live for this world's wealth completely destroys our testimony.

4. **Blind** - These people were blind to their True condition. They could not see beyond their worldly wealth. They had tunnel vision and it was focused upon the wealth of the world. Let me show you what the opposite of this would look like.

Hebrews 11:13

¹³ *These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.*

This verse speaks of those in Hebrews 11 who were living by faith. They were not focused upon this world but with their mind's eye they were able to look down the corridor of time to the day when the promises of God would come to pass.

The church at Laodicea could not see this far ahead for they were spiritually blind. We could say they were near sighted.

5. **Naked** - The city was known for its garments and the money which they made from them. But because of their True spiritual condition they were naked. Let me show you something very interesting.

Revelation 19:7-8

⁷ *Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.*

⁸ *And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.*

There is a connection between our service for the Lord and the heavenly garments given to us before we return with Christ. This may have been what Jesus was referring to. They were so caught up in the world that they had no time to serve. They were not exercising their spiritual gifts and so their lives were not counting for eternity.

Conclusion:

James 4:13-15

¹³ *Go to now, ye that say, To day or to morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain:*

¹⁴ *Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.*

¹⁵ *For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that.*