

REVELATION

3:14-22

Revelation 3:14-22

Taught by Simeon Forder on Sunday morning, 18th January 2026 @ Deal Christian Fellowship

Reading: Revelation 3:14-22

Introduction

This morning we are going to study the remainder of chapter three of Revelation, having got as far as verse 13 last week. And so this also concludes our study of these seven letters that we find in chapters two and three, that Jesus wrote via the hand of the apostle John to seven separate churches in what is modern day Türkiye. And as mentioned in the prior weeks, there are three applications to consider:

- First that these letters were written to real churches, with real people, with real things to be praised, but also real problems to address at that time. We'll certainly see that this morning.
- Second, these letters also amazingly map out church history in a *remarkable* way. Something we can only see with hindsight of the last 2000 years, which we'll consider a bit more today.
- But third, these things should speak to *us*, because here we read what Jesus *Himself* expects from *His* church — that's you and I. Both what He expects of us as we gather here this morning. But also what He expects from all churches at all times.

So then, let's be sure to *note* what He expects from each one of us.

Overview of chapter three

- **v1-6** — Sardis (the dead church)

- **v7-13** — Philadelphia (the faithful church)
- **v14-22** — Laodicea (the lukewarm church)

Now, last week, as we looked at this chapter, we saw that it contains three of these seven letters that Jesus dictates to John, which of course makes it easy to break down into three parts. First with Jesus writing to the church in Sardis (in verses 1-6), then to the church in Philadelphia (in verses 7-13) — both of which we looked at last week — then, Jesus writes to the church in a place called Laodicea (in verses 14-22), which we'll take a look at today.

The pattern in the letters

And this letter largely follows the same format as the previous six, with Jesus first instructing John to *whom* this should be addressed, saying "*To the angel of the church of [insert place name] write...*" (which is, to the pastor of that local church) but with the intent that all churches would listen to and hear with their hearts what Jesus writes here.

However, there is an exception with the *format* of *this* letter, in that while *all* the other six letters have some form of praise or commendation for that local church, here there is not a *single* good thing said about it. Indeed, outside of Jesus' rebuke of the Pharisees in Matthew chapter 23, this is the most scathing and heated challenge He makes. And so there is much correction and warning here.

Next, as with the others, this letter continues with an eternal perspective, talking about *he who overcomes* — speaking of those that remain faithful despite everything around them.

And after that, this letter (again, as the others) concludes by saying "*He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.*" — that not only would each church listen to what is written directly to *them*, but that they would listen to all Jesus says to *all* these churches. And that means you and I as individuals *need* to listen to this letter too.

Chapter three

So let's pick this chapter up in verse 14 where we'll spend a bit of time. We read:

Revelation 3:14

"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:

So then, writing to the pastor of this church, Jesus describes Himself as "*the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God:*"

And so at the very start of this letter Jesus reminds them of who He is. Of who is writing this letter to them. And first He calls Himself the **Amen** — which of course is a word we are used to saying at the end of our prayers, which is a custom carried over from Jewish synagogues to Christian churches, to indicate we are fully in agreement with what has been said, as if we had said it ourselves. But the word carries even more depth than that. Strong's Bible dictionary puts it like this:

The word "amen" is a most remarkable word. It was transliterated directly from the Hebrew into the Greek of the New Testament, then into Latin and into English and many other languages, so that it is practically a universal word. It has been called the best known word in human speech. The word is directly related -- in fact, almost identical -- to the Hebrew word for "believe" (amam), or faithful. Thus, it came to mean "sure" or "truly", an expression of absolute trust and confidence.

Strong's Bible Dictionary

And I believe it is *that* picture Jesus is painting for these believers here in Laodicea, that there is certainty and truth in Him, for He next calls Himself the **Faithful and True Witness**. Which, if you're going to have someone write a letter that corrects you, is the kind of character you want writing that letter, right?! That it would not be someone prone to lies or deceit. And *of course*, Jesus in John's gospel account said plainly that He was the way, the truth, the life. That no one comes to the Father except through Him. And so there is a reminder of that too.

But there's even *more* depth here. For the word translated *witness* is **martys** which is where we get our word *martyr* from. And so captured in this opening statement is Jesus saying He is the One that can be trusted, and that died for them. And *furthermore* He calls Himself **the Beginning of the creation of God**. That's not to say He was the first to be created (as the cults try and say He is), but rather He is the One who began creating all things in the very beginning. Indeed, the Greek word used for beginning here is **archē** which carries the idea of origin, or that by which anything begins to be. And so to this church which we will see was lukewarm and doing its own thing, we see Jesus reminds them that He was their Creator too, that as we read in John's gospel account:

John 1:1-3

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.

And so, as Jesus begins this letter He reminds this church of His truth, love and power. That He is the author of their salvation, and as well as the architect of life itself. But what do we know of this city and this church in it to which Jesus writes?

Well, it was a well known church, mentioned several times in Paul's letter to the Colossians, with him first saying in chapter 2 that *"I want you to know what a great conflict I have for you and those in Laodicea" ... "that their 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, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge."*

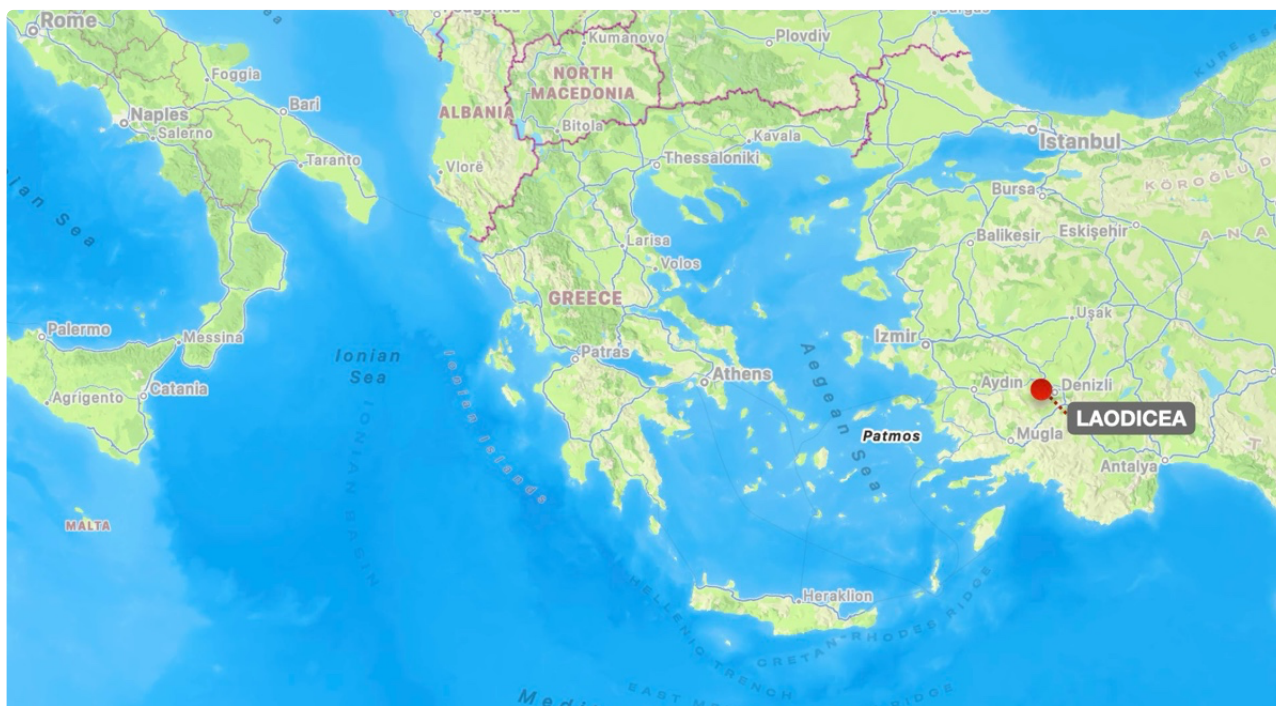
And going on to say in chapter four how another believer called Epaphras had a great zeal for those who are in Laodicea, and also how Paul himself sent *his* greetings, instructing them in verse 16:

Colossians 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.

And so it seems this church had started well. They had friendships that spanned to Christians in other churches. Perhaps this church was even born out of Paul's ministry in Ephesus.

But now, this church had gone off the rails, so to speak. It was no longer functioning as it ought to, as we'll see. But first, let me give you some historical background to this city, for that will help us understand the analogies Jesus uses here.



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You see, the city of Laodicea was located in what we know as Türkiye today, around six miles south of Philadelphia, forty miles east of Ephesus, and it sat in a valley along with the cities of Hierapolis and Colossae — those last two being of particular note. And it was founded by Antiochus II between 261-246 BC, who named it after his wife, Laodice (as you do).

And the meaning of that name starts to give us a clue as to the problems here, for — as in the name *Nicolaitans* — the "Lao" in Laodicea spoke of *the people*. And the "Diece" meant *decision* or *rule*. And so we have the *rule of the people* implied by that name. And indeed there are clues in history as to how the people here were self-sufficient, trusting in themselves, even refusing help from outside.

And sadly, it seems the *church* there had succumbed to culture around it and had itself come to be governed by the people, not by the head of the church, Jesus Christ. Indeed, whereas all the other letters are addressed to the church of *the place name*, or *in* that place. This was addressed to the church of the *Laodiceans* — the church of the people. And man's word had taken *such* priority over God's Word, that they were unaware of how destitute they were spiritually. How compromised they were. And so, as Jesus rebukes them here, He uses examples that would have resonated with them.

First, this was a city of great wealth, commerce, and Greek culture, for it had three trade routes that came through it, and had become rich because of banking. So rich, that when there was a major earthquake in 60 AD — destroying cities and parts of cities in the region, including Philadelphia — that though the Roman government offered financial assistance to rebuild, the Laodiceans refused, effectively saying no thanks, we don't need your help. And as such it became known as the city that had need of nothing. And Jesus mentions that when He gets to verse 17.

Second, the city was also famous for a particular breed of sheep that produced very soft wool called *Trimita*, akin to cashmere, but was raven *black*. It was reportedly extremely warm too, and had become famous throughout the Roman world. And that context helps us understand the weight of Jesus saying in verse 17 how they didn't know they were naked. And in verse 18 how He counsels them to buy *white* garments, that they might be clothed.

Then **third**, the city had also become famous for a medicinal therapeutic eye salve — that is an ointment — that they made called *Tephra Phrygia* or *Phrygian powder* which came from combining zinc and alum. And this salve was shipped throughout the Roman Empire. The irony of course, was that spiritually speaking they couldn't see their sorry state, which makes sense of what we read in verse 18 as Jesus uses this as an analogy, saying *anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see*.

But **fourth**, is the example that is perhaps best known, and that is this city at this time had an issue with lukewarm water. You see, Hierapolis, which is about six miles away and uphill, had natural hot springs pumping out boiling hot water filled with minerals, and so they built an aqueduct that went from Hierapolis to Laodicea. The problem was by the time it got there, it was lukewarm.

On the flip side, nearby Colossae was also famous for its natural springs. But these ones pumped out ice cold water, fed by snow melting from the nearby mountain. And so they likewise built an aqueduct to bring the water to Laodicea. But again, the problem was that by the time it got there it had warmed up, and was now also lukewarm. And this historical context helps us better understand what Jesus is meaning as He says to the church in Laodicea:

Revelation 3:15

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

So again, there is not *one* word of praise or commendation for this church, but rather Jesus says I can see everything you're doing, and you're neither cold nor hot. And of course, He's speaking of their spiritual state.

You see, a Christian should be on fire for the Lord, there should be real zeal for the things of God. There should be a hunger and thirst for righteousness. There should be desire for God's Word, for prayer, and for fellowship with other believers. That as AW Tozer suggests, there should be in every Christian a *flaming desire to be rid of every unholy thing and to put on the likeness of Christ at **any** cost*. Yet, as he notes, this *is not often found among us*. And it wasn't found here in Laodicea *at all*.

And so Jesus says to them I could wish — that is to say *oh how I wish* — that you were cold or hot. For one who is spiritually cold — that is, an unbeliever — at least acts consistently with what they believe. There's no compromise, for they are indeed living like unbelievers. And in fact, they are so cold they might just listen to the gospel.

But here, there were those who were believers that *said* they were Christians, yet didn't act like it. They were tepid, showing little enthusiasm. And in fact, it was worse than that. For there are two Greek words for lukewarm — one means lukewarm and warming, and the other means lukewarm and cooling. And the one used here is the one that means lukewarm and cooling, like the water from Hierapolis.

That is, Jesus was saying to them *you're not just compromised, but you're actually getting further away from Me*. And indeed, you can't tread water as a Christian. You can't coast. You're either growing closer to the Lord, or you're getting further away from Him.

So, what about you? Please, if you're a Christian, hear me out on this. Do you have a zeal for the things of God? Are you enthusiastic for Him? I'm going to be honest, I worry about some of you. I don't mean that in a condescending way, but rather you know, as well as I do, that you've never been to a church prayer meeting. Or at least haven't for years. You know, as well as I do, that it would be a surprise to see you here on a Sunday evening, or a mid-week meeting.

And you know better than I do, how you spend your weeks, what kind of person you are at work, and what your TV viewing or online habits are. Whether you are watching pornography, or coveting everything on Pinterest, or lusting after everyone on Instagram.

Please understand, that I'm not trying to beat you up, but rather I'm trying to wake you up. For to be a Christian but to live in such a way that there is no perceivable difference between you and an unbeliever (aside from being here on a Sunday morning), is to be lukewarm. And that is a dangerous position to be in for your own sake. For we read in verse 16:

Revelation 3:16

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

You know, the Laodiceans would have known just what Jesus was speaking of here. For they were used to lukewarm water being served up from the two aqueducts that came into town. And it was horrible. Just like it is when you go to get a cup of cold water from the tap, and find that you should have checked it first because someone had just been running hot water through the same tap. That warm, tepid water is awful to drink, and in fact you want to spit it out as quickly as possible.

Yet the language here is even stronger. This isn't just spitting out tepid water. No, no. Jesus says that this lukewarmness is so repulsive, that He will vomit those in this state out of His mouth. And I know we're close-ish to lunch, but I want you to get the picture here. You know how it is when you have a sickness bug, and your body convulses and throws up in an effort to cleanse itself of whatever toxin or bacteria is poisoning your system. Well that's the picture Jesus wants us to have here, that lukewarmness in the church makes Him want to vomit.

Why? As one pastor said; *Because the destiny of men and women are at stake. If you were cold or hot, the lines would be drawn. Men and women are going to hell. And you guys are lukewarm. And it makes a place for unsaved people to be comfortable, instead of them understanding they need to repent of their sins and be saved.*

He says, look, I wasn't lukewarm. I wasn't lukewarm in the incarnation when I was born and laid in a manger. I wasn't lukewarm when I became poor so that you could become rich. I wasn't lukewarm when I walked in human skin and when I was betrayed, when I was hungry, when I was tired. I was completely committed. I wasn't lukewarm as they spat in My face and beat Me beyond human recognition and put a crown of thorns on My head...

...I wasn't lukewarm when they nailed Me to the cross. I wasn't lukewarm when I breathed my last breath. Wasn't lukewarm when I rose from the dead on the third day. I wasn't lukewarm when I talked to the disciples about the coming kingdom. I wasn't lukewarm on the day I ascended, and I'm not going to be lukewarm on the day I come back. And He's saying to the church, all of that is yours. I did all of that for you. How can you take the greatest treasures of heaven, of time and eternity, and put them on the back burner somewhere and turn down the heat?

The problem of course in Laodicea was that they thought they were doing just fine. But that's the problem of self-diagnosis. We so easily miss what someone who is actually qualified to diagnose can see. So what we need, spiritually speaking, is the counsel of the Great Physician, Jesus, to reveal to us exactly where our hearts are at.

Here, the Laodiceans were doing the opposite of what Paul had written to the Colossians — which He said should be read out in Laodicea also — which was that they should set their minds *on things above, not on things on the earth*. For we read in verse 17:

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—

Again, as I shared earlier in our study, they were rich through their banking systems and commerce, they had indeed become wealthy, and had refused help of others, gaining the reputation as the city that needed nothing. But here Jesus says that all of that masked that they were actually *wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked*. Poor, despite their wealth. Blind, despite the eye salve they were famous for. Naked, despite the wool they were known for.

Oh how tragic it is to be so prosperous yet so spiritually poverty-stricken. In sharp contrast to the other churches, in it was no study of the Word, no love of Christ, and no witnessing of His saving grace; and was is blind to its own true condition. This church, that was characterised by the rule of the people, no doubt had plenty of programs. And committees. And rules. And events. But they were nothing like the church God wanted them to be. They were lukewarm. And they didn't even know it. They were blind to it.

But lest we point fingers and not consider ourselves, could any of this be said of us? Could any of this be said of you? You know, I was studying this passage and I couldn't help but think of some of the lyrics to Keith Green's excellent song *Asleep in the Light* which says:

*Oh, bless me Lord, bless me Lord
You know, it's all I ever hear
No one aches, no one hurts
No one even sheds one tear

But He cries, He weeps, He bleeds
And He cares for your needs
And you just lay back and keep soaking it in
Oh, can't you see it's such sin?*

And he goes on to sing:

*How can you be so dead
When you've been so well-fed?
Jesus rose from the grave
And you, you can't even get out of bed
Oh, Jesus rose from the dead
Come on, get out of your bed*

And you know, that call to move, to get up, to wake up, is what Jesus next wrote to this church. And it's what He'll say to you too if you are also lukewarm. For He doesn't want you to stay that way. He's not through with you. Rather He prescribes the medicine for anyone in this condition, writing:

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.

That is, I urge you to go after the right kind of treasure that won't rust away, to do business with Me on My terms. Indeed, I urge you to be clothed with righteousness again. And you who are so famous for this medicinal eye-salve, I want you to be filled with my Holy Spirit and listen to my Word, that your eyes may be opened and you may see clearly once again. Looking at the right things, rather than that which hurts you and hardens your heart.

Friends, I'm not saying that you are all living lukewarm lives. But *if* you are, or even if there are any corners of your heart that have cooled over the years, then go to God knowing that He wants you to be on fire for Him. He's written His Word, the Bible, that you might realise that. And perhaps, if you've not been picking it up, this morning He'll use a donkey like me to let you know that He wants you to live for Him without any compromise. Not lukewarm, but fired up! For He *loves* you, and He knows what is truly best for you.

So please, please, don't go home despondent after this morning's service thinking that God is on your case and is being snarly for no reason. For we read Jesus say next:

Revelation 3:19

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

Take that in. God doesn't hate you. He loves you. He's *fond* of you is the exact meaning here. And because of that, He'll correct you if you go astray, or if you're lukewarm. That is, if you're lukewarm and cooling. Getting further and further away from Him.

So if you're feeling convicted this morning, take heart. That's because He loves you so much that He has given you this example in His Word, that you might come to your senses and get on fire for Him once more. Which is what zealous means — the idea of being hot, burning with zeal. And repent, He says. Of what? Of your apathy. Of your indifference. Of your love for this world. Of your self-reliance, self-dependance.

For Jesus, the Creator of the universe, the One who died for you, who rose from the dead that you may have new life, wants to commune with you. We read in verse 20:

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.

Which of course, is often quoted in evangelism. Yet Jesus here is writing not to unbelievers, but to believers who have drifted, who have become lukewarm. And He's saying to them, *look, I'm going to stand here and keep knocking. And if you listen, and open the door, I'm going to come and dine with you* — not a quick drive thru meal, but sitting down with you over as one friend would with another over a proper meal. That you might pour your heart out to Him, as He reveals His heart to you.

So friends, take Him up on this. Spend time with the One who loves you the most. Who shed His own blood for you. *Please*, don't remain indifferent about this. Don't be lukewarm. The onus is on you. Indeed, a point was well made by the English painter Holman Hunt, who attempted to represent Jesus knocking on the door of our hearts in a painting of his. When he revealed the painting to his friends, they said "wow, this is great work — but you're missing something... there's no handle on the door" to which he replied "it's not missing, there's only a handle on the inside". And how true that is. Jesus is not going to force Himself in. You have to let Him in.

We read in verse 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.

Oh what promises we have in God! That as one pastor put it: "Open your heart to Me," Jesus would say, "and I'll open heaven to you.". Never in the history of the whole universe has there ever been such love shown as Christ has shown to us. And what awaits us is more profound than anything we can experience this side of heaven. And in the coming weeks we're going to get a glimpse of what awaits us as we continue to study the magnificent book of Revelation. But make no mistake, the great attraction of heaven will be God Himself. It will be Jesus. So what wonder there is that we will have such a relationship with Him as He tells us of here.

Now, as with the other letters, Jesus closes this one by saying:

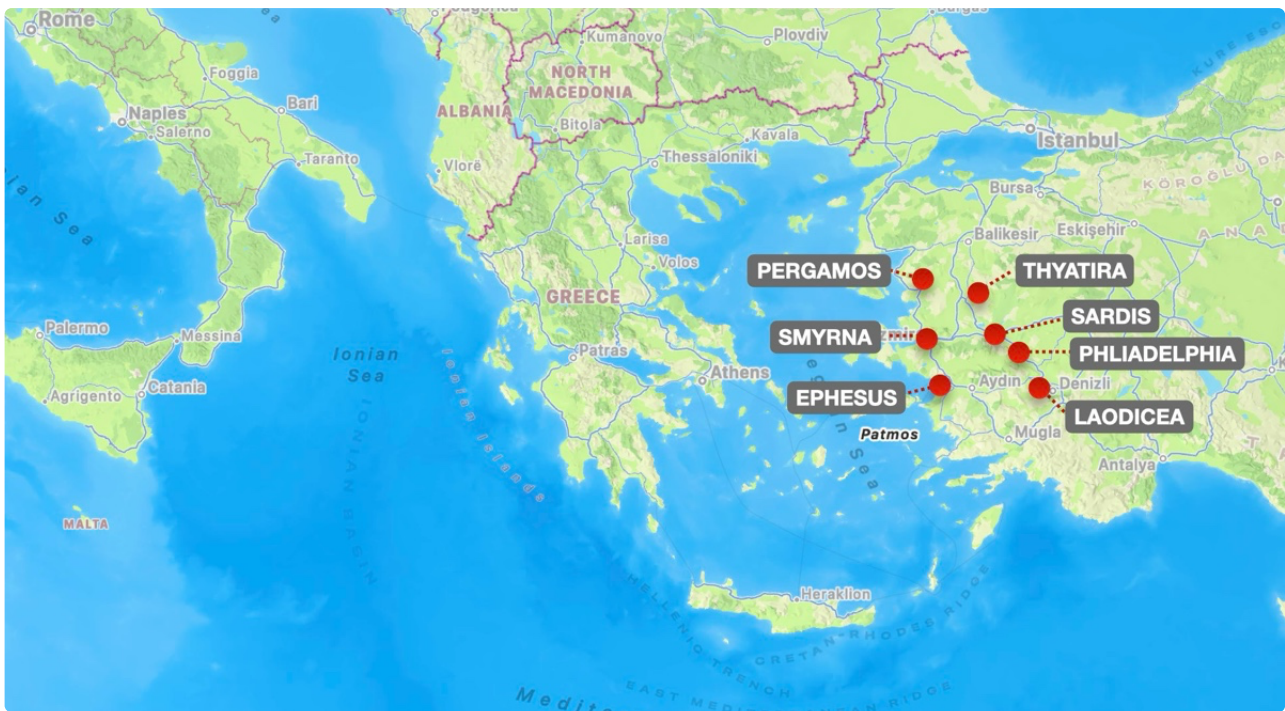
Revelation 3:22

"He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches." ' "

Which is to say, we need to pay attention to all seven of these letters. But not for our information, but our transformation. You see, as one commentator put it: *It's one thing to have Jesus as a Model or a Mascot. That's what they were doing at Laodicea. They were "good Christians." But Jesus is not to be a Model or a Mascot. He is to be our Master. That's what He was asking of that congregation. And that's what He's asking of you and me.*

So this morning, let us consider our own hearts, and be honest — have we become lukewarm? Have we lost — have *you* lost — all enthusiasm for the things of the Lord? If so, let us do something about that urgently, for He has lost no enthusiasm for us.

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Now, we've reached the end of chapter three. And that means we've reached the end of the last of the letters to these seven churches that you see on the map here. So what next? Well, when we study Revelation chapter four a couple of weeks from now, we'll find that John is writing from the throne room of Heaven. And there's going to be lot's to take in as we try and comprehend all that He saw. But before I wrap up this morning there are two things I want to do.

And the first of those is go back to a point I've made each of the last four studies, that as well as these letters being to real churches at the time they were written, and also to us here today, they also amazingly map out church history, in advance, in a *remarkable* way.

- Letter to Ephesus [2:1-7] — the loveless church (32-100 AD)
- Letter to Smyrna [2:8-11] — the persecuted church (100-313 AD)
- Letter to Pergamos [2:12-17] — the compromising church (313-590 AD)
- Letter to Thyatira [2:18-29] — the corrupt church (600 AD onwards)
- Letter to Sardis [3:1-6] — the dead church (1517 AD onwards)
- Letter to Philadelphia [3:7-13] — the faithful church (1900 AD onwards)
- Letter to Laodicea [3:14-22] — the lukewarm church (1900 onwards)

You see, back in the letter to the church in **Ephesus**, Jesus wrote of how they *had tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars*. And how they hated *the deeds of the Nicolaitans*, which were those that lorded over God's people, that tried to turn Christianity into a system of control. While those things were to be praised in the actual church in Ephesus, it was also characteristic of the early church from Jesus' death and resurrection in AD 32, through to the end of the first century. It's not that these things didn't take place at any other time, but rather we can see in the rear view mirror that this was characteristic of that time period.

Likewise, when we look at the letter to the church in **Smyrna** we read *"do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days."* And the church between 100-313 AD faced horrible persecution under the rule of 10 separate Roman Emperors from *Nero* to *Diocletian*. Again, it's not that the church didn't face persecution at other times, but it was during this time that Christians were being thrown to the lions, and literally set on fire as candles.

We then have the letter to the church in **Pergamos**, known as the compromising church. We read of course how Jesus said *"I have a few things against you, because you have there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit sexual immorality. Thus you also have those who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate."* And this closely matches the period from 313-590 AD, which began with the Emperor Constantine making an alleged conversion, and making Christianity the official religion of the Empire, but in doing so tried to combine it with Babylonian religious practices. And it was at this time that the Roman Catholic Church was born.

Next, there was the letter to the church in **Thyatira** — the corrupt church, to which Jesus wrote *"I have a few things against you, because you allow that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce My servants to commit sexual immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols."* And this represents the corrupt church, from around 600 AD onwards during which time the introduction of rituals and church doctrine supplanted personal faith in Jesus Christ. Worship of the Virgin and Child and the Mass were made a definite part of the church service. And Purgatory became a positive doctrine, and Mass was said for the dead.

Of course, the next church, **Sardis**, was the one described as dead. Representative of the period from 1517 onwards — for though the reformation was wonderful and necessary for the church, as many eyes were opened to salvation by faith, and not by works, Protestantism, as a whole, has turned away from looking for the coming of Jesus Christ, and they have built up these systems that certain things must be fulfilled before He can come. There is an arrogance, just as the people in Sardis were arrogant, to whom Jesus warned *"if you will not watch, I will come upon you as a thief"*.

The sixth church, that we looked at last week, was the church in **Philadelphia**, one of only two churches that Jesus didn't rebuke, to whom He also wrote *"Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth."* And this is representative of what some call the *revived church*, dating from approximately the beginning of the nineteenth century to the Rapture, that has turned back to the Word of God. And this church will not endure the Tribulation, as we shall see.

And finally, the last of these churches, the **church of the Laodiceans** is also representative of the church during this same age — from the turn of the last century until now and beyond. For how often we sadly see the church, especially the established church, think that it has the authority to decide what is right and what is wrong. Voting on whether marriage should only be between a man and woman, or whether homosexuality is a sin, when the lines are already clearly drawn in the Bible.

When we look at how remarkably this fits what is now history, it should cause us to consider that God knows not only what we have done, but all we will ever do. And how wonderful His grace is that He sent Jesus to pay for each and every sin we will ever commit. It's humbling. But also it should also cause us to consider the kind of people, and the kind of church, we ought to be.

Conclusion

So as I close, let me remind you of how much we have *read* in these seven letters, starting with just a few of the 27 commendations we *read*. For to each church Jesus declared how He knew their works, which in all but one case was positive in some regard. And He spoke of how some had laboured, served, and persevered. How some had not become weary, but had shown patience, had kept His Word, had not denied His name, but held fast to it, had not denied His faith, had not defiled their garments, and how some could not bear those that were evil, but hated the deeds of the Nicolaitans, and had shown love. These were all things to be praised!

But He also rebuked them where necessary, at least 8 times, warning them where they had lost their first love, or tolerated among them those who held to false doctrine, or worse permitted those in their churches to teach false doctrine. And He was clear in warning churches that were dead, whose works were not perfect before God, and who had grown lukewarm.

And because He wants His bride to be healthy, and to be pure, He gave at least 17 instructions throughout these letters, reminding His church to remember the gospel they had heard, saying multiple times that they should repent, return to the first works they did, and rather be faithful unto death, holding fast what they had until He returns, being watchful, and being zealous for the things of God — not lukewarm and lacklustre. So let us never think we don't know how Jesus wants His church to be! We have so much here, let alone throughout the rest of the Bible.

Now, as mentioned, there were more things to be commended than corrected, but there were at least 5 clear warnings, including that which we read this morning that as many as He loves, He rebukes and chastens. So let us have softened hearts as to what He has said to us through these letters, and what He will continue to say to us through His Word. For there is so much He has promised to those who love Him, and who walk with Him (including the four promises we find to specific churches here, and the many eternal promises He gives to those who overcome).

Application questions

Oh how I hope the Lord has prodded at each of our hearts this morning, including mine. For it would be a *tragedy* for any of us to become — or remain — lukewarm. To be indifferent about the things of the Lord. So let me ask you:

- Are you enthusiastic about the things of the Lord?
- Have you become lukewarm in your walk with Him?
- When was the last time you gave yourself a spiritual checkup?

I beg you, please consider these things. Again, my intention this morning has not been to beat you up, but to wake you up — especially if you have become lukewarm. For we need to make an honest assessment of ourselves. I can't do that for you. Neither can I open the door of your heart. You're the only one who can do that. So then, lest any of us have a false sense of commitment to the Lord, let me close by reading to you the inscription that is found on the cathedral in Lübeck, Germany, which says:

Thus speaketh Christ our Lord to us:

Ye call Me Master and obey Me not.

Ye call Me Light and see Me not.

Ye call Me Way and walk Me not.

Ye call Me Life and choose Me not.

Ye call Me Wise and follow Me not.

Ye call Me Fair and love Me not.

Ye call Me Rich and ask Me not.

Ye call Me Eternal and seek Me not.

Ye call Me Noble and serve Me not.

Ye call Me Gracious and trust Me not.

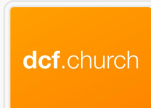
Ye call Me Might and honor Me not.

Ye call Me Just and fear Me not.

If I condemn you, blame Me not.

Let us pray.

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