

## Being an Overcomer #10

### Church #7: Laodicea – The Lukewarm Church) Rev. 3:14-22

Jesus describes himself as “the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God.” This may sound like Christ is the first of all that God created, but this would be a serious heresy (Arianism being the most important historical example) and was rejected in the early centuries of the church (3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>). This taught that God created Christ first, and then through Christ created everything else. We know elsewhere that Christ was not only before all things, but is in fact, eternal, without beginning or end. He is uncreated, eternal not only forward, but also backwards. The phrase “the beginning of the creation of God” means that he was the source or the origin of all creation.

Christ’s eternal Sonship is denied today by Jehovah’s Witnesses and other anti-Trinitarian groups. The Biblical and historical position is that God is one being, eternally manifested as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This is not easy to understand nor to explain, but is the representation of the Bible.

**Commendations:** none

**Rebukes:**

1. 3:15-16 – “I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.”

Laodicea had to pipe their water in through long aquaducts and so it was definitely not cold by the time it got there. Other areas had hot springs, but Laodicea’s water was lukewarm. Jesus used that as a figure of their spiritual condition. Be all in or all out. Don’t be a fence-straddler.

2. 3:17 – Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked”

Beware self-satisfaction, self-delusions, and carnal confidence. Honestly assess your spiritual state and needs. Don’t be satisfied with this world and its objects. Our goal should not be more stuff in this life, but to be rich in those things that will endure eternally. Our confidence and satisfaction must be in God, not in possessions.

**Warning:**

1. 3:18 – I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich: and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see.”

Gold (true riches). We tend to think of riches in physical terms – money, silver, gold, jewelry, stocks and bonds, real estate, homes, collectibles, etc. But none of those things can make the transfer between this world and the next. The gold that we buy from Jesus is not physical, but those true riches that we will enjoy forever. Isa. 55:1-3

White raiment (righteousness). Physical clothing hides the shame of nakedness from people, but God sees everything. Heb. 4:13 - All things are naked and open in His eyes. In recognising our spiritual nakedness before him, we have tried to hide it with our own righteousness – Isa. 64:6.

Eye salve (spiritual vision). Used for dry eyes, dust in eyes, infections, or other acute problems. Laodicea is said to have had a thriving industry in making and selling eyesalve using stone from Phrygia. Not sure how that would have been done, but the point is that they were more expert in satisfying physical ailments than in recognizing their own spiritual blindness.

**Encouragement/Command:**

1. 3:19 – “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.”

Chastening means correction, or parental discipline. Another phrase I like is “getting your priorities straightened”.

Heb. 12:5-11 – “Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.” Take courage. Chastening and correction is not evidence of God’s rejection of you, but that you ARE a son!

How should we respond to chastening? “Be zealous” “Repent”

**Promises:**

1. 3:20 – “Behold, I stand at the door, and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.”

This verse is commonly used during altar calls to motivate sinners to receive Christ. While that is valid, in this context he is not speaking to unbelievers, but to the Christians of Laodicea! His invitation is to the lukewarm, to respond to his invitation and to come to know Christ personally and in that, to become like him. Christianity is more than church membership, or correct doctrine, but individual relationship with God Himself, through Christ and the Holy Spirit.

2. 3:21 – “To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I overcame, and am set down with my father in his throne.” We will reign and rule with Christ in his millennial kingdom.

Rev. 1:6 – we have been made kings and priests unto God and the Father. Similarly in 5:10, but adds “and we shall reign on the earth”.