

# THE BOOK OF REVELATION: VERSE BY VERSE

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## WEEK NINE

### I. THE MESSAGES TO THE SEVEN CHURCHES (Revelation 2:1 - 3:22)

#### A. The Repeating Pattern Of The Messages

1. A description of the character of Christ.
2. A description of what Christ knows about each church, with a word of commendation for their strengths and a word of rebuke for their sins of commission and omission.
3. A call to repentance, with a warning of consequences if they don't repent.
4. A description of the reward promised for faithfulness and overcoming.

#### B. The Message To The Church In Laodicea (3:14-22)

1. The historical context of Laodicea:
  - a. It was located on the major highway in the region, the leading city of a "tri-city" region (Laodicea, Colossae, Hierapolis).
  - b. It was famous for four things:
    - i. Lousy water: it was located between a source of cold water (Colossae) and the hot springs (Hierapolis); by the time the water arrived in Laodicea via aqueduct, it was lukewarm...
    - ii. Wealth: it was the Switzerland of the region, famous for its many banks.
    - iii. Medicine: especially a special salve that was said to soothe and heal eye diseases.
    - iv. Clothing: it produced highly sought after (usually black) wool from local sheep.

2. The specific message to the church in Laodicea:

- a. Beginning with a description of the character of Christ:

***"To the angel of the church in Laodicea write: These are the words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God's creation." (v. 14)***

- i. ***"Amen"***: a Hebrew word meaning "certain, very true..." Christ is called ***"the Amen"*** (a title reserved for God in Isaiah 65:16). Christ is shown as the solid foundation of life.
- ii. ***"The faithful and true witness"***: (see 1:5; 19:11) builds upon this quality. The word for "true" is not the word in contrast to "false" but the word in contrast to "counterfeit." It is the word for "genuine." Christ is shown as the genuine reflection and representation of God's nature.
- iii. ***"The ruler of God's creation"***: the word translated ***"ruler"*** is "arche" and is also translated "beginning." It is the word for "the starting point, the source, what has priority over the rest..." (See Colossians 1:15-20) Christ is shown as the source and pattern of God's creation.

b. Then followed by a description of what Christ knows about the church:

i. First, Christ has no words of commendation and goes directly into a word of rebuke...

***"I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! So, because you are lukewarm – neither hot nor cold – I am about to spit you out of my mouth. You say, 'I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.' But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked."*** (vv. 15-17)

- 1.) Their response to Christ, who has just been declared to be "the solid foundation of reality, the genuine representative of God's nature, the source and pattern of God's creation" is (in one author's words) "mild approval..."
- 2.) Christ uses famous elements of their city to communicate His truth (lukewarm, wealth, blindness, nakedness...)
- 3.) ***"You do not realize"***: Viewed from their perspective – they have everything; viewed from heaven's perspective (as the veil is pulled back) they have nothing, and they are oblivious to this reality.

ii. Next, a call to repentance...

***"I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see. Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest and repent. Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me."*** (vv. 18-20)

- 1.) ***"I counsel you to buy from me..."***: Using the language of commerce that filled their city, Christ offers to supply them with everything they need:
  - a.) ***"Gold refined in the fire"***: better than their Laodicean gold...
  - b.) ***"White clothes"***: purer than their Laodicean wool...
  - c.) ***"Salve to put on your eyes"***: more effective than their Laodicean salve...
- 2.) ***"Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline"***: everything said to this point is motivated by love.
- 3.) ***"Here I am! I stand at the door and knock..."***: Christ is present, but being kept on the outside.

iii. Finally, the reward for faithfulness...

***"To the one who is victorious, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I was victorious and sat down with my Father on his throne. Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches."*** (vv. 21-22)

- 1.) ***"I will give the right to sit with me on my throne"***: not to be taken literally or physically (just try to picture that!) but a declaration regarding their sharing in His royalty and being delegated His authority.
- 2.) ***"Let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches"***: John's Trinitarian view is evident in these two verses. The **Father** is on the throne, the **Son** is enthroned as well; the **Son** is speaking yet they are called to listen to ***"what the Spirit says..."***

### ***Lessons From The Churches...***

Three problems have plagued the church for 2,000 years: 1.) **Assimilation**: being "in" without being "of" the world... 2.) **Complacency**: becoming "fans" but not "followers" of Christ... 3.) **Persecution**: it is painful but productive...