



# WEEK 7

A LETTER TO THE  
CHURCH IN LAODICEA

# REPENT AND RETURN TO HIM

Laodicea is the final of the seven churches in Revelation. This church, located about 100 miles east of Ephesus and 40 miles southeast of Philadelphia, was a major commercial city. Like Philadelphia, Laodicea was found on a main Roman road, which brought in a lot of trading and goods. It was a banking center known for manufacturing soft, black wool garments and its medical school specializing in eye diseases. This thriving city was hit by an earthquake in 60 AD that essentially destroyed everything in the city, but unlike Sardis and Philadelphia, this city declined financial support from Rome because it was so prosperous that it could afford to rebuild itself.

Despite these benefits, the city did carry a significant weakness. Laodicea's closest water sources lay far outside of the city. Its two water sources were a hot spring in Hierapolis (about 8 miles north) and snowcaps a few miles to the south. This meant Laodicea was forced to create a piping system to bring water to the city. It was an engineering feat for this time to have miles of clay piping bringing in water for an entire city. However, since the water had to travel so far, it was warm and tepid by the time it reached the city. It was disgusting to drink.

These three defining pieces of Laodicea- their wealth, their pride of goods and medical expertise for healing eyes, and their tepid, lukewarm water all play into Jesus' important words to this church. This church seems to have become proud like Laodicea. They relied on their own work and goods, which has caused them to become proud, "lukewarm" in their faith, and blind to what Christ is calling them to. Their wealth and prosperity led them to become a consumerist society. They were more influenced by their culture than by Jesus.

Laodicea was the only church of the seven mentioned in Revelation where the Christians weren't persecuted for their faith. They, much like us today, had the freedom to worship openly without fear. This comfort and ease lulled them into complacency or what Jesus calls being "lukewarm". He saves his harshest words for this church that had it relatively easy, yet struggled to give God the glory for their prosperity and success. He is encouraging them to go "all in" on their commitment to Him.



WEEK 7  
LAODICEA

## JESUS'S WORD FOR THE CHURCH AT LAODICEA:

Your wealth, prosperity, and comfort have lulled you into thinking that you are rich, but you are in spiritual poverty. I stand patiently at the door knocking waiting for you to open it. When you open the door and invite me in, you will find a life filled with abundance and riches far deeper and richer than what you have now.

Eugene Peterson says it this way in *This Hallelujah Banquet*;

*We cannot be lukewarm spectators before such a Christ. We can be only passionate participants or ice-cold deniers. We can keep him at arm's length for only so long—his persistent knocking rouses us to respond. The moment we do, he is in and we are head over heels in love, invaded by our Lord, somersaulted into a life of praise by the power of the Resurrection.*

# WEEK 7 - HOLY WEEK

## DAY 1 - MONDAY

**I** *Revelation 3:14-22, John 17, 2 Corinthians 1:20*

**REFLECTION:** As we enter Holy Week leading up to Resurrection Sunday, let's focus our hearts on Jesus' love for us in His final days on earth. John 17 is a beautiful prayer of Jesus over His people. What does it mean to you that Jesus prays for you?

How can we remember His love and trustworthiness during this Holy Week?

What does it mean that all the promises of God are fulfilled in Christ?

### YES AND AMEN

Jesus opened the letter by describing Himself as the "Amen" (V. 14)...I grew up hearing the "amens" of the senior saints that filled the wooden pews of my childhood church. It never occurred to me to wonder what the word means. Context clues told me that this is how the family of God says "That's good" or "That's right." Let's go back to the Old Testament to get another clue on the meaning.

The title "God of truth" in Hebrew is "élohiym amen." So literally, the name is "the God of the Amen," which means God is completely true and trustworthy. Here in Revelation 3, that name is applied to Jesus. He is the incarnate truth. But the name has a richer meaning. In 2 Corinthians 1:20, Paul wrote that "every one of God's promises is 'Yes' in him [Jesus]. Therefore, through him we also say 'Amen' to the glory of God." Through Christ, all God's promises are fulfilled and satisfied. He is the Amen because He confirms all that God has said. Everything He says is true, trustworthy, and backed by His God-given authority. The last title for Christ in verse 14 helps us understand why He has authority.

Written by Whitney Capps - *We Over Me*

# WEEK 7

## DAY 2 - TUESDAY

Revelation 3:15-17, Matthew 21:12-22, 2 Timothy 3:5

**REFLECTION:** Reread Revelation 3:17. List what the Laodiceans think of themselves?

List what Jesus says about them?

The people of Laodicea were much like those that Jesus experienced in the days leading up to His crucifixion. People who eventually let their pride and power consume them to the point that they couldn't see the Savior who was there to refresh their souls standing right in front of them. In Matthew 21, we see him address the money changers in the temple for bringing consumerism into God's house. In this passage, we also see Jesus curse the barren fig tree, which symbolized Israel and its fruitlessness. They looked good on the surface, but they were not bearing fruit. Jesus wants a church and a people that are all in. Jesus was all in, He gave his very life for us! It is offensive to Him when His people are half-hearted/lukewarm in their devotion to Him.

How do we begin to deceive ourselves into thinking our relationship with Jesus is something it's not? How can you begin to evaluate your relationship with Jesus to check on your "temperature" of faith?

### ARE YOU IN OR OUT?

It's not surprising that this sense of pride and power infiltrated the church. According to Jesus, the Laodicean church believes that they are rich and need nothing (v. 17). Historical records affirm their perspective, but Jesus does not. Their confidence has made the Laodiceans comfortable. But Jesus' words disrupt their comfort.

Perhaps the most well-known charge to the church at Laodicea: They are lukewarm. They are neither hot nor cold. Some equate "hot" with spiritual fervor, and "cold" with total spiritual indifference. If that's the case, it means Jesus would prefer them to be either totally committed to Him or totally opposed, rather than hanging around somewhere in the middle...

Jesus was condemning their ineffectiveness. They had grown lazy and comfortable. This is the only place in the New Testament where the word lukewarm is used. It carries a sense of being barren and unusable. At Laodicea, there was no spiritual fervor changing and healing lives. Neither was their church a place where souls were refreshed. They were just lukewarm. Tepid. Useless."

Written by Whitney Capps - *We Over Me*



# WEEK 7

## DAY 3 - WEDNESDAY

Revelation 3:18-19, Matthew 26:14-16

**REFLECTION:** Take time and reflect/write an answer to this question: why do you think Jesus had to die for us?

In the Matthew passage, we see Judas betray Jesus for a fairly small amount of silver. Judas' betrayal of Jesus is a reminder of our own betrayal of Jesus when we choose sin over righteousness. To the church at Laodicea, Jesus describes following and depending on Him as buying gold from Him instead of seeking the lesser riches of this world.

Eugene Peterson says it this way:

*He (Jesus) had nothing derogatory to say about their money or their fine clothes or their medicines. But he mercilessly stripped from them the illusion that any of these things have any eternal value.*

Where have you found yourself choosing the instant comforts/riches of the world (silver) over the eternal comfort/riches Jesus offers (gold)?

### REAL RICHES

The change in the Laodiceans had to begin with understanding their spiritual poverty. As long as we believe we can meet the need for wealth, clothing, or sight ourselves, we can never receive them from Jesus. We must seek these things from Jesus instead of relying on them ourselves.

...If they received from Jesus His riches, His gold – beautifully refined in the fire – then they may be rich. If they received from Jesus the pure, righteous covering He gives, then they would be clothed, and no longer would the shame of your nakedness... be revealed. The merchants of Laodicea were famous for a glossy black wool they used to make beautiful garments. Jesus says, "I know the beautiful black that the world can clothe you in. But I have white garments, that you may be clothed."

If they received from Jesus the healing of their spiritual sight, they would then be able to see. Buy from Me: How can we buy these things from Jesus? We don't earn them through our good works. Instead, Jesus would say, "All this self-sufficiency must be expended in the labour of getting from Me (Jesus) these absolute necessities." (Alford)

Written by David Guzik - *Enduring Word Revelation 3*

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## DAY 4 - THURSDAY

| Revelation 3:20-21, Luke 12:35-40, Matthew 26:17-30, 36-56

### REFLECTION:

*As we receive the sacrament (the Lord's Supper), we are receiving Christ. We are responding to his knocking at the door of our lives. We are saying yes to his request to come "into" us, to enter our interior lives and sup with us. As we take in the bread and wine, we are taking the whole Christ into our lives.*

-Eugene Peterson *This Hallelujah Banquet*

Take time and reflect/write an answer to this question: how do you think your life would look if you let the whole of Christ into your life?

How can we begin to do that?

### A KNOCK AT THE DOOR

The imagery of a door being opened is used twice in Revelation 3. Jesus uses this imagery as an encouragement because this church had been closed out from the synagogue and society. He wanted to show them that His door is always open for them. The image is a reminder of His joy and acceptance of them. He opens the door for His people to know Him and live with Him. The image for Laodicea is a little different. For Laodicea, Jesus is the one knocking on a door. Jesus reminds the church in Laodicea that they have closed Him out of their lives. They have depended upon themselves, their wealth, status, and ability.

We fall into this trap as Christians all the time, especially in our modern western culture. We are dependent upon our conveniences, our wealth, and our ability. We have replaced our Savior with our comfort. The beauty of what Jesus says to Laodicea and us is that He is still at the door of our hearts knocking to come in, to be Lord of our lives again. It's up to us to open the door. To let Him in, to let Him rule, and to be subject to His beautiful and providential rule.

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## DAY 5 - GOOD FRIDAY

**I** *Revelation 3:21, Colossians 2:1-15, Matthew 26:59-68, Matthew 27:15-31, 33-66*

**REFLECTION:** Write down your thoughts on Jesus' sacrifice. What stands out to you?

What do you think it means to let God in to be the Lord of your life?

### RETURN TO ME

Jesus speaks these words to these churches from experience... He loved people so much that he was willing to suffer and die for sharing the truth. He lived a holy life fully submitted to His Father's will. He never rested on His previous works and good deeds. He continued to share the truth and point people to the Father while being persecuted, mocked, ridiculed, abandoned, betrayed, and killed. Jesus is our perfect example of staying on mission and finishing well. We've spent seven weeks hearing Jesus tell these churches and His people how to follow in His example; this section concludes with a call to return to HIM.

Jesus is calling the church in Laodicea to come back to Him. He is calling us to do the same. He is calling them to let Him be Lord of their lives. It's a question we should be asking ourselves every day: is Jesus Lord of my life? When we allow Him to be Lord of our lives, we truly live the way Christ has called us to. We begin to live in step with Jesus, we begin to find dependence in Him, and we begin to see the freedom of His salvation in our lives every day. Living for Jesus means dying to ourselves- it means dying to be the lord over our own lives and submitting every detail of our lives to the only one capable of being the LORD, the only one who has died to save us, King Jesus who sits at the throne at the right hand of the Father.

# ■ WEEK 7

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## DAY 6 - SATURDAY REFLECTION DAY

■ Look over the following verses from our study of Revelation 1-3.

*All glory to him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by shedding his blood for us. -Revelation 1:5*

*Turn back to me and do the works you did at first. -Revelation 2:5*

*I am coming soon. Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take away your crown. -Revelation 3:11*

*I correct and discipline everyone I love. -Revelation 3:19*

*Anyone with ears to hear must listen to the Spirit and understand what he is saying to the churches. -Revelation 3:22*

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS FOR WEEK 7:

- Write down what you learned about God through this study.
  
  
  
- Write down what you learned about yourself and your relationship with God through this study.
  
  
  
- What is a next step you believe God is calling you to after this study?

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## DAY 7 - RESURRECTION SUNDAY

■ Read Matthew 28:1-10, 18-20