

Revelation of Jesus Christ Study 23

Rev 3:15-17

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

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

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--

THE CONCERN

Since there was nothing for which to commend this unregenerate church, Christ launched directly into His concerns.

Deeds always reveal people's true spiritual state, as indicated by the Lord's words;

Matt 7:16

16 You will know them by their fruits.

Rom 2:6-8

6 who "will render to each one according to his deeds":

7 eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality;

8 but to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness--indignation and wrath,

Though salvation is wholly by God's grace through faith alone, **deeds** confirm or deny the presence of genuine salvation

James 2:14

14 What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him?

The omniscient Lord Jesus Christ knew the Laodiceans' deeds and that they indicated an unregenerate church.

Christ rebuked them for being **neither cold nor hot**, but **luke-warm**.

His metaphorical language is drawn from Laodicea's water supply.

Because it traveled several miles through an underground aqueduct before reaching the city, the water arrived foul, dirty, and tepid.

It was not hot enough to relax and restore, like the hot springs at Hierapolis, Nor was it cold and refreshing, like the stream water at Colossae.

The Laodiceans lukewarm water was in a useless condition.

Comparing its state to the city's foul, tepid water, Christ gave the Laodicean church a powerful shocking rebuke;:

Rev 3:16

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

Some churches make the Lord weep, others make Him angry; the Laodicean church made Him sick.

Hot people are those who are spiritually alive and possess the fervency of a transformed life. **Cold** people, on the other hand, are best understood as those who reject Jesus Christ.

The Gospel leaves them unmoved; it evokes in them no spiritual response. They have no interest in Christ, His Word, or His church.

They make no pretense about it; they are not hypocrites.

The **lukewarm** fit into neither category. They are not genuinely saved, yet they do not openly reject the gospel.

They attend church and claim to know the Lord. Like the Pharisees, they are content to practice a self-righteous religion;

They are hypocrites playing games. Christ described such people in *Matt*:

Matt 7:22-23

22 Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?'

23 And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'

The lukewarm are like the unbelieving Jews of whom Paul lamented:

Rom 10:2

2 For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge.

2 Tim 3:5

5 having a form of godliness but denying its power.

Such obnoxious hypocrisy nauseates Christ.

These smug, self-righteous hypocrites are far more difficult to reach with the gospel than cold-hearted rejecters.

The latter may at least be shown that they are lost.

But those who are self-righteously think that they are saved are often protective of their religious feelings and unwilling to recognize their real condition.

No one is harder to reach than a false Christian.

Jesus paralleling critique of the self-righteous, self-deceived Pharisees and Sadducees was that *"the tax collectors and prostitutes would get into the kingdom of God before them"*

Matt 21:28-31

28 "But what do you think? A man had two sons, and he came to the first and said, 'Son, go, work today in my vineyard.'

29 He answered and said, 'I will not,' but afterward he regretted it and went.

30 Then he came to the second and said likewise. And he answered and said, 'I go, sir,' but he did not go.

31 Which of the two did the will of his father?" They said to Him, "The first." Jesus said to them, "Assuredly, I say to you that tax collectors and harlots enter the kingdom of God before you.

The Laodiceans' lukewarmness was compounded by their self-deception. Christ rebuked them for their disastrously inaccurate self-assessment:

Rev 3:17

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--

Their deeds gave the lie to their empty words.

Matt 7:21

21 "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven.

Like the rich young ruler they were deceived about their actual spiritual condition.

Matt 19:16-22

16 Now behold, one came and said to Him, "Good Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?"

17 So He said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God. But if you want to enter into life, keep the commandments."

18 He said to Him, "Which ones?" Jesus said, "'You shall not murder,' 'You shall not commit adultery,' 'You shall not steal,' 'You shall not bear false witness,'

19 'Honor your father and your mother,' and, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' "

20 The young man said to Him, "All these things I have kept from my youth. What do I still lack?"

21 Jesus said to him, "If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me."

22 But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.

As we have previously studied, Laodicea was a very wealthy city. That wealth gave the members of its church a false sense of security as they imagined that their spiritual wealth mirrored their city's material wealth.

They were rich in spiritual pride but bankrupt in saving grace. Believing they were to be envied, they were in fact to be pitied.

Their incipient gnosticism, discussed earlier, led them to believe they had attained an exalted level of knowledge. They no doubt looked down on the unsophisticated people who fully accepted and were satisfied with the biblical teachings on the person and work of Jesus Christ.

But the reality was, as Jesus pointed out, they were spiritually **wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked**.

THE COMMAND

Rev 3:18-20

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.

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

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.

The Lord Jesus Christ could have instantly judged and destroyed this church filled with unredeemed hypocrites. Instead He graciously offered them genuine salvation.

Christ's three fold appeal played on the three features the city of Laodicea was most noted for and proud of:

Its Wealth

Its Wool

Its Eye salve.

Christ offered them:

Spiritual Gold

Spiritual clothes

Spiritual sight

The Lord of course, did not teach that salvation may be earned by good works; lost sinners have nothing with which to **buy** salvation;

I am reminded of the words in Isaiah concerning man's condition;

Isaiah 64:5-6

5 You meet him who rejoices and does righteousness, Who remembers You in Your ways. You are indeed angry, for we have sinned-- In these ways we continue; And we need to be saved.

6 But we are all like an unclean thing, And all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags; We all fade as a leaf, And our iniquities, like the wind, Have taken us away.

But notice the invitation of God to man;

Isaiah 55:1-3

1 "Ho! Everyone who thirsts, Come to the waters; And you who have no money, Come, buy and eat. Yes, come, buy wine and milk Without money and without price.

2 Why do you spend money for what is not bread, And your wages for what does not satisfy? Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good, And let your soul delight itself in abundance.

3 Incline your ear, and come to Me. Hear, and your soul shall live; And I will make an everlasting covenant with you-- The sure mercies of David

All sinners have to offer is their wretched, lost condition. In exchange for that Christ offers His righteousness to those who truly repent.

Christ advises the Laodiceans to **buy from** Him three things, all of which symbolize true redemption.

1st they needed to purchase **gold refined by fire so that** they might **become rich.**

They needed gold that was free of impurities, representing the priceless riches of true salvation.

Peter wrote of a faith, more precious than gold

1 Pet 1:7

7 that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ,

Paul defined saving faith as :

1 Tim 6:18-19

18 Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share,

19 storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.

Christ offered the Laodiceans a pure, true salvation that would bring them into a real relationship with Him

2nd Christ advised them to buy **white garments so that** they might **clothe** themselves, **and that the shame of their nakedness would not be revealed.**

Laodicea's famed black wool symbolized the filthy, sinful garments with which the unregenerate are clothed;

Isaiah 64:6

But we are all like an unclean thing, And all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags; We all fade as a leaf, And our iniquities, like the wind, Have taken us away.

Zech 3:3-4

³ Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and was standing before the Angel.

⁴ Then He answered and spoke to those who stood before Him, saying, "Take away the filthy garments from him." And to him He said, "See, I have removed your iniquity from you, and I will clothe you with rich robes."

In contrast, God clothes the redeemed with **white garments**:

Isaiah 61:10

¹⁰ I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, My soul shall be joyful in my God; For He has clothed me with the garments of salvation, He has covered me with the robe of righteousness, As a bridegroom decks himself with ornaments, And as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.

These white garments symbolize the righteous deeds that always accompany genuine saving faith.

Rev 19:7-8

⁷ Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready."

⁸ And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.

3rd Finally, Christ offered them **eye salve to anoint their eyes so that they might see.**

Though they prided themselves on their allegedly superior spiritual knowledge, the Laodiceans were in fact spiritually stone blind.

Blindness represents a lack of understanding and knowledge of spiritual truth.

Like all unregenerate people, the Laodiceans desperately needed Christ to *"Open their eyes so that they might turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to god, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Him (Acts 26:18; 1 Pet 2:9)*

But for the Laodiceans to be saved, they would have to **be zealous and repent.**

The meaning of these words is tantamount to the attitude of mourning over sin and hungering and thirsting for righteousness of which Jesus spoke in the sermon on the mount;

Matt 5:4-6

⁵ Blessed are the meek, For they shall inherit the earth.

⁶ Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, For they shall be filled.

While repentance is not a meritorious work, the New Testament call to salvation always includes it.

In repentance, the sinner turns from his sin to serve God:

1 Theses 1:9

9 For they themselves declare concerning us what manner of entry we had to you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God,

The Lord Jesus Christ followed the call to repentance in verse 19 with a tender, gracious invitation in verse 20

Rev 3:20

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.

The apostate Laodicean church could only expect Christ to come in judgment, but the startling reality introduced by the arresting word **behold** was that Christ stood **at the door** of the Laodicean church **and knocked, if anyone** in the church would hear His **voice and open the door**, He would **come in to him and dine with him, and he with** Christ.

The Lord urged them to repent and have fellowship with Him before the night of judgment fell and it was too late forever.

THE COUNSEL

Rev 3:21-22

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.

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

The wonderful promise to **he who overcomes** (all believers) is that Christ **will grant to him to sit down with Him on His throne, as He also overcome and sat down with the Father on His throne.**

To enjoy fellowship with Christ in the kingdom and throughout eternity is sufficient blessing beyond all comprehension.

But Christ offers more, promising to seat believers on the throne He shares with the Father;

Matt 19:28

28 So Jesus said to them, "Assuredly I say to you, that in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

Luke 22:29-30

29 And I bestow upon you a kingdom, just as My Father bestowed one upon Me,

30 that you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel."

This reveals the truth that we shall reign with Him.

The right to sit with Christ on His heavenly throne is but one of the many promises made to overcomers in the letters to the seven churches.

Overcomers are also promised:

The privilege of eating from the tree of life (2:7)

The crown of life (2:10)

Protection from the second death (2:11)

The hidden manna (2:17)

A white stone with a new name written on it. (2:17)

Authority to rule the nations (2:26-27)

The morning star (2:28)

White garments, symbolizing purity and holiness ((3:5)

The honor of having Christ confess their names before God the Father and the holy angels in heaven (3:5)

To be made a pillar in God's temple (3:12)

To have written on them the name of God, of the new Jerusalem, and of Christ (3:12)

As did the other six letters, the letter to the Laodiceans closed with Christ's exhortation, "*He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.*"

The message to the apostate church is obvious: **repent, and open up to Christ before the night of judgment falls.**

The implication for true believers is that, like Christ, we must compassionately call those in the apostate church to repent and receive salvation in Jesus Christ (*Jude 23*)