**The letter to the Laodicean Church – part 1**

1. **The slide into Lukewarmness**

1a) The life of the Church in it’s first years was literally just like Jesus’ life; full of passion and power and preaching and miracles and conversions along with turmoil and persecution. But somewhere along the line, the church lost its fire and its fervour. The unexplainable, supernatural dimension gave way to living a good, respectable life. The goal of radical discipleship was exchanged for the desire to become a happy and successful citizen. Persecution gave way to acceptance and influence within society.

1b) The letter to the church in Laodicea is the last of the letters to the 7 churches. It is actually the last segment of teaching that Jesus gave in the whole Bible. It is clear that Jesus, the prophet, saw a danger ahead that the church was likely to fall into in the years ahead.

1. **The Western Church is Lukewarm**

2a) There’s a book you can get as a free pdf on the internet called “Placebo” by Howard Pitman. He was a Baptist pastor in the states who suffered a massive internal haemorrhage and died. He was taken by angels to the gates of heaven.

2b) As Howard Pitman had been a Baptist pastor, preaching and working for God most of his life, he expected a warm welcome. Instead to his great surprise, God spoke to him in anger, telling him that he had wasted his life and that his religion was just an outward appearance that displeased him.

2c) God told him that he was Lukewarm in his faith, and told him that the church in the west was like the Laodicean church, warm, comfortable and self-satisfied. God said **“This is the age of the Laodicean Church”**. He told Howard Pittman that the vast majority of so-called Christians “talk Jesus and play church, but then live like the devil wants them to”.

2d) God sent him back to earth to warn the church that this was the Laodicean age of the church, that people need to wake up or they will be spat out of His mouth.

1. **An Introduction to Laodicea**

3a) Laodicea was the capital city of the county of Phrygia. Wealthy Roman city with a [stadium](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stadium), [baths](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thermae), temples, a [gymnasium](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gymnasium_(ancient_Greece)), two [theatres](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman_theatre_(structure)) and a Senate House). The city lay within 10 miles of Hierapolis where the apostle Philip was martyred and Colossae. The church was founded by Paul’s colleague Ephaphras, and is mentioned 4 times by Paul in his letter to the Colossians.

3b) The 3 roads and 2 rivers that passed through the city made it a wealthy trading hub. That brought many Jews – 7500 adult Jews in the census in 62BC.

3c) The two main features that that the city was noted for was wealth and health. It was very affluent, a centre for banking and finance. Cicero, on his travels, changed his letters of credit there for money. The city contained a lot of millionaires’ homes and therefore also teemed with wretched, naked beggars who moved Into Laodicea trying to get a few crumbs off the tables of the rich.

3d) The main industry was the clothing industry – the Jews throughout their history were often associated with the clothing and tailoring industry. In Laodicea it was black woollen clothes. There was a breed of local sheep whose wool was very fine and silky, jet black and very glossy and made the most beautiful, expensive clothes.

3e) Health, the local god they worshipped was called MEN who was the good of healing. The warm water filled with minerals filled the local spas and baths, and there were said to bring many health benefits to those who bathed in this water. There was also famous medical school in Laodicea, with a large hospital, one of the best in Asia Minor.

3f) Laodicea was also famous for their ointments and medicines, esp. for ointments for the eyes which was made to a secret local formula and was meant to help prevent blindness if you had problems with your eyes.

1. **The Lukewarm church**

4a) The church at Laodicea became infamous in Christian history for being labelled “Lukewarm”, just like the local water, which was steaming hot where it bubbled out of the geothermal pools at Pamukkalle a few miles away, but gradually cooled as it travelled along the aquaduct to Laodicea. Christians have a tendency to start their spiritual life hot, then to gradually cool down to a level that is more acceptable to the society around them.

4b) Everybody likes warm. It is comforting and makes life more comfortable. Many people want a faith that brings them comfort within and wins them acceptance for being “a nice, kind person”.

4c) Many Christians and churches think the way to evangelise is to be show people how “Nice and kind” we are. The modern gospel is that Jesus loves you. He is nice and kind and will make your life better. That might bring people into church, but it will never make disciples.

4d) The gospel has always been socially unacceptable. People don’t like to hear that they are sinners. Without Jesus they are on their way to a lost eternity. “We preach Christ crucified: a stumbling-block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles,” (1 Cor 1, 23).

4e) The Biblical gospel alone has the power to change lives. Paul said; “I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes” (Romans 1, 16).

4f) Those who preach the true gospel win converts and rejection wherever they go. They provoke a reaction either for or against God, leaving no middle ground.

4g) The world seeks to quench “fiery Christians” into more manageable, less threatening, “warm” Christians”. Jesus declares the opposite. He says Lukewarm Christians are of no use to him. At least if they were cold, there would be some hope of change and redemption. But the luke-warm make him sick. Literally translated He is about to vomit them out of his mouth. He won’t allow them to be in his body.

1. **What makes the Church Lukewarm?**

5a) Seeking the acceptance of society rather than fearing the Lord.

5b) Lack of spiritual care and discipline.

5c) Wrong priorities. Not giving God the time and priority that He deserves.

1. **How to take your own Spiritual Temperature?**

6a) What is your spiritual temperature? Are you fiery hot, burning with passion for the Lord? Or are you a comfortable warm, non-threatening, nice Christian who upsets no-one and sees little fruit for Jesus?

6b) The Bible gives us several ways to take your own spiritual temperature.

6c) **Worship** – Do you love God with all your heart, mind, and strength (Mt 22, 37)

6d) **Money** – “Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Matt. 6, 21). Look through your bank statements. What do you spend your money on? How much is spent on building God’s kingdom.

6e) **Time** – Your life is measured in days, hours and minutes. You give most of your spare time to the things that matter to you the most.

6f) **Words** – How much is Jesus in your conversation? “The mouth speaks what the heart is full of” (Matt. 12, 34)

6g) **Deeds** – “a tree is recognised by its fruit” (Matt. 12, 33). “As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead” (James 2, 26). (also Rev. 3, 15).

6h) **Fruit** – “If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit” (John 15, 5)

6i) **Power** – “whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father” (Jn 14, 12)

6i) **Persecution** – “Woe to you when everyone speaks well of you, for that is how their ancestors treated the false prophets” (Luke 6, 26). “A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also” (John 15, 20; See also 2 Tim. 3, 12).

1. **Jesus loves us too much to leave us as we are**

7a) It is easy to feel condemned when you look at your own life. “There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” (Romans 8, 1).

7b) Jesus wants us to understand that He is offering us far more than we are currently living in. “Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline, so be earnest and repent” (Rev. 3, 19).

1. **Jesus is on the outside trying to get in**

8a) It probably came as a surprise to those in Laodicea that Jesus was not within the church, but was knocking on the door from the outside wanting to come in.

8b) This is a verse that is often used for those who don’t know Jesus as a way of getting them to invite Jesus into their hearts. But the verse is actually written for a church which has unknowingly pushed Jesus out.

8c) How much of our life is Jesus not in the centre of? How many of our activities does Jesus take no part in? He wants to fill all of them with himself.

8d) Jesus doesn’t knock the door down, but he quietly knocks and he quietly calls with his voice. He says; “If anyone hears my voice and opens the door” – implying that many won’t hear his voice.

8e) Jesus voice for many is like an annoying alarm clock. You need to love, forgive, speak, pray. But people want to spend longer in bed and so press “snooze” on Jesus voice. If you do that too many times, he will stop bothering you. He won’t stand at the door knocking for ever.

8f) The downside is that you have to live without the tangible presence of God in your life, and in those moments when you desperately need him and you open the door looking for him, you can’t find him (Song of Songs 3, 1-2).

1. **A Door and a Throne**

9a) There is a strong link between chapter 3 and 4 in Revelation. When the book was written, there were no chapter divisions, which often create an artificial break. They were put in in by an English cardinal in 1205.

9b) In the last 3 verses of Chp 3 there is talk of a door and a throne. In the first two verses of Chp 4, there is a vision of a door and a throne.

“Here I am I stand at the **door** and knock... To the one who is victorious, I will give the right to sit with me on my **throne** …” (Rev. 3, 20-21). and

“After this I looked, and there before me was a **door** standing open in heaven. … there before me was a **throne** in heaven with someone sitting on it.” (Rev. 4, 1-2)

9c) Jesus is asking to eat at our table, to come into our world and share our life.

9d) The table is the place of family, home, identity and belonging; of sharing, listening, trust, friendship and fellowship. It is the centre of healthy family life. Healthy families take time to eat together. It means slowing down and investing in each other. It means that each one has to come out of their own separate orbit, meet with each other and interact together. Dysfunctional families don’t meet together around the table.

9e) “I will … eat him with **and He with me**” (Rev. 3, 20). Jesus also asks us to “**eat with Him”**. He invites us to come into His house and to enter into His world”.

9f) The next chapter begins with Jesus opening the door to his house showing us what it would be like to come in and eat with him in the heavenly realms.

9g)) The following verses give one of the most detailed descriptions of the heavenly throne room in the whole scriptures. The throne surrounded by the rainbow shining like an emerald encircling the throne, the 24 other thrones with the 24 elders seated on them, the flashes of lightening and peals of thunder, the seven lamps burning, the sea of glass, clear as crystal, the four living creatures, the heavenly worship. (Rev. 4). There is a glorious, spiritual dimension to life which Jesus is inviting us into.

1. **Invited into His glory**

10a) In 2021, Mike Bickle, the founder of the International House of Prayer, Kansas City was doing a teaching series on the Laodicean church. As he was praying in his office for the Lord to help him to open the door of his heart more, suddenly a Beautiful door appeared on his wall and opened towards him. He realised he was having a vision. Behind the door was a room full of beautiful golden light. He wanted the light to shine onto him, but it didn’t. Instead he was beckoned to go in through the door.

10b) God said to him; “You open the door of your heart (Rev. 3, 20) and I will open the door to my glory” (Rev. 4,1).