

PEOPLE OF JUSTICE

Revelation 3:14-22

The Lukewarm Church

"And to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write, 'These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God: "I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth. Because you say, 'I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing'—and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked— I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent. Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me. To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne. "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches." ' ""

We get our passage of Scripture today from the Book of Revelation or what it is more fully called the Revelation of Jesus Christ. The word revelation comes from the Greek word "apokalupsis" which is the word that we get apocalypse from. So, it could be called the Apocalypse of Jesus Christ or the Revelation of Jesus Christ. Same thing. This book was given to the Apostle John by God and throughout the book are words given to John by Jesus Christ. **Chapter 1 verse 8** has Jesus saying, ""I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End," says the Lord, "who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty."" And right before that in **verse 7** it says, "Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. Even so, Amen." Jesus then says in verse 11, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, and, "what you see, write in a book and send it to the seven churches which are in Asia: to Ephesus, to Smyrna, to Pergamos, to Thyatira, to Sardis, to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea." Chapters 2 and 3 are the messages that Jesus gave to each of the seven churches, of which, our passage of Scripture is what Jesus said to the seventh church, Laodicea. The apocalypse of Jesus Christ certainly sounds much more ominous and scary than does the Revelation of Jesus Christ yet both moods, so to speak, both messages, are being presented in this book. It is a "revelation" of what is to come. It is also a warning to God's people of what is to come. And just as God's Word is, from the beginning of Genesis to the last page of the Revelation of Jesus Christ, His message to His

people, God is speaking to all who will listen, to all "that have ears to hear" what He is saying-to His people, to His church, of whom He is preparing for His eternal kingdom in Jesus Christ. Of which, He is saying, My people-get ready!

Time obviously doesn't permit us today to go through the whole of the book of Revelation nor to have a full discussion and exposition of all that this book says. At the end of this book there is a final warning to the reader. In **22:18-19** it says, "For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book." In that I would have to say that my intention is not to add to or take away from the book of Revelation, and I would urge, strongly encourage even, everyone to read the book through to get the fullness of what God is saying to His church. But just as there is, in our passage of Scripture today, a message and a warning to the church of Laodicea, it can and should be considered a message and warning to us even today.

While the word apocalypse has been used so much in books and movies to represent the end of the world stuff, the word that is used in referring to the last of days is eschaton which means last and is the root of the word eschatology, which is the study of the last of days. The Apocalypse, or Revelation of Jesus Christ is much more than that. God gives us His revelation so that we will be watchful and ready, as He is preparing us for His eternal kingdom, yet also as He gives us wisdom and understanding to see what is happening around us in the world so that we won't be shaken in our faith and we won't be caught off guard to what is coming. If anyone asks for your opinion on where we are heading in these times and in this world you can tell them to just read the book of Revelation in the Bible. We're not headed toward world peace or a utopian world. We are headed toward "apocalypse" stuff, and truly end of the world stuff, for we are in the "eschaton" of days. One more thing to note before moving into our passage of Scripture for today is to say that the giving of the Apocalypse or Revelation of Jesus Christ and the eschatology or studying of the last of days is not to just scare people into believing on Jesus Christ and it is not in pinpointing the precise time of His return. But, it is a revelation of God's overall plan in Jesus Christ and a warning to His people-to be ready and watchful.

"And to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write, 'These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God: "I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot." This is Jesus talking and when Jesus speaks one better listen. After all He says He is ,

"the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God." Jesus here is speaking directly to the church in Laodicea but it is certainly something that should concern us as well. Laodicea is a forming of two Greek words. Laos meaning people and dike (theekee) meaning justice. I won't get into the history of Laodicea but it can be surmised by their name, Laodicea that it was named "people of justice" for some reason or another. It got me thinking about what the world considers to be justice is far different than what God considers to be justice. As we know from our own culture, in this country, and really in many other countries throughout the world, the meaning of justice could be interchanged with tolerance. Justice in this world then means to treat everyone the same, that everyone's beliefs and practices are personal and sacred and should not be infringed upon. The problem begins when one asks the question, what is truth, as Judas Iscariot asked Jesus. And the way Judas asks the question he is being quite rhetorical by implying that there is no absolute truth. Yet here we have Jesus saying that He is "the Faithful and True Witness." Jesus tells the people of Laodicea, "I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot." Perhaps it could be said of those Laodiceans that their justice was wrapped up in tolerance. A couple of the other of the seven churches that Jesus had a word for He mentioned that they were allowing or having to deal with the works of the Nicolaitans who ate food sacrificed to idols and were involved in sexual immorality, and those who had the spirit of Balaam in leading people astray from the truth and those who were in bed, so to speak, with Jezebel. All of those speak of what had become a real problem in the times of the early church and that was syncretism, or the blending of multiple religions. The religion of tolerance.

Though the Laodiceans were called "people of justice" which would be a good thing if they truly operated in God's justice, yet they obviously did not, since Jesus called them neither cold or hot. God's justice is spelled out throughout the Old Testament by telling His people to take care of the widows, the orphans, the poor, the stranger, and to help those in need. The Laodiceans, according to Jesus, were saying "I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing'" But then He says, "-and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked- I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see." **Psalm 89:14** says, "Righteousness and justice are the foundation of Your throne; Mercy and truth go before Your face." **Psalm 33:5** says, "He loves righteousness and justice; The earth is full of the goodness of the Lord." Much of the time justice can be transposed into the word mercy. After all if we all got the justice we deserved we'd all be doomed. Amen? **Romans 5:8**

speaks to that in saying, "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." And **John 3:16-17** says, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved." God's justice was due to us, yet in His mercy He sent His Son Jesus to take on our sin so that we can be reconciled unto God, to have a right relationship with God, to have a proper standing with God to be as **1 Peter 2:9-10** says, "But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy."

The Laodiceans were saying they were rich and in need of nothing but Jesus said they were spiritually poor and naked by being lukewarm. Yet, by what we read of the Laodiceans (as well as some of the other churches) they weren't operating in God's justice of loving one another, as Christ loves the Church. If anything they were operating in the justice of the world in tolerance. Yet God is calling His people "out of the darkness into His marvelous light." Jesus said in **Matthew 5:16**, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven." If you were in a court of law being accused of being a Christian would there be any evidence? Oh sure, you may say. I go to church on Sunday, I try to be nice to other people, I try not to make waves with other people. Could it be said of us what Jesus spoke to the Jewish leaders saying, "These people draw near to Me with their mouth, and honor Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me." (**Matthew 15:8**) Can anyone see the light of Jesus coming from you?

I hear it said all the time, "God sure is a hard God. He's sure tough on His people. He expects ME to be holy as He is holy. I can't ever do that." Good! Acceptance of that fact is truly the foundation to recovery. There is a difference between being holy and being obedient. If WE try to be holy we come to that same conclusion over and over. We CAN'T be holy. But He can and He is Holy. We are called to humble ourselves before God, for He is holy, believe on Jesus for dying on the cross for our sins, and then to continue believing on Jesus that He will "work in us to will and to do according to His good pleasure." (**Philippians 2:13**) "There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death." (**Romans 8:1-2**) The question that can be asked then is, can others see that Jesus is working in you or do you still look like a product of this world? So God has given us the "revelation" that Jesus is our righteousness, and so much more as **1 Corinthians**

1:30-31 says, "But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God—and righteousness and sanctification and redemption—that, as it is written, "He who glories, let him glory in the Lord."

So what about those Laodiceans being called lukewarm by Jesus? Who am I calling lukewarm right now? I'm not calling anyone anything, and I am ever hopeful that we all make it into His eternal kingdom. But just as Jesus warned the people of the church of Laodicea, we must also know that God is calling us out of the darkness into His marvelous light. He's calling us to no longer follow the ways of the world that is full of tolerance and wickedness and to let Him reign in us to be not only our Savior but also our Lord. To let Him work in us His wisdom, that is far different than the wisdom of the world, and His righteousness, which means no longer following after the lusts of the flesh, and let Him work in us His sanctification, which means His setting us apart in His holiness, which means we will be able to stand firm in Christ. The wise man builds His house upon the Rock, and that rock is Jesus. Jesus said then to the Laodiceans as He says to us too, "**As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten.**" Elsewhere in Scripture, the writer of Hebrews says, "My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; For whom the Lord loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives." (**Hebrews 12:5-6**)

God is calling us to be a people of justice (with mercy) as the Laodiceans were called people of justice, but He wants us to be full of His righteousness and justice, which is full of His mercy. Loving God with all of our heart, soul, strength, and mind, and then also loving our neighbor as ourselves. Helping one another, encouraging one another, praying for one another, and in any way the Lord gives opportunity, to be a blessing to one another. But He is calling us out from the ways of the world. When we compromise with the world, as Christians, we are essentially becoming that stumbling block to others just as was the case with those who were living as the Nicolaitans in giving honor to false gods, in sexual immorality, and in operating in the spirit of Balaam by leading others into sin and rebellion against God, and in the spirit of Jezebel who were doing as the Nicolaitans. Yes, it will certainly seem as though God is a hard God when you are being disobedient and being rebellious. Yes, it can be hard in having your flesh desire the things of the world while you are being called to follow the Spirit in His Righteousness. But what awaits you on the other side of that battle, which belongs to the Lord by the way, we just have to submit to Him in that battle, is what Jesus said, "**Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin. And a slave does not abide in the house forever, but a son abides forever. Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.**" I and many, many others can testify to that truth that Jesus spoke. I may not always be perfect, but praise God, "**whom the Son sets free is free indeed.**" The sins of my past that

held me captive are, praise God, no longer in my way. As the Apostle Paul said, "Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus." (**Philippians 3:13-14**)

Most assuredly, the Laodiceans could not say that. They may have said something like, "oh sure, I believe Jesus died for my sins", but they clearly weren't continuing in the faith that they began with, otherwise Jesus would not have called them lukewarm and said that He would vomit them out of His mouth. Yet, praise the Lord, God loves us and warns us when we are not on the right path. He said then as He's saying now, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me. To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne. "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches." Can you hear Him calling. Can you see He's calling you to higher ground, to come out from among them, the world that is perishing. What a great promise that He gives us that He will come in and sup with us (that is to dine with us). He also promises us that we will be joint-heirs with Jesus (**Romans 8:17**) and to those who will endure, to those who will overcome, we will reign with Him! (**2 Timothy 2:12**)

Finally, not only was there strong warnings to God's church throughout the book of Revelation, God also speaks of many blessings to all of His people who overcome. To the church of Laodicea Jesus promises, "To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne." At the beginning of the book of Revelation there is another promised blessing, "Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; for the time is near." (**1:3**) And just as Jesus said to John we can be sure that He says to all those who will overcome, "Do not be afraid; I AM the First and the Last." And as Paul said to encourage the Philippians, "I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine making request for you all with joy, for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ." (**Philippians 1:3-6**) Hopefully that in this message to us today, we are encouraged and hopeful in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. He has gotten us this far. He may be burning off the stuff from us that shouldn't be there but we will overcome. **Hebrews 12:1-2** encourages us today in saying, "Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is

set before us, **looking unto Jesus**, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." Thank You Lord Jesus!