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THE SEVENTH CHURCH--THE CHURCH OF LAODICEA

A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF REVELATION
REVELATION 3:14-22
NUMBER 8

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REVELATION 3:14-22 "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; I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. 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: 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. 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. 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. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches."

The Laodicean Church is dedicated to all lukewarm Christians.

The message is to the aggelos, the angel, the pastor, the messenger of this church. Church is in dative plural, and refers to more than one church. Antioches dedicated this church to his wife and named it for her. It was the last of seven churches, located on the highway that led to Ephesus and Miletus. It was a banking center and place of great pleasure. Sports and drama center. Cicero lived there and did much of his writing there. It was the central city for the Internal Revenue of that part of the world. This letter addressed to several churches in Laodicea.

Write--aorist, active, imperative "Grappho"--not only a message but it would become a part of the Word of God. "These things"--"hode" this is a demonstrative pronoun and refers to content. Keeps on saying the Amen.

"ho amen" and it means to believe. ISAIAH 65:16 "That he who blesseth himself in the earth shall bless himself in the God of truth; and he that sweareth in the earth shall swear by the God of truth; because the former troubles are forgotten, and because they are hid from mine eyes." These things sayeth the Lord of doctrine--the source of all truth.

The faithful and true witness--Witness comes from "Martus" and refers to someone who can verify something in a court of law. See this idea in Hebrews 1:3 and Rev. 1:5. Jesus Christ is the witness to the Father's plan. Witness carries with it the concept of grace. Faithful is from "pistos" and means in every generation he will warn you concerning truth. True is from "alethinos" and means dependable. He is faithful and dependable in helping us recover.

The beginning is from "he arche" and means the original source. So these things were to be written from the original source of the creation of God.

REVELATION 3:15 "I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot." When he says "I know" it carries the idea that these facts are based on all the facts. In other words, this is established truth. He knows them now, has always known them, and will know them throughout all the future. You don't have to worry here about the appraisal he is making here. It is built on perfect truth.

In every generation there would be churches like this Laodicean church. Christ told them that he knew their production--"Eargon". It refers to production of the soul as it relates to life. In other words, their soul was made bare before God and he is going to reveal here a picture of the soul of this church. The real idea is "nakedness of soul". "That thou art" means the absolute status quo that they kept on being neither hot nor cold.

Cold comes from "esuchros" and refers to coldness of soul. This refers to an unbeliever. So this is referring not to unbelievers. Later on he will say that I wish you were unbelievers, for then the problem might be solved easier. If you are cold, then believe in Christ.

Not hot--"Testos". So they were not hot and were not cold; just in between. These were the lukewarm Christians.

No one is cold----unbelievers.

No one is hot----believers with doctrinal maturity.

It is addressed to the lukewarm--"Chliaros", but the picture is even more vivid than that. It is "salt water" and something that causes you to vomit. Something that produces nausea. God will spue them out, vomit them out of his mouth. Laodicea is made up of immature believers. These are believers involved in pleasure, people negative toward doctrine. They were not dead, and where there is life there is hope. "I would" is an aorist, active, indicative of "opheilo". It is a word that expresses a wish like "O that you would" or "I wish you would". So God here is saying, "I wish that you were either cold or hot". If cold, then believe in Christ and be saved. If lukewarm, then get back in fellowship and become hot again.

REVELATION 3:16 "So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth." It is the lukewarm Christian that always causes the trouble. They refuse to accept the authority of Scripture and will not study doctrine. So then "Houtos", a condition previously mentioned, since they are lukewarm, God tells them that he is about to spue them out of his mouth. It is either the sin unto death or it is the fifth cycle of discipline.

Look At The Doctrine Of The Sin Unto Death

1. Definition--The sin unto death is maximum punishment from God. This comes from scar tissue on the soul.
1 JOHN 5:16 "If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it."
PSALM 118:17-18 "I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord. The Lord hath chastened me sore: but he hath not given me over unto death."
2. When people fail to repent and rebound, all God can do is send to them the sin unto death.
JEREMIAH 9:16 "I will scatter them also among the heathen, whom neither they nor their fathers have known: and I will send a sword after them, till I have consumed them."
JEREMIAH 44:12 "And I will take the remnant of Judah, that have set their faces to go into the land of Egypt to sojourn there, and they shall all be consumed, and fall in the land of Egypt; they shall even be consumed by the sword and by the famine: they shall die, from the least even unto the greatest, by the sword and by the famine: and they shall be an execration, and an astonishment, and a curse, and a reproach."
3. Scar tissue on the soul is the mechanics of the sin unto death. You have spiritual emphysema. This is illustrated in Ephesians 4.
4. We have a case history of the sin unto death. Ananias and Sapphira lied to the Holy Spirit as explained in Acts 5, and they died the sin unto death. This is also illustrated in the Corinthian incest in 1 Cor. 5:1-5. This is the sin of persistent carnality without any desire to rebound. King Saul died the sin unto death because he would not repent.
5. King Hezekiah, because of lack of faith and obedience, had the sin unto death pronounced upon him, but he rebounded and God spared his life and gave him fifteen more years to live.

6. The sin unto death comes to believers involved in apostasy.

7. The sin unto death can be canceled by rebound.

1 CORINTHIANS 11:31 "For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged."
EPHESIANS 4:24 "And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."

Now this is the principle which is in operation in the Laodicean church. God is saying to them, "In such a condition because you keep on being lukewarm, and will not repent, I am about to vomit you out of my mouth".

Now what causes a condition like this? The answer is pride and prosperity.

REVELATION 3:17 "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" Here is the illustration of how pride and prosperity and success tore them away from Bible doctrine. They kept on contending that they were rich. "Elouseas" is the word used here and it means they were rich in their own estimation at the expense of Bible doctrine. They had allowed wealth and pleasure and things to crowd out Bible doctrine. They looked at themselves and said, "I have need of nothing". Now let me ask you a question--What is it that sustains you? Is it position? Is it money? Is it your success? What television program is going to sustain you in times of adversity? So many of our people are lukewarm and they are moving toward the sin unto death. Don't let anything separate you from Bible doctrine.

Now we are going to get God's estimate of these people in Laodicea. They are going down and don't know it. God used five words to describe their condition. Let us see if any of these terms can be applied to us.

Wretched----"Talaiporos" and it means you endure scar tissue on your soul and you do not rebound and get back in fellowship.

Miserable----"Eleeinon" and it means pitiful, miserable and not aware of it.

Poor-----"Proxos" and means one who begs for affection and attention. It means they were slaves to other people.

Blind-----"Tuphlos" means slipping spiritually and don't even know it.

Naked-----"Gumnos" and means nakedness of soul. They were poorly dressed in their souls.

This is a perfect picture of many churches today.

REVELATION 3:18 "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." This word "I counsel thee" means that "I keep on strongly advising you to buy". God is giving them and us good advise. We are to buy gold that will not burn in the fire. It means to "buy from the immediate source of me". In other words, we can only get truth for life from Bible doctrine. Try to live any other way and we fail.

"Chrusion" means gold refined so you can wear it--it refers to Bible doctrine put into your everyday living. And this is a decision you have to make for yourself. The white raiment here means a mantle of white. We are to put this mantle of white around us. "The shame of thy nakedness" here refers to a naked soul, a soul that is not clothed with Bible doctrine.

Now he refers to one of the famous medical products of Laodicea. This was one of the famous medical centers of the world. "Kallourian" was the name for this famous eye salve that was known all over that part of the world. Christ tells them that Bible truth to their souls is the same thing as this eye salve is to sore eyes. If they will apply this they will keep on seeing.

REVELATION 3:19 "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent." Christ is reminding them that his rebuke to them is based on his love for them. "I rebuke" means to judge with discipline. He keeps on spanking them so they will get back into line. The word repent here is "metanoeo" and means to change the mind.

REVELATION 3:20 "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." We so often use this verse when we talk to the unsaved, but it was given to Christians to get them back in fellowship with God. This verse is addressed to believers in Jesus Christ. This is not an appeal for salvation.

The word for Behold is "Idou" and is a strong word for getting attention. "I stand" is from "Histemi" and means that he stood in the past and keeps on standing there. Jesus never gives up on us. "Krouo" means he just keeps on knocking.

"If" is third class condition and means that maybe you will hear and maybe you won't. "Hear" is from "Akouo" and means to listen and concentrate, "then I will come in". Please notice it doesn't say that he will come in and save them from their sins. They have already been saved, and salvation is not the issue here. He will come in and have fellowship with them. This is a fellowship verse and is meant for Christians.

This is a picture of the way the Christian life ought to be. We are to so live that Jesus will be on the inside, having fellowship with him all the time. If we enter places where he will not go, then this fellowship is broken. Indeed this verse is a good motto for any church and any individual Christian.

REVELATION 3:21 "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." This is a verse which described the reward for rebound and staying in fellowship. Please notice that God considers the final victory of Christ to have been achieved when he ascended and sat down at the right hand of God. When Christ sat down at the right hand of God everything changed. The Kingdom was assured. Satan was once and for all defeated.

REVELATION 3:22 "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." This verse emphasizes again the truth that spiritual recovery is possible for every born again child of God. Living in fellowship comes from obedience to the Word of God. If we hear it and live by it, then we can live in fellowship.