

# Revelation

*Part Fifteen*

*Laodicea*

*(Revelation 3:14-22)*

*With Study Questions*

*Pastor Paul Viggiano  
Branch of Hope Church  
2370 W. Carson Street, #100  
Torrance, CA 90501  
212-6999  
pastorpaul@branchofhope.org  
[www.branchofhope.org](http://www.branchofhope.org)  
10/17/2021*

310)

# Revelation

*Part Fifteen*

*Laodicea*

*(Revelation 3:14-22)*

And to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write, 'These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God: <sup>15</sup> "I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. <sup>16</sup> So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth. <sup>17</sup> Because you say, 'I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing' – and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked – <sup>18</sup> I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, *that* the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see. <sup>19</sup> As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent. <sup>20</sup> Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me. <sup>21</sup> To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne. <sup>22</sup> "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches" (Revelation 3:14-22).

## Introduction

Most of us are aware of the date June 6<sup>th</sup>, 1944. British, US, and Canadian troops successfully landed on the beaches of Normandy, functionally putting an end to the World War in Europe. D-Day. We're not as familiar with what happened on June 5<sup>th</sup>, 1944. General Eisenhower, knowing he was sending these troops, these young men, into almost certain death in an effort to rid the world of the ever-growing darkness of Nazism, gave a speech. These men would make a sacrifice for the liberation of others, of people they had never met. Eisenhower said:

**Your task will not be an easy one. Your enemy is well trained, well equipped and battle-hardened. He will fight savagely. I**

**have full confidence in your courage, devotion to duty and skill in battle. We will accept nothing less than full Victory!**

I said that D-Day *functionally* ended the war. Of course, the war didn't actually end in Europe until almost a year later. Similar to the death blow to Goliath by David, the armies of Israel still had work to do. Even though the death blow to death landed at the cross, there is still work for the church to accomplish.

Yet I fear that the church has embraced a doctrine of history, of end-times, that leaves us with a speech short of the vigor of Eisenhower's quest for "full Victory." We doubt the power of the cross. We, at least all within orthodoxy, believe in its power to save, but we have misgivings about its power to transform. As we observe moral, political, economic, artistic and educational decay, today's acquiescent western church, with the harmony of a choir will sing, "These are the last days." As if to give in. To surrender. Oh, how the enemy must love such a song!

Seventy years prior to Eisenhower's speech, the Prince of Preachers, Charles Spurgeon, addressing the relatively newly found pessimistic prophetic prognosticators, taught in his exposition of Psalm 86:9 of King David:

**David was not a believer in the theory that the world will grow worse and worse, and that the dispensation will wind up with general darkness, and idolatry. Earth's sun is to go down amid tenfold night if some of our prophetic brethren are to be believed. Not so do we expect, but we look for day when the dwellers in all lands shall learn righteousness, shall trust in the Saviour, shall worship thee alone, O God, and shall glorify thy name. The modern notion has greatly damped the zeal of the church for missions, and the sooner it is shown to be unscriptural the better for the cause of God. It neither consorts with prophecy, honours God, nor inspires the church with ardour. Far hence be it driven.**

This morning we conclude part two of the outline of Revelation, "**the things which are**" (Revelation 1:19), with meditations on the church of the Laodiceans. This church was considered to be in the worst condition of the

seven churches on this Roman postal route receiving this apocalyptic letter. It was a church ill-prepared for the remainder of Revelation.

Jesus would not offer false comfort to this church by suggesting they'll be raptured by the next chapter, which is today's popular view. Difficult times were coming, and they were to be prepared. They would not hear a call to escape. They would hear a call to repent and to overcome. There may not be a church in these two chapters that mirrors today's western view of Christianity more than Laodicea.

Laodicea was a wealthy city, known for its banking, clothing manufacturing and medical school, all of which Jesus will use to instruct and rebuke. Similar to the other cities it endured a severe earthquake, yet it was able to rebuild itself without the aid of Rome. It was a self-reliant city which had produced a self-reliant church. We read of no persecution, and no false teachers. Neither were necessary. The church was on the verge of death and was blissfully unaware of it.

**And to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write, 'These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God (Revelation 3:14).**

The self-designation of Christ hearkens the church to ask itself, 'who will we believe?' "**Amen, faithful and True**" are gloriously redundant words. A definition of truth is assumed and neglected. We have become like a culture of fish who have forgotten that we are in, and in need of, water. We assume it. We forget it. We've quit asking. We think we're capable of flying on our own and as the water of truth slowly descends, we're circling the drain while calling it progress. Is there a more appropriate verse, describing the current intellectual and moral climate than the one found in Romans:

**Professing to be wise, they became fools (Romans 1:22).**

The hope for the church, for the world, is to heed the Truth who is Christ, "**the Beginning of the creation of God.**" The one through whom and for whom, all things were created and consist (Colossians 1:16). We must ever ask ourselves, *who will we believe?* This church needed to hear the truth about their own deplorable condition.

**I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. <sup>16</sup> So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth (Revelation 3:15).**

There is some debate about what is meant by “**cold or hot.**” Some say that hot means fervent and genuine in faith and that cold means antagonistic to the faith. Others argue that local to Laodicea were the hot waters of Hierapolis which had a medicinal effect and the cold waters of Colossae, which were pure, drinkable and life-giving. But everybody agrees that “**lukewarm**” is bad.<sup>1</sup>

It is a very dangerous frame of mind to think we’ve got our religion covered. To walk through this life with one foot in the world and one in the church receives the most scathing of denunciations. Let us not forget that it is to a church that Jesus threatens to “**vomit you out of My mouth.**”

The image of expulsion is common in Scripture. It happened to Adam and Eve. It happened to Israel and it can happen to the church (Romans 11:20-22). I do believe in the perseverance of the saints. The true saints in Laodicea, no doubt, heeded Christ’s warning. But it is a matter of only a generation or less for a church to have its lampstand removed (Revelation 2:5).

The heart of the church’s problem is a false self-evaluation.

**Because you say, ‘I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing’ – and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked (Revelation 3:17).**

They thought they were doing fine! What can be better than to be in need of nothing? But, of course, a church (a person) in need of nothing is not in need of Christ. We might consider the somewhat paradoxical words of Christ in the face of the self-satisfied Pharisees.

**And when the Pharisees saw *it*, they said to His disciples, “Why does your Teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?”  
<sup>12</sup> When Jesus heard *that*, He said to them, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick (Matthew 9:11, 12).**

---

<sup>1</sup> There is historical evidence that Laodicea had access only to warm water which caused nausea.

The problem with the Pharisees was they were sick (sinful) and refused to acknowledge it. Perhaps you've invited someone to church, and they responded by being a bit insulted and suggesting you invite Gary, because he really needs it. A flourishing, vibrant, growing church is not a church that views itself in need of nothing, but desperately in need of Christ.

The adjectives Jesus uses here, **“wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked”** may very well been a reflection of what Laodicea was known to be strong in (a wealthy city, known for its banking, clothing manufacturing and medical school). It has been suggested, with some merit, that they credited their material success to their willingness to be a compromising church engaging in idolatrous syncretism (the willingness to mix and match religious convictions). “If our church and coffers are full, we must be doing something right” has been the swan song of many a church! How much are we willing to give in to the world?

Pinching incense to Rome and its Caesars, giving allegiance to first century trade unions for the right to buy and sell, was powerfully on the table and getting hotter by the moment. Laodicea had allowed half the camel in the tent. It was beginning to stink, and changes had to be made. Their spiritual condition was the mirror opposite of their material condition. What counsel would they receive?

**I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, *that* the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see (Romans 3:18).**

Jesus brings to the fore of our thinking objects which, in Scripture, have profound significance: Gold, white garments and eye salve. Gold is a biblical idiom for purification.

**And I will put this third into the fire, and refine them as one refines silver, and test them as gold is tested (Zechariah 13:9. See also Job 23:10; Proverbs 27:21; Malachi 3:2, 3; 1 Peter 1:6-9).**

Let it be noted that refinement is not always an immediately pleasant experience.

Nakedness in Scripture is a term of ultimate social shame and degradation (Jeremiah 13:26). It is common for people to have very uncomfortable dreams of being naked in a public place. But even if someone were able to socially overcome that which would be awkward for most, nakedness before God implies being fully seen and known (Isaiah 47:3). The beauty of these **“white garments”** is not merely hiding our physical bodies, but the covering of our sin before God (Zechariah 3:1-5).

Finally, there is the **“eye salve”** for blindness. It is a spiritual blindness where the natural eye is incapable of seeing that which is real and true.

**Hear this, O foolish and senseless people, who have eyes, but see not, who have ears, but hear not (Jeremiah 5:21).**

Jesus would speak of those whose hearts are dull to the point of closing their eyes. Such was the case in the church of Laodicea. The answer to the deplorable condition of the church was for them **“to buy from”** Christ. What does that mean? Is there a price tag on these items? Were the Laodiceans reaching for their wallets?

Isaiah helps us grasp such a proposition.

**Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price (Isaiah 55:1).**

How does one go about buying without money? Isaiah 55:3 answers that question by God beckoning us to incline our ears, to come to Him that our souls might live. In one sense we have no money to buy. As if God can be bought off! In another sense the cost is everything.

**Then Jesus told his disciples, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. <sup>25</sup> For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it (Matthew 16:24, 25).**

We are called to lose a false sense of self, a deceptive identity, and become a new creature in Christ. When we are found by Christ, we find

our true selves and true life. We are to imitate that wise man who found a treasure in a field and sells all he has to buy it (Matthew 13:44). The church was in bad condition. The answer, corporately and individually, was to come to Christ.

Perhaps it was beginning to feel the pinch of the rebuke, which tends to be the case for us all. But Jesus was preparing them for the coming tribulation. His motives are brought forth. It was an act of love for them, for their souls.

**As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent (Revelation 3:19).**

It is an act of love for a parent to discipline a child. As children grow older, hopefully, they begin to see this. The same is true for all who are children of God.

**And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons? "My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him. <sup>6</sup>For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives" (Hebrews 12:5, 6).**

Let us have eyes to see and seek to respond appropriately, with a zealous repentance to **"the Faithful and True Witness"** when He tells us the truth about ourselves. Wise counsel should excite us. There seems to be a shortage. And lest we merely think of Jesus as some Divine Chastener, these words of followed by a bidding of great intimacy.

**Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me (Revelation 3:20).**

This is not, as is so often used today, an invitation for an unbeliever to come to Christ. It is a call for a church of those who presumably had already come to Christ, to quit excluding Christ from their church. It is a call to renewed fellowship. A shared meal in Scripture was a token of affection (Luke 15:2; Acts 11:3). Abraham offered a meal to the Angel of the



Lord (Genesis 18). To what extent is Christ knocking at the door of our own church?

**To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne. <sup>22</sup> He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches (Revelation 3:21, 22).**

There is a call to overcome. Similar to Eisenhower calling the troops to courage and victory. To sit on the throne with Christ, as we learned with Thyatira, should not be thought of as some power-grab. When James and John came to Jesus requesting to sit on the throne with Him, Jesus brought the discussion to the type of leadership that involves suffering and servitude. The other apostles actually became indignant when they heard of the seize for power (Mark 10:35-45). Jesus concluded that conversation, and we will conclude, with words for every church and every Christian.

**And Jesus called them to him and said to them, "You know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. <sup>43</sup> But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, <sup>44</sup> and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. <sup>45</sup> For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mark 10:42-45).**

**He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches (Revelation 3:22).**

## Questions for Study

1. Do the prevailing views of end-times encourage you or discourage you when it comes to God's plan for history? How does the Spurgeon quotation comport with today's more popular views (pages 2, 3)?
2. What does it seem like Jesus was seeking to accomplish in Laodicea in terms of the remainder of the Revelation (page 4)?
3. Why is truth important? How is it arrived at (page 4)?
4. Summarize what appeared to be the problem with the church of Laodicea (pages 5, 6).
5. How did Jesus counsel them? What does that look like in your life (pages 6, 7)?
6. Does being rebuked by Christ mean God doesn't like us? Explain (page 8)?
7. How is Revelation 3:20 often used? How should it be understood (pages 8, 9)?
8. What are the implications of sitting on the throne with Christ (page 9)?