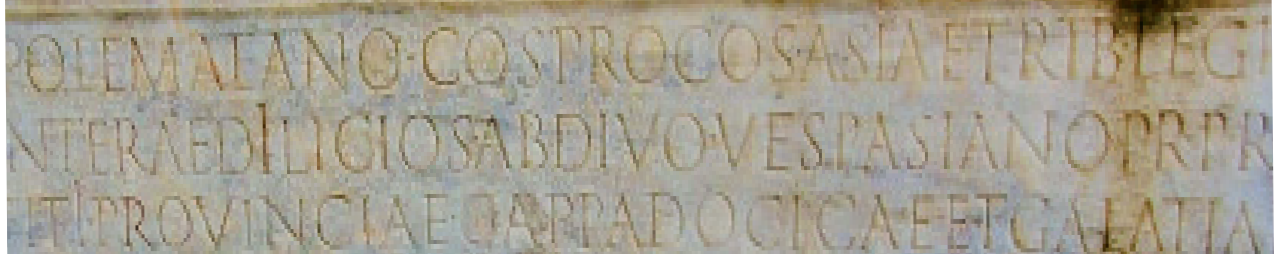




FOUNDATIONS

Lessons in Discipleship
from the New Testament Church



Study Guide



CENTER FOR
HOLY LANDS STUDIES

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Laodicea The Lukewarm Church

Bible Text: Revelation 3:14-22

If the church in Laodicea were given a letter grade for their lifestyle and faithfulness to God, it might have been an *F*. The final reference we have to Laodicea is in the Book of Revelation chapter 3. The church in this city received the last letter written to the seven churches. With this site, it is important to note that the letters are listed in order of their declining righteousness.

Unlike the other six letters from Christ to the churches of Asia Minor, His words for the believers of Laodicea did not contain even one positive attribute of the church. There was no good to be said about their deeds or their actions.

Instead, Christ's words for this church serve as a chilling reminder that His church cannot get away with simply playing the part of Christian. They must also live it out. He knows and sees all. Nothing can be hidden from Him. For the church of Laodicea, this must have been a terrifying reality to comprehend.

We read about Laodicea in the books of Acts, Colossians, and the book of Revelation. Laodicea was an ancient Hellenistic city located in the Lycus Valley. It is a little over ten miles from Colossae and six miles from Hierapolis.

Laodicea is mentioned six times in the New Testament, mostly in the Book of Colossians. Paul mentioned a deep connection between the church here with the church in Colossae. Paul even asked that the letter to the Colossians be traded for the letter sent to the Laodiceans after they read it, as it was applicable to both churches.

WATCH THE LUKEWARM CHURCH VIDEO



The letter to the Laodiceans does not mention anything positive regarding the church. The letter only rebukes them for the lukewarm nature and their pride:

“I know all the things you do, that you are neither hot nor cold. I wish that you were one or the other! But since you are like lukewarm water, neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth! You say, ‘I am rich. I have everything I want. I don’t need a thing!’ And you don’t realize that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked. (Revelation 3:15-17)

The mention of “lukewarm” would have spoken clearly to this church. The city of Laodicea had a system that brought water into the city by aqueducts from several locations. One system brought in hot water, the other delivered cold. When the two combined, the result was lukewarm water. The lukewarm water was unusable, undrinkable, and useless. It is no wonder Christ referred to this church as lukewarm. It would have certainly caught their attention!

How do you feel about the description “lukewarm?” It is an unpleasant state. It is a state of indifference, showing a lack of interest or concern. They were showing indifference toward God!

In the Book of Revelation, the church here was admonished because they thought they had all they needed, but they had forgotten the One who provides. Revelation 3:19 says, “I correct and discipline everyone I love. So be diligent and turn from your indifference.”

What can we learn from the letter to the church in Laodicea? In essence, we are to be passionate for God at all times. A half-hearted effort is no effort at all! Are you lukewarm? If so, what discipline do you need to incorporate to become fully dedicated to the Lord?

We are loved by God. He is neither “hot nor cold” in relation to us, so in all sincerity, do not be one who is half-hearted in your relationship with Him. Be fully diligent and devoted in your relationship, just as the church in Laodicea was encouraged to be.

Let’s close with the final verses in the letter to this church:

“Look! I stand at the door and knock. If you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in, and we will share a meal together as friends. Those

who are victorious will sit with me on my throne, just as I was victorious and sat with my Father on his throne. Anyone with ears to hear must listen to the Spirit and understand what he is saying to the churches.”
(Revelation 3:20-22)

Imagine being a part of the church in Laodicea. Out of seven churches in your area, you were the church singled out by Christ for living a near godless witness in your city. Would that be enough to make you change who you were? Would you realign and change your identity in Christ?

Though the church in Laodicea received such a letter, and what was said was true, we must remember that the story of the church of Laodicea did not end with the letter in the Book of Revelation. Later, the church of Laodicea seemingly turned from the identity that we find here in Revelation, and grew to be one of the strongest churches in Asia Minor. By 363 AD, the church had grown to be known for their desire for strong doctrine and righteous living.

Reading about churches who were lost, and yet found their way back to Christ as He actively sought them, is an example for us. The story is not yet finished. Be a strong pillar with a strong foundation for the continuation of the spread of the gospel throughout the earth.



