

WHAT KIND OF CHURCH WILL WE BE?

Lukewarm

TEXT: Rev. 3:14-22

INTRODUCTION: Many of us have seen a picture of the painting by Warner Sallman, of Christ knocking on the door. But did you know the verse that inspired Mr. Sallman to paint this picture was Rev. 3:20, which was a part of the message of the risen Lord Jesus to the church at Laodicea.

- The picture, in its context of Rev. 3, shows Jesus locked out!
- Can you imagine being a part of a church where the Lord Jesus is locked out?
- Jesus is knocking, but no one inside is willing to open the door!

What kind of church is this? Let us read the message of Christ to this church, and we shall see.

Rev. 3:14-22 NKJV 14 “And to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write, ‘These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God: 15 “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— 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. 19 As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent. 20 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. 21 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. 22 “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.””

I. WHAT WAS THE LOCAL CHURCH AT LAODICEA LIKE?

- A. Remember that the city of Philadelphia was built as a missionary city to spread Greek influence.**
- B. Laodicea was a sister city intended to support and assist Philadelphia with that task.**
- C. Both the church at Philadelphia and the church at Laodicea were positioned to take the gospel of Jesus Christ to the frontiers of Phrygia.**

1. Both had roads leading from their cities into the wide open frontier.
2. Both had the commission to “make disciples.”
3. Both had the presence and power of the Risen Christ.
4. Only the church at Philadelphia was faithful to the task.

D. The lukewarmness, the apathy, of the church of Laodicea kept them from walking through the door of evangelistic and missionary opportunity.

1. There was no flaming passionate love for the Lord who had saved them. They did not disbelieve in Him or hate Him. They were indifferent to Him.
2. There was no roaring furnace deep in their breasts that spurred them on to walk in obedience to the one they casually called Lord. This title they used without giving consideration to its meaning, which is Master.
3. The aching heart, such as beat in the chest of Jesus as He wept over the citizens of Jerusalem who did not trust Him, and refused the opportunity to know Him, that broken heart for the lost could not be heard inside the lives of the Laodiceans.
4. The members of the church at Laodicea were content to develop their own wealth and comfort, spend their time in work and entertainment. They found no reason to leave the security and splendor of their homes and go anywhere to try to introduce the riffraff to Jesus.

So the Risen Christ said to them,

Rev. 3:17 NKJV ... 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—

Some church historians believe that the history of the church from the days in which Christ sent His message to the seven churches until the days of His return to take His church home with Him in Heaven can be divided into seven periods of history, each one corresponding to one of the seven churches of Asia Minor.

Although I would not consider myself a church historian, I have studied the work of some of these historians, and I concur with their findings. A few weeks ago, I mentioned to you the period of time they labeled as the Thyatira Period of church history. Their research is fascinating in the parallels that are revealed between the descriptions of each of the churches and the church at large during each of these epochs of church history.

Contrasting the Philadelphia Period and the Laodicean Period is especially helpful for us to understand the lukewarm church.

II. THE PHILADELPHIA PERIOD: A.D. 1750 – 1900

The church of the open door of evangelism and mission opportunity.

A. A great move of God in England and America prepared the church for the door of opportunity the Lord was about to open.

- The evangelical revival in England awakened the passions of many believers and led to the conversion of many others.
- **The great awakening in America did the same.** Whole cities in America felt the impact. Both bars and jails were emptied. Churches filled with worshippers.
- **For the first time since the earliest centuries of the church, much of the church was aflame for Christ, fervent in faith, and had a growing passion to proclaim the gospel to reach lost souls.**

B. God raised up men and women out of His faithful churches to communicate His vision of taking the gospel to every nation.

- Such was William Carey, a Baptist shoemaker who became a preacher.
- Carey went from praying for the people of the world while looking at a homemade map he had pieced together from scraps of leather to being a missionary himself to the people of India.
- Carey not only labored in translating the Scriptures to the language of the people he served, but his letters provided stirring messages that God used to call others into evangelistic missionary service.
- In one of those letters, **William Carey** wrote, **“To know the will of God, we need an open Bible and an open map.”**
- By the mid-18th century, evangelistic missionary societies were springing up in America, England, and Europe.
- For the next 150 years, the number of missionaries from numerous evangelical denominations multiplied.
- And as more missionaries were sent, God opened the doors for them to be received in the nations around the world.
- **This was the season when God opened the door, and no man could shut it.**
- Even in countries today like China that have officially closed their doors to Christ and the gospel, underground churches continue to spread the good

news, churches that have their roots in these days of open door missionary opportunity. Contrast this with

III. THE LAODICEAN PERIOD: A.D. 1900 - ? THE PRESENT

A. The passion and fervency of the Philadelphian church of the 1800's had brought revival, spiritual awakening, evangelism, and missions around the world.

B. It was replaced by an intellectualism that brought forth liberalism in most church denominations.

1. **Main cause** for this shift in the world view of most people was the popularizing of the theory of **Darwinian evolution**.

- People reasoned that if the Bible was not scientifically and historically accurate in the first few chapters concerning origins, it could not be trusted to give a scientific or historic account on other matters either.
- Thus began the “demythologizing” of the Bible. Relegating the Bible’s historical accounts of the miracles of God to the categories of myth and legend.

2. **Results** were multi-faceted.

- **Obedience displaced by skepticism.**
- **Forms of religion kept while substance discarded.**
- **Religion became more self-centered than God-centered.**

People discovered this new religion to be unfulfilling, and the church began to decline.

C. The chief characteristic of most churches during this period was apathy.

- They had great financial resources,
- But were spiritually impoverished.

We live in the Laodicean age of the church. Jesus said it would be like the day of Noah, when people would not respond to the truth.

IV. THE LAODICEAN CHURCH TODAY

A. The Laodicean church is the predominant type of church in existence today.

1. Theologically liberal

- Do not believe in 6 day creation 6,000 years ago.
- Do not believe in a worldwide flood.
- Do not believe in the inerrancy of Scripture.
- Do not believe in all the miracles of the Bible, and many do not believe in cardinal doctrines of Christianity such as the virgin birth and Christ's bodily resurrection from the dead.
- In these churches the same anti-supernatural bias that dominates our world dominates the thinking inside the church.
- You show me a church that is theologically liberal and I will show you a Laodicean church, a lukewarm church. It may be big or it may be small, but it's not blazing hot with a passion for lost souls nor making much difference in things that count for eternity.

2. Forms of religion are far more important than substance. Tries to better people socially, but leaves them impoverished spiritually.

3. Self-centered; self-focused

- What is important to the membership is that they are comfortable. They like the architecture, the color, the landscape, the traditions, and style of the church.
- Any ole' doctrine will do.

B. Christ's message to the church in this Laodicean age.

1. He reminds us Who He is –

- **The Amen (It is true) & the Faithful and True Witness.** Both of these speak about the integrity of God and the veracity and dependability of His Word.
- **Beginning of the creation of God.** Jesus Himself is the agent of creation. When we say it did not happen the way He says it happened, we slander the Lord who called all things into being.

2. He accuses the church –

- **You are neither hot nor cold – lukewarm.**
- **About the Word** – won't trash it but won't believe it entirely.

- **About worship** – won't discontinue but won't do it with enthusiasm or passion.
- **About witness** – give lip service but little practice.
- **About wealth** – The one story they take seriously is the widow's mite, and that's what they give every week. The Lord makes them the wealthiest people that have ever lived on the earth, but they keep most of it bottled up for their own wants and security.
- Jesus says, "You make Me puke!" You think you have everything you need, and I tell you that spiritually you are "wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked!"

3. Jesus counsels the church –

- **Buy gold from Me! – The golden wisdom of His Word.** The psalmist said that God's words are to be desired more than much fine gold.
- **Buy white garments from Me! – Genuine salvation**
- **Buy spiritual eye salve from Me! – Spiritual insight** that comes from the control of the Spirit.
- **"As many as I love, I chasten."** I am telling you this because I love you. I love you too much to leave you as you are.
- **Repent!**
- **Be zealous for Me!**

The choice for the church today: be like Philadelphia or be like Laodicea.

C. A church which is not fervent in passion, zeal, evangelism, and missions will be lukewarm.

CONCLUSION: Christ's message to the church ends with Him standing at the door knocking, wanting to enter. This is a picture of salvation. Jesus stands outside the door of our heart, but we must open the door to let Him in.

It is also a picture of empowering fellowship. Unfortunately, Laodicean churches unwittingly lock Jesus out of the church itself and exclude Him from many parts of their lives. Jesus wants to come in and dine, to fellowship, and to work in and through the lives of each of His children.

As we come to the few minutes when each of us decide what we will do with the Word of God we have read and heard today, let me ask you to consider this question: If every member of St. Andrew Baptist Church were just like you, what kind of church would we be? Like Philadelphia the evangelistic, mission involved church or the lukewarm church of Laodicea?