

The Church at Laodicea: The Fashionable Church (Part 2)

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 31 July 2013

Preacher: Don Coleman

[0:00] Revelation chapter 3, and starting with verse 14, I'll go ahead and read the text, which runs all the way through verse 22 of the chapter.

Revelation chapter 4, verse 14, verse 14, verse 14, verse 14, I know your works, but you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. So then, because you are lukewarm, neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of my mouth.

Not exactly a very pleasant word, is it, in Scripture? I think the King James, does the King James have spew you? Amen. Okay. Well, same thing. That's the meaning of the word, vomit.

Because you say I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing, do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked.

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.

[1:58] And anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten, therefore be zealous and repent.

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. 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.

He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. Alright, so there's the letter, and it's the last letter, by the way. Last letter from the Lord Jesus Christ to his churches in Asia Minor.

Real churches existing in that day, and in the first century of Christianity. Real churches in real places, real people.

Real church in real places, real people.

[3:23] But, clearly from the text that I read a moment ago, and it's that part of it that is perhaps most well known. I mean, there are really a couple of parts of this particular letter that are often quoted, often used.

I mean, the part about being lukewarm. And then, of course, Jesus standing at the door and knocking. Those two passages are very well known and used, sometimes abused.

And we'll get into that a little bit later. But, the church in Laodicea was lukewarm. Lukewarm about what? About Christ.

You've got it right there in front of you, don't you? Or printed. Lukewarm about Christ. That, clearly, was Jesus' primary complaint or condemnation.

Really, not complaint, but condemnation toward this church. They were lukewarm about Christ.

And, maybe to set that in our minds, see how profound, how serious that is.

[4:29] Or, how strange that is. Really, maybe I ought to put it that way. How strange a thing it would be for a church to be lukewarm about Christ. Imagine a doctor, medical doctor, being lukewarm about disease.

Alright, so you're sick and you drag yourself down to the doctor's office. Just imagine this, alright. You get down there to the doctor's office and after you've waited an hour and a half in the waiting room, you finally get in to see the doctor.

Isn't that kind of the way it goes sometimes? Yeah, and he says, hurry up, I've got patients. Yeah. Alright, so you sit there on the little examining kind of, whatever you call that thing.

And, he feels your pulse and he takes your blood pressure. That's what they do, you know. And, takes your temperature, checks that out. Looks down your throat, looks at your tongue, you know.

How they examine things like that. And, then he puts his cold stethoscope on your chest and your back to listen to what's going on inside of you.

[5:33] And, then imagine that he says to you, okay, well, just pay the receptionist on the way out. And, you say, wait a minute doctor, what's wrong with me?

Now, I'm sick. Aren't you going to tell me what's wrong with me? And, he just kind of sort of nonchalantly looks at you and says, what's wrong with you? Oh, nothing to worry about, you just have a bad case of bubonic plague.

Can you imagine that? And, you know, so you look at him and you say, but, doc, you know, aren't you going to give me some kind of injection or something?

You know, aren't you going to put me in the hospital? I mean, people don't just walk around with bubonic plague, do they? I mean, you're asking the doctor this. I mean, that's an obvious question. And, you might even say, well, what about my family? And, what about the people out of the waiting room? This is contagious. People don't just walk around with bubonic plague, do they?

[6:35] And, also, what about me? People die from bubonic plague. So, you're just naturally going to ask the doctor these questions. And, the doctor, you know, he just looks at you and very passively he says, well, just calm down.

He's going to die someday anyway. He might as well be from bubonic plague as anything else. Besides that, I'm just really not all that interested in diseases. Can you imagine a doctor saying that?

I'd be absurd. You know, ridiculous. I mean, we can't even imagine anything like that happening except maybe in Hollywood on some comedy movie. You know.

But, stranger than that would be a church that is lukewarm about Christ. A doctor lukewarm about disease.

A church lukewarm about Christ. That would be the most strange, the strangest thing that you could think of. And, yet, that was the case with the church at Laodicea.

[7:37] You know. You know. And, here's the Lord of glory standing before this church. The Bible describes Him as the altogether lovely one. The Bible describes Him as the chiefest among ten thousand.

He's standing before the church at Laodicea. He's the one, the Bible says, that angels worship. And, there He stands. You know, the marks of the nails.

In His hands and in His feet. And, Jesus says to this church, I could wish you were cold or hot. And, essentially, what is He saying?

He's saying, give me all your hate or give me all your love, but do not offer me lukewarm love. That's basically what He's saying.

All right. So, that kind of introduces us to what's clearly going to be the tenor of this letter. I mean, this is a very condemning letter.

[8:36] The church at Laodicea was a, you know, really, really pitiful church. And, I'll mention this a little bit later, but remember that I think we can.

And, there's some basis to see all seven churches as prophetic of church periods, eras, eras of history in the age of the church.

And, Laodicea is the last one. And, if we really believe that we're living in the last days. I mean, in the sense that immediately the last days. Though the last days really started when the church was birthed at Pentecost.

These have been the last days for the last 2,000 years, technically speaking. But, if we really believe that we're at the last of the last days, we can make a case for that. Then, the church at Laodicea is prophetic of the church today.

Not necessarily our church. I don't think so. Praise the Lord. Not prophetic of every individual church. But, in general, prophetic of the condition of the church in the world today.

[9:46] And, so I really do think we're living in the days of Laodicea. The lukewarm church. So, that's what we're going to look at as we look at this letter.

Now, we're just going to barely get into this letter tonight. Right? And, in fact, I shouldn't say it. Let's just go on. I said my sermon was going to be short Sunday morning.

It turned out not today. So, it ought to teach me never to say that again. Right? Here's the first thing we want to see tonight. In fact, of the four points of Revelation.

There are four, by the way. Four major points of Revelation. The first one is the dynamic Christ. And, it really is very profound.

Verse 14. Just really an incredible verse. And, we don't think of verse 14 when we think of this letter to Laodicea. Again, remember I said we think about this lukewarm kind of business.

[10:47] And, the picture of Jesus knocking on the door of the heart. We think of that thing. But, this first verse. Or, not the first verse. Well, it is the first verse. Verse 14. It's very profound.

And, it's a description. A description of the Lord of glory. And, let me read it again. You have it printed for you there in your notes. Or, you have it in your Bibles.

Whichever way you want to look at it. Or, place you want to look at it. And, here's verse 14. And, to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write. And, here's the description. These things says the Amen.

That's the first part of the description. Second, the faithful and true witness. And, then the third part of the description is the beginning of the creation of God.

These are all three astounding things that are spoken or said of the Lord of glory. This is a description. And, what a description.

[11:44] And, so, you know, here's the Lord of glory. He's standing there before the church of the Laodicean church. And, he stands there. We're going to see as we look at the whole letter.

He stands there before them with indignation, clearly. But, also with love. There is a mixture of love and grace and mercy in this letter as well.

Now, who is this Lord of glory? Let's consider this description here tonight. First of all, he is the all-conquering one.

The all-conquering one. Now, you may not, just on the face of it, just through a bare reading of it, get this from this first phrase, but this is the idea.

When he says, these things says the Amen. The idea is that he has conquered all. He's conquered it all. He's the all-conquering one.

[12:43] Jesus is God's fullest and final Amen. Now, that's very significant, especially when you understand this concept or this whole idea of an Amen.

And we should because we do something today, even privately as well as corporately, that points to the meaning of this, quote, Amen.

When I say that Jesus Christ is God's final Amen, I'm talking about the final Amen for all of our spiritual needs.

All of them. Forgiveness, redemption in Christ, eternity. He's the final Amen.

It was the custom in the early Jewish synagogues. And then later, of course, it crossed over into the Christian church. And we still have it today. And the custom was to say Amen at the close of the prayer.

[13:51] We still do that today. We do it privately. But it started out in the synagogue. And in the order of service in the synagogue, there would be a scripture reading and a discourse, like a sermon or homily or something about the passage.

And then there would be a prayer offered up, usually by the leader of the synagogue or a rabbi or someone official. And then there would be an Amen and everyone would say it.

Amen. And so that was the custom. And the word Amen literally means, May it be fulfilled. May it be fulfilled.

Now, of course, the Amen at the end of the prayer was, you know, because it was attached to the prayer, then what we're saying is, May what has been prayed be fulfilled.

Now, then, the Bible is telling us here in this letter to Laodicea that Jesus is the Amen, the final one. He is the Amen.

[15:00] He is the one, may it be fulfilled, one who did fulfill it. Jesus is the final Amen to all things. This is the idea of this. The final Amen to God's self-revelation.

God, in His providence and mercy and grace, He revealed Himself to man. And He fully revealed Himself through the person of Jesus Christ.

He's the final Amen, the full revelation, self-revelation of God. He's the final Amen to God's redemptive purposes for mankind. Something that has been unfolding over the centuries since Adam and Eve were created and placed in the garden.

And God's plan of redemption has been unfolding. The revelation of it has been unfolding for us all throughout the Old Testament. And then, of course, Jesus comes in the New Testament.

And He's the final Amen to God's redemptive plan. This is the all-conquering one. He's the final Amen to God's glory forever and ever.

[16:08] So it doesn't end just with the cross. It doesn't end just with His ascension back up to the right hand of the throne of God. It doesn't end with just His return to gather up His beloved, His bride, His church.

It doesn't end there. It doesn't end with the marriage supper of the Lamb that's going to take place one day. And it goes on into eternity forever and ever and ever.

He is God's final Amen. He's the all-conquering one. In fact, the book of Revelation begins and ends with a double Amen. A double Amen.

Revelation 1, 6. I didn't print that for you in your notes. Revelation 1, 6 and 7.

Let me read it for you. And has made us kings and priests to His God and Father. To Him be glory and dominion forever and ever.

[17:10] Amen. Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him.

Even so, Amen. There's a double Amen. The idea here in this double Amen that comes at the beginning of the book of Revelation, the idea is that Jesus here is presented as the final ruler of man.

Of all mankind. Not just those who follow Him and believe in Him, but all those, even those who pierced Him. That would be the Jews. Even all the tribes of the earth.

The unbelieving nations will mourn because of Him. He's the all-conquering one. The final ruler of man. So, the book of Revelation begins with a double Amen, and then it ends also with a double Amen.

Revelation chapter 22. Boy. My voice is going quick. Revelation 22.

[18:14] I forgot to put a sticky note in that one. I put sticky notes in this so I can turn to him real fast. You think, you know, Pastor, he just knows his Bible so well. Right there.

You know, he probably did Bible drill until he was an adult. Revelation 22, verse 20. He who testifies to these things says, Surely I am coming quickly.

Amen. Even so, come Lord Jesus. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen. That's a double Amen.

It ends the book of Revelation. Revelation 22. And really, what's capped off here is that Jesus is not, you know, with the first double Amen, He presents Him as the ruler of man.

Here, He's presented as the final revealer of God. The final revealer of God. All right. So, He's the all-conquering one.

[19:15] Second, He is the all-convicting one. The all-convicting one. These things says, the faithful and true witness.

Faithful and true witness. That's who Jesus is. Faithful and true witness. Now, what does that mean? Well, it means several things, all of which are connected to the truth.

He is a faithful and true witness. That's what witnesses do. They witness to the truth as they see it. I mean, if you were called upon to, you know, enter into the courts, you know, because you were a witness, called upon to give testimony to what you saw, and you're going to, hopefully, testify truthfully and say, this is what I saw or this is what I know.

And, of course, you're fallible. I mean, you know, sometimes people get on the witness stand and lie and know it that they're lying. Sometimes people get on the witness stand and they don't tell the truth because they misunderstood what they saw or, you know, we're just fallible.

But Jesus is not infallible. I mean, not infallible. He is infallible. He knows the truth. And so, all these are attached to the truth.

[20:44] So, here's what this means. Three things. Jesus does not dilute the truth like we do, typically. Specifically, the truth about us.

The truth about me is what we're talking about. He is the faithful and true witness. He does not dilute the truth about you like you would do for yourself or I would do, typically do for myself.

That's what we typically do. We soften the truth, you know, so that it doesn't sound so bad. Am I the only one? No. We, you know, we add things to the truth, you know, to make it more favorable toward us.

Even when we are kind of reasoning in our own minds about ourselves, we sometimes have a hard time bringing ourselves to be truthful to ourselves.

You know, we're in denial quite a bit. But we have a tendency to want to dilute the truth, especially if it's unfavorable. But Jesus does not do that.

[22:00] He's the faithful and true witness. He knows the truth. He deals in facts. He does not dilute the truth with half-truths or untruths. There's only one truth.

And all other variations are not truth. They're untruths. All right, so Jesus does not dilute the truth. Second, Jesus does not distort the truth.

Distort. Distort the truth like we do. You know, sometimes we add to the truth.

That's diluting it. Sometimes we just distort the truth. We give it a little spin, a little different perspective, you know, that makes it sound a little bit better. I mean, we're just good at it, you know. We learned it when we were kids. Actually, I think we were born knowing how to do it, you know, to distort the truth. You know, I'm trying to remember the story.

[23:07] It just came to me, and I can't remember all the facts about a couple of our boys, you know. Oh, I remember what it was. We went in there, and one of our kids crying.

He said, he bit me! He bit me! You know, that kind of thing. And I look on his finger, and sure enough, there are teeth marks on it. I'm bleeding, but, you know, it's obvious that. I think it was Matthew and Timothy, actually.

And it was Timothy that was crying. And Matthew said, I didn't bite him. He just put his finger in my mouth.

Now, is that the truth? But it's distorted a little bit. You know, you didn't have to bite him kind of thing. Maybe that's kind of a rough illustration. But you know what I'm talking about.

But Jesus does not do that. He sees it as it is. As it really is. And says it like it is. He's the faithful and true witness. And there's coming a day, by the way, when the truth will be revealed.

[24:10] But Jesus wants us to know the truth before that day. I mean, he's working to do that in our hearts. And then third, Jesus does not deny the truth, which is something we do quite often.

Just deny it. Can't figure out how to dilute it. Can't figure out how to distort it. Because it is what it is. And so we just say, it just didn't happen. It's not true.

I deny it. You know, we can get away with that, with ourselves and with other people. But we can't get away with that with Jesus. Jesus knows. Here's the bottom line.

He knows the full truth about you. I mean, He really does. He knows things about you nobody else knows. And you wouldn't want anybody else to know.

I mean, it's just a sobering fact. And Jesus knows the truth about you. And here's the mercy, the gracious part of this.

[25:10] He wants you to know the full truth about you. You say, well, I already know it. You probably don't. Or you don't have eyes to see it and the heart to admit it.

He always is working in our lives. This is the work that is done through the Holy Spirit who searches our hearts and sees, brings to light those things that are in us.

And He's always working for you to know what He knows. He wants you to know the true, full truth about you. And He reveals this truth to you if you have eyes to see it and willing ears to hear it.

If you will willingly admit it. And all for this reason, to have the right response. And our response should always be to agree with Jesus about it. We should always agree with Him.

And that's what confession is. I've said this many times. Maybe it's something we just need to drill into our hearts and minds.

[26:22] I know I need to for me. But confession is not about informing God as if God needed to learn anything. He knows all things.

He knows everything about you and about me. Confession is just agreeing with Him about it. And that's what He is working to do. He's the faithful and true witness. All right, so we're talking about the dynamic Christ.

And by the way, before I leave that, of course, I've been applying this truth about the dynamic Christ, applying it to the individual. But really the letter is applying it to the church.

And just as we as individual believers should deal in facts and truths about ourselves so that we can deal with them properly, a church ought to as well.

But Jesus Christ is the true and faithful witness as He stands before any church, our church, any church. And He deals with facts.

[27:22] He says it like it is. And we need to agree with Him always. All right, so we're talking about the dynamic Christ. He's the all-conquering one, the all-convicting one, and then one more.

He's the all-controlling one. And this really deals with His sovereignty, His absolute sovereignty. He's the all-controlling one.

Or you could say the all-sovereign one, though sovereign doesn't begin with a C, and that would mess up my alliteration. But that is the idea.

He says the beginning of the creation of God. That's His statement about that. The beginning of the creation of God. That means that Jesus is the origin of creation.

The book of Genesis, though Revelation is written in Greek, but in the Hebrew, the word Genesis means beginning. The beginning.

[28 : 26] And Jesus is the Genesis. Literally. Genesis. The beginning of the creation of God. That includes the angels, of course.

The spiritual realm. Glorious angels, as well as fallen angels. All angelic beings. Demonic beings. He's the creator.

All the spiritual realm. And that includes, of course, their and His dwelling place in the third heaven.

The spiritual realm. He's the beginning, the origin of the creation of these things.

And it includes, of course, the universe. And all that is in it. The physical realm. Including our planet. That includes mankind. We bring it on down to ourselves.

It includes mankind. He is the origin of the creation. And I gave you a few scriptures that support that. In fact, they're really more than just these.

[29 : 29] But I'm not going to read all of them. But Amos 4.13. For behold, He who forms mountains. And creates the wind.

Who declares to man what his thought is. And makes the morning darkness. Who treads the high places of the earth. The Lord God of hosts is His name. That's Yahweh.

And that is the second person of the Trinity. It's the Son of God. Ephesians 3.9 And to make all see what is the fellowship of the mystery.

Which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God. Who created all things through Jesus Christ. All things. He's the origin of creation. Well, I will read some more.

Lovely scriptures. For by Him all things. Colossians 1.16 All things were created that are in heaven. And that are on earth. Visible and invisible.

[30 : 28] Whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. That's pretty all conclusive there. There's not any middle ground or any gray area.

Or anything that's excluded. All things. Revelation 4.11 You are worthy, O Lord. To receive glory and honor and power. For You created all things. And by Your will they exist and were created.

That's everything. And it just happened. You know. Not that Jesus. You know. That God got it all started with some little.

You know. Amiiibo. Maybe even before that. Some little oozy thing. And then everything just kind of sprung out of that. All things were created.

Exnihilo. That means from nothing. He created all things. They were all created through Him and for Him. Revelation 10.6 And swore by Him who lives forever and ever.

[31 : 35] Who created heaven and all things that are in it. The earth and the things that are in it. And the sea and the things that are in it. All the various realms. From the spiritual to the celestial to this terrestrial.

To the little fishies that swim in the sea. All of it was created by Him. All right. So Jesus is the all controlling one. Because He created all things.

And there's one more verse at least. John 1.2-3 He was in the beginning with God. That means before anything was created He existed. All right.

So Jesus was not. The Christ was not a created being Himself. He's not the brother of Lucifer. As some religions would have us believe.

He's not a created being. He was in the beginning. Before anything was. He was in the beginning with God. God the Father. All three existed in the beginning. They're not created.

[32 : 36] And all things were made through Him. And without Him nothing was made that was made. That's just very clear. He flung the stars into space.

They're all up there. Not by chance. Flung them all up there. They're all named. He knows all of them. When one burns out He keeps count of that.

And He placed the planets of course in their orbits. And not just those in our solar system. But all the planets throughout the entire universe.

He's in the nearly countless. Really. Essentially countless solar systems and galaxies that are in our universe.

He placed all of them there. And placed them in perfect order. And they all move in perfect order. And not one of them gets out of culture.

[33 : 35] And the water is perfectly ordered by Him. He scooped out the oceans. He's kind of... Well...

We call these anthropomorphisms. God actually took His hand, you know. And scooped it out. But just as a testimony to His greatness.

He's scooped out the oceans. And heaped up the mountains. He filled the earth with plants and animals. He created man. To have dominion over it all.

He's the Creator. And as Creator then, Jesus is sovereign over all. He's sovereign. I went kind of fast. Did you miss any of those?

So sovereign that, by the way, not a blade of grass grows without His permission. Not a blade dies in your parched yard when it doesn't rain without His permission either.

[34 : 43] And really, not even a speck of dust moves without His knowledge. I mean, if you just, you know, come up with all kinds of ways to describe just how sovereign He is.

Down to the little particle of dust that He knows all about. Insignificant as it is. It doesn't escape His knowledge.

And so He's the all-conquering One. The origin of all creation. And this is the One then that stands before the church at Laodicea. And we have to understand that He's the One that stands before our church.

He's the One and He's the dynamic Christ.