

THE CHURCH THAT MADE JESUS SICK
(AKA: The Poor Rich Church)
Revelation 3:14-22

(Main idea of the Biblical Text)

Jesus rebuked the church at Laodicea because they were self-confident.

(Main Idea of this Study)

Every church should reject self-confidence and be fully confident in Christ.

I. Listen to the authority that Christ possesses (14).

A. You can trust what He says.

- *Write-aorist imperative*, word of urgency and authority.
- *Amen*-In applying this to Himself, Christ affirms He is the answer to all the promises of God.
2 Corinthians 1:20: For all the promises of God in Him *are* Yes, **and in Him Amen**, to the glory of God through us.
- *Faithful and True witness*-He is reliable, they are not. He is faithful, they are not. He is the True Witness, they have no witness at all.
Revelation 1:5: and from Jesus Christ, **the faithful witness**, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth. To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood.

B. You can trust who He is.

- *Beginning of the creation of God*-The beginning (*arche*) of the creation of God. These words echo Col. 1:15, 18, which affirm Christ as the chief, ruler, the originator of both Creation and the Church. He is Lord over both the material and the spiritual realm.
Colossians 1:15: He is the image of the invisible God, **the firstborn over all creation.**

II. Listen to the rebuke that Christ gives (15-17).

A. He rebukes the spiritually indifferent (15-16).

- *I know your works*-What kind of shape were they in? They were neither hot nor cold.
Matthew 5:16: Let your light so shine before men, **that they may see your good works** and glorify your Father in heaven.
- *lukewarm*-The deeds of the Laodicean Christians manifested their heart attitude. They were neither cold nor hot in their love for God, just lukewarm.
- *neither cold nor hot*-lukewarm, tepid, moderate.
- *I wish you were cold or hot*-You are providing neither refreshment for the spiritually thirsty nor healing for the spiritually sick.
- *vomit you out of My mouth*-His intense disgust. He would rather we be spiritually refreshing or healthful, as cold or hot water, rather than that we be spiritually bland, as lukewarm water.

B. He rebukes the spiritually ignorant (17).

- *I am rich, have become wealthy*—"Become" is the perfect tense. The city had been rebuilt after an earthquake without any aid of the Roman government. The church had adopted this same attitude. "We are wealthy and don't need anything, including Jesus."
- *have need of nothing*—Like your city you brag about who you are and what you have. The Laodiceans enjoyed material prosperity (v. 17) that led them to a false sense of security and independence.
Do you not know (realize) that you (yourself, emp.) are spiritually (5 things):
- *wretched*—(The first of five spiritual conditions.)unfortunate, used of ravaged lands, devastated countries, pillaging.
- *miserable*—pitiable, the object of extreme pity and compassion.
- *poor*—extreme poverty, poor as a beggar or pauper, a slap at a city that bragged of its wealth, commerce and banking industry.
- *blind*—a slap at a city that prided itself on its ophthalmic school and famous Phrygian eye powder.
- *naked*—a slap at a city that boasted of its famous glossy black wool.
1 Corinthians 4:8: You are already **full!** You are already **rich!** You have reigned as kings without us—and indeed I could wish you did reign, that we also might reign with you!

Vance Havner: "Smyrna was a rich poor church and Laodicea was a poor rich church. They were blind, shortsighted. They had no vision of God, of their own hearts, of the world's need. I'd rather be a rich poor Christian than a poor rich Christian!"

III. Listen to the counsel that Christ offers (18-19).

A. We need Christ's riches (18a).

- *to buy from Me*—The currency of that purchase is always the same: faith, trust, radical dependence on Him and only Him. Since they considered themselves to be rich but were spiritually poor Jesus urged them to "buy," implying self-sacrifice, the things they really needed.
- *gold refined in the fire*—Instead of real gold they should buy "gold refined by fire," namely, pure spiritual riches.
- *that you may be rich*—Such wealth, unlike earthly riches, will last and endure forever.
1 Peter 1:7: that the genuineness of your faith, *being* much more precious than gold that perishes, **though it is tested by fire**, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

B. We need Christ's righteousness (18b).

- *white garments*—In contrast to the beautiful glossy black wool the Laodiceans were so proud of, Jesus offers a garment of white that will cover the shame of their nakedness. White garments symbolize the imputed righteousness of Jesus.

- *nakedness may not be revealed*-Nakedness in the ancient world was a sign of shame, judgment and humiliation. To receive fine clothing was a symbol of honor and acceptance. Laodicean Christians walk about spiritually naked, completely unaware of their humiliation and need for the pure white righteousness that is available only in Jesus.

C. We need Christ's remedy (18c).

- *anoint your eyes with eye salve*-famous for its eye salve called "Phrygian Powder," the Laodiceans were blind to their spiritual condition. Only the great physician had a cure for this condition.

D. We need Christ's rebuke (19).

- *I rebuke and chasten*-To rebuke is to correct. To chasten is to punish.
- *be zealous and repent*-"Be zealous" and "repent" are both imperatives. They should, therefore, be zealous (Gr. *zestos*, "hot," vv. 15, 16) and repent (i.e., repent with zeal). The only way cold people can become hot in their love for the Lord is to repent (i.e., do an "about face"). Hebrews 12:7: If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; **for what son is there whom a father does not chasten?**

IV. Listen to the invitation that Christ issues (20-22).

A. He invites us to perfect fellowship (20).

- *Behold*-aorist active imperative; "look, listen, pay attention."
- *I stand*-perfect tense underscoring the settled condition. He has taken up a position outside the door of His church and He will not move.
- *Knock*-present tense; I keep on knocking and I permanently stand. The Lord and Savior of the Church stands outside, gently, graciously, lovingly and persistently knocking.
- *if anyone hears my voice*-This is a THIRD CLASS CONDITIONAL SENTENCE implying potential but not certain action. In many parts of the world knocking is accompanied by a verbal greeting.
- *opens the door*-personal responsibility. It is the indifferent Christian that the Lord urged to open his heart's door and to invite Jesus Christ in for intimate fellowship.
- *I will come in to him and dine with him*-"I will come" is a future tense. The response of Jesus to any open door is to enter and join in in table fellowship. This highlights the marriage supper of the Lamb that will take place at the beginning of the Millennium. John 14:23: Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and **We will come to him and make Our home with him.**

B. He invites us to a privileged reigning (21-22).

- *overcomes*-a present tense, continues to overcome; conquers, is the victor

- *I will grant to sit with Me on My throne*-grant/give as a gift. “To sit with Me” all we get, we get with Jesus. Our joint reign has already been highlighted in 1:6,9; 2:25-27 and will appear again in 5:10, 20:4-6. Matthew 19:28: So Jesus said to them, “Assuredly I say to you, that in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, **you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.**
- *as I also overcome and sat down*-As the Son shares the throne of the Father, we share the throne of the Son. Jesus overcame the world through suffering the death of the cross and because of Him and what He has done, we not only get heaven, we get a throne!

Charles Spurgeon: *It is harder a great deal to work for Jesus with a church which is lukewarm than it would be to begin without a church. Give me a dozen earnest spirits and put me down anywhere in London, and by God's good help we will soon cause the wilderness and the solitary place to rejoice; but give me the whole lot of you, half-hearted, undecided, and unconcerned, what can I do? You will only be a drag upon a man's zeal and earnestness. Five thousand members of a church all lukewarm will be five thousand impediments, but a dozen earnest, passionate spirits, determined that Christ shall be glorified and souls won, must be more than conquerors; in their very weakness and fewness will reside capacities for being the more largely blessed of God. Better nothing than lukewarmness.*