When Jesus Gets Sick of Church
Revelations 3:14-22

- Has anyone ever made you so angry that you said to him or her, “You make me sick!”?
- Have you ever made someone so angry that they said to you, “You make me sick!”?

This is what happens in the letter recorded in Revelation 3:14-22. The writer is the Lord Jesus Christ. The recipient is the church at Laodicea. This church made Jesus sick. He calls them to repent before he vomits them from his mouth.

Revelation is the glorious unveiling of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is prophesy, which focuses on the end of the world. The book is called Apocalyptic Literature, because it is end-time prophecy written in signs and symbols. The majority of the book is about things that are yet to come. But in chapters 2-3, Jesus dictates letters to seven local churches in the Roman province of Asia Minor. Our text is the last of the seven letters.

A messenger would have traveled in a semi-circle. When he arrived at Laodicea, he would be due north of Ephesus, the first city he visited. What was true geographically was also true spiritually. We have come full circle from the first letter to the last. In Revelation 2:4, Jesus says to the church at Ephesus, “But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first.” In this final letter, Jesus rebukes the church at Laodicea for being lukewarm. These are different ways of describing spiritual indifference.

Like the church at Ephesus, the church at Laodicea maintained a profession of faith in Christ. But there was no true devotion to Christ. They were spiritually lukewarm. Jesus calls this church to renew its spiritual passion. He also calls on us to check our spiritual temperature. Revelation 3:22 says, “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.” This letter is not written to us. It is written for us. The church is like a bucket of water. Each member is like a glass of water. By the participation of each member, the temperature of the church rises or falls. What is your spiritual temperature?

Jesus call you to renew your spiritual passion.

I. The Character Christ Reveals.

Verse 14 says: “And to the angel of the church in Laodicea write: ‘The words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of God’s creation’” This threefold self-description affirms three attributes of Christ.

A. The Veracity of Christ

The Lord describes himself as “the Amen.” “Amen” transliterates a Hebrew work that means agreement or affirmation. It confirms truth. Jesus uses the word to state his commitment to the truth. Yet there is a deeper meaning. In Isaiah 65:16, the prophet calls the God “the God of truth.” Literally, the God of Amen. Truth is essential to the character of God. When Jesus call himself the Amen, he declares himself to be truth incarnate. 2 Corinthians 1:20 says, “For all the promises of God find their Yes in him. That is why it is through him that we
utter our Amen to God for his glory.” Jesus is the truth of God and the truth about God. We speak subjectively of “my truth.” Jesus speaks objectively of “the truth.” Jesus always tells the truth because he is the truth. John Stott wrote: “He is neither fickle nor capricious. No idle whim ever moves him to speak or act. He has never needed to retract or modify any statement which he has made. He is absolutely consistent.”

B. THE INTEGRITY OF CHRIST

Verse 14 says: “The words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness.” In Revelation 1:5, John calls the Lord: “Jesus Christ the faithful witness.” Here Jesus calls himself “The faithful and true witness.” The Amen of God takes the stand to witness against the church at Laodicea. The integrity of his witness is “faithful” and “true.” Both terms are significant. A witness can be faithful but not true. He can show up to testify but perjure himself when he takes the stand. Or a witness can be true but not faithful. He can have accurate testimony but be found in contempt because he fails to show up to testify. Christ is the faithful and true witness. Pilate asked, “So are you a king?” In John 18:37, Jesus answered, “You say that I am a king. For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world – to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice.”

C. THE AUTHORITY OF CHRIST

Verse 14 says: “The words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of God’s creation.” Cults teach the Son of God was the first and greatest of God’s creation. But that is not so. If Christ was created, he is not eternal. If Christ is not eternal, he is not God. In Revelation 22:13, Jesus declares, “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.” “The beginning of God’s creation” is not about the beginning of Christ. It is about the beginning everything else in creation. John 1:3 says, “All things were made through him, and without him not any thing made that was made.” Trace creation to its beginning, and you will not find a big bang. You will find Jesus. He is the originator of God’s creation. Because Christ began creation, he rules over creation. This is why you should trust and obey Christ. He is the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of God’s creation.

- How can you win if the Lord Jesus testifies against you?
- How can you lose if the Lord Jesus testifies for you?

II. THE REBUKE CHRIST GIVES.

Like the church at Sardis, this church received no commendation. But conditions were worse at Laodicea than Sardis. In Revelation 3:4, Jesus, “Yet you have still a few names in Sardis, people who have not soiled their garments, and they will walk with me in white, for they are worthy.” No godly remnant existed in Laodicea. Jesus rebukes the lukewarm church.

A. LUKEWARM CHRISTIANITY EXPOSED
Verse 15 says: “I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were either cold or hot! The Greek words are extreme: icy cold, boiling hot. Cold water refreshes. Hot water soothes. The church at Laodicea was neither hot nor cold. Their temperature was tepid. They had room-temperature spirituality. Laodicea was located in the Lycus valley, near Colossae and Hierapolis. Colossae had cold, refreshing streams. Hierapolis was famous for its hot springs with medical or therapeutic benefits. An aqueduct system delivered water to Laodicea from Colossae and Hierapolis. By the time water reached Laodicea, it was revoltingly tepid. The impure water could cause vomiting. Jesus says this is how it was in the church. The church at Laodicea provided neither therapy for the sick nor refreshment for the weary. It was neither cold nor hot. They were lukewarm.

Are you lukewarm? Most politicians are Conservative or Progressive. Some are Libertarian. There are few Moderates. In that regard, the true spirituality is like partisan politics. There are no Moderates. Pick a side. Joshua 24:15 says, “Choose this day whom you will serve.” Jesus would rather you be cold or hot than lukewarm.

How does water become lukewarm?
- To make water hot, boil or microwave it.
- To make water cold, refrigerate or freeze it.
- To make water lukewarm, do nothing.

It will eventually adopt the temperature of its environment. You become lukewarm if you do not stay hot! Verse 16 is a gross and graphic response to lukewarm Christianity: “So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth.” Jesus lifts the cup of this church to his lips, gets a taste of its lukewarm spirituality, and then he begins to vomit. Lukewarm Christianity make Jesus sick! Romans 12:11 says, “Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord.”

B. Lukewarm Christianity Explained.

Christ rebuked five of the seven churches. Several of these rebuked congregations were guilty of blatant evil. But there is no mention of sexual sin, doctrinal heresy, or spiritual idolatry in the church at Laodicea. Yet Jesus says this church made him sick for two reasons.

Self-sufficiency. Verse 17 reads, “For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing.” Laodicea was a wealthy city with a robust economy. In A.D. 60, an earthquake destroyed Laodicea. But the city rebuilt without disaster relief from the Roman government. This sense of independence infiltrated the church. The church at Laodicea boasted, “I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing.” There is nothing wrong with being rich or prosperous. But material prosperity can create arrogant self-sufficiency that makes you think you need nothing. You need God! This is why prayer is so vital to the Christian life. Prayer advertises our dependence upon the Lord.

Self-deception. Verse 17 says, “For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked.” The church at Laodicea was self-deceived. They said they were one thing. Jesus said they were something else. The Laodiceans thought they were rich, prosperous, and self-sufficient. Jesus calls them wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked. The Lord’s opinion is the only one that matters. It is
not about what the world thinks about a church. It is not about what other churches think about a church. It is not about what the church thinks about itself. It is about what the Lord thinks about the church. Life is like baseball. The pitcher throws the ball. The catcher calls it a strike. The batter calls it ball. It is neither, until the umpire says so. Jesus has the last word!

III. THE COUNSEL CHRIST OFFERS.

Verse 18 says, “I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire, so that you may be rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself and the shame of your nakedness may not be seen, and salve to anoint your eyes, so that you may see.”

Jesus counsels this poor church to buy gold from him. Divine favor cannot be bought with money. You must accept the handout of gold. Isaiah 55:1 says, “Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters, and he who has not money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.” Laodicea was known for its fashion industry. But Jesus counsels the church to buy white garments from him. Adam and Eve were naked and not ashamed. When they sinned, Genesis 3:7 says, “Then the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked.” Sin produces shame that needs to be covered. Only Jesus provides white garments. Jesus counsels the church to buy salve for their eyes. Laodicea was a medical center that specialized in treating ophthalmia. Only Jesus can truly open blinded eyes!

Verse 19 says, “Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent.” The Lord does not reprove us in anger. He disciplines us in love. When the Lord reproves and disciplines us, we should be zealous and repent. Verse 20 says: “Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me.” This is the most well-known verse in the letters to the seven churches. It is also the most misinterpreted and misunderstood. Jesus is pictured knocking on the door of the heart of the unbeliever. The appeal is made to the non-Christian to open the door and let Jesus in. But this is not a how salvation works. In John 10:9, Jesus says, “I am the door.” The only way lost people can be saved is to come to God through faith in Jesus Christ.

Verse 20 is not an appeal to the unbeliever. It is an appeal to the church. In Matthew 16:18, Jesus says, “On this rock I will build my church.” Yet Jesus knocks on the door of his own church. In Revelation 3:7, Jesus writes the church at Philadelphia, “The words of the holy one, the true one, who has the key of David, who opens and no one will shut, who shuts and no one opens.” Jesus has the authority to open the door. Yet he stands at the door and knocks.

- Satan would knock down the door of the church that does not belong to him.
- Christ stand and knocks on the door of his own church.

Laodicea was a military outpost. Soldiers extorted citizens, randomly showing up at homes, demanding food and lodging. Jesus waits for anyone to open the door and let him in. If you open the door, Jesus says, “I will come in to him and eat with him and he with me.” If you do not enjoy intimate fellowship with Christ, you cannot blame the church. If you let him in, he will eat with you and you with him. In scripture, sharing a meal is about fellowship, not food. In Luke 15:2, the religious leaders grumbled, “This man receives sinners and eats with them.” Jesus eats with sinners! But it is no banquet. It is an intimate meal! In Luke 12:37, Jesus says,
“Blessed are those servants who the master finds awake when he comes. Truly, I say to you, he will dress himself for service and have them recline at table, and he will come and serve them.”

IV. **The Promise Christ Makes**

Verse 21-22 says: “The one who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, as I also conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.” The **one who conquers** are not special or select Christians. They are true Christians. The one who conquers is the one who trusts the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation and continues in the faith. Perseverance does not save. It is evidence that faith is genuine. **Revelation 12:11** says, “And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death.”

In verse 21, **this worst church gets the best promise**: “The one who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne.” In **Matthew 19:28**, Jesus promises the Twelve apostles: “Truly, I say to you, in the new world, when the Son of Man will sit on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.” The promise in **Revelation 3:21** is greater. The saints used to end their prayers with the life to come, asking the Lord to give them a place **somewhere in his kingdom**. Jesus promises the church **triumphant** will sit on his glorious throne with him pray.

**Why trust this promise?** Verse 21 says, “The one who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, as I also conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne.” Jesus conquered by his **bloody cross** and **empty tomb**. Because Jesus has conquered, he has sat down with the Father on his throne. Those who conquer will sit with the Lord Jesus Christ on his throne. There are people who are now famous because of their work in the White House. But they were unknown a few years ago. They were loyal to the president. When he won election, they were given offices in the government. When the next president is elected, it will happen again. Unknown people will be given seats of power because they were loyal to the candidate.

- If you take care of God’s business, God will take care of your business.
- If you remain loyal to Jesus, promotion day is coming.
- If you conquer, you will sit with Christ on this throne.