



Sermon-Based Study Guide
Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church

Revelation 3.14-22

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I. Introduction to this Study

We have heard our Lord invite the Ephesians to “come back!” to their first love, instruct the Smyrnans not to give even “a pinch,” and remind those in Pergamum to “bloom where they’re planted.” We’ve seen Christ get down “on one knee,” asking for the hand of the Thyatirans, heard Him call those in Sardis to make “the most important decision,” and prompt the Philadelphian church to use their “open door policy” to declare the good news of God’s salvation. And through these blogs, we’ve heard the voice of God calling us to the same. If you’ve missed any studies in this series, click onto gspc.org/study-guides.

This week we read the last of the Risen Jesus’ seven blogs, written to the church in Laodicea, in whom were those who had become entirely self-sufficient. They relied neither upon God, nor upon one another, but rather, upon the mighty dollar. And they had plenty of them to rely on! Instead, Jesus invites this early church to depend upon Him – and Him alone.

II. Connecting with One Another

Surely there’s been a time when you’ve been interrupted. Though we usually do so, perhaps it’s not best to share the last time it occurred! How about you just think about what’s so frustrating about being interrupted. Why is it so maddening!?

III. Study the Text

- a. Read Revelation 3.14. Some textual connections with these verses are found in Colossians 1.15-23 (interestingly, Colossae was close geographically to Laodicea) and John 1.1-5. How do these passages help you understand Revelation 3.14?
- b. Read Revelation 3.15-16. While “cold” and “hot” are figures of speech meaning “against me” and “for me,” the implications for the Laodiceans were even deeper. It’s been written,

The terms ‘cold,’ ‘hot,’ and ‘lukewarm’ are metaphors drawn from the water supply of the city of Laodicea, which was lukewarm, which, in contrast to the hot medicinal springs of Hierapolis and the pure cold water of Colossae, is a metaphor for barrenness or ineffectiveness... At Laodicea there are remains of an aqueduct that probably carried water from hot

mineral springs five miles south; this would have cooled slowly and become tepid and emetic when it finally arrived at Laodicea.

How does this information transform your understanding of these verses? What is Jesus using this metaphor to communicate about the Laodicean's faith?

- c. Others have noted other ancient water supply issues. Herodotus wrote that the nearest water supply vacillated in temperature throughout the day:

They have another hot spring of water besides, which is warm at dawn, and colder at market-time, and very cold at noon; and it is then that they water their gardens; as the day declines the coldness abates, till at sunset the water grows warm. It becomes ever hotter till midnight, and then it boils and bubbles; after midnight it becomes ever coolest till dawn.

How does this information transform your understanding of these verses? What would this imply about the Laodiceans?

- d. However we are to understand the water metaphor, it is clear that the Laodiceans would have heard the message loud and clear: While both hot and cold water have purposes, lukewarm water – or water that is constantly changing temperature – is of little use.

Read Matthew 6.24. How does this verse elucidate the issue at the church in Laodicea?

Read Matthew 12.30. How does this verse apply?

- e. In verse 16, Jesus states that He will vomit the Laodicean church out of his mouth, which means that they are utterly rejected. This is the same imagery used for the fate of the Canaanites in Leviticus 18.25, 28 and 20.22. Why would Jesus use such bold imagery for a Christian church!?
- f. One answer to the above question may be found in verse 17. Read Revelation 3.17-18. How do these verses help you understand why the Laodiceans are the recipients of such harsh critique?

Laodicea was the furthest east of the cities Jesus addresses in Revelation 2-3, though it was connected by road to a number of other commercial centers. That said, Laodicea was, perhaps, the most profitable. After a great earthquake, Laodicea was so wealthy that it declined financial support from Rome to rebuild! Can you imagine!?

The large Jewish population of Laodicea even sent their contribution to the Temple in Jerusalem in gold! How does knowing this transform your understanding of verse 18, where Jesus instructs *them* to buy gold from *Him*!?

See Romans 2.4, 10.2, 11.33, 1st Corinthians 1.5, 4.8, 2nd Corinthians 6.10, 9.11, Ephesians 2.4, Philippians 4.19, and James 2.5 for other references to riches in the Christian Scriptures.

- g. Like other towns in the area, a great deal of Laodicean wealth came from the cloth and clothing industry. This connects with Jesus' declaration that they buy

white clothes. How does this verse connect with being clothed in Christ? What is the significance of white?

If you have a Bible concordance (or access to biblegateway.com) search for "clothed", and note all the verses that come up. How do they inform your understanding of being "clothed in Christ"?

- h. Laodicea was also home to a medical school famous for a salve that could cure eye problems. Where do you see this connect in these verses? What is it that the Laodiceans need to "see" better?
- i. Note an interesting connection to Isaiah 55.1-2. How could the Risen Jesus be reappropriating this passage for the Laodiceans?
- j. Read Revelation 3.19-22. Verse 19 is very similar to Proverbs 3.12 and Hebrews 12.6. Why does the Lord discipline those He loves?
- k. In verse 20, Jesus invites *individual* Christians in the Laodicean church to welcome Him into their hearts. There may be a reference to Jewish Passover or the celebration of Communion in the Christian church. "Supper" refers to the evening meal, which carries significant connotation: In the first century, the morning meal was very light, and the afternoon meal was eaten quickly, on a short break from work, usually in the town's square. Supper, on the other hand, was when the family would gather together for a meal, with extended time of eating and enjoying one another's company.

How does this shape your understanding of Jesus knocking on the door of our hearts, desiring to come in an "sup" with us?

IV. Reflect and Respond

- a. In what ways are you "hot" or "cold" – useful – for the Lord? In what ways may you be "lukewarm"?
- b. Are there times that your own success has prompted you to be more self-sufficient, instead of relying upon your worth from God? How does our culture reinforce the Laodicean's error?
- c. What do you need to see more clearly this Holy Week?
- d. Have you ever felt disciplined by God? What was the result?
- e. Have you invited Jesus in to "sup" with you? Just once – or daily?

V. Pray

- a. Ask God to draw non-Christians to worship with us this Easter, that they might hear and respond to the good news that the grave is empty!
- b. Pray for our ongoing dismissal process, that God might make the way forward clear and unhindered.