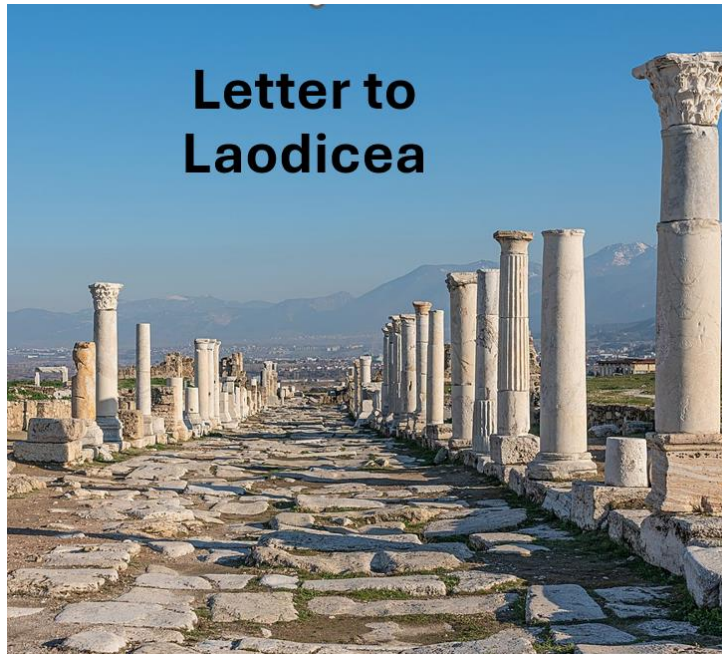


Letter to Laodicea

Revelation 3:14-22



This, the seventh and last letter to an Ecclesia in Asia Minor region as it was called by the Romans, followed the same format as the previous ones: introduction, praise, condemnation, advice and instruction.

Like the earlier letters, the author – the Lord Jesus himself – uses a

description he has already attributed to himself in the vision to John

...

14 And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God;

compared with: 1: 5 And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead...

Such an address lays the foundation for what was to follow. There were plenty of false witnesses around, ready to corrupt, and undermine the gospel. There were many true witnesses, as well, though not as many as the false witnesses. Yet these may be true witnesses, but by their personal example and behaviour cause the Adversary to speak reproachfully. Jesus on the other hand, The Faithful and True witness. True, in that there was never any corruption, and utterly sincere, faithful in that he kept the practical example of that true witness in an exemplary and perfect way.

Ordained from the very beginning, in the mind of God, Paul to the Colossians explains how Christ Jesus is the very best, the premier aspect of God's Creation, - and only by his Creation can anything else consist. 1:15-18:

15 Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: For by [through - NET] him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by [through - NET] him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by [through - NET] him all things consist. And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the pre-eminence.

*by him should be translated through him. Trinitarians use passages like these to try to prove that Jesus was the Creator in the beginning. But the text is saying that these things were created through him, or because of him. In other words, the idea, or *logos* of Jesus Christ the Son of God, was in God's mind from the very beginning. The whole purpose of God from the very creation of Adam, included the *logos* of Jesus Christ. Jesus was not there in person of course, but in the mind of God as part of His plan. Hence Genesis 3:15 for example, and many other parallels that were identified in our study on the 1st Adam and the Second Adam on 190824.

Why did Jesus feel it necessary to remind this ecclesia of these Titles? He was stating his authority, which had been given to him by the Father, and that as the representative of God, they should take what he had to say extremely seriously, and that also by reminding them of the first vision which John saw, and had been circulated to the Ecclesias, that their very future, and belonging in that vision was at stake.

Immediately the choice of these titles is seen, as The Lord Jesus found it necessary to be more severe with this seventh ecclesia, than any of the others. Compare this for example with the previous

letter, to Philadelphia, where Jesus described himself as having the key of David, and the keys to hell and death, but then telling the Philadelphians – who received no condemnation at all, and only positive points, that for them there was an open door!

15, 16 I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would you were cold or hot. So then because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.

Having a decent drink of water was important to the Laodiceans. Amongst the many wonderful discoveries that have been found there dating back to ancient times is a piece of marble with a Greek inscription. It is dated 114AD, and the inscription was a Water Law. It regulated the use of water imported from the mountains to Laodicea on pain of 5 to 12.5 thousand denarii fines imposed for polluting water, destroying channels, or opening water pipes. Was it just coincidence that the Lord Jesus selected drinking water to teach a lesson?



Jesus comparing the experience being in fellowship with them, as taking a refreshing and thirst quenching drink. A hot drink that has been left to go cold and still served up, shows a lack of care. A cold drink that has been left and warmed up in the hot sun, probably has a few flies in it as well. Of course the temperature is not evident to begin with, until we taste it. Then we spit it out, if it is not what we expected. Hmm not very nice. The person who prepared it didn't seem to care much either.

Lack of care either way. But the temperature of the drink is relevant. Being hot, or passionate, enthusiastic. Cold, and calculating, cool, and calm. Lukewarm characteristics are likened to the dithering

person, who can't quite make up their mind, compromising and half baked efforts, careless, and half hearted.

Various references are useful to show in a practical way how repeated patterns of behaviour show what our temperatrure is:

- Titus 1:16 - *They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him*
- Mathhew 7:21-23:21 *Not every one that says unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that does the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in your name? ...And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.*
- 1 Corinthians 13:2 - *If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing.*
- 2 Corinthians 13:5 - *Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, unless you fail the test?*
- Isaiah 29:13 - *Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men:*

Jesus does not leave the Laodiceans just hanging there wondering what they needed to do or why theu were stuck in between two decisions. He explained the root cause:

17 Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked:

This is not to say that being rich and increased in goods is a bad thing. Abraham, Job, David, Nicodemus... to name but a few show that riches is no barrier to faith – it does make things more dificult, as there are more temptations, and more to worry about – but the

Laodiceans were talking about it – *you say you are rich and increased in goods*, in other words, they were boasting, it was important to them, and a sign of success and happiness. More revealing was the resulting thought: *And have need of nothing!*

They had fallen prey to the culture of the city they lived in of materialism, consumerism, oh! Much like today in the west. As if it really matters what car you drive, what watch you wear, shoes, handbag – but to some people it really does matter, which is very sad.

The image at the beginning of this contribution shows a colonnaded street, lavish columns, and a sign of of a once lavishly rich city. Laodicea straddled an important trade route and became one of the most successful commercial cities of Asia Minor, in which large money transactions and an extensive trade in black wool were carried out. Riches were very much a way of life it seemed. The Laodicean Ecclesia seemed to be infected by the idea that lots of money equals happiness and contentment. It is not what the scriptures teach at all.

- Proverbs 13:7: *There is that maketh himself rich, yet hath nothing: there is that maketh himself poor, yet hath great riches.*
- Luke 6:24: *But woe unto you that are rich! for ye have received your consolation.*
- 1 Timothy 6:9: *But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition.*
- 1 Timothy 6:17: *Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy;*

Riches can give the owner a sense of invincibility, or being in control of their life and destiny, of a kind of superiority, and the need to believe in God fades. No need for God. Whereas people who have

nothing constantly call upon God for assistance. Until they get what they want, and don't need God anymore. Such is the human condition. Israel was the same;

Deuteronomy 8:12-14: Lest when thou hast eaten and art full, and hast built goodly houses, and dwelt therein; And when thy herds and thy flocks multiply, and thy silver and thy gold is multiplied, and all that thou hast is multiplied; Then thine heart be lifted up, and thou forget the LORD thy God, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage;

This is the prayer the Laodicean should pray: Proverbs 30:8,98
Remove far from me vanity and lies: give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me: Lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the Lord? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain.

Jesus also recommended the Laodicean Ecclesia pray:

18 I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, (not the black wool that Laodicea produced) that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see.

Of course, Jesus is referring them to ideas and teachings they should be aware of - the gold tried in the fire:

- *1 Peter 1:7: 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: and see Malachi 3:3.*
- *Revelation 3:5: He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life,*

- John 9:6-11: *When he had thus spoken, he spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and he anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay,*

The solution to be wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked was Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, Jesus. The supplier of comfort, hope, blessing, sight and a covering – all from the Words he spake, the Words he fulfilled, and the Word he obeyed.

The solution to a backsliding Ecclesia is right there, in front of us all. That the Compromising Complacent Comfortable state of Laodicea is common to all situations, Jesus ensured that the letter be a general letter, just the previous six, and that it be sent and read to all the ecclesias – like it is being done now. We can be like this. It is not the end. Just. It is a case of breaking the cycle, changing behaviour consistently, and helping on another to the same ends.

19 As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.

Such an exhortation needs no explanation. Just obedience

20 Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.

This is what we pray happens every first day, as an ecclesia, the Lord, is there in spirit with us, his Spirit with all the ecclesias. But opening the door on the First Day as we remember his life death and resurrection is easy. Do we open the door on our life? Are we transparent, and open with how we spend our time, priorities, focus and effort? Are we opening the door to our hearts?

21 To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne. This the final consolation, the final promise – that of reconciliation with the Father, to sit in thrones of glory, with the Father, with God. To become part of the First Creation, part of the

logos to experience glory, and understanding, wisdom and eternal love – to those who overcome. Lukewarm efforts won't do it.

Brother Terry