

Chapter 1

Laodicea: Lukewarmness (3:14–22)

1.1 Address opening the letter (3:14a)

Revelation 3:14a

And to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write...

1. **Laodicea:** Laos means people and diko means rule and the place name indicated the rule of the people. Note that this church has the most solemn message and the sharpest rebuke. There is no commendation except an encouragement to repent and overcome. City might have been established by Antiochus II around BC 250 and was named after his wife Laodice. Population consists of Syrians, Greeks, and Jews. City was very rich due to commerce, manufacturing (esp. of soft wool), medicine. The city had a famous school of medicine, specially famous for an eye ointment, and followed Hierophilios, a Greek physician regarded as one of the earliest anatomists .
2. **Biblical references:** The church might have started by some close associate of Paul

Act 19:1. And it happened at Corinth, that Paul, having passed through the upper regions, came to Ephesus ...

Col 1:7. as you also learned from Epaphras, our dear fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf

Paul had great concern about this church

Col 2:1. For I want you to know what a great conflict I have for you and those in Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh

He also sent letter to this church

Col 4:16. Now when this epistle is read among you, see that it is read also in the church of the Laodiceans, and that you likewise read the epistle from Laodicea

Which is this letter from Laodicea? Some scholars have reasons to believe that it is same as the Ephesians.

1.2 Attributes of the speaker (3:14b)

Revelation 3:14b

... These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God:

1. **The Amen:** This Hebrew word means true, verily, certain, etc.

Is 65:16. So that he who blesses himself in the earth Shall bless himself in the God of truth (amen)

Jer 28:6. the prophet Jeremiah said, "Amen! The LORD do so; the LORD perform your words which you have prophesied ...

Here, it refers to Jesus who is credible and what He says will truly be accomplished.

2. **The witness (*ho martys*):** the word is used in legal sense, historical sense (faithful life of Jesus), or ethical sense (those who died because of faith). Christ is a reliable witness to the divine revelation which God the Father has given to Him. He can be trusted that He will never exaggerate or suppress the truth. He is reliable both in character and message

Ps 89:37. It shall be established forever like the moon, Even like the faithful witness in the sky

Rev 1:4-5. Grace to you and peace ... from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth

3. **The faithful (*pistos*):** The word means one who is trustworthy and this is a title given to Jesus

1 Joh 1:9. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness

Note that this in contrast to the unfaithfulness of the Laodicea church.

4. **The true (*alethinos*):** the witness of Christ is true and genuine. This is the highest perfection of a witness.

5. **The Beginning of the creation of God:** liberals teaches that Christ is not exceptional. They essentially teach that God created Christ first and then He created all things. Such liberal teachings makes the church lukewarm. But the truth is different.

Col 1:15-20. He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. 16 For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. 17 And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. 18 And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence

He is not the first one created, but the originator or initiator of life. Low view of Christ maintained by many prompted Paul to wrote Colossians and asked them to read it to the Laodiceans.

Col 4:16. Now when this epistle is read among you, see that it is read also in the church of the Laodiceans, and that you likewise read the epistle from Laodicea

There is a close similarity between this letter and Paul's letter to Colossae a nearby city. Christ is unique and therefore pre-eminent. He has supreme authority and power to execute His word, including the warnings and promises in the message to follow. There are many references that highlight the importance of Jesus Christ

Eph 2:6. raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus

Col 1:27. To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory

Col 2. 8 Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ. 18 Let no one cheat you of your reward, taking delight in false humility and worship of angels, intruding into those things which he has not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind 23 These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, false humility, and neglect of the body, but are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh

Col 2:1-3. For I want you to know what a great conflict I have for you and those in Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh 2. that their [Laodiceans] hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, and attaining to all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the knowledge of the mystery of God, both of the Father and of Christ, 3 in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge

Col 3:1. If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God

1.3 Knowledge about the people of the Church (3:15)

Revelation 3:15

I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot.

1. **I know:** divine comprehension that is absolute because it is based on omniscience unlike human's progressive knowledge by observation.
2. **Works (*erga*):** are more than deeds which reflects life and conduct in general including outward spiritual activities. They are the evidence of the inward spiritual condition the Lord alone sees and know directly. It is by means of these that men prove what they are.
3. **Cold (*psychros*):** pictures an unbeliever who has rejected the gospel openly and aggressively and is the clear contrast of hot.
4. **Hot (*zestos*):** It means fervent or I boil and points to a person who spiritually healthy

Act 18:25. This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things of the Lord, though he knew only the baptism of John

Rom 12:11. not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord

5. **Wish (*ophelon*)**: shows the frustration of the Lord or a holy impatience over the half hearted devotion to Him.
6. **Hot or cold**: Lukewarm is state of professing Christianity, but untouched by its fire. State of coldness/hotness is more conducive to a person coming to Christ than the state of lukewarm

John 9:41. Jesus said to them, "If you were blind, you would have no sin; but now you say, "We see.' Therefore your sin remains

Act 9:1. Then Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest

1.4 State of the Church (3:16)

Revelation 3:16

So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth.

1. **Lukewarm (*chliaros*)**: the word used only here. Neighboring Hierapolis had hot springs with medicinal values, and Colose had cool water good for drinking. Water brought to the city was neither hot or cold. Lukewarm is not spiritual immaturity, complacency, or poor testimony. It is professing faith seen externally and without any conviction in the heart. They think that the external profession is sufficient. There might be genuine believers in this church, that is why it is called as church. The believers are numerically so small to have any influence on the church.
2. **I will (*mellow*)**: the word indicates: (i) about to do the action, with a possibility to avert, meaning the church has still chance to repent, (ii) the action is imminent indicating the sudden return of Christ.
3. **Vomit (*emesai*)**: the word is used only here in the NT and indicates the Lord's utter abhorrence of the condition of the church at Laodicea. OT has many equivalences

Prov 26:11. As a dog returns to his own vomit, So a fool repeats his folly

Isa 19:14. The LORD has mingled a perverse spirit in her midst; And they have caused Egypt to err in all her work, As a drunken man staggers in his vomit

Isa 28:8. For all tables are full of vomit and filth; No place is clean

Jer 48:26. Make him drunk, Because he exalted himself against the LORD. Moab shall wallow in his vomit, And he shall also be in derision

Revelation 3:17

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

1. **Because:** this verse is the basis for the counsel in the next verse and elaborated the lukewarm nature.
2. **I am rich:** historically Laodicea is a rich city which might have contributed to their belief that they are spiritually rich. Part of the church's problem is its inability to make a distinction between the material riches and spiritual riches. Gnostic spirit, which thinks the knowledge as an indicator of spiritual riches, might have also contributed to their wrong self-assessment.
3. **I have become rich:** is an assertion that they became rich by their own efforts.
4. **Have need of nothing:** reflects that the church is happy with its state and this complacency is dangerous: the material richness is their spiritual poverty (rich in pride, but poor in grace)!

5. **Do not know that you are:** is a strong denial of their assessment by the Lord- the whole church is guilty and He pronounces His assessment which is true.

6. **Wretched (*talaiporos*):** the word found here as well as in

Rom 7:24. O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?

Paul knew his true state very well. But this church is unaware of its true state.

7. **Miserable (*eleeinos*):** the word found here as well as in

1 Cor 15:19. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable

This word shows the extreme pitiable state since one who do not realize that he is heading eternal damnation.

8. **Poor (*ptochos*):** derived from the word of begging and hence means beggar.

9. **Blind (*typhlos*):** mental blindness like the state of Pharisees

Mat 23:17. Fools and blind! For which is greater, the gold or the temple that sanctifies the gold?

Note that this city is famous for its eye ointment is interesting.

10. **Naked (*gymnos*)**: Note this is also a shameful assessment to a city famous for its wools. The one who is NOT saved is like naked before the Lord

Gen 3:10. So he said, "I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself."

Mat 22:11-12. "But when the king came in to see the guests, he saw a man there who did not have on a wedding garment. 12 So he said to him, "Friend, how did you come in here without a wedding garment?' And he was speechless

Rev 6:11. Then a white robe was given to each of them [martyrs]; and it was said to them that they should rest a little while longer, until both the number of their fellow servants and their brethren, who would be killed as they were, was completed

Rev 7:9-14. After these things ... a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands, 13 Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, "Who are these arrayed in white robes, and where did they come from?" 14 And I said to him, "Sir, you know." So he said to me, "These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

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.

1. **I counsel:** an invitation that leads and draws near rather than a demand.
2. **Buy from Me:** the feeling of self-sufficiency is baseless and they are required to depend of Jesus.
3. **Gold refined by fire:** is picture of high quality faith. Such a faith is capable of withstanding trials and will results in good works. This is a direct solution to the spiritual poverty of this church

Luke 12:21. So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God

1 Tim 6:18. Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share

Jas 1:3. knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. 4 But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing

Jas 2:5. Listen, my beloved brethren: Has God not chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him?

1 Pet 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, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ

Prov 17:3. The refining pot is for silver and the furnace for gold, But the LORD tests the hearts

Zech 13:9. I will bring the one-third through the fire, Will refine them as silver is refined, And test them as gold is tested. They will call on My name, And I will answer them. I will say, "This is My people"; And each one will say, "The LORD is my God."'

4. **White garments that you may be clothed:** indicates receiving a new heart inclined to do righteous deeds. This also implies imputed righteousness as the basis of this clothing.
5. **The shame of your nakedness may not be revealed:** A believer must put on the garment comes at the time of salvation. In other words, the boldness to stand before God comes from the righteousness imputed from the Lord Jesus. Exposing the shame comes only at the time of His coming. One who rely anything other than

the righteousness of Christ will have to face condemnation from God. This is the shame of the one who profess faith, but not truly saved

2 Sam 10:4. Therefore Hanun took David's servants, shaved off half of their beards, cut off their garments in the middle, at their buttocks, and sent them away. 5 ... the men were greatly ashamed ...

Isa 20:4. so shall the king of Assyria lead away the Egyptians as prisoners and the Ethiopians as captives, young and old, naked and barefoot, with their buttocks uncovered, to the shame of Egypt

Ezk 16:35-43 . 35 "Now then, O harlot [Jerusalem], hear the word of the LORD! 36 Thus says the Lord GOD: "Because your filthiness was poured out and your nakedness uncovered in your harlotry with your lovers ... 37 ... I will ... uncover your nakedness to them, that they may see all your nakedness

Hos 2:3,9. 3 Lest I strip her naked And expose her, as in the day she was born ... will take back My wool and My linen, Given to cover her nakedness

Nah 3:5. "Behold, I am against you," says the LORD of hosts; "I will lift your skirts over your face, I will show the nations your nakedness, And the kingdoms your shame

2 Cor 5:2-3. For in this [body] we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed with our habitation which is from heaven

Heb 4:13. And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account

6. Anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see: eye salve is a medicine used for eyes and it pictures illuminating grace or anointing of the Holy Spirit along with the convicting ministry of the Holy Spirit

1 Joh 2:20,27. But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you know all things, 27 But the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you, and you do not need that anyone teach you; but as the same anointing teaches you concerning all things

John 9:6. When He had said these things, He spat on the ground and made clay with the saliva; and He anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay

John 16:8-11. And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: 9 of sin, because they do not believe in Me; 10 of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more; 11 of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged

7. **Note:** the city was an important financial center, manufacturer of woollen garments, and medical center famous for its eye medicine, but the church was ironically lacking in genuine faith (gold), righteousness (garments), and vision/discernment (eye salve).

1.5 Promise of the Lords return (3:19-20)

Revelation 3:19

As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent.

1. **Note:** Some think 19-22 is a common closure to all the churches, but it is more appropriate to be that of this church.
2. **As many as I love (*ean philo*):** Strange that Christ loves this church.
 - (a) the basis of this admonition is out of His love to the church, even though there is an external profession only

Prov 3:12. For whom the LORD loves He corrects, Just as a father the son in whom he delights

Heb 12:6. For whom the LORD loves He chastens, And scourges every son whom He receives

- (b) The phrase *I am about to (mello)* in v 16 shows the possibility of averting the action indicate it is a warning.
- (c) the basis of this love is conditional as we see from the word therefore
- (d) Similar blessing to those who respond is promised

Rev 16:15. Behold, I am coming as a thief. Blessed is he who watches, and keeps his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame

- (e) the love of Christ here is not agape the unconditional one, but phileo which is emotional or less deep than the former. Christ extends special treatment to a church in spite of its lukewarm condition.

- 3. **Rebuke:** verbal rebuke to bring a person to acknowledge his fault
- 4. **Chasten:** corrects a person by action.
- 5. **Zealos and Repent:** One issue here: how can one be zealous first without repentance? This can be resolved when we understand that this is a figure of speech called **hysteron proteron** (i.e."later earlier" is a rhetorical device by placing the first key word of the idea refers to something that happens little later than the second key word. The goal is to call attention to the more important idea by placing it first. E.g. thunder and the

lightning). The repentance leading to a clear change of heart followed by continuing zeal (hot) instead of lukewarm. The act of repentance is necessary to be truly zealous.

Revelation 3:20

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.

1. **Behold:** Lord calls for a special attention to what He is saying, for it points to the future blessing. The word **behold** has special eschatological significance in the book of revelation.
2. **I stand:** These words indicate that the Lord has taken a deliberate decision to wait.
3. **Knocks:** This word is referring to an action that is ongoing.
4. **Door:** Popularly people think that the door refers to the human heart which points to evangelisation. Nevertheless, here it refers to the nearness of his coming

Mat 24:33. So you also, when you see all these things, know that it is near - at the doors!

Mark 13:29. So you also, when you see these things happening, know that it is near—at the doors!

Luke 12:36. and you yourselves be like men who wait for their master, when he will return from the wedding, that when he comes and knocks they may open to him immediately

Jas 5:9. Do not grumble against one another, brethren, lest you be condemned. Behold, the Judge is standing at the door!

SoS 5:2. I [The Shulamite] sleep, but my heart is awake; It is the voice of my beloved! He knocks, saying, "Open for me ... my love ... my perfect one ... 6 I opened for my beloved, But my beloved had turned away and was gone. ... I sought him, but I could not find him; I called him, but he gave me no answer

Christ presents Himself at the verge of entering and hence urges the church to respond favourably to his commands.

5. **Note.** This verse is commonly used in the evangelistic context. However, as seen above, its primary context is eschatological. That is when the Lord comes, He will have marriage supper. Supper is an indication of intimate fellowship. Fellowship between a believer and the Lord happens at two phases: first, at the time of salvation, second at the time of second coming. The evangelistic implication of this verse is secondary only. Because of His long suffering, He keeps on knocking, but at some point of time, unknown to humans, that knocking will come to an end

1 Pet 3:20. ... Once the Divine long-suffering waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared ...

2 Pet 3:9. The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is long-suffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance

6. **Hears My voice and opens the door:** Opening the door was in response to the voice and knock (Act 12:13-14). Spiritually, this is a climatic decision of a person turning to Christ. It is an opportunity for those who have not yet experienced conversion to Christ to do so and thereby make ready for His return. It is not an invitation to a backsliding Christian to come back to active fellowship with the Lord.
7. **I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me:** Supper points to an intimate fellowship with the Lord. However, this is not a reference to Lord's Table. Instead, it is promise that will be realized in the Messianic kingdom. It is both personal and intimate. This is also a mutual fellowship

Mat 26:29. But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom

Mark 14:25. Assuredly, I say to you, I will no longer drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God

Luke 22:30. that you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel

Luke 12:37. Blessed are those servants whom the master, when he comes, will find watching. Assuredly, I say to you that he will gird himself and have them sit down to eat, and will come and serve them

John 6:56. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him

John 10:38. but if I do, though you do not believe Me, believe the works, that you may know and believe that the Father is in Me, and I in Him

John 14:20. At that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you

John 15:4-5. Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me

John 17:21. that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me

Thus, the true Christian has, in a sense, already begun fellowship with Christ immediately after born-again, but in another sense, his ultimate fellowship with Him will happen after the second advent of Christ.

1.6 Command to hear and obey (3:22)

Revelation 3:22

The one who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches

1. This is a comprehensive warning to the church to hear and apply what has been written. This warning is not only to itself, but also to the other six.
2. The message to Laodicea had particular relevance to the church in that city, but the seven-fold repetition of this command to 'let him hear' shows the likelihood that some of the lessons were also needed in the other six churches.
3. Are these messages then applicable to our church as well to all the churches?

1.7 Promise to the over-comer (3:21)

Revelation 3:21

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.

1. **Sit with me on My throne:** This points to the promise of Jesus that apostles and all believers will be ruling with Him.

Mat 19:28. So Jesus said to them, "Assuredly I say to you, that in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. 29 And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life

Luke 22:29-30. And I bestow upon you a kingdom, just as My Father bestowed one upon Me, 30 that you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel

1 Cor 6:2. Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world will be judged by you, are you unworthy to judge the smallest matters?

Also note that this throne is the one promised to Jesus by the Father

Psalms 122:5. For thrones are set there for judgment, The thrones of the house of David

Ezk 43:7. And He said to me, "Son of man, this is the place of My throne and the place of the soles of My feet, where I will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel forever ...

Luke 1:32. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David

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