

"What in the World is Happening?"

Part 2

Revelation 3:14-22

Introduction: Today we are going to continue our look at what is happening in the world. Last week we looked at 2 things which are not happening:

1. **This is NOT the end of the world.**
2. **We are NOT in the Tribulation.**

We also looked at one thing that is happening.

1. **The Church is being Chastened.**

We began to look at the Church of the Laodiceans in Revelation 3 and we are going to look in more detail at this church today.

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.

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.

Application:

This is what happens to many believers today. Someone rises up against them with a sinful practice and they know they need to take a stand, but FEAR fills their hearts. If they take a stand there will be consequences and they are fearful of the cost of standing for Jesus Christ. So, the end result is they compromise, and they drift further away in their walk. This is exactly what has happened to many churches today. For this reason I believe the church is experiencing the chastening hand of God.

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.

Let me show you the Words of Jesus from the Sermon on the Mount.

Matthew 6:19-21, 24

¹⁹ Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal:

²⁰ But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal:

²¹ For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

²⁴ No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

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. Remember Jesus' Words to the church at Ephesus?

Revelation 2:5

⁵Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.

Application:

We need to be reminded the dangers of getting caught up in materialism and the world especially if we attempt to live with one foot in the church.

To be LUKEWARM means we have no ministry in our lives. Let me explain. Cold water is refreshing to a parched soul. Hot water is healing to a sick soul. LUKEWARM does nothing. If we get caught up in the world and materialism, then our allegiance becomes divided and we are of no spiritual use to others.

Let me show you what James said about the world.

James 4:4

⁴Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.

Let me show you what God said through the Prophet Haggai to Israel:

Haggai 1:2-5

²Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying, This people say, The time is not come, the time that the LORD's house should be built.

³Then came the word of the LORD by Haggai the prophet, saying,

⁴Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your cieled houses, and this house lie waste?

⁵Now therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts; Consider your ways.

Right now we need to be praying the words of the Psalmist in Psalm 139.

Psalm 139:23-24

²³ Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts:

²⁴ And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

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.

Application:

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 AWAY 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.

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 and a distorted teaching of what true success really is.

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 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

⁹I 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 what 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.

IV. The Offer

Notice Revelation 3:18

The first point I see within this verse is that Jesus offers to these believers the opportunity to BUY 3 items.

Jesus offers to the church 3 items:

1. Gold
2. White raiment
3. Eye salve

Now these are 3 items with spiritual significance. We will get to each of these in a moment but before we do, I want to look at what Jesus means when He offers them to BUY these items.

Let me first of all make it very clear that He is not offering the forgiveness of sins to these people. Salvation cannot be bought for it is a free gift to those who will come to Jesus Christ.

So, the offer here is not to BUY salvation. Let me now show you the 3 items then we shall come back to the word BUY.

These were 3 spiritual blessings and they were in contrast with 3 items that were dividing the allegiance of the believers.

- ✓ **Gold** - Remember that the city was a place of money exchange and they minted their own coins. They had earthly gold, but they had no spiritual gold. But what was the spiritual gold which Jesus was speaking of here? I believe that Peter can help us to answer this question.

1 Peter 1:7

⁷ That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ:

Peter tells us that FAITH in God in the midst of the trials of life is more precious than the GOLD of this world. Many have seen Peter's words to mean that FAITH is spiritual GOLD because when it is tried with fire it will endure.

They were not living by faith. Let me phrase this another way; their security was not in God. They were trusting in Gold instead of God. They had little faith in God. They felt secure because they had a great amount of wealth.

Therefore, their entire focus was on material wealth. They did not know what it was to step out in faith. They believed they had to have their worldly wealth in order to make it through this world.

- ✓ **White Raiment** - This was the 2nd item offered to this church. Let us remember that the city was known for the beautiful black wool. But Jesus made it very clear that they were NAKED in His eyes.

This offer will connect with the 1st offer as we shall see.

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.***

I like what David Guzik says concerning this thought.

"For the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints: Believers are created for divinely prepared good works. These "righteousnesses" (righteous acts) are what fill the "hope chest" of the bride of Jesus."

Now the problem seems to have been at Laodicea that there was a lack of FAITH/GOLD and therefore these believers were not serving nor standing for the Truth of Jesus Christ. Possibly they were fearful of losing their worldly wealth.

- ✓ **Eye salve** - The city was known around the world for their eye salve but spiritually they were blind.

Because of the stagnant state which they were in they were unable to see things through spiritual eyes. Therefore, Jesus offered to them spiritual sight.

So, they were offered GOLD, WHITE RAIMENT, and SPIRITUAL EYE SALVE. But it had to be bought. What did our Lord mean when He said it was for sale? Jesus is telling them that if they desire TRUE spiritual riches then it is going to cost them.

He is speaking of SACRIFICE AND SURRENDER!

This is what Jesus is calling for in the church at Laodicea and it is what He is calling for in our lives. He calls us to forsake the world. He calls us to die to the desires of the flesh. He calls us to be controlled by the Holy Spirit. In all of this there is a cost.

Notice Revelation 3:19

Here Jesus tells them they must separate from the world.

Notice Revelation 3:20

Here is the desire of our Lord. He desires fellowship with His church, and it cannot happen until we are willing to sacrifice and surrender.

Conclusion:

John 17:3

³ And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.