

# Laodicea



# 7: Laodicea

## BACKGROUND ON LAODICEA

- Last city in loop of circulating letter to churches of Asia minor.
- referenced often, more than any other letter in Revelation, because of its "lukewarm" attitude.
- Large and prosperous. Twin city to Hieropolis about 6 miles away, known for its hot springs (*Turkish government attempting to harness these springs today as a source of geothermal energy*).
- Laodicea midway between hot springs of Hieropolis and cold mountain spring waters of Colossae. Brought both to city.
- **Hot and cold separately are therapeutic and refreshing. Together they are lukewarm, putrid and polluted.**

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## BACKGROUND ON LAODICEA

- Founded/named by Antiochus II in 250 BC, after his wife, Laodike.
- Stood on a plateau above Lycus River, controlled trade that came down the river valley to the coast.
- Also three very major roads in and out of Laodicea. Because of trade and resources, grew to wealth and prominence during Roman Empire.
- Military outpost and trade center, a Roman “assize” town, with plenty of pomp and circumstance.
- **Lots of wealth and pride here.**

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## BACKGROUND ON LAODICEA

- Also known for **black wool**, spun from black sheep raised specially here. Textile industry manufactured clothing shipped all over the world.
- A medical school here, Laodicea also well known for its ear salve made from nard, and its **eye powder** which was mixed as a salve for bad eyes.
- Other distinctive feature was its fame as **financial center**. Specialized in money-changing, hand minted own coins centuries before Christian era.
- References to all these features seen in the letter to this church.

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## BACKGROUND ON LAODICEA

- Usually offered Jews free citizenship and freedom of worship. (all about money and trade).
- Jews here had **great wealth and independence**. Were so influential, known to bring pressure on Roman governors.
- Laodicea was wealthiest city in Phrygia in Roman times, one of **richest commercial centers of the ancient world**.
- So wealthy, after devastating earthquake in 60 AD, refused all financial aid from Rome, insisting on rebuilding their city themselves, from their own resources and private citizens. **They were too rich and proud to accept anything from anyone.**

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## BACKGROUND ON LAODICEA

- Laodicea not a religious center, though had their gods, principally "Men" god of healing, later identified with "Asklepios."
- Religious persecution not bad here. Too busy making money.
- The Laodicean people put their trust in money, material worth, luxury and physical health. They trusted in things of this world.
- 30 years before letter written, Paul warned Archippus (*considered the bishop of Laodicea*) to be more diligent in his ministry to these people. Apparently also warned previously. (Col. 2:1, 4:16-17)
- One commentator said: ***"Laodicea stands as a warning to those who remember intensely that man has a body and forget completely that man has a soul."***

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***Laodicea*** - This word literally means "rule (or justice) of the people." How appropriate for this church, and for this age. **The people were in charge here, not God.**



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## DESCRIPTION OF SPEAKER

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

- In contrast to the church that was unfaithful, untrue to The Master. He is faithful and true.
- The "Amen" is literally the "**so be it.**" The final word is His.
- Letter last in the circuit, references last church of Christian age before Jesus' coming. The church of the end of times is an apostate church, a false church. **It is well on its way.**

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## DESCRIPTION OF SPEAKER

- Phrase "***the Beginning of the creation of God***" often misunderstood, does NOT mean Jesus was created. *He is not a created being*, already equated Himself with the Almighty, the One who has no beginning and no end.
- **These words mean the origin or source of the creation.** Jesus created all things (Colossians 1:16). Greek word "arche" also indicates the highest order, top rank.
- Yeshua is King of Kings, Lord of Lords. He is the **pre-eminent One, the master of the creation.**

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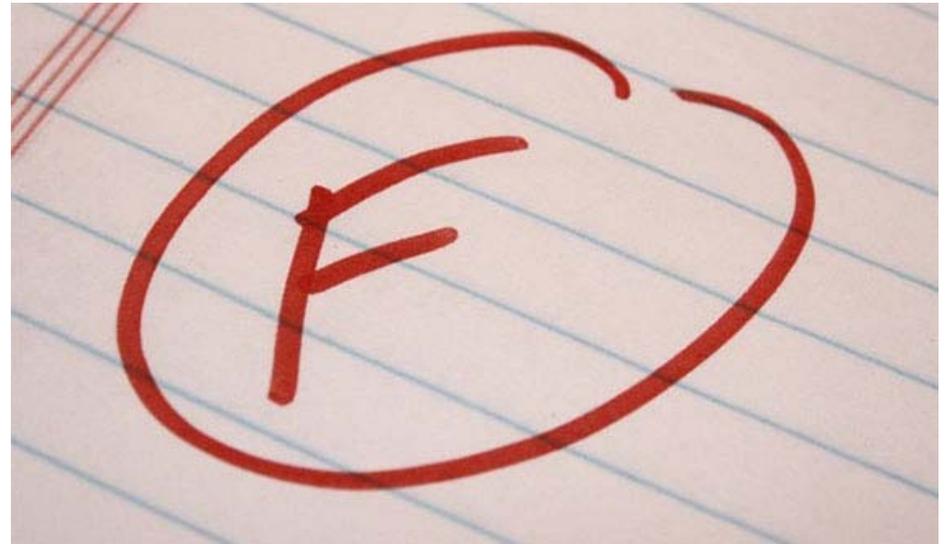
### COMMENDATION

# None!

*Not even some who had not soiled their clothes, like the church in Sardis, only other church with no praise.*

**Sardis may have gotten a D-, but Laodicea earns an "F."**

**This alone should wake up the church in this age!**



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## CRITICISM

*"I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth."*

- Jesus might have been disappointed in other churches, but with this group He literally shows disgust.
- Laodiceans understood what was said here, as their **lukewarm water was disgusting, and is a way to induce vomiting**.
- Yeshua wished instead they were either cold or hot, as either extreme reveals a useful purpose. This church disgusted Jesus so much He provides a very descriptive picture of His rejection.

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## EXHORTATION

*“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— 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.”*

- Uses renown of city to chastise it. They believed they were wealthy, but he says they are **wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked!** What a slap in the face.

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## EXHORTATION

These wealthy “Christians” needed, and were charged to “buy” from Him:

- **His gold** (refined - always indicates purification by trial) to be truly (spiritually) rich
- **His WHITE garments** (robes of the redeemed, righteousness) instead of those they were known for (black, sinful) to cover their spiritual nakedness
- **His medical salve** (from the Great Physician) to heal their spiritual blindness

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

- Although disgusted with this church, **He also loves them** (*indicates not all hope is lost!*), and will “rebuke and chasten” them, just as a parent would discipline a wayward child.
- He tells them be zealous (*as opposed to lukewarm*), restore their passion (first love!), and repent of this lazy and lukewarm (apathetic) attitude toward Him.
- Our God is a “jealous God,” demanding our complete love and loyalty. Should be voluntary, our greatest desire. They forgot this, and even forgot Him. **Relationship had grown lukewarm.**

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*“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.”*

- Now Jesus appeals to "anyone," not the corporate church.
- An open invitation to individual who will answer the knock at the door of his or her heart.
- In these times, dining with someone was also a way to repair relationships. Still chance for anyone who will respond to Him.
- Conditions at end of the age will **force true believers to leave apostate church** of the end times. Jesus knocks at door of individual hearts and calls them out of the world, even if that “world” is the apostate church.

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- Mid 1800s William Holman Hunt painted "**Light of the World.**"
- Jesus standing outside door overgrown with weeds, not used in quite a while.
- Someone noted no handle on door. Hunt replied, "*This door is a picture of the human heart, the only handle is on the inside.*"
- Jesus won't kick the door down. It's up to us to open it.
- To "dine" with Jesus is to share main fellowship meal of the day.
- God's desire throughout scripture to fellowship with us.



*Most of us are familiar with Sallman's painting of "Jesus at the Door"*

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## PROMISE

*"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."*



- This promise can be seen as indication there is **hope for individuals**, even in this apostate church.
- Overcomer granted right to sit with Jesus on His throne. Looks forward to **Millennial Kingdom**, when we will rule with Him.
- Thankfully we will do so in our redeemed state, not subject to the political corruption of rulers today! Jesus has already taken His throne with His Father, and we will follow Him there.

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## SIGNS OF LAODICEA TODAY...

- Scripture no longer ultimate authority for Christian faith. Emergent leaders teach we cannot know the "truth" of the Word of God, so rely on the thoughts of man.
- Gospel of Yeshua Ha'Mashiach replaced by humanistic methods promoting church growth and "**social gospel**" (*make world a better place, feed hungry, environmental concerns, etc*).
- Almost no teaching about need for atonement, the shed blood of Jesus, or forgiveness of sins in order to enter heaven.
- More and more **emphasis on building kingdom of God "now"** (*Dominion theology*) and less on warnings of Scripture about imminent return of the Messiah and coming judgment.

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## SIGNS OF LAODICEA TODAY...

- Teaching that Jesus will rule and reign in a literal millennial period **considered unbiblical and heretical**. Emergent church's "eschatology" claims we are being drawn into a golden age when God will recreate everything and us, and we will help Him do this by making the world a better place. Jesus will not judge when He comes again. The teachings on "signs of the times" and the Bible's prophecies regarding those times is considered false.
- Teaching that Revelation does not refer to the future, but instead has been already fulfilled in past (1st century) or is just allegorical.
- Teaching that church has taken the place of Israel and Israel has no prophetic significance is embraced. (*replacement theology*)

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## **SIGNS OF LAODICEA TODAY...**

- An "experiential" mystical form of Christianity promoted as way to reach the postmodern generation.
- Idea that Christianity needs to be reinvented in order to provide meaning for this generation.
- Implementing an idea called "ancient-future" or "vintage Christianity" claiming that in order to take the church forward, we need to go back in church history and find out what experiences were effective to get people to embrace Christianity (such as icons and mystical rituals, relies on mysticism).

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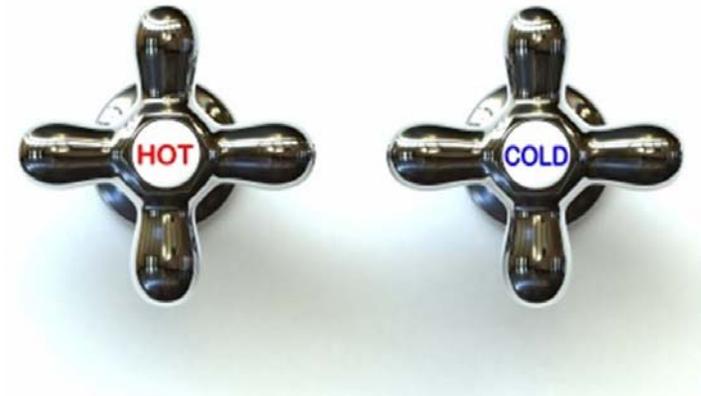
## SIGNS OF LAODICEA TODAY...

- While authority of Word of God is undermined, images and sensual experiences are promoted as key to “experiencing” and knowing God. These include icons, candles, incense, liturgy, labyrinths, prayer stations, contemplative prayer, experiencing the sacraments, particularly sacrament of the Eucharist.
- Strong emphasis on **ecumenism**, unity with Roman Catholic Church, and ultimately all religions, leading to one world religion.
- Suggest there are many ways to God. Some even say "God is in everything" - a **New Age teaching**. The New Age "all paths lead to god, the divine within" is prevalent in the emergent church, or will be in those who are still claiming to be "Christian."

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An inscription engraved in stone on a cathedral in Lübeck, Germany is a good reminder to “Church” today:

**Ye call me Master and obey me not,  
Ye call me Light and seek me not,  
Ye call me Way and walk me not,  
Ye call me Life and desire me not,  
Ye call me wise and follow me not,  
Ye call me fair and love me not,  
Ye call me eternal and seek me not,  
Ye call me gracious and trust me not,  
Ye call me noble and serve me not,  
Ye call me mighty and honour me not,  
Ye call me just and fear me not,  
If I condemn ye, blame me not.**



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Symbolic Age	Apostate Church of Last Days 1900-present +
Speaker	<i>“the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God.”</i>
Praise	NONE!
Problem	<b>Neither hot nor cold - lukewarm.</b> Say they are rich, have need of nothing, but He says <u>they are wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked.</u>
Counsel Or Warning	Will <u>vomit you out of my mouth!</u> <i>Buy from Me gold refined in fire (that you may be rich) white garments (that you may be clothed), anoint your eyes with eye salve (that you may see) As many as I love I rebuke and chasten. Be zealous and repent. Open door to Him!</i>
Promise	Will sit with Me on My throne. (co-ruling Millennial kingdom)
Nutshell	<b>Lukewarm, pride,</b> more concerned about material wealth than spiritual wealth

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### **SIGNS OF SARDIS AND LAODICEA TODAY...**

- Members of churches who question or resist changes are reprimanded and usually asked to leave. If you are over age 50, your opinion will not even matter.

**ENDANGERED SPECIES**

