

REVELATION 3:14-22

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to Revelation chapter 3 as we continue our study through the book of Revelation and the Word of God.

Over the last several weeks we have been looking at these letters that Jesus wrote to the churches in Asia Minor or modern-day Turkey.

And the reason we are spending so much time with these letters is that they are letters that Jesus wrote to the church, not just the historical churches in Turkey, but to us as individuals and as a local body of believers.

And as much as we all want to be the faithful church or the church of Philadelphia, I think some of these issues that Jesus spoke of in these other churches can apply to us as well and we need to listen and heed the warnings that Jesus is giving to us so that we can grow in our relationship with Him.

Tonight we are going to finish up looking at these letters that Jesus wrote to these churches in Asia Minor, and this is the seventh letter.

Keep in mind that there were many more churches in this region and thus, seven, being the number of completeness, in these seven letters Jesus is giving to us all that we need to know as we look at the history of the church. You will see what I mean in a minute.

And, as we have done with the previous 6 letters we have studied here in Revelation chapters 2 and 3, we will be looking at the 7 key principles of this letter: the *destination*, the *title* or *description of Jesus*, the *commendation* except for Laodicea, the *rebuke* but as we saw Smyrna and Philadelphia had none, the *exhortation*, the *warning* and once again Smyrna and Philadelphia had none, and then we will finish up with the *promise* that Jesus gives to all who will listen and obey these words that the Spirit is speaking to them!

For some who may have not been to our previous studies on these churches, let me show you how they play out prophetically speaking, because that will lead us to the last day's church that we will be reading about this evening.

We started out with the church of Ephesus, and we see that they left their first love, Jesus Christ. They were very busy, lots of motion but no emotion. We call this church – ***THE LOVELESS CHURCH!*** And their light or their witness of Christ was removed because they refused the warning of Jesus to remember, repent and repeat; to fall in love with Jesus. This represented the apostolic church or the church of the first century that lasted to around 63 A. D.

The next church we looked at was the church of Smyrna or – ***THE PERSECUTED CHURCH!*** They faced intense persecution and yet they remained faithful to their Lord in the midst of this intense persecution and poverty. And as they were crushed by this persecution the fragrance of Jesus was released in their lives touching the lives of others. The persecuted church represented the church from around 63 A. D. to 312 A. D. where some 5 to 6 million Christians were put to death for their faith in Jesus Christ by Rome!

We also looked at the church of Pergamos or – ***THE COMPROMISING CHURCH!***

This church wanted to be liked, they did not want to rock the boat, they did not want to face any persecution or trouble and they compromised what they believed in. This church represented the church from around 312 A. D. to the 5th century where the church married the state and in doing so, they compromised what they believed!

We then looked at the church of Thyatira or – ***THE CORRUPT CHURCH!*** The corrupt church or the church of Thyatira lasted almost 1,000 years, from around 590 A. D. to 1517 A. D. And we know this period of time as the ***Dark Ages***. And as we have seen, the church of Thyatira represents the Roman Catholic Church, prophetically speaking. And for the first time Jesus says that if they don't repent, they will be cast into the Great Tribulation! (Revelation 2:22)

Next was the fifth letter that Jesus wrote, and it was to the church of Sardis. We might call this - ***THE DEAD CHURCH!*** Interestingly enough, we see the move from the dark ages into a period of time known as the Renaissance, which literally means "***rebirth***." It is the name given to the great awakening of the fourteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, culminating with the sixteenth century reformation in Europe! The Reformation movement was badly needed to confront the corruption within the Roman Catholic Church, but what began with life ended in death. It became nothing more than a monument to the past and when you look at the Protestant church today, that is exactly what has happened!

Now, out of this Protestant Reformation there are two main branches or end-time churches that emerge.

Last time, as we looked at the sixth letter that Jesus wrote to the churches in Asia Minor, to one of these branches that came out of the Protestant Reformation, and this letter was to the church of Philadelphia – ***THE FAITHFUL CHURCH!*** And of this church the Lord tells them that He will keep them from the hour of trial that is coming upon the earth dwellers. This is speaking of the Rapture of the church or that the church is removed before the Tribulation Period begins.

You see, out of this dead church there were people who loved the Lord and His Word. People who were guided by the Spirit of God and it led to the spiritual awakening of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries that began over northern Europe and the British Isles and overflowed to America.

That is the church ***prophetically*** speaking covering a period of time from the 1700's to the late 1800's.

And tonight we will look at this last letter that Jesus wrote to the churches in Asia Minor and this letter was to the church in Laodicea – ***THE APOSTATE CHURCH!***

Now some may feel I am being a little harsh and unloving but when you see where Jesus is at in this church, you will understand why I call this church – ***THE APOSTATE CHURCH!***

Now you may be wondering, ***“What is an apostate?”***

Let me tell you. I like the way that J. Vernon McGee defines this word, apostate. He wrote, ***“An apostate is one who has heard the great truths of the Christian Faith, has become intellectually convinced that Jesus is the Christ, has even made a profession of Christianity, although he has never been truly saved. After having tasted the good things of Christianity, he completely renounces them and repudiates the Lord Jesus Christ.”***

Yes, they may have departed from the Christian faith, but they still remain in the local church. And today we see the number of apostate churches growing and growing as they deny the truths of God found in the Word of God and we are seeing the church of Laodicea, prophetically speaking, coming to pass!

Let me share this with you as it will give you some insight into what we will be dealing with. We are told,

I would like to buy \$3.00 worth of God, please, not enough to explode my soul or disturb my sleep, but just enough to equal a cup of warm milk or a snooze in the sunshine. I don't want enough of Him to make me love a black man or pick beets with a migrant. I want ecstasy, not transformation; I want the warmth of the womb, not a new birth. I want a pound of the eternal in a paper sack. I would like to buy \$3.00 worth of God, please.

- Wilbur Reed, from *When I Relax, I feel Guilty* by Tim Hansel

That is the problem, just a little of God and no transformation, they are not saved! And yes, this is not an easy subject, but one that Jesus wants us to understand and learn from so we don't go down that same path.

With that as our introduction, let's begin reading in Revelation chapter 3, beginning in verse 14, and let's see what the Lord has for us as we study through His Word.

REVELATION 3**VERSE 14**

The *destination* of this letter is Laodicea.

Now this interesting to me because in the previous letters that Jesus wrote, He says, “*to the angel of the church IN Sardis [and-so-on]*” but here He writes, “**to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans . . .**”

It seems like He is speaking to the people and not just the pastor. Why is that?

It is possible that the pastor was apostate and thus, Jesus was not only giving this letter to the pastor, but to the people as well, just in case the pastor was not willing to read it to them. It is a possibility! In the other letters the pastor was to read the letter to his people.

Now we need to look at this city of Laodicea because it will help us to understand this letter that Jesus wrote to them.

The city of Laodicea was located about 40 miles southeast of Philadelphia and 100 miles due east of Ephesus.

Laodicea was part of a triad of cities, along with Colosse, which was 10 miles to the east; and Hierapolis, which was 6 miles to the north; and they all were located in the Lycus valley.

Also, this city was located on a plateau several hundred feet high, and thus, geographically it was nearly impregnable.

The city was founded by the Seleucid ruler, Antiochus II and named after his first wife sometime before 253 B. C., when he divorced her. Her name was Laodice.

One of their problems was a poor water supply that made Laodicea vulnerable to attack through siege.

If an enemy army surrounded the city, they had insufficient water supplies in the city, and the supplies coming into the city could be easily cut off.

Therefore, the leaders of Laodicea were always accommodating to any potential enemy, and always wanted to negotiate and compromise instead of fight.

Which is interesting when you look at what this church was doing and what churches today are doing, compromising what they believe to be at peace with the world. They don't want to fight the fight of faith but would rather give in to the worldly philosophies! Not a good thing.

Because they did not have a water supply of their own, they had to pipe water into this city from several miles away. As we will see, Jesus is going to use that in the next verse to illustrate their condition.

Laodicea was one of the richest commercial centers in the world. In fact, it was so wealthy and so independent that after a devastating earthquake in 60 A. D. that leveled the city, they refused help from Rome and rebuilt their entire city on their own with the resources they had!

The idea here is that they were so self-sufficient that they needed help from no one, and as we will see with the church, not even God!

Barclay put it like this, ***“Laodicea was too rich to accept help from anyone. Tacitus, the Roman historian, tells us: ‘Laodicea arose from the ruins by the strength of her own resources, and with no help from us.’”***

Also, Laodicea was known for three main industries.

First, financially speaking they were wealthy and were a strategic banking center.

Secondly, they were known for their wool production. They raised black sheep and this wool was made into carpets and clothes, which were very expensive, and they made a huge profit off the selling of these products. This wool was something that many sought after.

And lastly, they produced this eye salve that was produced at the temple of the Phrygian god Men Karou and within this temple was a medical school that was famous for this eye salve they developed.

This eye salve was exported all over the Greco-Roman world!

Thus, their riches, their self-reliance, their programs ended up being their downfall, at least for the church.

When was the church started in Laodicea?

The church in Laodicea probably got started when Paul was in Ephesus or sometime thereafter.

We are told in Acts 19:10 as Paul was in Ephesus, **“And this continued for two years, so that all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.”**

Now it is possible, according to what Paul wrote in his letter to the Colossians, that the church was planted or at least ministered to by Epaphras, (Colossians 1:17, 4:12-13).

And it is also possible that Archippus, Philemon’s son, was the pastor there.

There is a fourth century document, the Apostolic Constitutions that names Archippus as the Bishop in Laodicea, (vii, 46), (Colossians 4:17).

So this church had a good start but by the time that Jesus wrote this letter, some 30 to 40 years after Paul wrote his letter to the Colossian church, the church had deteriorated into nothing more than a great structure with no true life inside.

What is interesting to me is that the name **“Laodicea”** means ***“ruled by the people.”***

You see, LAO means people and DIECE means rule.

That was one of the problems.

A church is not to be ruled as a democracy, but the pastor is to shepherd or lead the people. You don't see sheep leading a shepherd.

And at any given time, in most churches, 10% of the people are on fire for the Lord, 30% are just getting fired up, and 60% are new believers or unbelievers.

So if the church is run by democratic rule, you would have the church being led by new believers and unbelievers!

That is not good, and it is not scriptural.

The pastor oversees the church, and the elders assist in the work of the spiritual matters and the deacons help with the cleaning and upkeep and then the congregation, but the pastor leads.

Make no mistake about it, the Laodicean church is symbolic of the liberal, apostate church of the last days.

They make their own rules, they decide what to believe and what not to believe. They tend to follow the way that the world is going and thus, what they allow into the church is in a constant state of flux, depending on what the culture is dictating.

And the result of this unbiblical way of leading is that you have churches that are ordaining homosexuals, promoting the theory of evolution, supporting Planned Parenthood and in agreement with Marxist, Communist groups like Black Live Matter and Antifa, they are preaching the dangers of global warming and even worshiping Gia or mother earth!

They deny the deity of Jesus, they deny His virgin birth, they deny His blood atonement and they don't even believe the Bible is the Word of God!

This is the letter that Jesus wrote, and it is a tough letter, as we will see.

Historically speaking the church of Laodicea was a real church that existed in John's day, and by the time that Jesus wrote this letter, it had become apostate. Again, hard for some to swallow, they don't see it that way, but as we read on that is the only conclusion you can come to, and I will show you that in a few minutes.

Prophetically speaking, where does the church of Laodicea fit into the church age or the age of grace?

First of all, this period of time began with the day of Pentecost when the church began and will continue on until the Rapture or the church being caught up to meet the Lord in the air.

Again, I have covered this, but I think it is important for us to understand how this all plays out.

Now as we have seen in our studies so far, the church of Ephesus represented the apostolic church or the church of the first century and that lasted to around 63 A. D. This was the church that left their first love, Jesus Christ.

We then came to the church of Smyrna or the persecuted church from around 63 A. D. to 312 A. D. where Rome put to death some 5 to 6 million Christians for their faith in Jesus Christ. But in this persecution, as they were being crushed, the fragrance of Jesus was released from their lives touching the lives of others.

From there we moved to the church in Pergamos or mixed marriage where the church and the state were united under Constantine, as Christianity became the state religion and thus, this church was known as the church of compromise. And what the persecution couldn't do, this relationship did, this compromise weakened the church, and this covered a period of time from around 312 A. D. to 590 A. D.

Now, these last four churches are all in existence today, and some, if they don't repent, will be cast into the Tribulation Period.

Out of the compromise of Pergamos we come to the church of Thyatira, which means "*continual sacrifice.*" This represented the Roman Catholic Church that denies the finished work of Christ on the cross of Calvary for our sins, and they believe we must atone for our sins that we commit now. That atonement is accomplished on this earth through the Mass and other sacraments and in Purgatory waiting to get into heaven when your work is done, at least that is what they believe, it is not found in the Scriptures. This covered a period of time from around 590 A. D. to 1517 A. D. and this period of time was known as the dark ages!

Out of the dark ages came the Renaissance or "*rebirth.*" This is the church of Sardis, and it represents the Reformation movement where the call was to get back to the truths of God found in the Word of God and away from the doctrines, the philosophies of man. They held to the truth that we are saved by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone! But over time this movement became dead, lifeless, cold, mechanical as they were no longer moved by the Spirit of God. The time frame here is from 1517 A. D. to 1750 A. D. They still had a name, but there was no life in them!

Out of the deadness of what was the Protestant Reformation movement came two branches or groups of churches.

One was the church of Philadelphia that represented the Great Awakening of the 1700's to the late 1800's and into the early 1900's. Men like Moody, Spurgeon, Carey, Taylor, Wesley, Finney, Edwards and others whom God used as He put away the old wineskins and used the new wineskins to work through.

The other branch that came out of the Protestant Reformation movement was the church of Laodicea or the lukewarm church. They were into higher criticism and began to deny the truths of God found in the Word of God and what began in the 1900's continues on today. This church is big, it is strong, and it is experience driven instead of Spirit lead. It goes by feelings instead of the Word of God. It is the apostate church of the last days and we are seeing it grow before our very eyes, as I have said!

This is the church *prophetically* speaking – ***THE APOSTATE CHURCH!***

Now the *title* or *description of Jesus* that He uses really doesn't come out of Revelation chapter 1, as we saw with the church of Philadelphia.

Jesus begins by saying that He is the "**Amen.**"

That word was used to punctuate a statement; it is a word that means, "*so be it.*"

In other words, He is the one who will have the final say in all things and since Jesus is God, that just makes sense, and it truly makes sense as He speaks to this apostate church!

Listen to what we are told of God in Isaiah 65:16, "**So that he who blesses himself in the earth Shall bless himself in the God of truth; And he who swears in the earth Shall swear by the God of truth; Because the former troubles are forgotten, And because they are hidden from My eyes.**"

Notice what God calls Himself – ***THE GOD OF TRUTH!***

Do you know what the Hebrew is for the word "*truth*"?

It is ***AMEN***, (aw-mane).

So He is the God of all ***TRUTH***, the ***AMEN!***

It is as Paul said in II Corinthians 1:20, "**For all the promises of God in Him are Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us.**"

What is Paul saying?

Paul is saying that all the promises of God are guaranteed through the work of Jesus Christ.

You see, the blood of bulls and goats could not take away our sins, but the shed blood of Christ could and did!

Listen to what John tells us regarding Jesus in I John 2:2, “**And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.**”

You see, God became sin for us, He paid in full the penalty for our sins, enduring the wrath of God that was due us!

Thus, Jesus does not defend us by manipulating the evidence because we are guilty before God.

What He does do is say that our penalty was paid in full by Him, and He can show the scares to prove it, case closed!

What is interesting to me is when they were translating the Hebrew Scriptures into Greek, back around 250 B. C., the Greek word they used for Mercy Seat is the same Greek word that John uses for propitiation, *HILASMOS!*

In other words, on the Day of Atonement, when the High Priest entered the Holy of Holies and poured out the blood upon the Mercy Seat to atone for the sins of the nation, Jesus has become our Mercy Seat and it is His blood that was shed to atone completely for our sins!

In fact, Paul tells us in Hebrews 7:25, “**Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.**”

Jesus is also the “**faithful and true witness**” but of who?

He is the faithful and true witness of God!

Remember what Jesus said in the Gospel of John, that if you have seen Me, you have seen the Father. He represented the Father to us because He is God!

Thus, when Jesus says, “**... ‘I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.’**” He had the authority to proclaim this. (John 14:6).

And it was important for this church to hear that because they did not believe it!

Now He also says that He is “**the beginning of the creation of God**” and when cults hear this they jump to the conclusion that Jesus is a created being, and thus, He is not God or maybe He is just “*a god.*”

That is poor Bible exegesis or interpretation.

Listen carefully, this is important because, like I said, the cults will try to hit you on this one denying the deity of Jesus!

The word “**beginning**” is the Greek word ARCHE and that speaks of origin.

In other words, Jesus is saying that He is the source or the origination of creation. He is not a created being; He has always existed because He is God, and He is eternal.

In John 1:1-2 we are told, “**In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God.**”

Also, in Micah 5:2 tells us, “**But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, Though you are little among the thousands of Judah, Yet out of you shall come forth to Me The One to be Ruler in Israel, Whose goings forth are from of old, From everlasting.**”

That phrase, “**from everlasting**” speaks of His eternal existence and can be translated “*beyond the vanishing point.*”

Thus, Jesus is eternal, He is God!

Why was it so important to make these statements to the church of Laodicea?

Keep in mind Jesus does not waste words and the reason is simple.

The church in Laodicea was being infected with the heresy that was being spread in Colosse, which was only some 10 miles away. Some believed the material universe was evil and thus Jesus was only spiritual, He had no flesh or bones.

Obviously, the Scriptures deny that very clearly.

Others believed that God created Jesus and that He was some distant emanation of God. Thus, they were denying the deity of Jesus Christ.

And so, we see Jesus telling them as the God of truth and the faithful witness of the Father, the only one who has seen the Father, that He is the originator of creation. The one who holds your existence in His hands is speaking to them! Thus, they better listen to what He has to say because it is a matter of life and death as we will see!

Also, there is no **commendation** for this church that was lukewarm in their relationship with the Lord, and we will see that as we move on.

VERSES 15-17

As we have seen in the other letters, God knows all that we do. And we see that here in this letter.

God, who knows their works, **rebukes** them and He does so like a machine gun firing off in rapid-fire succession.

They seem to be unaware, indifferent but the Lord tells them they are lukewarm, wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked!

You see, they had no excuse now, the Lord is showing them their error and it is up to them to listen to what the Spirit is saying and respond!

As I have said, it seems that Laodicea did not have an adequate water supply, so they had to pipe it into the city from Colosse, who received their water from the mountains.

And in Colosse the water was cool, it was refreshing but by the time it reached Laodicea it was lukewarm, distasteful, it was no longer refreshing.

Also, from Hierapolis they had hot springs that were therapeutic to the body. But once again, by the time it reached Laodicea this water was lukewarm, it was no longer therapeutic.

Now you need to understand that Jesus is not speaking of believers, but unbelievers.

You see, those that were hot are speaking of those that were saved and on fire for the Lord.

Those that are cold were the unsaved and they knew where they stood and there was always the possibility that they would desire the warmth of the Lord and turn to Him.

But this church was not hot or cold, they were lukewarm, which speaks of them being religious but unsaved. This is the most dangerous place to be because they were in a condition that made them feel safe, it made them feel secure, but they were still lost in their sins.

One writer put it like this, ***“These smug, self-righteous hypocrites are far more difficult to reach with the gospel than cold-hearted rejecters.”*** Exactly!

Think of it like this. The thief on the cross was cold, indifferent to Jesus and he knew it and saw his need for the Lord and got saved.

The apostle John was hot towards Jesus; he had a personal relationship with Him.

But Judas, he was lukewarm. He followed close enough to Jesus to be considered a disciple but never giving his life over to Jesus to be saved.

That was this church, the people here in Laodicea, they were lukewarm!

It is as Walvoord said, *“There is no one farther from the truth in Christ than he who makes an idol profession without real faith.”*

We would call them the pretenders, but they are nothing more than apostates!

Does the Lord care for these people, for this church?

Of course He does or He would not have warned them of the danger they were in. *God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son*, may we not forget that!

The Lord desired to see them saved or at least cold, but they refused and for those who believe that by just being religious, just believing in something is acceptable before God, think again.

The Lord says to those who are lukewarm, **“I will vomit you out of My mouth.”**

This Laodicean church made Him sick and the same is true for those who are lukewarm like this church! The Lord doesn't want anything to do with a false profession of faith – that is hypocrisy!

The Lord saw this hypocrisy, this false profession of faith as unpleasant to Him and He was going to expel them out of His life, you might say!

And I find it interesting how religious people, people who think they are Christians and yet not following the Lord, are self-deceived! They feel comfortable where they are at and what they are doing, but they are lost!

What was their self-deception? Look again and Revelation 3:17, **“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.”**

Remember when we were studying the church of Smyrna, this persecuted church, they were small, they were poor having absolutely nothing and many were at the point of death for their faith, and many were martyred for their faith.

Now from a worldly perspective, they were nothing. But as the Lord looked at this church who had nothing physically, He saw them as spiritually rich!

Here we see the exact opposite with the church of Laodicea. They were self-sufficient and were in need of nothing, not even the Lord!

You see, from a human perspective they saw themselves as rich or wealthy, in need of nothing but the Lord looks at the heart and sees what is really going on and says that they are wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked!

And when you look at churches today it is about their buildings, their programs, and the church is run like a business, and they don't need the Lord when they have marketing gimmicks for people to send in more money.

I have received information on how to get the people in our church to give more money, and this is from a Christians organization.

I am Italian, we tend to have a way of making people a deal that they can't refuse! Sorry, but you know what I mean.

We have always believed that where God guides, He will provide, and you don't have to pressure people to give. Let God work!

Warren Wiersbe gives us this insight of what was going on in Laodicea. He wrote, *“Laodicea was a wealthy city and a banking center. Perhaps some of the spirit of the marketplace crept into the church so that their values became twisted. Why is it that so many church bulletins and letterheads show pictures of buildings? Are these the things that are most important to us? The board at the Laodicean church could proudly show you the latest annual report with its impressive statistics; yet Jesus said He was about to vomit them out of His mouth!”*

As Christians, we can struggle here where we are doing so much, we have so much, that we leave God out of our lives. We are too busy for God and have enough not to need Him. And God loves us too much to leave us where we are at and thus, God will shed His light upon the things we need to change. We just need to listen and obey what He is showing us.

The Psalmist tells us **“O LORD, You have searched me and known me. You know my sitting down and my rising up; You understand my thought afar off. You comprehend my path and my lying down, And are acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word on my tongue, But behold, O LORD, You know it altogether. . . . Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me, and know my anxieties; And see if there is any wicked way in me, And lead me in the way everlasting.”** Psalm 139:1-4, 23-24.

We need to let God search our hearts and expose those evil things so we can be more like Him as this stuff is purged from our lives!

In regard to the church in America today, it truly is a sad state.

John Stott writes these words in regard to the church, and this was written back in 1980.

This is what he wrote,

Perhaps none of the seven letters is more appropriate to the twentieth-century church than this. It describes vividly the respectable, sentimental, nominal, skin-deep religiosity which is so widespread among us today. Our Christianity is flabby and anemic. We appear to have taken a lukewarm bath of religion.

- John Stott, What Christ Thinks of the Church, p.116

As we move into verse 18 Jesus is going to *exhort* them in what they need to do.

VERSE 18

The *exhortation* here is threefold as the Lord calls for them to buy three things from Him and the idea of buying is an invitation of salvation, it is free and must be received by faith.

It is as we are told in Isaiah 55:1-3, **“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. 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. 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.”**

Keep in mind that they were a proud, wealthy banking center and yet Jesus calls for them to buy gold from Him that will make them rich.

Peter tells us in I Peter 1:7, **“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.”**

Peter is saying that our faith, like gold, is heated up through trials, it is tested.

Thus, this gold is not bought but it is received by faith. They were spiritually bankrupt, and God wants them to make them spiritually rich because real faith is more precious than real gold!

And where does real faith come from?

Paul reminds us in Romans 10:17, **“So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”**

Here was a church that had moved away from the Word of God and allowed the philosophies of the world to come into the church. Like Black Lives Matter, Social Justice, Critical Race Theory and the like as well as all kinds of sin. And Jesus is calling for them to get rid of the fake riches of the world and replace them with the true riches of God that are found in His Word!

Read the Word of God, be taught the Word of God, and apply the Word of God to your life and the riches you will gain from that will be everlasting because they will not only lead you to saving faith, but they will help you to grow in your faith!

Secondly, they manufactured black wool from sheep and made these expensive garments from them.

Everyone in town wore these black outer garments and yet, look at what Jesus is saying to these people who thought they were in style, and yet, Jesus tells them that they are naked! He is telling them, ***“Your black outer garments are indicative of where you are spiritually! What you need are white garments which only I can clothe you with.”***

What do these black garments represent?

Jesus is speaking of them being clothed in their own righteousness, which are like filthy rags, instead of the righteousness of Christ imputed to them by faith, the white garments.

Remember the parable of the marriage feast in Matthew chapter 22. Let’s pick up in verse 11 where we are told, **“But when the king came in to see the guests, he saw a man there who did not have on a wedding garment. So he said to him, ‘Friend, how did you come in here without a wedding garment?’ And he was speechless. Then the king said to the servants, ‘Bind him hand and foot, take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’ For many are called, but few are chosen.”** Matthew 22:11-14.

You see, apart from Christ you are lost, but in Christ you are clothed with His righteousness, you are as white as snow as the blood of Christ cleanses you!

What are liberal churches into today?

Good works, they are obsessed with social programs that, in a sense they wrap themselves in as they help those in need, but they are not giving them the Gospel and thus, they are helping them in this life to spend an eternity apart from Christ.

Let me share this with you regarding social justice and how it opposes what God’s Word has to say, and yet, many churches are embracing it.

We are told,

“To preach moral duty without the underlying power of the gospel,” explains Don Carson, “is moralism that is both pathetic and powerless.”

It seems many Christians have fully swapped out morality rule books, trading the Bible for an ever-changing social justice manual. One was written by the very hand of God and will never be erased, edited or discredited.

The other? The loudest and most influential voices win the right to determine what the societal rules of the day are. Of course, the rules change according to whatever their current agenda is, and most aren't privy to these rules until they are cancelled, or worse.

Of course, most people of God wouldn't admit to shelving the Word of God in favor of the word of the mob. Instead, they have been known to attempt an unholy morphing of the two manuscripts while most often favoring social justice issues. Biblical truths are forced to fit within man-made definitions of what is right and fair.

The truth is biblical justice and social justice are often, though not always, mutually exclusive. They are at odds.

“You must not follow the crowd in doing wrong. When you are called to testify in a dispute, do not be swayed by the crowd to twist justice. And do not slant your testimony in favor of a person just because that person is poor.” (Exodus 23:2–3, NLT)

The plumb line of morality can never be the crowd. . . . For Christians the litmus test of morality does not come from our ability to gauge unfairness or improprieties. The test is Scripture. We don't need a social justice movement that's tainted by the agendas, whims, politics and emotional reactions of the squeakiest wheels. We need a movement of God's justice on the Earth as he is the only perfect judge. His justice is never wrong.

There are many distinctions between social justice and biblical justice. Here are just a few. Social justice promotes an often twisted version of fairness. It demands that individuals, entire people groups or segments of society are punished, minimized or discredited for the sake of those the mob values. The agenda becomes the standard of fairness, though it's laughable to even consider using the word. . . .

- <https://bit.ly/2SwOwtb>

And the third point that Jesus makes deals with this eye salve that was produced at this medical school with an allegiance to the serpent god, Asclepius.

This eye salve was famous, and it was called Phrygian powder.

The problem was these people were spiritually blind, this eye salve was not going to help them with their spiritual blindness. They needed their eyes opened by the Holy Spirit so they could see the things of God.

It is as Paul said in I Corinthians 2:14, “**But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.**”

God wants to help them, but they must be willing not only to listen, but to obey what He is telling them, to come to Him and receive the gift of life that is found in Him!

Let me read this to you and then I will tell you who wrote it.

We are told,

The extent to which sheer frivolity [foolishness] and utterly inane amusement have been carried in connection with some places of worship would almost exceed belief. . . . There can be no doubt that all sorts of entertainments, as nearly as possible approximating to stage-plays, have been carried on in connection with places of worship, and are, at this present time in high favour.

Can these things promote holiness, or help in communion with God?

Can men come away from such things and plead with God for the salvation of sinners and the sanctification of believers?

We loathe to touch the unhallowed subject; it seems so far removed from the walk of faith and the way of heavenly fellowship.

In some cases the follies complained of are even beneath the dignity of manhood, and fitter for the region of the imbecile than for thoughtful men.

- Charles Haddon Spurgeon

Believe it or not, that was Charles Spurgeon who wrote those words, can you imagine what he would write today! Keep in mind that Spurgeon wrote those words over 150 years ago!

It is a warning to the church back then and it was not heeded and here we are today.

The church in America needs to get back to the basics, as Acts chapter 2 tells us, “**And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers. Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. . . . And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.**” Acts 2:42-43, 47b.

That is the key to lukewarmness, turning to God and for some, just turning back to God!

VERSE 19

Jesus *exhorts* them to repent, not to remain in this condition but to turn to God.

And I want you to see God's love for sinful man. He says to this church, to these people,

“As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. . . .”

Because God loves them, He is rebuking them and chastening them so that they will turn to Him.

And He wants them to be **“zealous”** which is interesting to me because this word means **“to be hot.”** Jesus wants them to come to saving faith and not to remain lukewarm and unsaved!

And He calls them to repent and the idea here is to turn from their sin and turn to God.

D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones wrote this in regard to repentance. He wrote,

Repentance means that you realize that you are a guilty, vile sinner in the presence of God, that you deserve the wrath and punishment of God, that you are hell-bound. It means that you begin to realize that this thing called sin is in you, that you long to get rid of it, and that you turn your back on it in every shape and form. You renounce the world whatever the cost, the world in its mind and outlook as well as its practice, and you deny yourself, and take up the cross and go after Christ.

- D. Martyn Lloyd Jones, *Studies in the Sermon on the Mount*

Can you imagine something like that being said in church today?

J. Vernon McGee put it like this, ***“This church needs repentance more than all the others. And the message of repentance is for the contemporary church, but you will not be popular if you preach that, I can assure you. It is not too late even for those in this church to turn to Christ . . .”***

How true and yet, make no mistake about it, this is what needs to happen because without true repentance, there is no salvation! You must turn to the Lord, repent of your sins, and ask Him to be Lord and Savior of your life!

VERSE 20

Let me say this because many use this verse as part of their Gospel presentation, just open the door of your heart to Jesus and let Him come in.

The problem with that is something huge is missing here and because of that, the message they present is wrong.

Do you know what is missing?

REPENTANCE!

It is what Jesus spoke of in Revelation 3:19 but many today don't want to talk about sin and repentance, just believe in Jesus and you will be saved. And yet, unless you repent you will perish according to what Jesus said in Luke 13:3. Even the demons believe that Jesus is God, and they are not saved! (James 2:19)

Also, Jesus is not saying that the church of Laodicea will be saved or the last days church will be saved if they repent and turn Christ because it is too far gone! I am not sure the church has reached that point yet, but it is getting close and for some, it may be too late!

But I believe that Jesus is speaking to individuals who go to these churches and that they can be saved if they repent of their sins and turn to Christ!

Also, here is the obvious reason this church, these people in this church are not saved, not one of them.

Jesus is outside knocking to get in. He is calling for anyone to open the door. How is that done?

Again, what did the Lord just call them to do?

He called them to repent and that opens the door for Christ to come into their life and folks, it only takes one person for the Lord to work through and others can catch that fire!

Holman Hunt painted a picture of Jesus knocking on a door, and this painting hangs in St. Paul's cathedral in London.

As this painting was unveiled, a critic came up to Mr. Hunt and said, ***"You've made a mistake, Mr. Hunt, there's no handle on the door!"***

"Ah," Mr. Hunt replied, ***"That was on purpose. You see this door is a picture of the human heart, and the handle of the door is only on the inside, for it's up to the one within to respond to the knock of Jesus."***

You see, the only one preventing you from going to heaven is **YOU!**

Jesus is telling you to open the door of your heart so He may come in and be not only Savior but Lord of your life!

It is as Jesus said in John 14:23, **"... 'If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him.'"**

It is always the Lord doing the knocking and pursuing, all we must do is respond to His call. And the Lord is urging them to repent and have fellowship with Him before the night of judgment falls upon them, before it was too late!

That is the *warning* to this church.

VERSE 21

The *promise* to them is they need to overcome this obstacle that is before them and if they do this they will sit with Jesus!

But how do we overcome; we just don't have the strength it seems?

In I John 5:4-5 we are told, "**For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world - our faith. Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?**"

You see, if Jesus is your Lord and Savior you have overcome by faith in Him!

They still had a chance by the choice they make, either to open the door or keep it closed!

It is funny and sad because some call this church – ***THE CHURCH OF THE CLOSED DOOR!*** Yes, the door for Jesus to come in is closed, but they were open to all kinds of worldly things. Open to the world, closed to Jesus!

Clarke reminds us, "*This is the worst of the seven Churches, and yet the most eminent of all the promises are made to it, showing that the worst may repent, finally conquer, and attain even to the highest state of glory.*"

VERSE 22

This letter that Jesus wrote is truly a wake-up call to the apostate church today, which is growing very quickly! If they refuse to open the door of their heart and the door of the church, they will go through the Tribulation Period; they will not enter the Kingdom of God and sit with Jesus!

They are traveling down the road of self-righteous deception that is leading them to the gates of Hell and if you think that all roads lead to God, you are deceiving yourself and you are arrogant and self-righteous because you are saying that God is wrong, and you are right! That is foolish!

Remember what Jesus said at the close of each of these letters, and this is for all of us, **“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”** Revelation 3:22.

As we close this seventh letter to the churches in the Roman Province of Asia, we close out church history.

We have covered the apostolic church of the first century through the apostate church of the last days.

And the next time you will see the church on the earth, the true church of God, His Bride, is in Revelation chapter 19 when we return with the Lord.

And we will look at that next time when we move into Revelation chapter 4 as John is caught up to heaven and we begin the third division of this book, **“the things that will take place after this.”** Revelation 1:19. The things after the church age closes!

As I close this evening, let me leave you with these words from Jude who tells us, **“Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, And to present you faultless Before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, To God our Savior, Who alone is wise, Be glory and majesty, Dominion and power, Both now and forever. Amen.”** Jude 24-25.