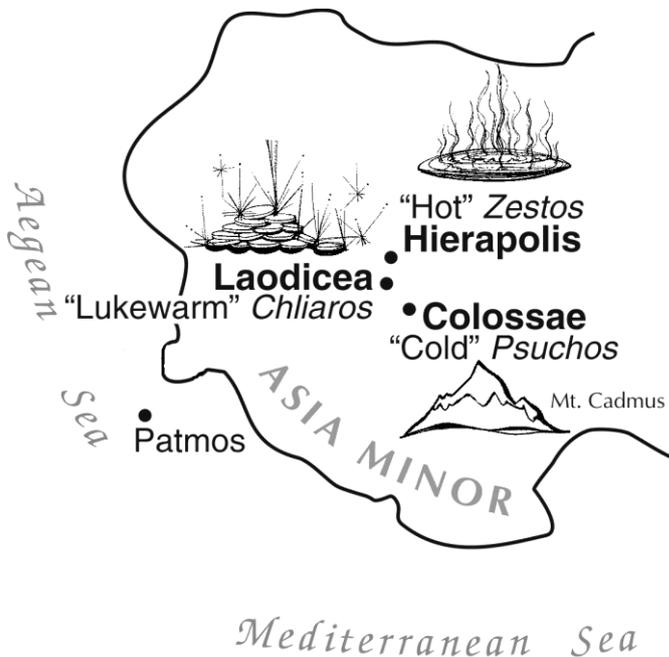


The Seven Churches of Revelation:

No.7 Laodemia – neither cold nor hot

Introduction & recap:

The seven churches in Revelation chapters 2 and 3 are Jesus' own words to the church and are the main prophetic message for her throughout the ages. Studying them gives us a clear vision of what Jesus wants His church to be. Here is a short résumé of the first six churches*:



The name of the first church, Ephesus, meant “desirable” and “first”, representing the early church. Jesus told her that she had good works but had lost her first love, without which she ceased to be pleasing to Him. Today we also need to be careful to maintain that first love and not just fall into a routine of good works without real love (see also 1 Corinthians 13). They were instructed to “repent and do the things you did at first.”

The second church, which is Smyrna, meant “suffering” and represented the church that suffered continually, including ten brutal persecutions under the Roman Emperors during the first three centuries. They were encouraged to “be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you your victor’s crown”. There is an even greater quantity of believers around the world today who are suffering greatly for their faith, being imprisoned, tortured and killed.

The third church, Pergamos, represented a pivotal event in about 313 AD. Pergamos means “marriage” or “union” and it was the marriage between the church and state when Constantine, Emperor of the Roman Empire, entered the church in a place of honour; this was to spell the beginning of State Churches, which have continued until this day.

The fourth church, Thyatira, was the fruit of that marriage between the world and the church. This generated much confusion and compromise. While there were still genuine lovers of Jesus Christ, hoards came into the church who were there because their relatives were, or as an insurance

policy or because they loved ceremony and ritual. The church in Thyatira represents the so-called “Dark Ages”, but the same problems can be in the church today, causing a blurring of the simplicity of the Gospel as a result.

The fifth church, Sardis was a step in the right direction, representing the Reformation, a rediscovery of salvation by faith and not by works, and a throwing off of idolatry that was prevalent in Thyatira. But while they had restored doctrine, Jesus found the church dead. However much we may have sound doctrine in our minds, it's the putting it into practice that is the only thing that counts.

The sixth church was Philadelphia which means “brotherly love” and is the church that Jesus loves. Her characteristic and her works were built on this foundation of brotherly love. She had an open door set before her.

Now let's look at the last church, Laodicea:

“To the angel of the church in Laodicea write: These are the words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God's creation. I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! So, because you are lukewarm—neither hot nor cold—I am about to spit you out of my mouth. You say, ‘I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.’ But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked. I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see. Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest and repent. Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me. To the one who is victorious, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I was victorious and sat down with my Father on his throne. Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”

“To the angel of the church in Laodicea write:

Laodicea is made up of two words, “laos” meaning laity or the common people, and “decia” or sayings. The characteristic of this church is that they congregation ruled; it was a democratic church.

These are the words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God's creation.

Jesus presents Himself here in an absolute way; Laodicea was characterised by relativism.

I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! So, because you are lukewarm—neither hot nor cold—I am about to spit you out of my mouth.

We are commanded to love God with all our heart, mind, soul and strength, so it is really frustrating and sad for Jesus when He looks down and sees a lukewarm church.

The Kingdom of God is a Theocracy and not a Democracy, which means that God rules the church and not man. In our society we are used to living in a democracy, which for the purposes of national government works relatively well as the human tendency is towards corruption and pride; in a democracy no one person or party has power for long enough to become too corrupt or proud. But democracy is intrinsically weak. Instead of aiming for perfection the tendency is to try to please the majority. Majority opinion inclines towards gratification of the lower senses - the flesh, comfort, etc, instead of the higher aspirations of the spirit – relationship with God, service to others, benevolent activity, etc.

However, in the Church it's not man's opinions that should rule, but what God says in His word and through His anointed leaders. As they are born again and transformed by the Holy Spirit, they are able, in submission to God, to rule with benevolence and divine justice.

Following the opinions of the majority and not seeking the Lord we then become lukewarm and of no pleasure to Him. His reaction is to spit us out of His mouth. We need to develop a spirit of constant repentance and seeking the Lord; it is so easy to slide into complacency and not retain the sharp edge of those who love Him with all their heart.

You say, 'I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.' But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked.

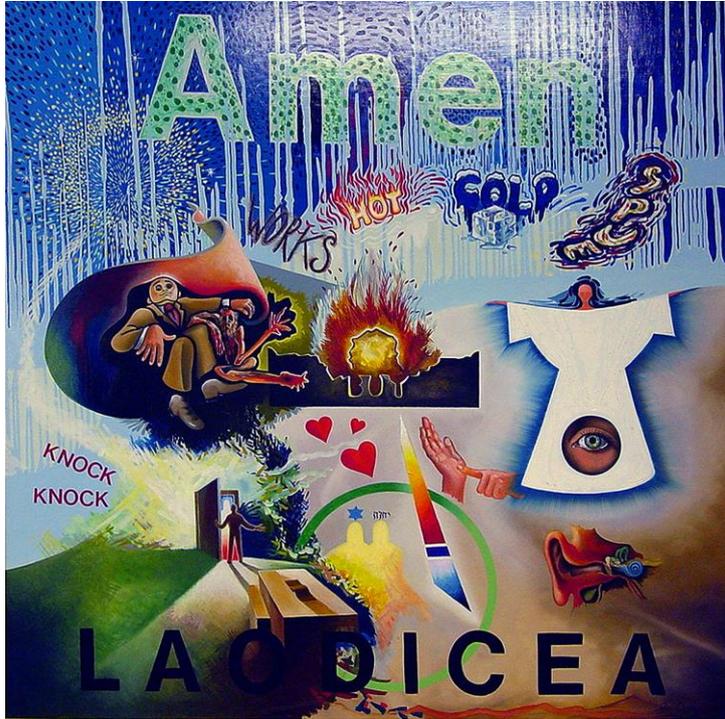
Having the world's wealth and comfort and yet not remaining close to the Lord is really to be poor. Jesus said: Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of God". Wealth in itself is not wrong, but whether we are wealthy or poor should not concern us, but rather whether we are abiding in the Lord or not; rich towards God. This is a daily task – to let Him cleanse our hearts and breathe into us His Holy Spirit.

I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and

salve to put on your eyes, so you can see.

Buying refined gold means seeking holiness; white clothes are our righteous acts (Rev 19:8); eye salve signifies seeking a godly and biblical vision to see clearly what to do in life.

Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest and repent.



The Lord rebukes us because He loves us. Discipline is so that our character will change for the better. Our response should not be resentment but repentance.

Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me.

This famous verse often used to invite people to become Christians is firstly meant for Christians who have become lukewarm. The promise is that if we open our hearts to the rebuke we will

have intimate fellowship with Jesus. This is what He is longing for. Will you accept His discipline and repent?

To the one who is victorious, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I was victorious and sat down with my Father on his throne.

How can we be victorious? By doing what Jesus says: buying gold refined in the fire; spending time asking Him to cleanse us and make us like Him – pure, loving, patient, etc. The prize is to sit down with Jesus, ruling over our lives and sharing His rule over the whole of creation.

Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”

We’ve heard this refrain after each of the churches. It urges us to pay attention. Will you be an overcomer in whatever church you find yourself in?

***Conclusion:**

We’ve now looked at all the seven churches in Revelation. *In the next and final session we will take an overview and try to see how we can work towards being the Church that Jesus loves.

Songs: Jesus shall reign; reign in me; purify my heart