

Hymns:            20 Mansion Over the Hilltop                            51 Love Lifted Me  
                       52 Leaning on the Everlasting Arms                    65 This Is My Father's World

Scripture:       Psalm 103:8-17

Big idea: Laodicea Turn to Jesus

We've all met someone who fits the expression "he's too big for his britches." Another expression for this type person is "He's a legend in his own mind." The person projects a very high opinion of himself while never coming close to living up to it. Today, we will see what Jesus has to say about an entire church with that problem – and its not pretty. But before we do, let's review where we've been as we ...

continue our **trip** through the fascinating book of Revelation. We learned that this final book of the Bible sometimes called *the apocalypse* unveils or reveals Jesus **not** in His humanity as shown in the gospels but instead it reveals Him in His glory. The imagery of Christ in the first chapter of Revelation describes a person of great majesty and power.

Yet despite Jesus having this frightening appearance, His demeanor towards His own is tender and gracious. We learned that we who know Him will receive a perfect, immortal body like His that can float through the air, pass through walls, materialize, dematerialize, and even fly through the clouds and beyond.

So far, we've visited the cities of Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, and Philadelphia. First century Ephesus boasted a large, prosperous port and transportation hub and featured the temple of Diana, the pagan goddess of fertility. While that church did many good deeds, its heart was not right. It had lost its first love of the LORD and was **just** going through the motions. The irony of this was that that a city obsessed with *sensual* love would have a church whose prime weakness was its *spiritual* love.

Next, we moved on in our travels to Smyrna, a city that lies 30 to 40 miles to the north of Ephesus on the western coast of what is now Turkey. The large, prosperous city today, called Izmir, engulfs the ruins of ancient Smyrna making them seem to be almost an afterthought as the development around the site overshadows what seems more like a city block. Jesus had only **commendation** and encouragement for them to persevere. He assured them that their days of persecution were numbered and would pale in comparison to the glorious future awaiting them in eternity.

Next, we traveled to Pergamos. Located about 60 miles north of Smyrna and inland about 20 miles from the sea along the Caicus River, the city on a hill called an acropolis contains extensive ruins of ancient Pergamos within the city now called Bergama. On this acropolis stood many monuments and temples. Pergamos produced an alternative writing medium called parchment. It boasted a library of 200,000 volumes, a medical center, and much more. While Ephesus was a commercial center, and Smyrna became a political center, Pergamos was a religious center. Unfortunately, their religion permitted those who followed the doctrines of Balaam and the Nicolaitans both which the LORD hates.

Next, we traveled to Thyatira which lies about 30 miles southeast of Pergamos. The city was famous

for having more commercial guilds (unions) than any Roman city. It was where Lydia the seller of purple had lived. Today, the chief industry there is rug-making. If you travel to Thyatira, you will not see much. Much like with Smyrna, the city overwhelms the ruins (surrounded by a wrought iron fence looks more like a town square, mini park, or a mini cemetery.). The rest of the ruins remain buried under the many surrounding buildings. Thyatira had a problem with its church leader – a wicked woman referred to as Jezebel who led them into bad doctrine, fornication, and idolatry.

Next, we traveled about 30 miles southeast of Thyatira to the fifth of the seven churches of Revelation named Sardis – another city on a 950 foot high hill called an acropolis. There among its **extensive** ruins are a temple of Cybele, a theater, and a stadium. As Sardis failed to watch for invaders, they also failed to live expectantly for the return of Christ. The extensive graveyard there symbolized the church at Sardis was dying with only a remnant remaining faithful.

Last time, we traveled to Philadelphia. Ancient Philadelphia is about 25 miles southeast of Sardis. You've all heard the phrase "Move along, there's nothing to see here." If you're looking for ancient ruins, that expression works fairly well for this city also. Earthquakes plagued Philadelphia explaining why it contains just a city block with few relics and virtually none dating back as far as the time of John the writer of the book of Revelation. The major distinction for students of Revelation is that only the letters to Philadelphia and Smyrna contain no rebuke from the LORD.

Today, we're traveling to the seventh and final church of Revelation located at Laodicea.

From Easton's Bible Dictionary:

*Laodicea:*

*... lay ... about 40 miles east of Ephesus (Rev 3:14), on the banks of the Lycus. It was originally called Diospolis and then Rhoas, but afterwards Laodicea, from Laodice, the wife of Antiochus II., king of Syria, who rebuilt it. It was one of the most important and flourishing cities of Asia Minor. ... It is now a deserted place, ..."*

Easton, M. G. "Laodicea", *Easton's Bible Dictionary*. Blue Letter Bible. 1897. 24 Jun, 1996 19 Mar 2025.

<http://www.blbclassic.org/search/Dictionary/viewtopic.cfm?topic=ET0002238>

From Smith's Bible Dictionary we learn that Laodicea means:

*(justice of the people) a town in the Roman province of Asia situated in the valley of the Maeander, on a small river called the Lycus, with Colossae and Hierapolis a few miles ... to the west. ....*

Smith, William. "Laodicea", *Smith's Bible Dictionary*. Blue Letter Bible. 1884. 14 Dec, 2010 19 Mar 2025.

<http://www.blbclassic.org/search/Dictionary/viewtopic.cfm?topic=BT0002591>

From the International Standard Bible Encyclopedia we have the following:

*... Antiochus II (261-246 BC) of Syria, ... populated it with Syrians and with Jews who were transplanted from Babylonia to the cities of Phrygia and Lydia. Though Laodicea stood on the*

great highway at the junction of several important routes, it was a place of little consequence until the Roman province of Asia was formed in 190 BC. It then suddenly became a great and **wealthy** center of industry, famous [e]specially for the fine **black wool** of its sheep and for the Phrygian **powder for the eyes**, which was manufactured there .... In the vicinity was the temple of Men Karou and a renowned school of medicine. In the year 60 AD, the city was almost entirely destroyed by an earthquake, but so **wealthy** were its citizens that they rejected the ... aid ... Rome [offered], and quickly rebuilt it at their own expense .... It was a city of **great wealth**, with extensive banking operations.... ... In 1071 the city was taken by the Seljuks; in 1119 it was recovered to the Christians ..., and in the 13th century it fell finally into the hands of the Turks.

The ruins, now called Eski Hissar, or old castle, ... have long served as a quarry to the builders of the neighboring town of Denizli. Among them nothing from before the Roman period has appeared. One of the two Roman theaters is remarkably well preserved, and there may still be seen the stadium, a colonnade, the aqueduct which brought the water across the valley to the city by an inverted siphon of stone pipes, a large necropolis, and the ruins of three early Christian churches.

Banks, EJ. "Laodicea", *International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*. Blue Letter Bible. 1913. 5 May, 2003 19 Mar 2025.  
<http://www.blbclassic.org/search/Dictionary/viewtopic.cfm?topic=IT0005422>

With that introduction we should have our bearings. Let's now dive into our text for today.

### Revelation 3

[14] *And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things sa[ys]  
the Amen,  
the faithful and true witness,  
the beginning of the creation of God;*

Jesus addresses this church, as He does every church, by identifying Himself through referring to some of His attributes. After all, this is the Revelation of Jesus Christ. What do we learn about Him here?

1. He is the *Amen*. That word can be viewed as a universal word in all languages. Let's test this out. Who speaks a language other than English. Could you please translate *Amen* in your language? What does it mean? It means *faithful, true, reliable*.
2. He is the *faithful an true witness*. This really feels like a couplet – saying the same thing as *Amen*. If you have ever had a good dog, you know the meaning of faithful. Of course, Jesus is more faithful. Jesus is the embodiment of truth. In this world of liars even among many Christians, His honesty is as refreshing as a cool, clear stream.
3. He is the Beginning and the Creator (John 1:1-3; Colossians 1:16-17).

### John 1

[1] *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God,  
and the Word was God.*

*[2] The same was in the beginning with God.*

*[3] All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.*

Colossians 1

*[16] For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him:*

*[17] And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.*

We have a great God and Savior – Jesus Christ. After introducing Himself, He goes on:

*[15] I know thy works, that thou art neither **cold** nor hot: I would [y]ou wer[e] **cold** or hot.*

*[16] So then because [y]ou ar[e] lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue you out of my mouth.*

He then elaborates, but many Bible teachers say that Jesus cites the lukewarm aqueduct-supplied water temperature at Laodicea to highlight the lukewarm nature of their works. But let's see what He says the reason is:

*[17] Because [y]ou say[],*

*I am rich, and*

*increased with goods, and*

*have need of nothing;*

*and know[] not that y]ou ar[e]*

*wretched, and*

*miserable, and*

*poor, and*

*blind, and*

*naked:*

Jesus is not holding back here. He's contrasting their outward beauty and opulence with the ugliness and spiritual bankruptcy of this church.

*[18] I counsel [you] to buy [from] me*

*gold tried in the fire, that [y]ou may[] be rich;*

I Corinthians 3

*[11] For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.*

*[12] Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble;*

*[13] Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare*

*it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is.*

*[14] If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward.*

He's urging this church to focus on building on His foundation works of spiritual and eternal value rather than worldly things. After urging to buy things of eternal value, He also instructs them to also buy:

*and white raiment,*

[Why?]

*that [y]ou may[] be clothed,  
and that the shame of [your] nakedness do[es] not appear;*

Jesus offers purity and white raiment as His free gift to all who believe in Him (Revelation 19:8).

*and anoint [your] eyes with eyesalve, that [y]ou may[] see.*

You may recall from the historical description, that Laodicea produced black wool and eyesalve. Perhaps Jesus drew on common aspects of their city to bring His point home: that they need to be **pure** in thought and deed and have **spiritual** eyes to see His truth.

*[19] As many as I love,  
I rebuke and  
chasten:*

There's a tenderness here to these harsh words. He **loves everyone** who has accepted His gift of grace. But because He loves them, He cares enough to set them straight – even if it involves some pain.

*be zealous therefore, and repent.*

Jesus encourages them to forsake their worldliness and to enthusiastically turn to Him.

*[20] **Behold**, I stand at the door, and knock:*

Jesus is the consummate gentleman. He politely stands outside your heart's door, knocks and waits for your response. He doesn't break down the door and twist your arm to force you to comply. He suffered the death of crucifixion, so you may **freely choose** to turn to Him. He continues:

*if any man  
hear my voice,  
and open the door,  
I will come in to him,  
and will sup with him,  
and he with me.*

Isn't that a great promise? He invites **any man** – not just *the chosen* or *elect* as some teach.

*[21] To him that overcome[s] will I grant to sit with me in my throne,  
even as I also overcame, and [have sat] down with my Father in his throne.*

You may recall in the message to the church of Philadelphia, this concept of overcoming came up. Here we have the rest of the story. Jesus explains that **our** overcoming will be like **His own** overcoming. What **exactly** did Jesus overcome? He overcame the **curse** of **death** (Genesis 3:14-19). And because He overcame death, we know we can overcome it as well.

Don't miss too He promises **His bride will sit with Him on His throne**. He's elevating us to the highest position imaginable for eternity.

Here's what the apostle Paul said about overcoming:

I Corinthians 15

*[26] The last enemy that shall be destroyed is **death**.*

*[54] So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, **Death** is swallowed up in **victory**.*

*[55] O **death**, where is thy sting? O **grave**, where is thy victory?*

*[56] The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law.*

*[57] But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

He concludes as He does with each letter to the seven churches.

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

That is, pay attention. Don't miss this.

### Application

We started today thinking about a person with **an** unrealistically positive view of himself. Jesus compared that person to lukewarm water. A similar comparison can be made of donuts. I've had

some really bad donuts in my day. You know the type. They're cakey, crumbly, dry, and tasteless. Their name implies they are good for mixing with coffee or perhaps milk. After a lifetime of running into these abominations of food, I stopped by a Krispy Kreme doughnut shop that offers a free glazed doughnut right out of the grease at certain times of the day. That doughnut melted in my mouth with a warm, moist, sweet, delectable flavor.

Do you see the difference? Jesus wants His church to not be bland, boring, proud, and lifeless. Instead, He's looking for His church to be humble and alive. Jesus said:

Matthew 5

*[13] Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men.*

**Benediction**

*The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen (Revelation 22:21).*

---

© Ron Harrod, 2025.

This document may be reproduced for noncommercial use only.