

# Patmos and the Seven Churches of Asia

By Doug Hamilton

## **VII) Laodicea: The Materialistic Church (3:14-22)**

*Rev 3:14 "And to the angel of the church in Laodicea write: The Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God..."*

Laodicea was 43 miles southeast of the Philadelphia church. It was founded in 250 B.C. by Antiochus, being named after his wife Laodice. What made it an important city was its location; it was the hub city connecting three primary roads leading to anywhere and everywhere in Asia Minor.

Rome brought relative peace to the area and prosperity naturally followed. At the time of the writing of the letter of Revelation, Laodicea was one of the richest cities in the world. This led to an attitude of independence and pride among those of the community and even the church. In AD 61, a devastating earthquake leveled the city and the Rome stepped in to offer aid for rebuilding. So rich and independent were their citizens that they turned down the offer for financial relief, personally footing the bill themselves. This will play a very important factor in understanding the church family in Laodicea.

Jesus was referenced in three things in this verse:

1) He is "The Amen".

What was the significance of this? The term "Amen" means the equivalent to our saying "bring it on". It is to be in complete agreement to whatever was being spoken. Jesus is the great "AMEN" of the Father. The words He spoke were of the Father, from the Father and because of the Father. Jesus was and is in complete agreement with the Father. Jesus and the Father are one (John 10:30). The words He spoke were not of His own, but the Father's (John 14:10). *"If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; from now on you know Him, and have seen Him* (John 14:7). Jesus is the great Amen because He is in complete agreement with the Father. Should our lives not also strive to be the Amen of Jesus? Should our lives not say Amen to the Savior?

2) He is also called the "faithful and true Witness".

Historically, there are three qualities in the first century to being a witness.

- a) First he must have seen with his own eyes that of which he tells, for how can someone bear witness to that which he has not seen?
- b) Second, he must have a dependable and faithful reputation, possessing an unchanging testimony.
- c) Third, he must have the ability to relay the message to make a true impression of the matter, possessing the power of true communication. When the phrase is



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spoken the “faithful and true Witness”, it communicates something wonderful to the Christian. Jesus is testifying to that which He knows. He has not nor will not waver in His testimony whether in blessing or judgment. He has always been up and precise in the relay of His message. Heaven and earth may pass away, but the words of Jesus will never pass away. He is the faithful and true Witness we need to know that heaven awaits all those who diligently serve Him.

### 3) He is also “the Beginning of the creation of God”.

This is not saying, as some cults may state, that Jesus was a created being. One does well to remember in Genesis 1:26, “*Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness..."*” Jesus is the creative force of the Triune God, standing outside of time, pre-human bodily form, making everything there ever was, ever is and ever will be. He carries the names of “the First and the Last”, “the Alpha and Omega”, “the Beginning and the End “.

- *John 1:3 All things came into being by Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.*
- *Colossians 1:16 For by Him all things were created, {both} in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities-- all things have been created by Him and for Him.*
- *Hebrews 1:2 in these last days has spoken to us in {His} Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world.*

Being “the Beginning of the creation of God” commands respect from all creation. Being “the Beginning of the creation of God” communicates power to get the job done regardless the task. **Being “the Beginning of the creation of God” clarifies that Jesus put the beginning in creation before the beginning began in the beginning.** He is truly “the Beginning of the creation of God”.

*Rev 3:15-16 'I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot; I would that you were cold or hot. <sup>16</sup> 'So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth.*

Colossae, located eight miles southeast, was known for its mountainous, cold, refreshing waters. Hierapolis, four miles to the north, was famous for its beneficial sulfur-smelling hot springs. In an effort to have both cold and hot running water, Laodicea had an aqueduct built to pipe the both source of water brought in.

Eventually both sources of water would end up in a public collection pool and was lukewarm. When travelers would come to the public pool after a great distance, come to the pool and drink



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the water. They would taste the lukewarm, sulfur-flavored water and spewing it out of their mouth. It would have been a common scene from this area and date.

What does this have to do with us today? Jesus expects us to be fully committed one way or another, being hot or cold toward Him, but never lukewarm. He does not want us to have two masters, but to serve Him fully. He wants us to choose whom we will serve, his house or our house. Jesus is in the presence of His people and with Him the expectations as spelled out in the Bible. He is the Amen of God, the faithful and true Witness and the firstborn from the dead. He is not messing around. **If He does not find what He desires concerning our lives, He will be spitting us out on the ground as well.**



*Rev 3:17-18 '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, I advise you to buy from Me gold refined by fire, that you may become rich, and white garments, that you may clothe yourself, and {that} the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and eye salve to anoint your eyes, that you may see...'*

## The Three Money-making Industries of Laodicea

### 1) The Banking Industry:

One of the three primary resources of income for the city was the **banking** industry. At the time of the writing, Laodicea was one of the richest cities in the world. This was the location that Cicero cashed in his letters of credit while traveling through. Every transaction spelled money for the banks. They had a booming economy and were convinced they had no need of anyone or anything.

### 2) The Eye Clinic:

The second money maker was the famous **eye clinic** located northwest of town closer to the hot springs of Heirpolis. If one traveled there today, they would find the sides of the hills covered with mineral deposits. These particular springs contained a good mixture of sulfur and other important minerals which are good for healing the eyes. The eye clinic



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staff would collect the dried sulfur and roll it into balls for eye-salve to be sent throughout the world.

### 3) The Clothing Industry:

A third form of income for the city was in the **manufacturing of clothing**. The sheep which grazed around the area were well-known for their extremely soft, violet-black, glossy wool. They mass-produced this material into outer garments, something that was a hot seller among the travelers passing through. Traders from all over the world were familiar with the Laodicean clothing and it was in heavy demand.

Jesus said they were wretched and miserable in His eyes. They are the opposite of the church in Smyrna. He said to the Smyrnans in *Rev 2:9* “*I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich)*”, but here Jesus was saying “I know your rejoicing and riches, but you are bankrupt.” There is a serious problem in the church there in Laodicea. In the last congregation, Philadelphia, He had nothing bad to say, but in this congregation He has nothing good to say.

The following reveals the true problem...*materialism*. They were trusting in the economy, the medicine, the clothing, and all the while Jesus was saying to them “Trust in Me!” In their eyes, they had the funds, the clothes, the eye medication and a false contentment, but in the eyes of the Lord they were poor, naked and blind.

What does Jesus say when He looks at us? Do you think that the church in America resembles Laodicea? Brothers and sisters, if we trust in anyone but God, we are fooling ourselves. Jesus deeply desires to be our source for the riches; He deeply desires to be the medicine to make us whole; He deeply desires to cover our nakedness, but we must yield to Him and not the materialism.

*Rev 3:19-22 'Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline; be zealous therefore, and repent. <sup>20</sup> '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. <sup>21</sup> '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. <sup>22</sup> 'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'*

The writer of Hebrews said in chapter 12 verse 6 “*For those whom the Lord loves He disciplines, and He scourges every son whom He receives*” This seemed to be the case in Laodicea. If God never took the time to correct us, then this would be an admission of hate. He loves, therefore He chastens. This warning is appropriate concerning the materialistic church, for someday their wealth will be gone; then what will be important? Jesus wants them to have a good life of dependency on Him by overcoming this problem.

Jesus is still standing at the door, knocking and desiring to come in and be part of our lives, but the materialism stands in the way. Christianity is different from every religion in the following way: **Man did not seek God, but God sought out man.** *1 John 4:19 We love, because He first loved us.* Jesus was taking the initiative to bring us to heaven. He is the One who first loved us. He drew the first blood in the covenant. Jesus was doing the knocking which

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confirms that the door only opens from the inside. Will they open the door to Him? Better yet, will we open the door to Him today?

What do they receive if they overcome? They would be allowed to dine with the Lord and rule with the Lord. **If they will just permit the knocking Savior to come into their house, He will be letting them come to His house.** The threshold of a door is where much is determined.

- Matthew 10:14 “Whoever does not receive you, nor heed your words, as you go out of that house or that city, shake the dust off your feet.
- John 10:1-2 “Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter by the door into the fold of the sheep, but climbs up some other way, he is a thief and a robber. 2 “But he who enters by the door is a shepherd of the sheep.
- James 5:9 Do not complain, brethren, against one another, so that you yourselves may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing right at the door.

Jesus will fellowship with us and. It doesn't get any better than this. What kind of comfort do you think this would be for them that will soon undergo the persecution? What kind of comfort does this provide you today in the midst of peace?

Christ wants us to keep the dinner date as the bride of Christ. Are you looking forward to sitting at the same table with Jesus? Jesus said we would be allowed to sit with Him and the Father on the throne. What kinds of people sit on a throne? Royalty of course! Those who are faithful in Christ need not worry about the riches of this world for we are royalty. Do we see ourselves as this?

Conclusion: We need to be careful that we are not pulled into materialistic Christianity. We must strive to lay up our treasures in heaven. If we are not careful, then the pain will be enormous when things on this earth begin to follow apart.