

THE MESSAGE TO LAODICEA: THE CHURCH THAT IS AFFLUENT, BUT LUKEWARM AND HALF-COMMITTED REVELATION 03:14–22

Introduction

This is the last church addressed by Christ, and it is the worst church. Christ does not commend Laodicea at all. This is the one church about which He has nothing good to say. Imagine a church that may as well not exist — a church that has no good within its body whatsoever — a church that does no good at all. What was it that made the church so bad? So useless and worthless? Lukewarmness, which means that the church was indifferent, complacent, lethargic, self-satisfied, half-hearted and neutral. The church and its believers were only half-way committed to Christ, only half-hearted in their worship and service for Him. Imagine! To Christ there is *no good whatsoever* in a lukewarm, half-committed believer, and most church members are lukewarm! There are few who are really *hot*, that is, really committed. Hence, this is a critical message that must be heeded by all churches and believers. We must study what Christ says to this church and heed His warning and counsel.

- I. The recipients (v. 14).
- II. The speaker — Jesus (v. 14).
- III. The complaint: the church is neither cold nor hot, but lukewarm (v. 15).
- IV. The warning: will be spit out (vv. 16-17).
- V. The counsel (vv. 18-20).
- VI. The promise: to the overcomers (vv. 21-22).

I. Revelation 03:14 Message to the Minister and the Church

There are the recipients. Christ sends this message to the minister, for he is the one who is ultimately responsible for the state of the church. Christ expects the minister to be the first to heed the warning against lukewarmness and half-hearted commitment. Then Christ expects the minister to take the message of the Lord to the church and declare His warning to its believers. The point to see is this: the minister is held accountable by Christ for the indifference and complacency of the believers. He expects the minister to arouse himself and repent, and to arouse the believers and lead them to repentance and whole-hearted commitment.

REVELATION 03:14 LAODICEA

There is only one historical fact that seems to have a bearing upon this letter. Laodicea was the chief city of Phrygia — an extremely wealthy and prosperous city. It lay astride three of the most important highways of its day. It was a city of enormous wealth. The city had three particular claims to fame. It was...

- a financial and banking centre
- a clothing manufacturing centre
- the location of a famous medical school renown for the eye salve which it produced.

Perhaps the condition of the church in v. 17 — “poor, blind and naked” — has reference to these three industries.

Paul prayed for the Laodicean church (Col. 2:1-2) and wrote a letter to them (Col. 2:1; 4:12-16). Archippus is said to have been the first Bishop (pastor) of the church (*The Apostolic Constitutions*, 8:46. Information from “The Pulpit Commentary.” Vol. 22, p. 114). This seems to have some significance for what Christ says to the church, for Laodicea is a church that Christ does not commend. He has nothing good to say about the church. In writing to the Colossians, Paul exhorts Archippus, Laodicea’s pastor: “See to it that you complete the work you have received in the Lord” (Col. 4:17). The corruption and degeneration could have begun under his ministry. □

II. *Revelation 03:14 Message from Jesus Christ*

There is the speaker, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. Note how Christ describes Himself to the lukewarm and half-committed church and believer.

1. Jesus Christ is the “Amen.” This is a title that Christ says belongs to Him. The term *Amen* is used to close prayer or to declare the truthfulness of some statement. It is a term that declares and guarantees the truth. Therefore, Jesus Christ is *the Amen*, the declaration, the guarantee of the truth. What He says is totally true and trustworthy. This means two things to a lukewarm church.
 - => The lukewarm church can trust the promises of Christ. He will meet the needs of any church that will repent and turn from its lukewarmness and wholly commit its life to Christ.
 - => The lukewarm church had better heed the warning of Christ. He is *the Amen*: His words of judgment will be carried out. The lukewarm church and believer will face the terrible judgment of Christ, face it just like He has pronounced it in His Word. His Word is true, completely guaranteed. What He has said will be. His pronouncement of judgment will come to pass — unquestionably. The church that ignores or neglects His Word does so at its own peril and loss.

John 1:14 *The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.*

John 14:6 *Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."*

John 18:37 *"You are a king, then!" Said Pilate. Jesus answered, "You are right in saying I am a king. In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me."*

2. Jesus Christ is the "faithful and true witness." Jesus Christ is faithful to God the Father and He bears a true witness to God the Father.

=> Jesus Christ is *perfectly honest*. He has not told a single lie or untruth.

=> Jesus Christ is also *completely honest*. He holds nothing back about the truth. He does not keep us wondering or questioning in seeking after and in knowing God. He has not kept a single thing from us that God wanted us to know about Himself.

But note: Jesus Christ is the *faithful and true witness*; He is just what the church is not. The church is lukewarm. It only tells part of the truth, only bears part of the witness. It is only half-faithful to Christ and God. What the lukewarm church needs is to get a renewed sight of Christ. They need to refocus their attention upon Jesus Christ: the only way they will ever see God is to hear the witness of Jesus Christ, the witness of Him who is faithful and true. If the church is looking at other witnesses — depending upon the rituals of baptism, church membership, ordinances, services, ceremonies, fellowship and worship attendance to make them acceptable to God — then the church is missing the faithful and true witness of God. It is missing Christ, and to miss Christ is to doom oneself.

John 3:11 *"I tell you the truth, we speak of what we know, and we testify to what we have seen, but still you people do not accept our testimony."*

John 3:32 *"He testifies to what he has seen and heard, but no one accepts his testimony."*

John 8:14 *Jesus answered, "Even if I testify on my own behalf, my testimony is valid, for I know where I came from and where I am going. But you have no idea where I come from or where I am going."*

1 Tim 6:13 *In the sight of God, who gives life to every thing, and of Christ Jesus, who while testifying before Pontius Pilate made the good confession, I charge you.*

Rev 1:5 *And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood.*

3. Jesus Christ is the “ruler of God’s creation.” Jesus Christ is the great Creator of the universe, the Maker and Sustainer of the universe and all that is therein. Therefore, He is the source of all — all good things, all real wealth and satisfaction, all purpose, meaning and significance in life, all love, joy and peace that a person experiences. Therefore, the church must not depend upon its prosperity: its rituals, ability, energy, wealth and resources. Its only hope for life is to trust Him who is the beginning of creation, Him who alone can give the church life both abundant and eternal life. Therefore, no matter how prosperous the church, it is not the creator nor the sustainer. Christ alone creates and sustains. The church’s wealth and prosperity are meaningless and useless apart from being absolutely centred in Jesus Christ.

John 1:3 *Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.*

John 5:25 *“I tell you the truth, a time is coming and has now come when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live.”*

John 10:10 *“The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.”*

1 Cor 8:6 *Yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live.*

Col 1:16 *For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him.*

Col 2:10 *And you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority.*

Heb 1:1-2 *In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways. But in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe.*

III. Revelation 03:15 Lukewarm Church

There is the complaint. The complaint is shocking, for it unquestionably describes most church members. What is the complaint? *Lukewarmness*. Note exactly what Christ says: the church and its members were “neither cold nor hot.” This means...

- they were only lukewarm, only half-committed, only half-hearted.
- they were complacent, lethargic, self-satisfied.
- they were indifferent and neutral.

As stated, note how this so clearly describes so many church members. This is serious, even critical, for the judgment that Christ pronounces upon the lukewarm church and believer is terrible. This will be seen in the next note. For now, we need to think about how lukewarmness affects the church and its members.

=> A lukewarm church is only half-committed to Christ. In addition to stressing Christ, it stresses ritual, ceremony and programs as a way to become acceptable and to please God.

Luke 9:23 *Then he said to them all: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me."*

Rom 12:1-2 *Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God – this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will.*

=> A lukewarm church is only half-committed to proclaiming that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

1 John 2:22-23 *Who is the liar? It is the man who denies that Jesus is the Christ. Such a man is the antichrist – he denies the Father and the Son. No one who denies the Son has the Father; [but] whoever acknowledges the Son has the Father also.*

1 John 4:1-3 *Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God. But every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world.*

=> A lukewarm church is only half-committed to teaching the Word of God.

2 Tim 3:16 *All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.*

2 Tim 4:2-4 *Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage – with great patience and careful instruction. For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths.*

=> A lukewarm church is only half-committed to evangelism and missions.

Mat 28:19-20 *"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. And teaching them to*

obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

Mark 16:15 *He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation.”*

Acts 1:8 *“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”*

=> A lukewarm church is only half-committed to stressing holy and pure living for Christ.

2 Cor 6:17-18 *“Therefore come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you.” “I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty.”*

Heb 12:14 *Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord.*

1 Pet 1:16 *For it is written: “Be holy, because I am holy.”*

1 Pet 1:22 *Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for your brothers, love one another deeply, from the heart.*

=> A lukewarm church is only half-committed to self-denial and sacrificial living, to stressing that its people must deny themselves and sacrificially die to self. They seldom stress that total sacrifice is demanded, that a person must give all he is and has to reach the lost and meet the desperate needs of the world.

Mat 19:21 *Jesus answered, “If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.”*

Mark 10:28 *Peter said to him, “We have left everything to follow you!”*

Luke 5:27-28 *After this, Jesus went out and saw a tax collector by the name of Levi sitting at his tax booth. “Follow me,” Jesus said to him, And Levi got up, left everything and followed him.*

Luke 9:23 *Then he said to them all: “If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.”*

Luke 18:29-30 *“I tell you the truth,” Jesus said to them, “no one who has left home or wife or brothers or parents or children for the sake of the kingdom of God will fail to receive many times as much in this age and, in the age to come, eternal life.”*

Luke 14:33 *“In the same way, any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple.”*

=> A lukewarm church is only half-committed to the church.

Heb 10:25 *Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another – and all the more as you see the Day approaching.*

=> A lukewarm church is only half-committed to attending and staying awake and learning in the services of the church.

John 5:39 *“You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me.”*

Acts 17:11 *Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.*

Rom 15:4 *For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.*

1 Tim 4:13 *Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching.*

Heb 10:25 *Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another – and all the more as you see the Day approaching.*

=> A lukewarm church is only half-committed to supporting the church.

1 Cor 16:2 *On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made.*

2 Cor 9:7 *Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.*

=> A lukewarm church is only half-committed to witnessing.

2 Tim 1:8 *So do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord, or ashamed of me his prisoner. But join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God.*

2 Tim 2:2 *And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others.*

1 Pet 3:15 *But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.*

=> A lukewarm church is only half-committed to Bible study and prayer.

2 Tim 2:15 *Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.*

1 Pet 2:2-3 *Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation. Now that you have tasted that the Lord is good.*

=> A lukewarm church is only half-committed to daily devotions.

Rom 15:4 *For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.*

Deu 17:19 *It is to be with him, and he is to read it all the days of his life so that he may learn to revere the LORD his God and follow carefully all the words of this law and these decrees.*

The list could go on and on, but the terrible reality of lukewarmness is clearly seen. It is frightening, for lukewarmness is seen in so many churches and members.

Note what Jesus Christ says: it is better for one to be cold than lukewarm. This is utterly shocking: Christ Himself says that it is better for a person to have no commitment whatsoever to Christ than for him to be lukewarm. Why? How could this be? Because a lukewarm person does not know that he needs clothing or heat. A cold person knows he needs clothing and heat. A person must be sensitive to his need before his need can be met.

Luke 18:11 *“The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other men – robbers, evildoers, adulterers – or even like this tax collector.’”*

John 9:41 *Jesus said, “If you were blind, you would not be guilty of sin; but now that you claim you can see, your guilt remains.”*

Most people who profess Christ attend church only enough to salve their consciences, only enough to make them feel acceptable to God. Most people feel that God would never reject them, not in the final analysis. Most believe that God will eventually accept them into whatever kind of heaven exists in the next world. But Christ completely contradicts this. He says that all these – all the lukewarm and half-committed church members in the world – would be far better off if they made no profession at all. Being self-satisfied, feeling comfortable and respectable in one’s religion, is the worst state imaginable for a person. He is the hardest person of all to arouse and set aflame for Christ. Yet, tragically this is the state of so many, the state of half-hearted commitment to Jesus Christ, the state of comfort, complacency, lethargy, indifference and self-sufficiency.

IV. Revelation 03:16–17 Warning: Judgment

There is the warning. Jesus Christ warns the lukewarm and half-committed person: “I will spit you out of my mouth.” This is graphic language, but it is used for a purpose. The person who claims to be a follower of Jesus Christ is claiming to be a part of His body, claiming to be nourishment for His body, a part of the growth of His body. But when the person is lukewarm, he is none of this. He is like lukewarm food, unappetizing and

unwanted. Christ does not want the nourishment that such food provides. It is not fit to help in the nourishment and growth of His body. Therefore, He rejects all who are lukewarm and half-committed. There are two reasons why He rejects them.

1. The lukewarm make a false profession (v. 17a). Note the verse: the church felt that it was *rich and prosperous and had need of nothing*. As stated above, the city was extremely wealthy, and practically everyone but the slaves shared in the wealth. We can tell by the very charge of Christ against the church that the believers were financially wealthy. What happened to the church is what so often happens among believers. They equated wealth and prosperity with spirituality. They felt that they had been especially blessed by God because they had been blessed with material possessions and wealth. They became...

- self-sufficient
- independent
- self-centred
- prideful
- conceited
- boastful

They carried their wealth over into their spiritual life; they confused prosperity and material blessings with spirituality and spiritual blessings. They were able to have a full staff of ministers and to have all the ministries. They were able to launch any program, to promote any activity, and to do anything the minister or church felt should be done.

=> They focused upon their capability instead of Christ.

=> They depended upon their ability instead of Christ.

=> They relied upon their resources instead of Christ.

Worship, Bible study, prayer, missions, witnessing and activities — all were done as a matter of form and as a part of the normal activity of the church. There was no hunger or thirst after God, no sense of a deep-seated need, no desire for God's Word, no burden for the lost, no sense of needing to grow spiritually. Simply speaking, the church was self-sufficient and comfortable. It had the money and the members to operate and work the ministries of the church; and many of the members, being industrious business and management people, had the energy and ability. Therefore, the members operated and carried on the activities of the church, but it was all done in the energy of the flesh and of self. It was not done in the power of God's Spirit.

Rom 12:16 *Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited.*

1 Cor 10:12 *So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall!*

2 Cor 10:12 *We do not dare to classify or compare ourselves with some who commend themselves. When they measure themselves by themselves and compare themselves with themselves, they are not wise.*

Gal 6:3 *If anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself.*

Prov 3:7 *Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD and shun evil.*

Prov 20:6 *Many a man claims to have unfailing love, but a faithful man who can find?*

Prov 26:12 *Do you see a man wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for him.*

Isa 5:21 *Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes and clever in their own sight.*

Oba 1:3-4 *The pride of your heart has deceived you, you who live in the clefts of the rocks and make your home on the heights, you who say to yourself, ‘Who can bring me down to the ground?’ Though you soar like the eagle and make your nest among the stars, from there I will bring you down,” declares the LORD.*

2. The lukewarm are rejected because of their true condition: they are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked. What does this mean? All of these refer to the spiritual life of the church and its believers.
 - a. The church was spiritually “wretched” (hotalaiporos). The word actually says *the wretched one* in the Greek. The church had its full staff and all the programs — so much so that it felt it needed nothing. But the church was really *the wretched one*. The word means to be afflicted spiritually; to be spiritually contemptible; to be spiritually inferior. In God’s eyes they were spiritually lacking, very much so — so much so that they were afflicted, contemptible and inferior.

Rom 3:23 *For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*

1 John 5:19 *We know that we are children of God, and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one.*

Prov 20:9 *Who can say, “I have kept my heart pure; I am clean and without sin”?*

Isa 53:6 *We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.*

- b. The church was spiritually “pitiful” (eleeinos). The word means pitied, despicable. The believers felt self-sufficient and were carrying on all the works of the church, but they were doing it in their own strength. They were *missing out* on the greatest thing in all the world: the presence of Christ and the power of Christ. They were missing out on experiencing the power of Christ working in their lives and in the church. They were to be pitied. In God’s eyes they were despicable, for they were ignoring and neglecting His Son.

1 John 1:6 *If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth.*

1 John 1:10 *If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives.*

1 John 1:8 *If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.*

Isa 64:6 *All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away.*

- c. The church was spiritually “poor” (ptochos). They felt rich and in need of nothing, but in truth they were as spiritually poor as a church and person can be.

Luke 15:14 *After he [the prodigal son] had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need.*

Eph 2:12 *Remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world.*

Jer 5:4 *I thought, “These are only the poor; they are foolish, for they do not know the way of the LORD, the requirements of their God.*

1 Tim 6:5 *And constant friction between men of corrupt mind, who have been robbed of the truth and who think that godliness is a means to financial gain.*

Rev 3:17 *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.*

- d. The church was spiritually “blind” (tophlos). They could see only what was in the world: money and human ability and effort. They did not look beyond to the spiritual need of the human soul nor to the possibility of spiritual and supernatural power working within the church and the lives of people.

Mat 6:23 *“But if your eyes are bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness!”*

2 Cor 4:4 *The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.*

Eph 4:18 *They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts.*

- e. The church was spiritually “naked” (gumnos). They failed to see their need for the righteousness of Jesus Christ, for the clothing of Christ’s righteousness. They believed they could be good enough and do enough good to become acceptable to God on their own. They felt their religious works and gifts to the church would secure God’s approval. They did little thinking about their need for the righteousness of Christ and about the death of Jesus Christ for their sins.

Mat 22:11-13 *“But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing wedding clothes. ‘Friend,’ he asked, ‘how did you get in here*

without wedding clothes?’ The man was speechless. Then the king told the attendants, ‘Tie him hand and foot, and throw him outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’”

2 Cor 5:3 *Because when we are clothed, we will not be found naked [without the righteousness of Christ].*

Rev 16:15 *“Behold, I come like a thief! Blessed is he who stays awake and keeps his clothes with him, so that he may not go naked and be shamefully exposed.”*

Thought 1. Note that many lukewarm and half-committed persons never witness for Christ. They say that they do not witness for Christ...

- Because they want to be kind and not offend people.
- Because they are too meek and shy.
- Because there is a place for professing Christ (the church) and a place for the affairs of this world.

But note: a lukewarm commitment to Christ is nauseating to Him. He will reject all of the lukewarm and half-committed.

V. **Revelation 03:18–20** *Call to Repentance*

There is the counsel. Christ advises the church to do three things.

1. Christ counsels them to buy spiritual gold, spiritual clothing and spiritual eye salve. What do each of these mean? Note what each says.
 - a. The church needed to buy spiritual gold that is purified in the fire. Remember the city of Laodicea was a banking centre and a manufacturing centre, extremely wealthy. Christ is teaching the church this: their wealth is not true wealth. What they need is spiritual gold, spiritual wealth. Why? So they can be truly *rich*. Gold represents spiritual riches — all the *richness and inheritance* offered by Christ — all the spiritual things that make life rich and overflowing: love, joy, peace, goodness, faith, assurance, confidence, security, hope. It is possessing all the abundance of life. Note that material possessions and wealth cannot give these things. Earthly riches cannot buy love, joy, peace or happiness. Riches cannot keep a person healthy nor keep him alive nor erase emptiness and loneliness. This should tell man something, but so many are so blinded by worldly wealth and possessions that they ignore it: man’s great need is for spiritual gold. Above all else, we need the riches of the Spirit. Spiritual gold is the only thing that can satisfy our souls. Note where spiritual treasures are found: in Christ. If we are to be spiritually wealthy, we have to come to Christ and secure the wealth He has.

Mat 6:20 *“But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal.”*

Mat 12:33 “*Make a tree good and its fruit will be good, or make a tree bad and its fruit will be bad, for a tree is recognized by its fruit.*”

Mat 19:21 *Jesus answered, “If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.”*

Gal 5:22-23 *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.*

Phil 3:8 *What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ.*

1 Tim 6:19 *In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life.*

Heb 11:26 *He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward.*

- b. The church needed to buy white clothing. Remember the city was a clothing centre, a large textile and manufacturing centre. Christ is telling them this: no matter how much clothing they manufacture, they lack the real clothing. What the church needs is spiritual clothing. Why? So the shame of their spiritual nakedness will not be exposed. This refers to the righteousness of Christ, the pure righteousness of Christ that makes a person acceptable to God. A person must be clothed in the righteousness of God; he must put on the righteousness of Christ. God does not accept a person because he...

- is religious
- belongs to the church
- does religious works
- does good
- has been baptized
- attends worship
- professes Christ
- gives generously

There is only one way that a person can be acceptable to God: by being clothed in the righteousness of Jesus Christ. Christ and Christ alone is sinless. He alone is the Perfect and Ideal Man. He and He alone has made the perfect sacrifice for sins. Therefore, Jesus Christ alone is acceptable to God. If a person is to ever be acceptable to God, he has to be clothed in the righteousness of Jesus Christ. As the Perfect and Ideal Man, the righteousness of Jesus Christ can stand for and cover all men. Therefore, when a person really believes and trusts in the righteousness of Jesus Christ, God counts that person's belief as righteousness. God counts that person as *being in Christ*, as *being in the righteousness of Christ*.

Note: if a person is not *in Christ*, if he has not been clothed in the righteousness of Christ, then he shall appear naked in the great day of judgment. He shall be ashamed before God and rejected by God.

This is the great counsel, the great advice of the Lord Jesus Christ, His great message to the lukewarm and half-committed church and believers: “Buy of me the white clothing of my righteousness. Putting on my clothing, my righteousness, is the only way you can ever be acceptable to God.”

2 Cor 5:17 *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!*

2 Cor 5:21 *God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*

Eph 4:24 *And to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.*

Col 3:3 *For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.*

Col 3:10 *And have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.*

- c. The church needed to buy eye salve. Remember the city was well known for its medical school that concentrated on treating the eyes with a famous eye salve. Christ is telling them that no matter how much they treat their eyes, they are still blind and in the dark. Why? Because they do not spiritually see the Light of the world, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. They see only themselves...
- their prosperous life and blessings
 - their good behaviour
 - their abilities
 - their religious gifts
 - their good works
 - their wisdom
 - their prosperous church

They saw little if any of Christ Himself. They did not see their need for Him, nor did they see what His presence and power could do for them and their church. They were blinded to their own need and to Christ and the great difference He could make in life. The eye salve means the God-given ability to see spiritual truth. They needed to depend upon Christ to give them the ability to see the light of the world.

John 1:4 *In him was life, and that life was the light of men.*

John 8:12 *When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”*

1 Cor 2:14-15 *The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned. The spiritual man makes judgments about all things, but he himself is not subject to any man’s judgment.*

John 12:35 *Then Jesus told them, “You are going to have the light just a little while longer. Walk while you have the light, before darkness overtakes you. The man who walks in the dark does not know where he is going.”*

2 Cor 4:6 *For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.*

Eph 5:14 *For it is light that makes everything visible. This is why it is said: “Wake up, O sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.”*

Phil 2:15 *So that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe.*

2. Christ counsels them to be earnest and to repent. Note what Christ says: He loves them. They are lukewarm and indifferent to Him, only half-committed to Him, but He still loves them. The word used for love (philo) means a dear love, a tender, fatherly love. This is the reason He rebukes and chastens the lukewarm and half-committed person. It is not out of anger that Christ tells people they are doing wrong, sinning, coming short and are doomed. He tells them out of love. They must know they are doing wrong in order to correct their behaviour. They must know that judgment lies ahead so that they will do whatever is needed to save themselves. The Lord’s rebuke and chastening hand is for one purpose only: Christ loves them and wants them to see their wrong, correct their behaviour, and change their lives. He wants people to possess the fullness of life and the hope of eternal life.

Note: the matter is so critical that Christ exhorts them to be *earnest in repenting*. The word earnest means to boil and bum with zeal, sincerity and earnestness in repenting. It means to bum a path to repent; to get to the matter of repenting immediately. Being lukewarm and half-committed to Christ is so serious a matter that a person must repent immediately. A person cannot afford one minute more before repenting. He is bordering on being *spit out* of the mouth of Christ (v. 16).

3. Christ counsels them to *open the door of their heart* and to let Him in. This is one of the most beautiful and meaningful pictures of Christ in all of Scripture. At least five scenes are being pictured.
 - a. There is the *standing Christ*. He stands at the door. This symbolizes His readiness to enter the life of a person. He is the One who takes the initiative to save man.
 - => He is the One who has walked over and come to man. Man has not come to Him.
 - => He is the One who has approached man. Man has not approached Him.

Jesus Christ stands before the heart of man as the Saviour of the world, as loving man so much that He has come into the world to save man. He is the One who has travelled such a great distance from the majesty of heaven down to man’s heart.

Psa 34:18 *The LORD is close to the broken-hearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.*

Psa 145:18 *The LORD is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth.*

John 3:13 *No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven – the Son of Man.*

John 6:33, 38 *“For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.” “For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me.”*

John 6:50-51 *“But here is the bread that comes down from heaven, which a man may eat and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.”*

John 8:42 *Jesus said to them, “If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and now am here. I have not come on my own; but he sent me.”*

- b. There is the *knocking Christ*. He stands at the door and knocks. This symbolizes the seeking Christ. Christ has not only come to earth and walked over to man’s heart, He knocks upon the heart of man; He actively seeks to enter man’s heart. He knocks and knocks at the door of man’s heart and He refuses to give up. He keeps on knocking and knocking for man to open up and let Him in. Christ knocks so much that a person has to either open up or deaden his ears to the knock.

Mat 18:12 *“What do you think? If a man owns a hundred sheep, and one of them wanders away, will he not leave the ninety-nine on the hills and go to look for the one that wandered off?”*

Luke 15:4 *“Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Does he not leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it?”*

Luke 15:8 *“Or suppose a woman has ten silver coins and loses one. Does she not light a lamp, sweep the house and search carefully until she finds it?”*

Luke 19:10 *“For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost.”*

John 1:43 *The next day Jesus decided to leave for Galilee. Finding Philip, he said to him. “Follow me.”*

John 5:14 *Later Jesus found him at the temple and said to him, “See, you are well again. Stop sinning or something worse may happen to you.”*

John 9:35 *Jesus heard that they had thrown him out, and when he found him, he said, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?”*

- c. There is the *pleading Christ*. He pleads for entrance. This symbolizes the compassion of Christ. He not only knocks, He pleads and begs for man to open His heart. He is merciful and full of compassion. He knows what life should be, for He created life. Therefore, He knows that life must be lived in wholehearted commitment to righteousness or else it is wasted and doomed. He longs for man to have real life, abundant and eternal life. Therefore, He knocks and keeps on knocking at the door of a man's heart, and while He is knocking, He pleads and begs for the man to hear Him.

Thought 1. How often people hear the voice of Christ yet they refuse to let Him in! They hear His voice when they hear the Word of God preached and taught or witnessed to by a dynamic minister or some believer or from some tract or Bible literature. But they hardened their ears and pay no attention to the pleading of the Lord's voice.

Mat 11:28 *"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest."*

Mat 22:3-4 *"He sent his servants to those who had been invited to the banquet to tell them to come, but they refused to come. Then he sent some more servants and said, 'Tell those who have been invited that I have prepared my dinner: My oxen and fattened cattle have been butchered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding banquet.'"*

Mat 23:37 *"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing."*

Luke 14:17 *"At the time of the banquet he sent his servant to tell those who had been invited, 'Come, for everything is now ready.'"*

John 5:24 *"I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life."*

Rom 10:21 *But concerning Israel he says, "All day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and obstinate people."*

1 Cor 10:20 *No, but the sacrifices of pagans are offered to demons, not to God, and I do not want you to be participants with demons.*

Rev 22:17 *The Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life.*

Isa 1:18 *"Come now, let us reason together," says the LORD. "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool.*

Isa 55:1 *"Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost."*

d. There is the *penetrating Christ*. This is the most glorious promise imaginable! Imagine the Spirit of Jesus Christ living within the heart and life and body of a person. When a person hears His voice and opens his heart, Christ enters; He *penetrates* the life of the person. This symbolizes the life changing presence and power of the living Christ. When He enters and penetrates a person's life, He causes the most radical changes imaginable.

=> He causes the person to be *born again*.

John 3:3-5 *In reply Jesus declared, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again." "How can a man be born when he is old?"*

Nicodemus asked. "Surely he cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb to be born!" Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit."

=> He makes a *new creation* out of the person.

2 Cor 5:17 *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!*

=> He makes a *new person, a new self* out of the person.

Eph 4:24 *And to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.*

Col 3:10 *And have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.*

=> He changes the person's perishable nature into an *imperishable nature*.

1 Pet 1:23 *For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God.*

=> He gives the person a new *divine nature*, the very nature of God Himself.

2 Pet 1:4 *Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.*

e. There is the *companion Christ*. This symbolizes fellowship. When Jesus Christ enters and penetrates a person's heart. He lives forever within the life of the person. He is *always present* with the person...

=> looking after and caring for him.

=> talking and sharing with him.

=> leading and guiding him.

=> strengthening and empowering him.

- => providing for and meeting his needs.
- => manoeuvring and working all things out for good for him.
- => furnishing and filling him with love, joy and peace.

When Jesus Christ enters a life there is no good thing whatsoever that is kept from the person. He has the richest fellowship possible, fellowship and communion with the Son of God Himself. And the person has it forever and ever.

Luke 24:32 They asked each other, “Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?”

John 17:23 “I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.”

1 Cor 1:9 God, who has called you into fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, is faithful.

1 Cor 3:16 Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you?

1 Cor 6:19-20 Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; You were bought at a price. Therefore honour God with your body.

Gal 2:20 I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

Gal 5:22-23 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

Eph 3:17-19 So that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge — that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

Col 1:27 To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

VI. Revelation 03:21–22 The Glorious Promise

There is the promise to those who overcome. The promise is glorious! Those who overcome shall sit upon the throne of Christ and of God. The person who overcomes the lukewarmness and half-hearted commitment to Christ, who repents and turns his life over to Christ, shall sit upon the throne of Christ and of God. What does this mean?

- That we shall rule and reign with Christ forever and ever.
- That we shall be assigned certain duties in the new heavens and earth, given the responsibility to oversee and manage the universe for Christ (Mt. 25:21, 23; Lk. 19:17, 19).
- That we shall rule and oversee the work and duties of angels (1 Cor. 6:2-3).

It means that we shall rule as kings with Christ throughout the whole universe and for all of eternity (see *Rewards*, Rev 14:13. Also see Rev. 21:24-27.) ■