

BLESSED FOR SUCCESS – Churches of Asia Minor

Laodicea - Revelation 3

This is our final message in a series of messages I've entitled "Blessed for Success," *a message to the seven churches of Asia Minor*. We now come to the church located in the ancient city of Laodicea, which resided 45 miles southeast of the ancient city of Philadelphia. **Here in the Lord's final letter, Jesus sternly rebukes the church of Laodicea!** Many believe the Lord's letters to the churches represent the various stages of the church down through the ages, before the coming of Christ. If so, *given the fact we are prophetically in the last days*, this letter serves as a *possible* indictment against the church today! However, my prayer is that we would **not** miss our Lord's heart behind this stern exhortation; because it is actually a call to live *fully* for Christ!

(v.14) Once again the Lord opens His letter with a *declaration* of His divine authority. **A four-fold declaration:** First, He calls Himself the **Amen** – "so be it!" of God. Christ is the *ultimate confirmation* of the mind and heart of God. **2 Corinthians 1:20** – *all of God's promises are "Yes" and "Amen" in Christ!* **Faithful** – *Faithful when we are faithless* - **2 Timothy 2:13**. **True Witness** – *of a new a "better covenant"* - **Hebrews 8:6**. **Beginning of Creation** – **John 1:1-4**. **"All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made!"**

(v.15, 16) **"Lukewarm!"** Why would Jesus use such a word? *Possibly because of the two sources of water, residing north and south of the city.* Laodicea was situated between the thermal hot springs of Hierapolis – located 6 miles north; its white limestone deposits from the hot springs were visible from Laodicea; toward the south of Laodicea are mountains from which snowmelt from its summit provided cold water throughout the year. However, water flowing from the north through a ceramic water pipe system built by the Romans, would cause the water to become lukewarm as it passed through the aqueducts into the city. (Biblical Turkey/Mark Wilson; pg. 253)

Be cold like the water running down from the snowcapped mountains to the south, or hot like the hot springs to the north; but if you are lukewarm – a condition caused by water flowing from the south through man made ceramic pipes – I will “vomit” you out of My mouth! The condition of the church had become nauseating to Jesus. They had become an **emetic – a substance which causes vomiting** to God. (v.16b). Their Christian pretense, and *religiosity*, made God “gag!” (Psalm 51:6) Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts, And in the hidden part You will make me to know wisdom.

The ceramic pipes are *illustrative* of man’s efforts to direct the flow (move) of God through man made means! **The Laodicean Church thought they did not need God, (v.17)**. Laodicea was located at the intersection of three well-traveled highways. Laodicea was a highly successful commercial and financial center, with an abundance of wealthy bankers and financiers – the Wall Street of its day. The economic security of this city *apparently had* lulled the church into a sense of false security, resulting in *spiritual apostasy*.

The Lord wants His church “hot,” inside and out! (“hot pocket” faith). The Greek word for **hot – zestos; means - “boiling hot.”** It’s where we get our English word “zest.” In Laodicea the members of the church had lost their *enthusiasm, emotion, zeal* and “zest” for the Lord. (Proverbs 23:17-18) **Do not let your heart envy sinners, But be zealous for the fear of the Lord all the day; For surely there is a hereafter, And your hope will not be cut off.**

We live in a time in which love has grown cold. Jesus warned that this would be the temperature of the last days! (Matthew 24:12, 13) **And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold. But he who endures to the end shall be saved.** Our only defense against the cold is maintaining a fervent, hot love, “zeal” for Jesus! Staying in the word and prayer is throwing another “log on the fire.” But so is fellowship. (Ecclesiastes 4:11) **Again, if two lie down together, they will keep warm; But how can one be warm alone? (v.17)** Their self-evaluation was *nowhere* close to the Lord’s! ***Still, for each one of their carnal conditions, Jesus provides a remedy, through***

*the counsel of His word! (read: v.18) To the spiritually poor He declares, “buy from Me gold.” Gold is used here as a metaphor for true riches, that which is “pure,” *tried and true*, of “eternal value”; “...that you may be rich...” (Proverbs 8:18) **Riches and honor are with me, Enduring riches and righteousness.** To the “naked” – the believer living in shame – Jesus offers a *brand new* “wardrobe,” “that you may be clothed.” (Philippians 3:9) “...and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith.”*

To the “blind” He counsels, “*anoint your eyes.*” Historians tell us Laodicea was the home of a renowned medical school in the first century; a popular eye salve, an ancient healing formula, was manufactured in the city, as well, called “Phrygian powder.” (Strabo’s Geography 12.8.20). This may be the reason for the Lord’s reference to “anointing” their eyes. (Ephesians 1:18, 19) “...the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power.” Spiritual blindness conceals the hope, riches, and power we have in Christ!

(v.19) **Hebrews 12:5-11** tells us God disciplines those He loves, that we might be partakers of His holiness; hagiotes – sanctify, in a moral sense. **Life apart from a lifestyle of sin; abundant life!** (v.20) The invitation here is often ascribed to the lost; however, Jesus is speaking here to His church! There are fellowships, as well as individual believers, whom have left Jesus “knocking” at the door! Those who have chosen to leave Jesus out in the cold while we conduct our own lives and ministries apart from His Lordship!

Jesus desires to “**dine**” with you; literally be “one” with us. He doesn’t want a “drive by” relationship! Jewish culture. He **stands**, is an amazing statement. He stands because God, *who is love*, says “**Love suffers long...**” (1 Corinthians 13:4a). This invitation is for everyone within the church – “**If anyone hears...**” It’s a call to revival! (Psalm 85:6) **Will You not revive us again, That Your people may rejoice**

in You? Holman Hunt's famous painting of Christ knocking on the door, reveals there is no latch on the outside of the door; the latch is on the inside of the door where we are – we control the “latch.” We have as much of Jesus as we are willing to open the door; some only crack the door; others open it half way; but those who desire Him will fling the door open in authentic desperation! (v.21) Those who overcome are they who have placed their faith (trust) in Christ! (ttt) **Ephesians 2:4-10**. Because God is “rich in mercy,” we are now seated with Christ in glory! **The question is will you take your seat?**

CONCLUSION: To be “Blessed for Success” – is (1) To love Jesus first - Ephesian Church; (2) To not fear - Smyrna Church; (3) To not compromise -Pergamos Church; (4) To avoid sexual immorality - Thyatira Church; (5) To be watchful/strengthen what remains - Sardis Church; (6) To be faithful - Philadelphia Church; (7) To be Hot, zealous for the Lord - Laodicea Church.
This is the *attire* of “success” in Christ!