

Revelation 3:14-22

14 *“To the angel of the church in Laodicea write: The Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God, says this:*

15 ‘I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot; I wish that you were cold or hot. 16 ‘So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth. 17 ‘Because you say, “I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing,” and you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked, 18 I advise you to buy from Me gold refined by fire so that you may become rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself, and that the shame of your nakedness will not be revealed; and eye salve to anoint your eyes so that you may see. 19 ‘Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline; therefore be zealous and repent. 20 ‘Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me. 21 ‘He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne. 22 ‘He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.’”

Message to Laodicea

OK, this is the letter we've been waiting for. Is this us? Is POGO right? "We have met the enemy, and he is US!"

Someone has said, and well said I think, that the church in America is 3000 miles wide, and an inch deep.

Yet, walk in any "evangelical" church in America, and they know all about this letter, and will explain why it isn't about them.

So who is it about! I would contend that Sardis defines very well the main line denominational movements. They aren't luke-warm, they're dead. So who is this letter about, and do we need to be alarmed?

Who's in? Who's out? Are we lukewarm? Do we care?

In my youth I hung out with some 'ultra-dispensationalists'. Well, one in particular. I worked for him. He was completely unconcerned with almost anything written in the NT except what Paul wrote. "Grace plus nothing!" I agree. Sola fide!

That would be a good foundation for lukewarm-ness, because Jesus defines this, not Paul. Although Paul can be used to say everything Jesus said.

Let's lay a foundation from Jesus own words, and we'll throw in some James, and then return to this letter. It'll make the translation very simple, although, it may not make us comfortable.

I want to ask one question. Are we the people of Matthew 25?

Jesus gives 3 examples there of folks who aren't going to be in His kingdom. If we understand these well, we can breeze through the Laodicean letter and understand it at face value.

Matt.25

Parable of Ten Virgins

1 "Then the kingdom of heaven will be comparable to ten virgins, who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. 2 "Five of them were foolish, and five were prudent. 3 "For when the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them, 4but the prudent took oil in flasks along with their lamps. 5 "Now while the bridegroom was delaying, they all got drowsy and began to sleep. 6 "But at midnight there was a shout, 'Behold, the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.' 7 "Then all those virgins rose and trimmed their lamps. 8 "The foolish said to the prudent, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.' 9 "But the prudent answered, 'No, there will not be enough for us and you too; go instead to the dealers and buy some for yourselves.' 10 "And while they were going away to make the purchase, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding feast; and the door was shut. 11 "Later the other virgins also came, saying,

'Lord, lord, open up for us.' 12*"But he answered, 'Truly I say to you, I do not know you.'* 13*"Be on the alert then, for you do not know the day nor the hour.*

The 10 virgins. The oil in the lamps is the Holy Spirit. Christ IN you, the hope of glory...Paul...to the Colossians 1:27 Colossae was a neighbor city of Laodicea.

Here's the picture. The church is waiting for the bridegroom. But some of the "church" is ready, and some are not. Some go in, and some do not. What's the difference? Some of the people hanging out in church are not christians. Jesus isn't inside.

2Cor13:5 Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you-- unless indeed you fail the test? again, Paul

Rom8:9 if any man has NOT the spirit of Christ, he is none of His.

The Holy Spirit of God living inside you is the test. The Spirit of God, dwelling in you, is the downpayment.

The virgins with oil, go into the wedding. The virgins without oil do not! *"Later the other virgins also came, saying, 'Lord, lord, open up for us.'* 12*"But he answered, 'Truly I say to you, I do not know you.'*

"I do not know you" We know Jesus, intimately and personally by the quickening of his Holy Spirit dwelling with us and in us. That's the dividing line. Do you know Him?

Hey, the other 5 virgins talk very churchy. Lord, Lord, they say. They know all the lingo. They've been hanging around the evangelical movement. We couldn't look at a lineup of all 10 and tell the difference physically. We thought they were ALL saved!

Parable of the Talents

14"For it is just like a man about to go on a journey, who called his

own slaves and entrusted his possessions to them. 15 "To one he gave five talents, to another, two, and to another, one, each according to his own ability; and he went on his journey. 16 "Immediately the one who had received the five talents went and traded with them, and gained five more talents. 17 "In the same manner the one who had received the two talents gained two more. 18 "But he who received the one talent went away, and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money.

19 "Now after a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them. 20 "The one who had received the five talents came up and brought five more talents, saying, 'Master, you entrusted five talents to me. See, I have gained five more talents.' 21 "His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.'

22 "Also the one who had received the two talents came up and said, 'Master, you entrusted two talents to me. See, I have gained two more talents.' 23 "His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.'

24 "And the one also who had received the one talent came up and said, 'Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow and gathering where you scattered no seed. 25 'And I was afraid, and went away and hid your talent in the ground. See, you have what is yours.'

26 "But his master answered and said to him, 'You wicked, lazy slave, you knew that I reap where I did not sow and gather where I scattered no seed. 27 'Then you ought to have put my money in the bank, and on my arrival I would have received my money back with interest. 28 'Therefore take away the talent from him, and give it to the one who has the ten talents.'

29 "For to everyone who has, more shall be given, and he will have an abundance; but from the one who does not have, even what he does have shall be taken away. 30 "Throw out the worthless slave into the

outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

So what IS the difference? Fruit. Fruit. Not to be confused with good deeds done in the flesh. This fruit is glory rendered back to God by the Holy Spirit living in us.

Jesus said, *For to everyone who has...has what? Has the Holy Spirit. Has fruit. The 2 are interchangeable. It's impossible to have the Spirit indwelling you, and NOT have fruit. It's impossible to have real fruit, and NOT have the Spirit living in you.*

Remember the folks in Matt 7? Same idea exactly! Same lesson.

The Narrow and Wide Gates

13“Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. 14“For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it. 15“Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves. 16“You will know them by their fruits. Grapes are not gathered from thorn bushes nor figs from thistles, are they? 17“So every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit. 18“A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit. 19“Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. 20“So then, you will know them by their fruits. 21“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. 22“Many will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?’ 23“And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.’

Fruit, real Kingdom fruit can only be originated and generated by the indwelling Holy Spirit of God. Christ IN you, the hope of Glory.

In the story of the talents, (coins) the talents are the Holy Spirit. The

Holy Spirit living in you cannot NOT produce more talents. The guy who set the Spirit aside is the perfect picture of the church goer, he knows all about the Spirit, but there's no connection. He goes about his own business, not God's business. Indeed, it's impossible for him to make more talents for the master without using the talent given by the master. No connection. No fruit. No personal relationship. No indwelling Holy Spirit. This is a sub-christian.

Every indwelt slave WILL produce some fruit.

James answers back to the Grace plus nothing folks. This is a warning rooted directly in what Jesus was teaching here.

Faith and Works or better for our purposes, Faith and Fruit

James 2:14 What use is it, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but he has no works? (you can substitute "fruit") Can that faith save him? 15If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, 16and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and be filled," and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that? 17Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself.

18But someone may well say, "You have faith and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works." 19You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder. 20But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless?

Evangelicals are big on faith. Sola fide. But James warns us, if it isn't faith rooted in a personal relationship via the quickening from the dead by the indwelling Holy Spirit of Christ that produces fruit, it's dead faith. Worthless faith.

The evangelical movement in America is rife with this kind of faith. Hebrews 6 faith. What is Hebrews 6 faith you ask?

Hebrews 6:1Therefore leaving the elementary teaching about the Christ, let us press on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance

from dead works and of faith toward God, 2of instruction about washings and laying on of hands, and the resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment. 3And this we will do, if God permits. 4For in the case of those who have once been enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift and have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit, 5and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, 6and then have fallen away, it is impossible to renew them again to repentance, since they again crucify to themselves the Son of God and put Him to open shame. 7For ground that drinks the rain which often falls on it and brings forth vegetation useful to those for whose sake it is also tilled, receives a blessing from God; 8but if it yields thorns and thistles, it is worthless and close to being cursed, and it ends up being burned. 9But, beloved, we are convinced of better things concerning you, and things that accompany salvation, though we are speaking in this way.*

The church has had this problem since before it was born. Thousands of people flocked to Christ when He was preaching on earth. 10's believed. This warning to the Hebrew "christians" is not about losing your salvation! It's about a group of people identified in the movement, who DO NOT possess salvation.

But, but, you say, in vs. 4, they are partakers of the Holy Spirit! So was the guy with one talent. Heard the message. Responded. Moved on. Just like the rocky, shallow, weedy soils. Received the seed. No fruit.

There are thousands in the Evangelical movement like this. Why would they leave? We make them so comfy, they'd stay forever.

Look again at verse 9! *beloved, we are convinced of better things concerning you, and things that accompany salvation*

Every christian church down through all the ages has had wheat and tares, wheat and tares, wheat and tares. This church at Laodicea has ONLY tares. No wheat at all. Well, almost.

Go back to Matthew 25. Let's finish our picture of the "lukewarm" church according to Jesus.

The Judgment

31 “But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne. 32 “All the nations will be gathered before Him; and He will separate them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats; 33 and He will put the sheep on His right, and the goats on the left.

34 “Then the King will say to those on His right, ‘Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. 35 ‘For I was hungry, and you gave Me something to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me something to drink; I was a stranger, and you invited Me in; 36 naked, and you clothed Me; I was sick, and you visited Me; I was in prison, and you came to Me.’ 37 “Then the righteous will answer Him, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry, and feed You, or thirsty, and give You something to drink? 38 ‘And when did we see You a stranger, and invite You in, or naked, and clothe You? 39 ‘When did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?’ 40 “The King will answer and say to them, ‘Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me.’

41 “Then He will also say to those on His left, ‘Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels; 42 for I was hungry, and you gave Me nothing to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me nothing to drink; 43 I was a stranger, and you did not invite Me in; naked, and you did not clothe Me; sick, and in prison, and you did not visit Me.’ 44 “Then they themselves also will answer, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not take care of You?’ 45 “Then He will answer them, ‘Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.’ 46 “These will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”

Last year I read Richard Stearns book, **The Hole in our Gospel**

The evangelical church in the USA sends .04% of it's income to the people Jesus is talking about in this passage.

That's a real number. I didn't make that up. So let's think about this;

In America, 2012, we are seeing a mega-church phenomenon. When I was growing up, there were a few mega-churches. Not many. Most churches were 85 - 125 people.

Now we like our churches like our 'big box' stores. Costco and mega churches are how we do it in 2012. That's fantastic, right??!
1,000,000's of Evangelicals in thousands of mega churches all over America. Here's my question?

Is .04% the number of wheat . . . in those churches? Mini Crystal Cathedrals. We American evangelicals have to have the best of everything. Gazillion dollar sound systems for our 'theatrical productions'. We spend our tithes on ourselves. And there's never enough!

Francis Chan is an interesting study. He's spot on with his message! A gi-normous mega church grew around him in Simi Valley, Calif. He tried to ween the people away from spending all the money on themselves and sending it to the VERY needy instead. He failed. He became discouraged. He left. He went to the needy himself. Everybody called him crazy. Is he?

How much do evangelical's need? You've got \$65,000 in the bank? Give it away. Make the tare's mad.

John Piper calls his church to live by what he calls a "wartime" standard. In wartime, the Queen Mary was pressed into troop movement status. 12 men could cram into one stateroom meant for 2 to ride in luxury.

Look around you. Is the evangelical movement in war mode, or luxury liner mode? Babies are starving in Haiti and Uganda, but American christians won't go to church unless the seats are luxuriantly soft, and the sound system is cranking out the steel guitar and drums like the

grateful dead. We have to have mega flat screens for our Rock Star Pastors to be seen up in the cheap seats.

That looks an awful lot to me like what Jesus is talking about in Matthew 25.

Let's look again at the "church" at Laodicea. That was just the introduction.

14 "To the angel of the church in Laodicea write: The Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God, says this:

I have to read between the lines here. The gospel had become so corrupted at Laodicea, that it was producing a church of Non Christians. We can deduce a low view of Christ by these introductory statements. The highest view.

The amen. *verily, truly, amen, so let it be.* There is no greater further truth. This is the end all of truth and revelation. Jesus.

One of my favorite preachers is Ligon Duncan. An old school presbyterian from Jackson, Mississippi. When he reads from the Bible at the beginning of his sermon, he says very frankly and even curtly, *This is the Word of God. Hear it!* . . . and that's what amen means.

the faithful and true Witness Paul never wrote a letter to Laodicea, but he DID write one to Colossae. They were the sister city of Laodicea. And one of the things it was necessary to say to them is this;

Colossians 2:8 See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ. 9 For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form, 10 and in Him you have been made complete, and He is the head over all rule and authority;

Again, reading between the lines. Was Laodicea's view of Jesus, a view

less than God. Jesus is the faithful and true picture of the Father. The true witness. Nothing less will produce real believers.

the Beginning of the creation of God

One of the first problems the church battled was the false teaching that Jesus was created by God and thus subject to God. Less than God. The greek here corrects that, although it is poor in English. This is saying Jesus is the originator, the source, the cause of, the creation of God.

A low view of Jesus is the cause of lukewarm "believers".

15'I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot; I wish that you were cold or hot. 16'So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth.

Notice their problem. Fruit. *I know your deeds*

I've often said, and you've heard me say it. With the Holy Spirit, you can't do it wrong, and without the Holy Spirit, you can't do it right.

No Holy Spirit = lukewarm fruit. Oh this is churchy flavored religious "fruit". It looks like quasi christian fruit. It confuses us. It comes from "religious" people, and even has "Jesus" plastered all over it, but it is disconnected from the Holy Spirit and the real Jesus.

That's why He says; *I wish that you were cold or hot*

This lukewarm fruit confuses the world. Jesus Jesus Jesus, plastered all over it, and it isn't real. It has nothing to do with Him. Phony fruit. The world is gagging on it. Fruit that is a stumbling block.

Jesus **HATES** it. *So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth*

The word for spit there, is vomit. Spew. Hurl. That's what Jesus thinks of so-called fruit, that doesn't originate in His Holy Spirit. It turns His Holy stomach.

I personally believe this spewing occurs at the rapture. Jesus will come for His real church, and many, who think they're OK, will be hurled out of His mouth. They'll become the apostate world religion spoken of in Revelation.

17'Because you say, "I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing," and you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked,

It is said that the theologian Thomas Aquinas...once called on Pope Innocent II when the latter was counting out a large sum of money. The Pope remarked, 'You see, Thomas, the church can no longer say, 'Silver and gold have I none.'" Aquinas replied, "True, holy father, but neither can she now say, 'Rise and walk.'"

The scariest words in what Jesus just said to this church; *you do not know...*

It's one thing to be wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked, and know it, and beg for help. It's another altogether to be in that condition, and not know it. Not only not know it, they think they're rich.

In Rich Stearn's book, he points out that the American church, not the entire nation, the church in this nation, had the wealth to lift the entire world out of poverty, and spent it on itself.

Does that make the hair on the back of your neck stand up. It does mine. I read that and I started selling lenses and sending the money to Haiti. His book had a real effect on me. My fear is I haven't sold enough! I still have way too many toys.

you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked these are not terms that can be used to describe Spirit indwelt people. This is the First Church of the Tares. These folks are not just 'carnal christians'.

We see it over and over. Everything in God's economy is flip flopped from this worlds. The beatitudes do not say, blessed are the rich. The

world says that. In God's economy, these Laodiceans are beyond destitute. They are the spiritual equivalent of a miserable beggar, who is blind, who has open sores that the dogs are licking, sitting naked, a day away from death. That's their spiritual condition.

18 I advise you to buy from Me gold refined by fire so that you may become rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself, and that the shame of your nakedness will not be revealed; and eye salve to anoint your eyes so that you may see.

Big play on words here. Laodicea was rich because they had gold mines. They were merchants of the finest linen, and they had developed the worlds first eye salve. Jesus uses all of these things they had already, to show them spiritual truth.

Buy from ME. Who is the source of all spiritual wealth? Jesus is. The worlds gold is worthless. The worlds fine clothes are nakedness and shame. The worlds best eye medicine is blindness. Only Jesus who is the Amen, and the exact representation of the Father, and the originator of all creation can provide the real gold and the real white garments and the real sight.

Finally, in vss. 19 and 20 there are two messages here.

The first is to believers. You say, can there really be believers mixed in with all this language? This sounds like it's written in total to unbelievers.

No, as bad as it seems, there are believers in here. Verse 19 is to them. *'Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline; therefore be zealous and repent.*

That is an admonishment to carnal believers. Some of the wheat is indistinguishable from tares.

If you belong to Him, you can count on His love. And if you're a believer that looks like the world, reproof and discipline will come. In His time. But it will come, or you're not His.

So, to the believers He says. Repent! Zealously repent! Beg for mercy. Turn around and get re-acquainted with the real Jesus. Get immersed in His book. Spend time with Him. He's jealous for the ones He loves.

And to most of them at Laodicea, He says; vs. 20 *'Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me.*

This is salvation offered; to individuals. to the church. There's still time. The Lord Jesus is standing outside of this church, so busy with all of it's excesses and plans for more successes.

More new programs. More busses. More beautiful new buildings. More pastors on staff. More luxury cruises with Rock Star christians. More new books on the best seller list. They've got it all! But Jesus is outside, knocking.

21 'He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.

It's hard to overcome when you think you're the church that's in the drivers seat. This is the church that is overcome by the world. They're blind. They're naked. They're destitute. Their sick near death. Jesus is outside knocking. They think they're great.

We're pretty quick to declare them hopeless. To us, they look hopeless. But guess what. In that list of destitution, He didn't say deaf. *if anyone hears My voice and opens the door*

22 'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'"

Even in the most hopeless circumstances, Isaiah 55 is still true.

55:10 "For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven,
And do not return there without watering the earth
And making it bear and sprout,

And furnishing seed to the sower and bread to the eater;

11So will My word be which goes forth from My mouth;
It will not return to Me empty,
Without accomplishing what I desire,
And without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it.

As Ligon Duncan says; *This is the word of God. Hear it.*