

ETHAN TEMPLE MINISTRIES
TOOLS FOR LIFE
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THE CHURCH'S LAODICEAN PROBLEM

God gave a prophetic history of the Christian church in the book of Revelation. Revelation 2 and 3 describe seven eras of church history that apply to seven literal churches in Asia. They also apply to seven historical eras of the church, from the early apostolic church to today.

The seventh church is described in Revelation 3:14-21:

“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.”

Today's church era is called Laodicea. The city of Laodicea was known for its therapeutic hot and cold hydrotherapy baths. The benefits of hydrotherapy are well understood today, and this is significant when we consider that God describes today's church as lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold (verse 16). This displeases God very much, so much so that if the church remains in this lukewarm condition, God will spew her out of His mouth.

Why is this lukewarm condition so serious in God's sight? The answer is seen in His desire for the church. God desires that the church be either hot or cold – He desires the church to be of “therapeutic” value on this earth. You see, a lukewarm church is not therapeutic – it offers little benefit to those who come in contact with it. God wants the church to bring life everywhere it goes.

This is similar to Jesus' statement that the church is to be the “salt of the earth”:

“Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men” (Matt. 5:13).

Both salt and hot-and-cold hydrotherapy are therapeutic. Jesus said in Revelation that those remaining in a lukewarm, nontherapeutic condition will be spewed out of His mouth. In Matthew He says that salt that has “lost his savour” will be “cast out” (5:13). Jesus is saying the same thing in both Revelation and Matthew. If the church is not therapeutic, it is of no value to God and will ultimately be cast from Him.

Jesus revealed how life was to flow from His church when He said, “He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.” John interpreted what Jesus meant this way: “But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified” (John 7:38, 39). Through the baptism of the Holy Spirit life would flow from the church.

We can clearly see that God's warning to last-day Laodicean Christians is very serious. We must wake up to our condition and allow God to change us from nontherapeutic to therapeutic if we are to be ready to meet Jesus when He comes. The sad truth is that Laodicean Christians are not even aware of their dangerous spiritual condition:

“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” (Rev. 3:17).

Personal Reflection and Discussion

What does the Bible mean when God says the church today is lukewarm?

Why does God want the church to be either hot or cold?

What will happen to an individual who does not change from his/her lukewarm condition?

What do you think are evidences that a local congregation may be lukewarm?

What do you think may be evidence that you are a lukewarm Christian?

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