

The Churches of Christ Salute You

Lesson Fourteen

(Romans 16:16)

September 21, 2008

LESSONS FROM THE CHURCH AT LAODICEA

Overview:

1. Paul wrote to the Romans about the “churches of Christ.”
2. A plurality of churches did not mean a number of different denominations.
3. Instead, each was a local body of believers that belonged to Christ.
4. Since we also are a church of Christ, there are many lessons to be learned from these early churches.

Introduction:

1. Laodicea was located about 40 miles southeast of Philadelphia and about 40 miles east of Ephesus.
2. It was named after the wife of Antiochus II, Laodice (whom he later poisoned).
3. It was well known for its wealth and accompanying arrogance. *{It has been called the Wall Street of Asia Minor.}*
4. Much of its wealth came from the selling of wool – a special black wool produced by carefully bred flocks.
5. Laodicea was located on a major trade route at the junction of 3 major roads.
6. The city also possessed a school of medicine that was known for its eye salve reported to cure weak eyes.
7. The area around Laodicea was known for its natural springs – both hot and cold.
8. However, the city itself had no source of fresh water; instead, it was piped in through a 6-mile long aqueduct from hot springs to the south. *{The water probably arrived lukewarm.}*
9. Numerous Greek and Roman gods were worshipped in Laodicea, with Zeus being their primary deity.

I. Salutation

Revelation 3:14 a

- A. It is not known how, when or by whom this church was founded. *{We do know that it was not founded by Paul (cf. Colossians 2:1).}*
- B. Laodicea is mentioned in Scripture here and in Revelation 1:11.
- C. It is also mentioned in Colossians 2:1 and 4:13-16.

II. Description of Jesus

Revelation 3:14 b

- A. Jesus is called the “Amen.”
 1. The word “amen” means, “firm, sure, trustworthy; faithful, true.”
 2. Thus, Jesus is faithful and true in what He will say to this church.
 3. It also signifies that He is the fulfillment of what has been said to the churches.
- B. Jesus is called the One who is “the faithful and true witness.”
 1. Jesus is not a false witness.
 2. Instead, He is faithful and true in what He declares to the church.
 3. His message may not be pleasant to hear, but it is true.
- C. Jesus is called the “beginning of the creation of God.”
 1. The word “beginning” means, “origin, leader, active cause; one that commences.”
 2. Jesus is not a created being, for He is eternal (John 1:1-4).
 3. Jesus has supremacy over all creation – even the church.

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III. Commendation

- A. The Lord had no words of commendation for the church at Laodicea.
- B. This had not always been the case (cf. Colossians 2:1; 4:13-16).

IV. Condemnation

Revelation 3:15-18

- A. The Laodiceans were condemned for being lukewarm.
 - 1. They were not cold – “chilly,” often in reference to one having not become a follower of Christ.
 - a. There was medicinal value to be found in the nearby cold springs.
 - b. But, there was no spiritual healing to be found in this church.
 - 2. They were not hot – “to boil,” often in reference to one’s zeal or being fervent in service to the Lord.
 - a. There was medicinal value in the nearby hot springs.
 - b. They were even a source of water for Laodicea.
 - c. However, this church offered no healing or life-giving service to the city of Laodicea.
 - 3. They were lukewarm – “tepid,” indicating a mixture of hot and cold, double-minded; therefore, sickening and nauseating.
 - a. Tepid liquid is often nauseating (cf. hot tea or iced tea).
 - b. Tepid water is often a source of bacteria and disease.
 - 4. Lukewarm Christians are dangerous to themselves and the church.
 - a. They are a breeding ground for sin (cf. James 1:13-15).
 - b. They bring reproach on the church by their hypocrisy and inconsistency.
 - c. Their divided allegiance brings them heartache and keeps them from serving the Lord.
- B. The Laodiceans were condemned for an inaccurate self-examination.
 - 1. They thought they were rich and wealthy.
 - 2. They thought they were royally attired in the best clothing.
 - 3. They thought they possessed perfect vision.
 - 4. However, they were wrong!
 - a. They were wretched (enduring trials, afflicted), miserable (pitiable) and poor (destitute of wealth, reduced to begging).
 - b. They were naked.
 - c. They were blind.
 - 5. They needed to return to the Lord and see themselves accurately.
 - a. He could give them true riches – gold tried in the fire (refined and free from impurities – a spiritual necessity [1 Peter 1:7]).
 - b. He could give them white garments to cover their nakedness – pure clothing to cover their sins, cleansed by His blood (7:14).
 - c. He could give them medicine for their eyes to allow them to see – spiritual vision brought by His Truth.
 - 6. Outward appearances do not necessarily reflect inward realities.
- C. The Laodiceans were condemned for trusting in riches instead of in God.
 - 1. They said that they “have need of nothing.”
 - 2. They thought that their money was sufficient for anything they needed.
 - a. In fact, the city of Laodicea was destroyed by an earthquake in the year AD 60.
 - b. However, the city had so much money that they declined an offer from Rome to rebuild the city.

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- c. Instead, they rebuilt it themselves!
 - d. Apparently, this attitude had found its way into the church.
3. All Christians must guard themselves against a love for, dependence upon and trust in uncertain riches (cf. 1 Timothy 6:17-19).

V. Warnings Revelation 3:19

- A. The warning came in the form of a rebuke from the Lord.
- B. It was also a chastening (discipline) from Him.
- C. God warns and disciplines those He loves (cf. Hebrews 12:5-11).
- D. It was a warning to become hot (zealous) in their dedication and service.
- E. It was a warning to repent or perish.

VI. Exhortations Revelation 3:20

- A. Jesus exhorted them to open the door to Him.
 1. How sad it is that Jesus had been shut out of His own house!
 2. How encouraging it is that He had not given up on His people.
 3. Jesus will knock, but He will not force His way in.
- B. Jesus exhorted them to hear His voice.
 1. He offers promises of restored fellowship and eternal life.
 2. But, they must listen and heed in order to receive those blessings.

VII. Blessings Revelation 3:21

- A. Those who overcome will sit with Jesus on His throne.
 1. The faithful share in the reign of the Messiah.
 2. As His cause is victorious in the world, Christians share in that victory.
 3. This is an important and central theme in the book of Revelation.
- B. Those who overcome will be rewarded just as Jesus was.
 1. Jesus overcame Satan, sin and death through His resurrection and ascension.
 2. If we are faithful, we will be raised from the dead, meet the Lord in the air and live with Him forever!

Conclusion: He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.