

# Revelation 3:14-22 Letter to Laodicea

## EXHORTATION TO LAODICEA VITAL FOR OUR DAYS

This letter is crucial for the last days. Jesus Christ in his final plea before Armageddon, draws on his exhortations to Sardis and Laodicea in **Rev 16:15**: "Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame." In **Rev 3:18** Laodicea is exhorted to **watch** (anoint eyes with eyesalve to see), to **keep their garments** (that they may be clothed), lest they **walk naked** (that their nakedness not appear). In **Rev 16:15** he is coming as a thief, but (ironically) to Laodicea he is knocking on their door. Thieves do not normally knock, but the question for Laodicea is, can they hear him knock or are they asleep? So too for us today. He warns us and our ecclesias to go back to these letters and heed the exhortations. It is notable that both Laodicea and Sardis are free of persecution.

## BACKGROUND TO THE ECCLESIA AT LAODICEA

Laodicea was on the main trade route to Ephesus, the greatest trade centre of Asia. Laodicea was a strong fortress, but within the city there was no permanent water supply. Its water was piped from Hierapolis, whose warm water came from thermal springs which induced vomiting: cp. **Rev 3:16**. It was also a manufacturing centre in its own right, particularly the textile industry. They are exhorted to buy "white raiment, that you may be clothed" **3:18**. Laodicea was also famous for its school of medicine and the manufacture of collyrium, a famous eyesalve. There could be no mistaking the words of **3:18**: "and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see."

## THE REVEALING OF JESUS CHRIST

**v14 Laodiceans**: The letter to the Colossians was also written to Laodicea: **Col 4:15-16**. The ecclesia met in the house of a brother Nymphas, whose name means "to veil as a bride".

**The Amen**: A title of Yahweh, and also Jesus Christ. Yahweh is called the *God of Truth* or the *God of Amen* in **Isaiah 65:16**. That is in the context of God's promises fulfilled in the establishment of a **new heavens and new earth**. "Amen" is translated "faithful" (as the word means) in **Deut 7:9** and **Isa 49:7**. This is important in the context of Laodicea. "Amen" is an acknowledgement that what has been said is true. In **Rev 1:7**, he adds "Even so, Amen", Christ himself is called *The Amen* in **Rev 3:14** because he is the centre of that purpose. But here we have a double emphasis ie. "I am the faithful, the faithful". Consider the context of **Isaiah 65**. Israel had forsaken God. The language in **Isa 65:11-13** is very similar to the letter to Laodicea: "when I called, ye did not answer" cp. "Behold I stand at the door and knock".

**The faithful and true witness**: **Psa 89:35-37**: "I will not lie unto David. His seed shall endure for ever, and his throne as the sun before me. It shall be established for ever as the moon, and as a faithful witness in heaven." **Psalm 89** emphasises faithful, faithfulness, mercy, mercies. So why does Christ describe himself in this way? Because Laodicea was an **unfaithful** bride. He is also a **true witness**: **Jn 18:37**; **1 Jn 5:20**. See notes on **Rev 1:2,9**. Laodicea failed to witness because they were pre-occupied with riches. They are promised **David's throne**, as in **Psa 89:35-37**.

**14** And unto the angel of the church <sup>2</sup>of the <sup>2</sup>Laodiceans write; These things saith the <sup>2</sup>Amen, <sup>4</sup>the faithful and <sup>2</sup>true witness, <sup>2</sup>the beginning of the creation of God;

**15** I know thy works, that thou art neither **cold nor hot**: I would thou wert **cold or hot**.

**16** So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither **cold nor hot**, I will spue thee out of my mouth.

**17** Because thou sayest, **I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked:**

**18** I counsel thee <sup>h</sup>to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and <sup>k</sup>white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and <sup>l</sup>anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see.

**19** **As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten:** <sup>o</sup>be zealous therefore, and <sup>p</sup>repent.

**20** Behold, I stand at the door, and <sup>q</sup>knock: <sup>r</sup>if any man hear my voice, and open the door, <sup>s</sup>I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.

**21** To him that overcometh will I grant <sup>t</sup>to sit with me in my throne, even as <sup>u</sup>I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.

**22** He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

**v16 Lukewarm**: Laodicean water was lukewarm, just like the ecclesia. **Spue thee out of my mouth**: Literally means "I am about to vomit" ie. Only if they continued to live like this. A classic example of is **Mal 1:6-10**. Israel carried out rituals of worship however they "offered polluted bread upon mine altar; and they said, Wherein have we polluted thee?" cp. **Rev 3:17**. They didn't know!

**v17 Because thou sayest**: They were openly saying this! **I am rich, increased with goods, and have need of nothing**: They claimed to be spiritual because God had blessed them materially: **Hosea 12:8** NIV "Ephraim boasts, I am very rich; I have become wealthy. With all my wealth they will not find in me any iniquity or sin." Riches are deceptive: **Isa 55:1**; **1 Tim 6:17**; **Jas 2:5**. **Knowest not**: ESV "not realising". They were deceived. Same in Noah's day: **Matt 24:39-40** "they knew not until the flood came", despite Noah's preaching. Belshazzar knew of God's power and Nebuchadnezzar's repentance but ignored it: **Dan 5:22-25**. These were **willingly ignorant** just like in AD70: **2 Pet 3:4-5**. Things appeared to "continue as they were".

**v14 Beginning of the creation of God**: **Col 1:15-18** "the beginning, the firstborn from the dead." (ESV) Jesus Christ was in God's Mind from the beginning. It is for this purpose everything was made. **Isaiah 65:17** tells of a **new creation!**

## THE LORD'S DISAPPROVAL

**v15 Neither cold nor hot**: Repeated 3 times. The Greek word translated "cold" occurs only once outside Revelation: **Matt 10:42** "whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple." **Cold** is refreshing: **Prov 25:13** "As the cold of snow in the time of harvest, so is a faithful messenger to them that send him: for he refresheth the soul of his masters." **Hot** means to "bubble up and boil over". A related word in the Greek is translated "zealous" in **Rev 3:19** ie. "fire up", cp. **2 Tim 1:6**. See also **Acts 18:25**; **Rom 12:11**. David says his "heart is hot within me" when he meditated upon Yahweh: **Psa 39:3**. One of the best examples is the Word of God in Jeremiah's heart: "I feel within me as it were a fire that burns my very being" **Jer 20:7-10**.



"buy of me gold tried in the fire"



Hierapolis hot springs near Laodicea

**v17 Wretched**: Only other occurrence of this word in the NT is **Rom 7:24** "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Paul knew his problem. Laodicea didn't. What a contrast! **Miserable**: Means "pitiful". Only other occurrence in NT is **1 Cor 15:19** - Important! **Poor**: Spiritually poor. Contrast to Smyrna: **Rev 2:9**. **Blind**: mentally blind, some who choose to be: **Isa 6:9-10**; **Mt 13:14**; **15:14**; **23:16**. **Naked**: No spiritual clothing. Symbol of shame and humiliation: **2 Sam 10:4-5**; **Ezek 16:36**; **23:29**. See also **Rev 16:15**; **17:16**.

## OLD TESTAMENT BACKGROUND: HOSEA

The words of **Rev 3:17** take us back to **Hosea 12:8**. The book of Hosea reveals Yahweh's love for His people Israel, an **unfaithful bride**. It says of Israel, "strangers have devoured his strength, and he knoweth it not" **Hos 7:9**. See also **Isa 28:1**. Hosea's family life was symbolic of Israel's relationship with God. Consider particularly the words of **Hosea 2:3-8** "naked... she did not know"; **4:6-7** "as they were increased they sinned"

## EXHORTATION TO REPENT AND CHANGE THEIR WAYS

There were 3 spiritual problems. Therefore 3 remedies are now given: poor (gold); blind (eyesalve); naked (white raiment).

**v18 Gold tried in fire**: Tried faith: **1 Pet 1:7**. "Bought" by reading, study and application: **Psa. 66:10**; **Zech 13:9**; **Mal 3:3**. **Rich**: In good works: **1 Tim 6:18**; **Gal 6:2**. **White raiment**: Forgiveness in Christ: **Rev 1:3**; **19:8**. Paul previously wrote of this: **Col 3:9-10** cp. **Col 4:16**. **Nakedness**: **Hos 2:3**; **Rev 16:15**. **Eyesalve**: If we lose vision, we perish: **Prov 29:18**.

**v19 As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten**: He loves them personally: **Jn 10:3,13-16**; **17:17-26**. He wants them to change: **Heb 12:6-13** cp. **Prov 3:11-12**; **10:13**; **13:24**; **22:15**; **29:15**. **Be zealous**: Means *warmth of feeling*, from a word translated *hot* in **3:16**. **Repent**: See notes on **Rev 2:5**.

## PROMISE OF THE KINGDOM AND DAVID'S THRONE

**v20 I stand at the door, and knock**: Likewise, in **Song 5:2-6** the bridegroom knocks on the bride's door. **Key verses**: **Lk 12:24-39**. **Hear my voice**: **Jn 10:3-5,16,27**. **Open the door**: **Jn 10:1,2,7,9**. **Come in**: **Jn 14:23**. **Sup with him**: **Lk 15:18-24**. We are like Mephibosheth at King David's table: **2 Sam 9:7-13**.

**v21 To him that overcometh**: See notes on **2:11**. **Sit with me in my throne**: The Saints will also sit in David's throne: **2 Sam 7:12-17**; **Lk 1:26-33**; **Rev 4:1-11**; **5:6,10**; **7:17**; **22:1-5**. This is the subject of Revelation! **The revealing of Christ and the Saints in glory! Even as I also overcame**: He overcame the world by submitting to his Father: **Jn 16:33**; **1 Jn 2:15-17**; **5:4**.

**Colour code**: Blue (God and Jesus Christ); Red (sin/devil/judgment of wicked); Green (Kingdom); Orange (important words & phrases); Purple (return of Jews to the land); Yellow (practical exhortation). Prepared for Rathmines Bible School Teenagers.