

The Lord's **URGENT** Letter to the Church in America

by
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It is important for us to note that the Lord's letter to the churches is the entirety of the Revelation of Jesus Christ as it was given to John, an apostle of the church, not just Chapters 2 and 3. Thus the entire revelation was passed around to the churches so that each noted the Lord's commendations, condemnations, and required repentance as well as the prophetic future of the church in the end times.

The purpose of the commendations and condemnations at the beginning of the letter was to warn and prepare the church, not only for the persecution of their day, but for the intense events that the church would experience immediately prior to His return on the last day.

The response of these various types of churches and corresponding types of believers has been important throughout the ages, but the most important response is the response of the end times church who will EXPERIENCE the actual events of Revelation 4 through 22. Thus "reading" and "heeding" this letter is much more important for the church today than it was for those first seven types of the church in Asia Minor to whom the letter was first sent.

Proof that this letter was primarily directed for the end times church is in the promise to the church at Philadelphia. He promised to "keep" them from the "hour of trial" that would come upon the whole world. That "hour" of trial has not, yet, come and is, therefore, a future promise to that type of church and that type of believer, a promise that will have its greatest meaning for those who qualify as members of that church in the final three and a half years of the age.

My deep personal concern about, and condemnation of, Dispensationalism and its "**poisoned fruit**" of a pre-trib "rapture" is specifically related to the fact that the dispensational promise of a pre-trib "rapture" to take the church out of the way before trouble comes, has robbed us of the motive to prepare for the difficult but glorious times ahead, which is why Satan, through the Jezebel spirit, introduced the dispensational heresy into the church in the first place.

We are, therefore, the end times church whose response to the repentance and the instructions He has given us at the beginning of His letter to the churches will determine our specific future.

His command given to us is, "**Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches.**"

“Whoever” means you and me today, and it is His intention that you and I should “hear” by revelation exactly what His letter to the churches, and, specifically, to protestant evangelicals in America and the west, means for us individually and corporately, and to obey by repenting in order to be prepared for the events soon to come.

We should note, too, that the warnings and repentance demanded in this letter are the specific warnings and repentance given to the ten virgins, the entire corporate body of Christ, (Matthew 25:1-10) when we receive the wake up call, ***Behold! The bridegroom is coming.***

Thus our response to this letter, will determine whether we will become “wise” virgins or “foolish” virgins. See **“The Parable of the Ten Virgins Unveiled.”**

The Philadelphian type of church, for which the Lord has nothing but commendation, is alive and well in places like mainland China, Korea, India, Somalia, and in various Muslim countries where Christians are persecuted and regularly jailed, tortured, and killed for their faith.

But of all the “types” of the church addressed in the Revelation of Jesus Christ, the Ephesian church, having lost their first love for Christ, and the Laodicean church, with a “lukewarm” response to Christ, seem to be the most applicable to the protestant church in American and the western world.

However, few pastors and ministry leaders in America would confess that their fellowship, denomination, or ministry, much less themselves, individually, are identified by the Ephesian or Laodicean metaphors.

What we note about the church at Ephesus is that their doctrine and teaching is strong, but their passion for the Lord, resulting in continuous acts of (*agapao*) love have been reduced to doctrinally correct but passionless works that do not glorify (manifest the presence of) the Lord.

This is a well organized corporate body of believers with a seminary trained staff of professional ministers who are basically correct in doctrine and practice, but who have fallen into religious works of the flesh rather than the passionate works of faith.

The Lord’s required response of this church is so closely related to the required response of the Laodicean church that I believe most modern protestant evangelical churches in America, including Charismatic churches, fall into some combination of the metaphorical types of the church at Ephesus and the church at Laodicea.

Most believers, when reading the Lord’s message of commendation, condemnation, and required repentance, assume that the “lukewarm” designation applied to the Laodicean church is similar to the Ephesian church’s lack of passionate love for Christ being expressed through living works of faith. Yet, this failure to correctly identify the “lukewarm” Laodicean metaphor, and, therefore, failure to identify with the metaphor of “lukewarm,” is due mainly to a presumptive error concerning what the Lord is actually condemning in this church.

We have taught and preached that “lukewarm” is a metaphor for the lack of religious zeal and devotion to the Lord (i.e. passionate love), but that is NOT what the “lukewarm” metaphor

represents. And it is time for us to get it right, because the Lord's letter to the church in Laodicea is urgently applicable to the church in America today. And those who refuse to "read" and "heed" are in for a tragic future as "foolish virgins."

This quote from an article in The Apocalypse Chronicles, Volume XII by James Lloyd, author and director of Christian Media Network, makes the application perfectly:

"Anyone who has spent any time in the New Testament also knows the **Laodicean** identity is juxtaposed against the **Philadelphian** church examined in the same chapter. This is also thought to be the church of true believers in the end times, and this group...(the Philadelphian church)... is modestly lauded as holding to the truth.

"I can say with all conviction that, over the years, I've encountered significant numbers of believers who automatically assume the Philadelphian church describes their church, their fellowship, their doctrinal approach, their friends, or their circle of believers. In a breathtaking leap of illogic, these alleged 'Philadelphians' refuse to see that because they **all** have doctrinal differences which are voluminous enough to fill the Grand Canyon, the odds are enormously stacked against the possibility that **any** organized group is being represented by the metaphor of Philadelphia.

"Furthermore, even though this ministry has brought me into contact with tens of thousands of Christians, I've never encountered a single one who said he or she attends services at the church of Laodicea! This inability to recognize one's own spiritual condition guarantees the party disavowing any involvement in the allegorical "Laodicean" church demonstrates the group being described...(by the Lord)... is massive and universal."

In spite of the fact that we each think the Laodicean definition belongs to some other group, almost all modern Christian ministry leaders, authors and teachers believe that the Laodicean definition specifically defines the materialistic, non-committed, legalistic, ho-hum church of America and the western world....but not ourselves individually or our own church fellowship and denomination.

A closer examination of His message reveals exactly what His condemnation of this church is really about so that we might respond appropriately to Him, and it is NOT what we have thought:

I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot; I wish that you were cold or hot. so because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth...(unless you repent)...Revelation 3:15,16 NASB (insert and emphasis are the author's)

This promised threat of the Lord is modified only by the implied condition, "**unless you repent.**" Yet, I am not personally acquainted with any believer who is concerned by this threat of judgment. Why is that? Does the "lukewarm" condition itself cause us to be deaf and blind to the Lord's very real threat of judgment for those who refuse to repent?

I believe that it does.

But what do we Laodiceans need to repent of? Is it materialism, worldliness, and a lack of religious zeal? Or is it something entirely different?

The assumption that the metaphorical use of "hot" means "on fire for Jesus" and the metaphorical use of "cold" means "no religious fervor whatsoever" is TOTALLY WRONG, and

it leads us to the false conclusion that being “lukewarm” means “a materialistic, lackluster enthusiasm for things of the Lord,” which is what the condemnation of the church at Ephesus is all about.

Anyone reading this article would not be likely to think of themselves as having a materialistic, lackluster enthusiasm for the things of the Lord, but pay attention. This linguistic device, using the metaphors of “hot,” “cold,” and “lukewarm” is not defined by modern English idiomatic usage but by the content and context of His entire message.

HE DEFINES “lukewarm” specifically as believing that we are spiritually rich (lacking nothing of the character of Christ and the power of the Spirit) when we are actually lacking in Christian character, lacking in true righteousness, lacking in revelatory insight, and lacking in the power of Christ.

Because you say, "I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing," and you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked... Revelation 3:17 NASB (emphasis is the author's)

The simple implication is that the lukewarm church is a church that thinks it's “hot” but is not. But it is not “cold” either. “Cold” is a metaphor for the complete absence of truth and a complete absence of corresponding faith responses, while “hot” is a metaphor for the complete presence of truth and the corresponding faith responses

Therefore, “lukewarm” is the metaphor for blending faith with unbelief or truth with error and the inability to distinguish the difference.

We lukewarm Laodiceans say we are rich in the spirit and lack nothing of the manifestations of the Holy Spirit or the character of Christ, and we DO NOT KNOW that we are actually wretched (manifesting the sinful man), miserable (defeated), poor (not manifesting an abundant faith life), blind (lacking the ability to “see” by revelatory insight), and naked (revealing the sinful man).

It is easy to see in this passage that “rich” and “wealthy” and “have need of nothing” is a metaphor for something other than material wealth, because it is juxtaposed against “wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked.”

The church at Laodicea at the time the letter was written was a wealthy church, and by telling them that they were in reality “wretched,” “miserable,” and “poor” He was alerting them (and us) that His message had nothing to do with their material wealth.

By comparison, the Lord told the church at Smyrna, a poverty-stricken church, that they were “rich,” confirming that His use of the word is not in reference to worldly wealth but to the “gold” and “riches” of Christian character.

My paraphrase of His message to the Laodicean type of church is: You think you have the truth and that you have a rich and abundant faith life, but **YOU DO NOT KNOW** (and, therefore, will not repent of) or realize how defeated you are, how corrupt your doctrines and practices are, and how much of the sinful man you still manifest in the world.

His condemnation of the “lukewarm” Laodicean church is that it believes that it is spiritually rich and does not know that it is actually spiritually wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked. This is not about religious zeal. This is a church with great music, a church that does not come behind in any of the spiritual gifts, a huge building that shakes with

the fervent worship of its participants, a large professional staff, televised services, and a senior pastor that is known far and wide as a televangelist and author of numerous books.

But this is also a cold, dead, traditional church with narrow pews and narrow views, a church with nary a “Hallelujah!”

“Rich” in v.18 is the Greek word transliterated as *plouto*, meaning rich in outward possessions, with a secondary metaphorical meaning of being rich in the spirit. And it is in this context that He urges the Laodicean church to become “rich in the spirit” through “buying” gold refined in the fire from Him.

Thus, the historic church in Laodicea, a church that was wealthy in material goods, like much of the Laodicean “type” of church prevalent today, is not being admonished for believing that they have all that they need in material wealth or, even, for their obsessive pursuit of wealth through various faith “techniques”, but for their belief that they are also rich in spirit (manifesting an abundant, Spirit-filled faith life) when they are, in reality, wretched and poor in spirit and do not even know it.

Being poor in the spirit may produce “lukewarmness” in religious zeal, but it is not a lack of religious zeal that He is addressing. Many who do not know Him at all are extremely fervent in their religious works.

Therefore, the danger of ignoring the Lord’s stinging condemnation is greatest for those churches and individuals who assume that they are spiritually rich and lacking nothing of the truth, character, gifts, and anointing of Jesus Christ (i.e. evangelical believers, and, especially, Pentecostal and Charismatic believers).

This is the modern church in America and the western world, united only in our basic faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior but divided by winds of doctrine, including doctrines of demons and pagan practices, with very little ability to distinguish the truth of our condition.

His specific charge against this church, our church, is that we believe that we are spiritually rich, but we are actually spiritually poor and don’t know it.

Thus it is much, much better to realize that we are spiritually poor, lacking in the character and anointing of His Spirit, than to vainly imagine that we are not spiritually poor and in desperate need of repentance leading to restoration.

This, then, is His remedy and His command of repentance leading to restoration:

I advise you...(strongly)... to buy from Me gold refined by fire so that you may become rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself, and that the shame of your nakedness will not be revealed; and eye salve to anoint your eyes so that you may see. Revelation 3:18 NASB (insert and emphasis is the author’s)

His command of repentance involves the following:

1. Because we are spiritually wretched (manifesting the sinful man) and miserable (defeated) and poor (not manifesting an abundant faith life) we need to “**buy**” gold refined by the “fire” of testing from Him (described elsewhere as Christian character);
2. Because we are “naked” (revealing the sinful man) we need to “**buy**” white garments of genuine righteousness (i.e. putting on Christ) to hide the sinful nakedness of the old man, nakedness that we should assume is not hidden by religious works;

3. Because we are spiritually “blind” we need to “**buy**” eye salve to anoint our eyes so we can “see” by revelation instead of depending on the “blindness” of intellect alone and a dependence on religious “authorities” to tell us what to believe and what to do apart from the guidance and light of the Holy Spirit, our true “teacher.”

It is of great interest to me that our presumptive interpretation of this message throughout the church in America and the western world as simply referring to a lack of religious zeal is, in itself, PROOF, of the sinful condition He is actually addressing in the Laodicean church.

Beware! Brothers, we must examine His command of repentance carefully before we assume that we are not in need of it. The Laodicean error of believing ourselves to be “rich” in the spirit and not being able to discern that we are actually “wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked” may be ours.

In doing so we become like the Pharisees and scribes of the Lord’s own day.

There is only one way to “buy” these things from the Lord. We must buy them by “hearing” and “obeying” the revelation of His will, His truth, promises, and commands, in all things. And, to do so, we must assume that whatever we are doing now, is not an adequate response.

Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline; therefore be zealous and repent.
Revelation 3:18 NASB (emphasis is the author’s)

Zealousness, therefore, is not an increase in religious activity, or even a greater expression of the gifts of the Spirit. Zealousness is an eagerness to “hear” and obey the revelation of His will in all things, big and small...no matter what the cost...even if we have to abandon the doctrines or practices that we have built our reputations, our ministries, and our denominations around.

Examine the story of the rich young ruler again, but instead of wealth and possessions, imagine him as being a famous televangelist or denominational leader with a massive ministry built around some deceptive false doctrine(s) that tickle the ears of his many Laodicean followers.

What will he do when the Lord says, “Abandon this false doctrine, apologize to those whom you have deceived, and teach the truth as you follow Me.”

What will we do when He says:

Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door,
I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me. Revelation 3:20 NASB

This is not, as has often been interpreted in the Laodicean church, an evangelical call to the lost. This is a call to repentance of those in the Laodicean and Ephesian churches, those who believe they are spiritually rich, but are spiritually poor, those who blend truth with error and cannot tell the difference.

This is His invitation to those “wise virgins” who will awaken and begin to trim the wicks of their lamps, which is defined as cutting away false doctrine, false practice, and the sin that so easily besets us as we seek the truth from our only real authority, the Spirit of truth, the Teacher, Christ; cutting away the old man, and putting on the righteousness of Christ through our obedience to the revelation of His will in our thoughts, words, and actions, and; zealously

maintaining the intimacy of our fellowship with Him so that we can “hear” His voice and “see” His truth, promises, and commands with the eyes of our hearts.

And this is His promise to those who will be zealous and repent:

He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down 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. Revelation 3:21,22 NASB

This IS the message to a vast majority of church fellowships in America and the western world today, including Charismatic fellowships and believers, with whom I identify, who assume incorrectly that their fellowship and their denomination is not identified in any way by the Laodicean or Ephesian metaphors.

The real test is coming sooner than we think, and the Lord is standing at the door knocking. If you and I are “wise,” brothers and sisters, we will “hear” His voice, repent, and open the door.

May He grant us a spirit of wisdom and revelation as we examine and meditate on His word to the church in America and the western world today, because the day of decision is upon us.