

Lesson # 10 -- The People of Jesus Christ at Laodicea.

Introduction

- A. In each of these seven letters we have seen various facets of our own life and church. This experience is a reminder that our Heavenly Father has given us the Bible to serve as a spiritual mirror (II Cor. 3:18; James 1:23).
- B. There is another facet to the experience we have shared as we have studied together. It is a deepening of the realization that our walk with God is to cover all the areas of our life.
- C. A third truth that has impressed itself upon us has to do with the responsibility Jesus Christ has assumed for us. As we read these letters we see how practical His loving instruction was in that day and how practical it is in our day.
- D. The Scripture: Revelation 3:14-22.

I. The Introduction to the Church at Laodicea.

- A. The city of Laodicea was located about 45 miles southeast of Philadelphia and about 100 miles due east of Ephesus. She was one of those cities in the fertile Lycus valley.
- B. Laodicea was famous for many reasons. She was the commercial and medical center of that part of the county -- famous for banking, her medical school, as well as the medicine and clothing manufactured there.
- C. Historians tell us that this city had a very large Jewish population that was quite wealthy. When we consider this truth, as well as those mentioned above, we see that the Church there was something like the city -- prosperous and indifferent to any real need.

II. The Titles of the Lord Jesus.

And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write,
These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness,
the beginning of the creation of God. Rev. 3:14

A. The explanation of these titles.

1. The first title: "The Amen."

The root meaning and usage of this word indicates that it means "certainty," "so be it," "verily," or "truth." When used by the Lord Jesus as a designation of Himself it emphasizes that He is what He is -- the One fully trustworthy.

2. The second title: "The Faithful and True Witness."

In this title the Savior goes beyond the former designation and reminded the saints at Laodicea that His witness -- what He had said to them -- was fully trustworthy. This is the same truth as recorded in John 14:6 "I am the way, the truth, and the life."

3. The third title: "The Beginning of the Creation of God."

The Greek word for "beginning" is ARCHE which means "worth," "first," or "ruler." When used by the Savior as a title in reference to creation it means that He is the ruler of all the creation because of His worth and position. In John 1:3,10, and Hebrews 1:2 we are reminded that the Lord Jesus is the Creator of all things. The more we know of creation the more we stand in awe of His wisdom, power, and provision.

B. The application of these titles.

1. When we relate the title "Amen" with the second one, "The Faithful and True Witness" we recognize a great truth. It explains why the Bible -- the witness of the Lord Jesus -- can be trusted. It is because the Bible is His Word, and He can be trusted. (Note how these titles are used in II Cor. 1:18-20).

2. As we reflect on these titles we see how irrational it is to doubt the Savior or His Word. We have no reason for such doubt. There is nothing that would cause such a response to the Holy Scripture -- except our sinfulness. We must work hard to correct all such attitudes, thoughts, and actions.

3. The Church at Laodicea was a self-satisfied group of people. They had overlooked the One Who was and is the fullness of all value -- the Lord Jesus. He is "The First" or "Best" when compared to all of creation. We must be careful that we do not make that mistake. Whether we have or not can be easily seen. It is revealed by our priorities. Do we place higher in our list of values -- money, pleasure, security, other people, or even ourselves -- before the Lord Jesus and His will?

III. The Admonition of the Lord Jesus.

I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot. I would thou wert cold or hot. . . . 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. Revelation 3:15,17

A. The explanation of this admonition.

1. When the Savior described this church as "neither cold nor hot" He was speaking of her spiritual condition as being that of indifference. The church had a blind spot in regard to its true condition. Because they were prosperous, and seemingly in need of nothing -- they took for granted that applied to their spiritual life as well.
2. Many have wondered what the Lord Jesus meant by the words, "I would thou wert cold or hot." Does this mean He would rather they were lost -- than to be lukewarm Christians? The truth does not seem to be that, but an indication of the danger of position. . . . What can you do for one who believes he is without need?
3. From this admonition we understand the terrible effects of error. The deception that comes from accepting non-truth is one of the most serious of all the forces of spiritual destruction. Because they were wealthy and self-satisfied -- they believed that meant they also had a high level of spirituality.

B. The application of this admonition.

1. The condition of the church at Laodicea and the admonition of the Lord Jesus is a reminder of how careless we can become in a time of prosperity.

And houses full of all good things ... When thou shalt have eaten and be full, then beware lest thou forget the Lord. Deut. 6:11,12 When thou hast eaten and art full ... Beward that thou forget not the Lord thy God ... Deut. 8:10,11

He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word, and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he become unfruitful. Matthew 13:22

For who maketh thee to differ from another? And what hast thou that thou didst not receive? Now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it? I Cor. 4:7

2. Indifference is an attitude that no Christian can permit in his life. This error manifests itself because of two other terrible sins.
 - a. The sin of self-satisfaction -- "I don't need to change."
 - b. The sin of neutrality -- "It doesn't mean anything to me."
3. We must examine ourselves to see if we have fallen into this serious way of thinking and living. We can tell in a moment by monitoring our response when we read the promises and invitations of the Bible. Do we respond with a warm heart and a desire for deeper fellowship and involvement? Or do we simply look at the verse as though it had no meaning for us?

IV. The Counsel of the Lord Jesus.

A. The explanation of this counsel.

1. The warning.

So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. Rev. 3:16

These fearful words indicate how deeply the church at Laodicea was out of harmony with the Lord Jesus. He had saved these individuals, called them into fellowship with Himself, and given them the privilege of evangelism. And now, in spite of all that -- they were satisfied with themselves and indifferent to spiritual progress. He warned them that He would leave them in their sad condition.

2. The exhortation.

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. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten, be zealous therefore, and repent. Rev. 3:18,19

In these verses the Savior is telling this church that the true value of life is to be found in fellowship with Himself. Their blindness to these truths is matched only by our own. His love and concern for them was indicated in making clear to them their true condition. He called them -- and calls us -- to repentance.

Thus saith the Lord, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches. But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord . . . Jer. 9:23,24

3. The promises.

a. The first promise.

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. Rev. 3:20

When God created us He made us to be an independent personality with free will so we could love Him. This also made it possible for us to sin against Him. When we choose to live sinfully -- the only thing He can do is to stand at the door of our heart -- and knock.

His promise is that He will come into our life and enter into fellowship with us, if we will open the door. No greater invitation could be given -- are we indifferent to it? Are we so satisfied with ourselves that this promise is without personal meaning?

b. The second promise.

To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne. Rev. 3:21.

To the overcomer the Lord Jesus promises an even greater involvement with Himself in fellowship and service than could ever be experienced here on earth. How can it be that we who are such sinners -- could sit with the Savior on His throne -- and yet that is His promise.

We must ask again about our response. Do we want to be an overcomer? Do we want our future now and forever filled with fellowship and service with the Savior? He has not given us these promises to mock us!

B. The application of this counsel.

When we consider how much we are like the believers in the church at Laodicea, the only spiritual thing we can do is to cast ourselves upon the mercy of the Savior, repent, and open the door of all of our life to Him.