

The Unveiling of Jesus Christ



The Letter to the
Church in Laodicea
Revelation 3:14-22

Seven-headed Beast from the Luther Bible

The Letter to the Church in Laodicea

Revelation 3:14-22

Introduction

The Letter to the Church in Laodicea

Revelation 3:14-22

Introduction

- **Author:** Apostle John
- **Recipients:** Churches in the Roman Province of Asia
- **Place:** Patmos, a Greek Island
- **Year:** ~ 96 AD

The Letter to the Church in Laodicea

Revelation 3:14-22

Introduction

- This is potentially the saddest letter of all.
- It is a church that is so well off, they don't even realize that Christ is not a part of their church life.
- They are like wealthy passengers on a spiritual Titanic.
- The iceberg is not far ahead.

The Letter to the Church in Laodicea

Revelation 3:14-22

Introduction

- Jesus pictures himself outside the door of the Laodicean church.
- He wants to come in and join them, but the Savior needs someone to let him into their fellowship.

The Letter to the Church in Laodicea

Revelation 3:14-22

Introduction

















The Letter to the Church in Laodicea

Revelation 3:14-22

About Laodicea

The Letter to the Church in Laodicea

Revelation 3:14-22

About Laodicea

- This was a wealthy city.
- When it was destroyed by an earthquake in 60AD, the city **turned down help** from **Rome** and **Nero**.
- The people rebuilt the city themselves.

The Letter to the Church in Laodicea

Revelation 3:14-22

About Laodicea

- Laodicea was located on major trade routes.
- This made it easy for its merchants to sell clothing that was manufactured in the city from local black wool.
- It was also home to a medical school, and what we might call pharmaceutical companies today.
- They manufactured medicines, particularly for ears and eyes.

The Letter to the Church in Laodicea

Revelation 3:14-22

About Laodicea

- Hierapolis was just 6 miles to the north and had hot springs which many people enjoyed.
- Colossae was 11 miles to the SW. It had continuous access to cold, fresh water from the mountains.
- Laodicea had difficulty with water, which came by aqueduct from the south.
- It was no longer fresh or cool by the time it got to Laodicea.

The Letter to the Church in Laodicea

Revelation 3:14-22

Introduction



Chuck Swindoll,
Pastor, Author, Educator

Christ's messages to the seven churches in Asia come to a close with a tragic letter to the self-sufficient, self-righteous, self-serving church in Laodicea ... In fact, the Lord didn't state a single word of commendation—only stinging reproof. That church suffered from pervasive self-reliance ...

The Letter to the Church in Laodicea

Revelation 3:14-22

Introduction



Chuck Swindoll,
Pastor, Author, Educator

... hypocritical works done in their own strength, and an apathetic attitude toward the authority of Christ. Sadly, Christ's hard words for Laodicea resonate with relevance for many churches and Christians today.

Laodicea



By Gargarapalvin - Own work, CC BY-SA 4.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=90212942>

Laodicea



Gargarapalvin, CC BY-SA 4.0 <<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>>, via Wikimedia Commons

Laodicea



By Gargarapalvin - Own work, CC BY-SA 4.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=90212949>

Laodicea



<https://qxtravel.org/tour/laodicea-and-pamukkale-tour-price/>

Laodicea



<https://www.aa.com.tr/en/turkey/2-200-year-old-theater-brought-back-to-life-in-southwestern-turkey/2315308>

Laodicea

Water Distribution Center



By Laszlovszky András - Self-photographed, CC BY-SA 4.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=88619364>

Laodicea



By Allan Pingul

Laodicea



By Allan Pingul

Laodicea



By Allan Pingul

Laodicea



By Allan Pingul

Laodicea

With Hierapolis
and Colossae



The Letter to the Church in Laodicea

Revelation 3:14-22

Format of the Letter(s):

1. The Command to Write
2. Attribute(s) of Jesus
3. What's Right with the Church (Skipped in this case)
4. What's Wrong with the Church
5. What They Need to Do
6. A Promise to the One Who Conquers (Switch)
7. The Personal Call to Anyone with an Ear (Switch)

The Letter to the Church in Laodicea

Revelation 3:14-22

Introduction

- Let's now read the whole letter.

The Letter to the Church in Laodicea

Revelation 3:14

The Letter to the Church in Laodicea

Revelation 3:14

- As the Amen, Jesus has the final say. See Isaiah 65:16,
So that he who blesses himself in the land
shall bless himself by the God of truth [Amen],
and he who takes an oath in the land
shall swear by the God of truth [Amen];
because the former troubles are forgotten
and are hidden from my eyes.

The Letter to the Church in Laodicea

Revelation 3:14

- Think of the many times when Jesus began statements by saying “Truly, truly,”
- (Literally “Amen, Amen, I say to you ...”)

The Letter to the Church in Laodicea

Revelation 3:14

- John 5:24-25 (ESV)

Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life. Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live.

The Letter to the Church in Laodicea

Revelation 3:14

- When Jesus calls himself the **beginning of God's creation**, he does *not* mean he was created first.
- Rather, he is pointing to himself as **the source** or the **starting point** of God's creation.

The Letter to the Church in Laodicea

Revelation 3:14

- John 1:1-3

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.

The Letter to the Church in Laodicea

Revelation 3:14

- Colossians 1:16

For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him.

The Letter to the Church in Laodicea

Revelation 3:15-16

The Letter to the Church in Laodicea

Revelation 3:15-16

- Earlier we mentioned in nearby **Hierapolis**, there were **hot springs** that people considered therapeutic.
- In **Colossae**, there was a constant supply of **cold water** coming from the mountains.
- **Laodicea** had neither one.

The Letter to the Church in Laodicea

Revelation 3:15-16

- Similarly, the church had **no clear response** to Jesus.
- They didn't deny him altogether.
- They just didn't want to go overboard with all this religious stuff.
- Jesus was OK on Sunday, but not necessary to their daily lives.

The Letter to the Church in Laodicea

Revelation 3:15-16

To prefer outright rejection over a half-way response is startling, to say the least, but to profess Christianity while remaining untouched by its fire is a disaster. There is more hope for the openly antagonistic than for the coolly indifferent.

*— Robert L. Thomas,
The Master's Seminary*



The Letter to the Church in Laodicea

Revelation 3:15-16

- As a result, Christ is utterly disappointed with the state of this church.
- In fact, it makes him sick – “spit out” can more literally be translated as “vomit.”

The Letter to the Church in Laodicea

Revelation 3:17

The Letter to the Church in Laodicea

Revelation 3:17

- This church, like the city in which it was located, seemed completely self-sufficient.
- When people are well off, it can be hard for them to see their own need.
- The Laodicean church was looking at itself using the world's standards.
- They were blind to the spiritual standards of Christ.

The Letter to the Church in Laodicea

Revelation 3:17

- From Christ's point of view, they are not rich or prosperous at all.
- He calls them “wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked.”
- He then provides the solution – himself.

The Letter to the Church in Laodicea

Revelation 3:17

The Danger of Self-Sufficiency:

- There is a poem from 1875 by the English poet William Ernest Henley entitled *Invictus*.
- It means “unconquerable.” The last two lines state,
I am the master of my fate:
I am the captain of my soul.

The Letter to the Church in Laodicea

Revelation 3:17

The Danger of Self-Sufficiency:

- You may remember the movie by the same name.
- Morgan Freeman plays Nelson Mandela.
- Matt Damon plays a South African rugby star.
- Clint Eastwood is the director.
- It's an incredible film.

INVICTUS



The Letter to the Church in Laodicea

Revelation 3:17

The Danger of Self-Sufficiency:

- We admire Nelson Mandela for not giving in to the corrupt apartheid government.
- It meant years in prison, much of it on Robben Island – a modern Patmos – off the coast of Cape Town.
- His determination eventually leads to his election as president.

The Letter to the Church in Laodicea

Revelation 3:17

The Danger of Self-Sufficiency:

- Amidst the worst imaginable racial tension, Morgan and Matt work together.
- Their goal is to bring unity to a divided nation.

The Letter to the Church in Laodicea

Revelation 3:17

The Danger of Self-Sufficiency:

- They don't give in to society's lower elements, either white or black.
- By holding their ground, they prevent an endless cycle of revenge, violence and further strife.
- It's totally inspiring.

The Letter to the Church in Laodicea

Revelation 3:17

The Danger of Self-Sufficiency:

- That same poem, *Invictus*, and the same words were also used in a less heroic, less inspiring setting.
- Oklahoma City bomber Timothy McVeigh gave them in a handwritten last statement.
- This was just before he was executed at the federal prison in Terre Haute back in June of 2001.

The Letter to the Church in Laodicea

Revelation 3:17

- In that context, the title “Unconquerable,” seems merely defiant.
- The words, “I am the master of my fate: I am the captain of my soul,” just seem evil.
- Timothy McVeigh evidently saw himself as the resolute, unbending master of his own fate.
- And he thought this was a good thing.

The Letter to the Church in Laodicea

Revelation 3:17

Step one in the Christian life is to
recognize our own need.

The Letter to the Church in Laodicea

Revelation 3:18

The Letter to the Church in Laodicea

Revelation 3:18

- Jesus hits the **three things** that this city would have been most proud of.
- You can almost taste the irony as Jesus goes down the list of their shortcomings and offers the solutions.

The Letter to the Church in Laodicea

Revelation 3:18

- Gold refined by fire, so that you may be rich
- This church was just too comfortable.
- In spiritual riches, they were complete paupers.
- Earthly affluence made them oblivious to their need.

The Letter to the Church in Laodicea

Revelation 3:18

- White garments so that you may clothe yourself and the shame of your nakedness may not be seen
- Laodicea was known for its black wool.
- White garments in the Bible are associated with true righteousness.

The Letter to the Church in Laodicea

Revelation 3:18

- Revelation 19:7-8

7 Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory,
for the marriage of the Lamb has come,
and his Bride has made herself ready;

8 it was granted her to clothe herself
with fine linen, bright and pure” —
for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.

The Letter to the Church in Laodicea

Revelation 3:18

- Salve to anoint your eyes, so that you may see.
- This Christ says to a city known for its eye salve.
- Do you think they would feel the force of that rebuke?
- In the **Gospel of John**, the apostle tells of Christ healing a blind man.
- Afterward there is a big discussion that ends like this:

The Letter to the Church in Laodicea

Revelation 3:18

- John 9:39-41

39 Jesus said, “For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and those who see may become blind.” 40 Some of the Pharisees near him heard these things, and said to him, “Are we also blind?” 41 Jesus said to them, “If you were blind, you would have no guilt; but now that you say, ‘We see,’ your guilt remains.

The Letter to the Church in Laodicea

Revelation 3:18

- Too many of the people in the Laodicean church were still lost in their sins and didn't know it.

The Letter to the Church in Laodicea

Revelation 3:18

- I counsel you to buy from me
- This can be hard to grasp.
- Spiritual riches cannot be obtained in the same way as material wealth.
- None of these things can be bought except by giving up ourselves.
- The only way to obtain the things Jesus offers is to acknowledge our complete poverty before him.

The Letter to the Church in Laodicea

Revelation 3:18

- Isaiah 55:1-3

1 “Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters;
and he who has no money, come, buy and eat!
Come, buy wine and milk without money and
without price.

The Letter to the Church in Laodicea

Revelation 3:18

- Isaiah 55:1-3

2 Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread,
and your labor for that which does not satisfy?
Listen diligently to me, and eat what is good,
and delight yourselves in rich food.

The Letter to the Church in Laodicea

Revelation 3:18

- Isaiah 55:1-3

3 Incline your ear, and come to me;
hear, that your soul may live;
and I will make with you an everlasting covenant,
my steadfast, sure love for David.

The Letter to the Church in Laodicea

Revelation 3:19

The Letter to the Church in Laodicea

Revelation 3:19

- Look at Christ's motive. It is love.
- This may be a very harsh letter, but Jesus is not finished with this church just yet.
- He is trying to warn them of their sorry state before it is too late.
- Maybe, just maybe, someone will repent.

The Letter to the Church in Laodicea

Revelation 3:20

The Letter to the Church in Laodicea

Revelation 3:20

- Jesus now speaks to **individuals**.
- He stands at the door knocking, outside the church in Laodicea, waiting for someone to let him in.
- He's not like the Big Bad Wolf. He won't blow your house down.
- He will just wait – for a while, anyway – then he'll leave.

The Letter to the Church in Laodicea

Revelation 3:21

The Letter to the Church in Laodicea

Revelation 3:21

- 2 Timothy 2:11-12

... If we have died with him, we will also live with him; if we endure, we will also reign with him ...

The Letter to the Church in Laodicea

Revelation 3:22

The Letter to the Church in Laodicea

Revelation 3:22

- This is our final reminder that what Jesus says to this church he says to all of the churches.
- If we **have an ear**, then he also says it to us.

The Letter to the Church in Laodicea

Revelation 3:14-22

Conclusions

The Letter to the Church in Laodicea

Revelation 3:14-22

Conclusions

1. God has a right to rebuke us.

- When he does so, he does so out of love.
- Still, in our current culture, we may not be at ease with a God who ever rebukes anybody at all.

The Letter to the Church in Laodicea

Revelation 3:14-22

Conclusions

2. There is a danger of confusing material riches with spiritual riches.

- A society like ours admires the rich and famous.
- We may mistakenly think that those people have it made. Not so.
- They may be passengers on a spiritual Titanic and the iceberg may be just ahead.

The Letter to the Church in Laodicea

Revelation 3:14-22

Conclusions

3. There is a danger in being blind to our true condition.

- We can all have terrible blind spots in our lives.
- Therefore, it is essential that we let Scripture be the measure of our condition.
- By that standard we all fall short and need to let Jesus examine us thoroughly.

The Letter to the Church in Laodicea

Revelation 3:14-22

Conclusions

4. There is a danger in self-sufficiency.

- The Christian is one who is willingly conquered by the love of Christ.
- The Christian **refuses** to be master of his or her own fate, or captain of his or her own soul.
- We willingly gives Jesus those titles.

The Letter to the Church in Laodicea

Revelation 3:14-22

Conclusions

5. If we are going to enjoy fellowship with Jesus, the door only opens from the inside.

- It is like the door we come in through each Sunday
- That's the kind of door Jesus is standing at, and he is not going to break it down.
- He's knocking right now and inviting you to respond.

The Letter to the Church in Laodicea

Revelation 3:14-22

Conclusions

- Colossians 2:1-3

For I want you to know how great a struggle I have for you and for those at Laodicea and for all who have not seen me face to face, 2 that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, to reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God's mystery, which is Christ, 3 in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.