

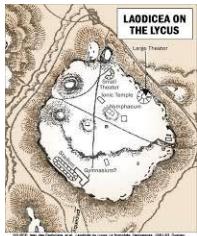
## Revelation 3:14-22

## Letter to Laodicea

## The End Times

In my last post, we examined the letter to the **Messianic Community at Philadelphia**. In this post, **Yeshua's** last letter to the **Messianic Community at Laodicea** will be examined.

## Historical Setting 1



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## Ancient Laodicea

(Pictures Courtesy of Google)

The last church to be designated is in **Laodicea**. **Laodicea** was located in the Lycus Valley of southern Phrygia, midway between **Philadelphia** and **Colossae**. The location of **Laodicea** on one of the main highways of travel enabled it to become wealthy. It was a center for banking, medicine, and was known for its fine textile products. Unfortunately, this economic sufficiency lulled the church to sleep.

**Laodicea** was a wealthy city in Asia Minor founded by Antiochus II (261-246 BCE). It lay on one of the great Asian trade routes, which ensured its great commercial prosperity (gained, in part, at the expense of **Colossae**, when traffic was rerouted from that city and through Laodicea instead). **Laodicea** was a leading banking center.

It was no doubt the rich banking firms that financed the reconstruction of the city after the great earthquake of 60 CE virtually destroyed it. **Laodicea** refused the Roman Senate's earthquake relief. ***For you keep saying, 'I am rich, I have gotten rich, I don't need a thing!' ~ Revelation 3:17.***

The Lycus Valley produced a glossy black wool, the source of black cloaks and carpets for which the city was famous. **Laodicea** was also the home of a medical school and the manufacture of collyrium, a famous eye-salve (3:17-18). The scornful imagery of the apocalyptic letter to **Laodicea** is obviously based on these activities. It also has reference to the emetic [an agent that causes vomiting] qualities of the soda-laden warm water from nearby Hierapolis, whose thermal springs ran into the Maeander River. **Laodicea's** water supply came from Hierapolis and most likely arrived lukewarm. The church of Laodicea was likewise lukewarm church. Its members were materially prosperous, but God tells them that He sees them as spiritually wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked.

<sup>14</sup> *"To the angel of the Messianic Community in Laodicea, write: 'Here is the message from the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the Ruler of God's creation: <sup>15</sup> 'I know what you are doing: you are neither cold nor hot. How I wish you were either one or the other! <sup>16</sup> So, because you are lukewarm, neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of my mouth! <sup>17</sup> For you keep saying, 'I am rich, I have gotten rich, I don't need a thing!' You don't know that you are the one who is wretched, pitiable, poor, blind and naked! <sup>18</sup> My advice to you is to buy from me gold refined by fire, so that you may be rich; and white clothing, so that you may be dressed and not have to be ashamed of your nakedness; and eye salve to rub on your eyes, so that you may see. <sup>19</sup> As for me, I rebuke and discipline everyone I love; so exert yourselves, and turn from your sins! <sup>20</sup> Here, I'm standing at the door, knocking. If someone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he will eat with me. <sup>21</sup> I will let him who wins the victory sit with me on my throne, just as I myself also won the*

<sup>1</sup> Halley's Bible Handbook: Deluxe Edition

**victory and sat down with my Father on his throne. <sup>22</sup> Those who have ears, let them hear what the Spirit is saying to the Messianic communities.**"" ~ Revelation 3:14-22 (CJB)

**Here is the message from the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the Ruler of God's creation.** In each address **Yeshua** tells us something about Himself and, looking carefully, you will note that attribute also to be a characteristic of the Godhead.

1. Rev. 2:1 ~ Omnipresent
2. Rev. 2:8 ~ Eternal
3. Rev. 2:12 ~ Truth
4. Rev. 2:18 ~ Omniscient
5. Rev. 3:1 ~ Comforter
6. Rev. 3:7 ~ Omnipotent
7. Rev. 3:14 ~ Creator

Each of these attributes, a post within itself, gives us a picture of the basic character of our Lord. He is the Sovereign God of this universe. What God must say in each of these seven messages to the churches of Asia Minor must be evaluated carefully, as they set awesome implications not only for the church named, but each and every church on this earth.

**"I know what you are doing: you are neither cold nor hot. How I wish you were either one or the other! So, because you are lukewarm, neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of my mouth! For you keep saying, 'I am rich, I have gotten rich, I don't need a thing!' You don't know that you are the one who is wretched, pitiable, poor, blind and naked!"** William Newell relates: <sup>2</sup>

*Here we have, first, their spiritual state; second, their supreme self-confidence; third, their imminent danger. The meaning of **hot** is seen in Romans 12:11 where the same Greek word is used – **spiritual fervor**. The word translated **cold** is used in Matthew 10:42, **a cup of cold water**; (Like cold water to a person faint from thirst... Proverbs 25:25). Either a hot drink on a cold day, or a cool one on a hot day, is acceptable and refreshing; **Lukewarm** is neither, and disgusts. These Laodiceans were lukewarm: **chiaros** - a Greek word used only this one time in the Bible. It is the last stage of the church's existence recognized by the Lord.*

What a sad commentary on the church of **Laodicea** as **Yeshua** offers no praise for this church. He does not rebuke it for immoral practices or doctrinal error as in the case of others; His rebuke is for being **lukewarm**. To be **lukewarm** reflects compromise, loss of zeal and direction; plus love for the Savior is diminished. This church is more interested in convenience and comfort than with commitment and commission. It has gone from a church that has **lost the love you had at first** (Revelation 2:4), to a church that is in love with itself.

**My advice to you is to buy from me gold refined by fire, so that you may be rich; and white clothing, so that you may be dressed and not have to be ashamed of your nakedness; and eye salve to rub on your eyes, so that you may see.** <sup>19</sup> **As for me, I rebuke and discipline everyone I love; so exert yourselves, and turn from your sins!** **Yeshua** counsels them to make wise spiritual investments before it is too late. He sets forth corrections that need to be made. First, He mentions **gold refined by fire**. This is true unadulterated spiritual riches, eternal wealth. Second, **Yeshua** mentions **White clothing**. The only thing that can cover spiritual nakedness is the absolute righteousness of God. Third, **Yeshua** mentions **eye salve**. Only through the work of the **Ruach** can one's eyes be opened to see spiritual truths. God longs for service from His own with a proper motive. Their testimony was so compromised that there was no difference between them and the lost people of the community. The church could have had a **doctrine of compromise** because they were all practicing it. Then added to all this was the fact that they were without direction. Five words sum it all up, **wretched, pitiable, poor, blind and naked!**

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<sup>2</sup> "Layman's Commentary on Revelation" by Don Jones.

Is **Yeshua** your Lord and Savior? If so, He loves you and desires the very best for you. However, to accomplish this He will discipline you when needed in order to keep you on the straight and narrow path of devoted service (see Hebrews 12:5-11). If you are guilty of compromise in any area of your walk, the admonition is to repent.

***Here, I'm standing at the door, knocking. If someone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he will eat with me.*** This is the final action being taken by our Lord prior to His return for His bride (the true Church). He is pictured on the outside of His own church. It is a sad picture, but because of the kind of activities, programs, leadership, beliefs and conduct of the people, He is no longer welcome in the church. Through its lukewarm condition, the church in Laodicea has shut **Yeshua** out. Since the church might not open the door to Him, He also appeals to individuals within the church to respond personally to Him. **Yeshua** is always there to enter a personal relationship with anyone who will open the door of their heart to Him.

This is a strange picture: **Yeshua** Himself on the outside, asking to be let in to one of His own churches. In measure, it is true of many churches of today, operating in the name of **Yeshua** but with **Yeshua** Himself little in evidence.

***I will let him who wins the victory sit with me on my throne, just as I myself also won the victory and sat down with my Father on his throne.*** **Yeshua** promises the true **Believer** that he will one day (the verb **will let** is future tense) sit with **Yeshua** on His throne. **Yeshua** will sit on the throne of David and we shall rule and reign with Him for one thousand years (see Luke 1:32-33; Matthew 19:28).

### Special Comparative Note on Chapters 3:14 ~ 22 <sup>3</sup>

Among **Historicist** and some **Futurists**, it is generally argued that **Laodicea** represents the lukewarm sector of the church in the End Times (possibly beginning near the end of the nineteenth century). The scholarly assault on the Bible, epitomized and exacerbated by the publication of Darwin's *Origin of Species* (1859), put tremendous pressure on the church to conform to modern thought or lose academic respectability. Many theologians succumbed to this pressure and began subjecting the Bible to "scientific methods" of analysis. Such analysis, though far from objective or conclusive, became fashionable in many seminaries [now I know why they call them cemeteries, the kill one's faith] and denominations, resulting in a loss of respect for the Bible as a genuine revelation from God. In many cases, secular psychology, sociology, anthropology, philosophy, and whatever social trend became popular secular thinking (e.g. the breakdown of Biblical models of marriage and sexuality), have displaced the Bible in its authority to dictate norms for the church.

Modern churches that have gone this route are said to be represented by this **Laodicean** church. They are lukewarm and **Yeshua** says that they nauseate Him. Those applying the seven church letters to eras of church history believe that both the **Philadelphia** and the **Laodicean** types of churches will exist together until the **Second Coming of Yeshua**.

Having considered what the Ruach had to say to each of the seven churches individually, we are prepared to proceed to the main theater, where the pageant of Heavenly scenes of later developments is presented for the edification of all seven of the churches – and, as we think, of the entire church of all times, as their symbolic number doubtless suggests.

In my next post, we will explore a summary of the **Four Views** of the letters in chapters 2 ~ 3 and the **Seven Sealed Scroll** contained beginning in chapters 4 ~ 7 of Revelation.

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<sup>3</sup> Material in this section is taken from "Revelation: Four Views, Revised & Updated" by Steve Gregg