

Supplemental Study

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REVELATION

OUR FINAL VICTORY

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Jesus Wants a Useful Church

(Revelation 3:14-22)

The Seven Churches:

- **Ephesus** (symbolizing the apostolic church, A.D. 30-100)
- **Smyrna** (symbolizing the persecuted church, A.D. 100-312)
- **Pergamum** (symbolizing the church married to the world, A.D. 300-500)
- **Thyatira** (symbolizing the church of Middle Ages, A.D. 500-1500)
- **Sardis** (symbolizing the church of the Reformation, A.D. 1517-1800)
- **Philadelphia** (symbolizing the faithful, Christ-honoring, zealous, missionary-minded church that is in love with Jesus Christ, bringing glory to God, A.D. 1750-1900 AD)
- **Laodicea** (symbolizing the lukewarm Church, A.D. 1900- today)



Artist rendering of ancient Laodicea

Revelation 3:14–22 (NKJV) – Bible passage [my explanatory notes]

¹⁴ “And to the angel [messenger/pastor] of the church of the Laodiceans write, ‘These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness [Jesus is reminding them that what He says can be trusted – He is God’s final Word “the Amen” (see 2 Corinthians 1:20 and Isaiah 65:16).], the Beginning [literally “the Originator” see Col. 1:15, 18] of the creation of God:

¹⁵ “I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. [the waters of Hierapolis were hot, and the waters of Colossae were cold]

- “Six miles to the north lay Hierapolis, famed for its hot springs. Ten miles to the east lay Colosse, known for its cold, pure drinking water... Hierapolis’s streams were so well known for their healing qualities that the city became a major health center, while the cold, life-giving water of Colosse, the only place in the region it was available, may account for its original settlement. Laodicea had no water supply of its own... When it piped in its



Hierapolis (Not snow, but white calcium deposits)

water from the hot springs of Denizli [6 miles south via an aqueduct], the water did not have enough time to cool in the aqueducts but arrived “lukewarm” (χλιαρός, chliaros). Even today, people in the area place the water in jars to cool... [P]assages from Herodotus and Xenophon indicate that it was the temperature as well as the minerals that made the water undrinkable.”¹

¹ Grant Osborne, *Revelation: Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Group, 2002), 205.

- The mineral waters were full of calcium carbonate deposits, and the effect of attempting to drink the water would be to vomit (the Greek verb is apparent in the English word “emetic,” referring to a substance that induces vomiting). The water flowing over the cliffs of Hierapolis left spectacular deposits that were visible from Laodicea. Hemer describes the scenic wonders well: **“Hot, sparkling waters rise from deep pools on the city plateau. . . . The cliff . . . is some 300 feet high and extends nearly a mile. Its ever-changing reflections of light and colour are unspeakably beautiful, especially when viewed against the backdrop of the snowy peak of Cadmus.”** **Yet all this beauty also reminded Laodicea that their water was undrinkable. As such, it provided a perfect metaphor for the shallowness of the church: beautiful outwardly and sickening inwardly!** **The exalted Christ is challenging them with a powerful rhetorical question, “Don’t you realize that you make me sick?”**²

16 So then, because you are lukewarm [you are tepid, indifferent, and have no value], and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth. [the first time the waters were piped in and consumed from Hierapolis and Colossae, the temperature and minerals of the waters made the citizens want to vomit.]

- “Their spiritual condition was nauseating. It made Christ ill. Sadly they were unaware of their true spiritual status. They believed things were fine, but Jesus says, ‘No. **You are like the lukewarm, unfit drinking water that your city is infamous for.** You are not like the cold refreshing springs of Colossae or the hot healing waters of Hierapolis. You are lukewarm, and I will not stomach this.’”³

17 Because you say, ‘I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing’ [They were so wealthy that in A.D. 60 a devastating earthquake leveled their city, and they refused Rome’s financial help to rebuild. They did not need it.] — and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked—

18 I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see. [They were well-known for a Phrygian powder that, when mixed with water, would heal certain eye problems.]

19 As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent [or, zealously repent].

- “Mounce paraphrases, **‘Now my practice is that all those I love, I also correct and discipline.’** This passage condenses Prov. 3:11–12, ‘The LORD disciplines those he loves’ (cf. Prov. 13:24; Heb. 12:5–6), and teaches the biblical principle of divine love mandating discipline.”⁴

20 Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me. [This is an invitation given to believers, though it may be applied to anyone. Believers will be forgiven, accepted and welcomed to “share a meal” or fellowship with Jesus.]

21 To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne [A figurative expression meaning that we will share the privilege and authority that Christ enjoys as we reign with Him (1:6)⁵].

22 “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.” ’ ’ ’



Holman Hunt's "Light of the World" (1854)
With no outer handle, the door must be opened from within.

² Osborne, 206.

³ Daniel L. Akin, *Exalting Jesus in Revelation*, Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2016), 100.

⁴ Osborne, 211.

⁵ John MacArthur, *Revelation: The Christian's Ultimate Victory*, MacArthur Bible Studies (Nashville, TN: W Publishing Group, 2001), 27.