



“8 Great Truths: Snapshots From Jesus in The Book of Revelation”



Teacher's Guide

The Church @ Laodicea - Chameleons Rarely Survive Week 8 – July 25, 2010

Opening Announcements and Prayer

Icebreaker: How would you feel if you knew someone was home and you knocked and knocked on the door and they refused to come and let you in? Would you walk away? How long do you think you would stay there knocking?

Transition: This letter to the Christians in the church at Laodicea is one of the most frightening and yet enlightening examples of how a church can become so self-centered that it doesn't even realize how utterly useless to the kingdom of God it has become.

Read Revelation Chapter 3:14-22

- **City Tour** - Using information from Craig Koester's web tour to provide the following information:
<http://www2.luthersem.edu/ckoester/Revelation/main.htm>
 - Culture and Government
 - 40Mi SE of Philadelphia
 - Sat on North/South and East/West trade routes on a high plateau
 - Founded by Antiochus II, named for his wife Laodice, and colonized by 2,000 Jewish mercenaries between 261 and 246BC to stop the influx of Gauls (Frenchmen) from the East -- That is why the region is later called Galatia
 - Fell to the Pergamene kingdom in 190BC and was willed to Rome by Attalus III in 133BC
 - Had no real water supply
 - Fresh water was brought up from the river valley below
 - Utility water was piped in from Hot Springs 7 miles away to flush the streets and be used for the baths and other public needs
 - The water exited the pipes lukewarm and was so heavily laden with minerals that drinking it would cause one to vomit
 - Viewed as a city that had it all, wealth, power fame, self-sufficiency, and prosperity.
 - Commerce and industry
 - Exceptionally wealthy economic and banking center
 - By far the richest city in Asia
 - It issued letters of credit for trading
 - When the city was leveled in AD60 by an earthquake, they turned down low cost loans offered by emperor Nero and rebuilt the city to even greater glory using their own funds
 - Trading center on the trade route crossroads
 - Using selective breeding they developed the most luxurious black wool of the ancient world.

- The garment made from the wool a *trimita* That only the most wealthy of the world could afford
- They had a medical school Asclepium
 - Developed the phrygian powders
 - The powders were mixed with olive oil and used as an effective salve for treating a eye diseases
- Religious practices
 - Temple of Zeus
 - Temple of Apollo
 - Temple to the emperor Titus (built in AD 79)
 - Also worshipped Men (or Men Karou) a god of healing
 - Ancient Phrygian, non-roman, god
 - Later associated with Ascelpius

Questions for Discussion:

- As a non-Christian in Laodicea, how would you have viewed the Christian Community?
- What difficulties would Christians living here face?
- What would have been your major temptation if living here?

- **The Letter**

- 3:14 - Picture the author
 - The Amen
 - Old Hebrew word meaning something to the effect of, "Surely this is true!" or "It is self-evidently true!"
 - It also emphasizes emphatic agreement (see Teacher's Resources note)
 - The faithful and true witness (or Martyr)
 - The faithful witness/martyr is drawn from Rev 1:5
 - Faithful implies one who is consistent with the truth.
 - He is simply called True
 - In a sense Jesus is introduced to a false church as the true, true, true one!
 - He is the One remained true to death, see Phil 2:5-8
 - The beginning (or source) of God's creation
 - It's possible that the Zeus and Apollo worship may have pushed Laodicean Christians to accept a Hellenistic cosmology in which they accepted Zeus as the creator.
 - Think back to John 1, we're talking about the eternal Word of God who is God here, who pre-existed his creation in Genesis 1.

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was with God in the beginning. 3 **Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.** 4 In him was life, and that life was the light of men.

The Holy Bible : New International Version. 1996, c1984 (electronic ed.) (Jn 1:1-4).
Grand Rapids: Zondervan.



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- 3:15 - Archival image of a Faded church - What the church looks like
 - Neither hot nor cold
 - Sounds like their nasty water supply
 - Jesus would prefer a church that was either Hot, on fire, for him like a Philadelphia or Smyrna that brought persecution on themselves because of their faith
 - Jesus would even prefer a cold church who'd lost their fire for him, Ephesus, yet kept themselves from adopting the Fallen Babylon worldview
 - He doesn't like this church. The Laodicean church accommodated so much of the world that they no longer stood out in any way from those around them
 - Hot water will burn you, Cold water will chill you, but lukewarm water has no real impact, it blends in, it's boring.

3:16 - 17 - Warnings to a Faded Church

- Because you are lukewarm, I will vomit you out
 - This is equivalent to removing their lamp stand or blotting their name out of the Book of Life, he wants nothing to do with them!
- **YOU SAY...** This was Laodicea's self-assessment
 - I am rich, I am wealthy, I am not in need of anything
 - In essence this, the wealthiest church in Asia, believes they have it all together
- **BUT I SAY TO YOU...** Jesus' Assessment of the church at Laodicea
 - Wretched - your city maybe famous, but I want nothing to do with you or your putrid water
 - Pitiable - Your city may be powerful, but you have no spiritual backbone or strength
 - Poor - Your wealth is of no value in God's eyes
 - Blind - Your famed Phrygian Powders can't help spiritual blindness
 - Naked - Your fancy garments do not demonstrate that your status is one of my people
- Jesus' evaluation is diametrically opposed, a radical contrast.
- They are the false church that blends in with the world.

Questions for discussion:

- 3:18 - 20 - A call to recapture the image of the true church
 - Buy from me Gold refined in fire to become rich
 - Remember this is the wealthiest church
 - The gold is refined by fire. Fire that refines focused churches is persecution at the hands of the Fallen Babylon world.
 - Jesus is saying you become truly rich by entering a depth of relationship with him that will bring you into direct conflict with the world.
 - Buy from me white garments to cover your nakedness



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- Don't wear the black robes of fitting in and impurity
- Instead wear the white robes of purity that make you stand out among the people of the earth, the Fallen Babylon minded people.
- Don't hide behind a façade that when it crumbles displays the inner ugliness of living as a citizen of Fallen Babylon because everyone can tell you are a fraud.
- Buy salve to put on your eyes to see
 - The Phrygian Powders could bring physical sight and healing, but Jesus' salve brings spiritual sight and healing
 - Spiritual sight is required to see the falsehood of the Fallen Babylon world.
- Jesus is laying out a plan of total healing
 - The refined gold rectifies their wretched, pitiable, poor nature
 - The White garment covers their nakedness
 - The salve for the eyes removes the blindness
 - Those I love, I rebuke and discipline (or better Nurture)
- Jesus still loves this messed up church.
- When he sees error he brings rebuke, i.e. he doesn't ignore it, he points out that it is wrong.
- Discipline is better translated nurture or instruct.
 - This is a Greek word from which we derive the term pedagogy or the practice of teaching and instructing.
 - It was used primarily and is translated everywhere else to reflect the process of growth and education of a young person to attain maturity, thus nurture.
- Be earnest (or zealous) and repent
 - Come to grips with the reality of this, there is still time and opportunity to change
 - If we ignore his reproof we fail to become conformed to his likeness (Rom 8:29)
 - The goal of reproof is to pull us back from the precipice.
 - Be earnest (or zealous) it should be something we hunger and thirst after with all our being.
 - Repentance is more than being sorry, it's a change of direction that takes your hands off the steering wheel and puts God in the driver's seat. It's about letting go of what is destroying you.
- I stand at the door and knock, open up and let me in to eat with you.
 - This is a continuing action. Jesus is standing at the door knocking. Remember that Revelation is written to the churches, to Christians who should be living out their faith in an intimate relationship with Jesus. This is not a message for the unchurched, but for those claiming Christ as Lord. Why is that a critical point to grasp?
 - Where is this door? It's any place in your life where you are shutting Jesus out. You have locked it from within and are now imprisoned by the sin.
 - Freedom awaits, but you must unlock the door yourself. The knock of reproof is Jesus saying, "Let me in to bring light to your darkness, freedom to your captivity, healing to your pain.
 - The act of eating is a time of nurture. Physically certainly, but more significantly the word for eating here is a Greek term used in the New Testament **ONLY** for the



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Lord's Supper. The change that restores us to wholeness comes in the presence and blood of Christ.

Questions for discussion:

- How might we "soil our garments" in today's world?
- What does this teach us about Jesus' love for people who have gone off track in their faith? What does it teach us about how to respond to them?
- Where is the door that Jesus is knocking on in your life?
- How does the image of nurturing time by Christ inform your view of Communion?
- 3:21 - 22 - Picture the future - "To him who is conquering..."
 - Given the right to sit on my throne with me
 - Let this sink in for a minute. This is Jesus' throne we're talking about.
 - He says in the same manner as he sat down on his Father's throne.
 - He sat down as a full participant (Eph 2:6)
 - In Ch 22 we see the throne as the source of living water.
 - Opening the door for Jesus allows the refreshment of the living water based on our relationship with him.
- **Summary discussion**
 - Do you see any evidence of a Laodicean problem in our church or in your life?
 - What doors do you have in your life that you have barred to God in the past or present? If past, what changed?
 - Do you hear God knocking? How should you respond?
 - How has this study helped make the book of Revelation more accessible to you?
 - How has this study encouraged you to live differently in this Fallen Babylon world?
- **Peering Deeper**
 - How are the letters to the seven churches a close-up view in the greater vision of the struggle between Fallen Babylon and the citizens of New Jerusalem pictured in Chapters 4 - 22?
 - Where does refining by fire or washing of garments appear elsewhere in Scripture and how does that enhance your understanding of the Bible?
 - What criteria should one use to evaluate themselves? How do you apply these to your own life?