

Laodicea – Revelation 3: 14 - 22

Background information

The order of the letters is probably according to the route the courier would follow from Ephesus through the other churches up to Laodicea and then back to Ephesus.

Laodicea was known for its extravagant wealth. The Pax Romana created an environment for prosperity that Laodicea enjoyed. Prosperity based on Banking and Textiles.

Laodicea was devastated by earthquake in AD 61 but the people refused help from Rome to rebuild the city because of their self-sufficiency.

The medical school in Laodicea produced powder used to make salve for the eye. People came from all over the Roman Empire to purchase it.

Laodicea suffers insufficient water supply for a growing commercial city. Water is piped from Hierapolis to supplement the need.

Jesus refers to himself as Amen, only place he does this. Thus, it is and shall be so. True, faithful, certain. So, let it be.

1- Authenticity problem

You are neither cold nor hot. I will spit you out.

Jesus called the church out of the darkness to set it apart for God's glory.

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful

light. ¹⁰ Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.¹ Pet 2: 9-10

But the lukewarm state of the church in Laodicea indicates that the church mixed the gospel with something else, maybe humanism - I am rich, I have prospered and I need nothing – a church that lacks authenticity. They fallen short of God’s standard.

No authentic worship, no authentic fellowship, no authentic service

The church is told off for what she does but for what she is: wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked. Pride prevented her from seeing the reality of her state.

Application: Set yourself goals to grow in your love for God by practical actions every, week, month such as praying more, studying God’s nature/character, reducing activities that distract you from God.

2- Autonomy problem.

The church lost it authenticity because of pride of wanting to be autonomous from God.

¹⁷ You say, ‘I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.

I don’t want to hear from God.

This attitude is possibly imbedded in the meaning of the name of the city; LAODECIA = “people ruling”

Eph 1: 22 (start from 18) And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church,²³ which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

The church is not independent from God, it answers to Jesus as its head.

Application: Be alert and proactive in areas of weakness so that you do not stray.

3- Authority is lost

I will spit you out of my mouth.

The church has lost the anointing that gives her the authority to represent God in her neighbourhood. To be a blessing to the nations. It does no longer have the spiritual and the moral authority to serve the purpose of God. This church was disconnected from Jesus.

I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.

John 15: 5

In our brokenness we limited in our humanity apart from God. Breaking away from Jesus break our power.

Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me. 3:20

Jesus who is supposed to be lord of the church is now standing outside knocking at the door.

With Jesus outside the church is without protection from the attack of the enemy. It doesn't have the filter of the discernment to distinguish wrong from right.

Therefore, it will be rejected by Jesus.

But God have not given up on the church; even though the church is now lukewarm, Jesus still extends a compassionate loving hand:

I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire.

Application: We should not procrastinate repentance; it restores our spiritual authority.

The very motivation of God to call the attention of this church and even all the church is because is his unfailing love.

Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline.

God cares about our communion with Him and doesn't want us to miss the opportunity of seating on the throne with Him for the eternity.

Recap of the previous letters:

- 1- John introduced the series in chapter 1 where we learned that if we surrender our life to God, he is able to restore us from the rustiness of our humanity to His intended original design.
- 2- Ephesus: Nik reminded us that God knows and understands our situation and he encouraged us to stand against that which is wrong in the society, love the sinner but hate the sin.
- 3- Smyrna: John told us that Jesus understands our suffering, not only he understands but he also come alongside of us. We need to align our lives with his plumb line
- 4- Pergamum: John challenged us to think about the ungodly things that cause us to comprise.

- 5- Thyatira: We learned from Tim that we need God to give us feedback on our life, because he is the only one who can speak truth to us. We should not tolerate things that are totally wrong.

- 6- Sardis: Nik encouraged us to hold on to the truth that we have learned from God. Learn from the mistake of Sardis that suppressed the truth.

- 7- Philadelphia: Paul exhorted us to remain faithful to God who rewards those who endure patiently.