

Session 8: Laodicea: Spiritual Pride and Lukewarmness (Rev. 3:14-22)

INTRODUCTION

Well, we are continuing in a twelve part series on the seven churches in the book of Revelation—the seven churches in Asia Minor—because the message Jesus gave to these seven churches is specifically meant to prepare the church in the generation in which the Lord returns for the unique series of events which are released as portrayed in the book of Revelation.

So, though these messages had a very specific application to the churches 2000 years ago, they have a full application to the church in the generation which is going to see the events of the book of Revelation—the positive and the negative ones. These messages are specifically for the generation which sees these events released. The promises, the warnings and the insight into these seven churches are specifically meant to prepare the church.

REVELATION 3:14-18

Let's go ahead and read Revelation 3:14-17: "To the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write, 'These things says the Amen'"—now this is obviously Jesus giving three different titles concerning Himself—"these things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God (v.14): 'I know your works that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot (v.15). So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth (v.16). Because you say in your heart 'I am rich, I have become wealthy'" (v.17, paraphrased)—they are saying this as a church, but of course this is the individual confession of believers in the church at Laodicea as well—"because you say 'I have need of nothing'" (v.17, paraphrased)—in other words because they were not desperate to encounter the Lord and to go forward in the Lord, but they were content with where they were spiritually—"you do not know that in truth you are wretched, you are miserable, you are poor, you are blind and naked" (v. 17, paraphrased).

He says in Revelation 3:18: "I counsel you to buy from Me"—now He is going to give them three words of advice—"buy from Me gold which is refined in the fire. The purpose is that you will be spiritually rich" (v. 18, paraphrased). Number two: "Buy from Me white garments with the purpose that you will be clothed and so that the shame of your nakedness will not be revealed" (v.18, paraphrased). Number three: "Anoint your eyes with eye salve. The purpose of this is that you will be able to see or receive greater revelation" (v. 18, paraphrased).

HE REBUKES US BECAUSE HE LOVES US

Lest they misunderstand what is in His heart because of this rebuke and because of this chastening or this discipline, He says, "Know this, that as many as I love I rebuke" (19, paraphrased). He says, "I am only rebuking you because I love you.

Beloved, we are in trouble when the Lord does not rebuke us anymore. As long as the Lord is speaking correction that means we still have a future and He is still interested in our recovery. But when the Lord ceases to talk about the issues in our life which are contrary to His Word then we are in trouble. “As many as I love, I rebuke and I chasten. Therefore”—in other words because I really do love you and because your future is still within reach—“Therefore be zealous and repent” (v.19). To be zealous is the opposite of being lukewarm. He says, “Make some radical changes in your life and do them with full energy and repent. Be zealous and repent” (v.19, paraphrased).

REVELATION 3:20-22

Then He offers promises to them here in Revelation 3:20-22. “Behold I stand at the door” (v. 20). He is talking about the door of their heart and the door of the church in the corporate sense—the door of their heart in the individual sense. He says, “I am knocking” (v.20, paraphrased). He says, “I am pleading, I am inviting. I am urging you to allow Me to have entrance. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door”—speaking of the door of the heart—“I will come in to him. I will dine with this person and he with Me. To the one who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, in the way that I overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne. He who has an ear let him hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches” (v.20-22, paraphrased).

THE PRIMARY MESSAGE

The primary message of this prophetic word to the church in the city of Laodicea is of course very appropriate to the church today in the western world. Jesus is promising this prestigious, wealthy church, He is promising them deep fellowship with His heart.

When He says, “I will dine with you” (v.20, paraphrased), that is language—I mean He is literally going to dine with us in the age to come in the physical sense, in the resurrection, but He is using the word “dine” in the spiritual and physical sense. In this age it is spiritual—meaning, He will be near us in deep fellowship. He is promising deep fellowship, but He is also promising them a position in His eternal kingdom and He is promising them gold, garments, and deep revelation of His heart and of His Word.

It is interesting that to the church which gets the greatest rebuke and has the most compromise, He is giving the greatest promises. There is a message in this: that no one has gone too far if they will hear what the Spirit is saying and open their heart.

THE DOOR OF OUR HEART

Now it is interesting that to the church before the Laodiceans, to the church of the Philadelphians—Revelation 3:7-8—Jesus presents Himself as the One with the keys which can open doors that nobody can shut and can shut doors that nobody can open. However in the next church He makes the one exception. The only door He cannot open and will not open is the door of our heart. He says, “I can open all the doors but, because of the way I have chosen to run My eternal kingdom, I cannot open the door to your heart. I will not violate your free will, because the kingdom of God is run on the basis of voluntary love and voluntary partnership with Me” (v.

20, paraphrased). He can open any door but the one door He refuses to open, which He waits for us to open, is the door of our heart.

THE NEED TO REPENT

Now Jesus offers this prestigious church, this wealthy church, deep fellowship, an eternal position in the government of His kingdom, and gold, garments and revelation. However the only way they can receive this, is if they zealously repent of lukewarmness.

Now when somebody does that, it is a miracle. I have been in ministry now over 30 years and it is a miracle. I have seen it but I do not see it very often. When somebody has been in the kingdom for a while and they get familiar with the things of the world, they get entrenched in a mindset. They remember when they were on fire the first couple of years when everything seemed new. And now they have been in the kingdom five, ten, fifteen, twenty years and it happens occasionally that they repent of lukewarmness, but I do not see it often.

It is a miraculous work of the Holy Spirit when a person repents or even better than that, when an entire ministry repents in a zealous way. I do not mean for a weekend or for a summer but they repent with zeal. They leave no stone unturned until they connect with God.

It is one thing to repent for a moment under the influence of an inspiring weekend or conference, it is another thing to repent with zeal. Jesus says, “If you repent with zeal these promises are still within your reach, but it will take radical changes of your mindset related to your time and your goals, but if you do it I will give you gold, I will give you garments, I will give you increased revelation” (v.18-19, paraphrased). He is talking about this age and the age to come. They all have application now and in the age to come.

SPIRITUAL BLINDNESS

Now the problem the Laodiceans had was their spiritual blindness. They could not see that they had a problem, which is really the essence of pride. The way things were, seemed good enough. Even though God was pleading with them and beckoning them to change, they were content. It seemed that things were good enough. That is the essence of pride. They did not have to take drastic steps to respond to God on His terms, because they were continuing to come to God on their own terms, even as believers.

MISINTERPRETING FINANCIAL BLESSINGS

One of the main problems they had—and it is very prevalent in the church in America—is that they misinterpreted why they had financial blessings. Now lest you think I am picking on the wealthy in America, I am not, because I am going to address the problems of wealth.

But do not think of multi-millionaires from a global perspective and a historical perspective. Even the poor in America are wealthy from a historical and global point of view. I mean many of the poor, not all the poor. There are exceptions in our nation, but most of them still eat on a daily basis. They have heat, they have some form of transportation—things like that. On a global scale

and a historical scale the majority of the human race could not say that. Even those who are really simple in the western world, they are among the wealthy from the global point of view.

One of the problems that this wealthy church had—and of course in the West, and particularly in America there are so many large, influential, wealthy churches—they misinterpreted the reason God gave them financial wealth. In Deuteronomy 8:18 the Lord says—through Moses—“Remember the Lord your God, for it is He who gives you the power to get wealth, so that He may establish His covenant which He swore to your fathers.”

Now most people are familiar with this basic idea, so there is a lot of emphasis in the body of Christ in America on the legitimate biblical promises of wealth, but the problem is that when our wealth grows faster than our heart grows, negative dynamics take place that are very serious. We must not allow financial prosperity to hinder our heart prosperity and our eternal treasure, our heavenly treasure. That is a nice statement to make, but this principle is mostly neglected.

THE DANGER OF INCREASE

People will usually take wealth any time it is available. They don't understand the idea that they should draw back from opportunities, because their heart will be injured in God or they will be forced to neglect some of their relationship with God, just through the sheer weight of managing increase. Whether it is increase in influence, increase in finance or increase in popularity, most people cannot do well or they do not do well with managing increase. I will just put it that way.

Now the Lord offers a way to do it well, but when increase comes—I have seen it for 30 years in ministry—when somebody's ministry goes from little to big, more times than not, five years later, most people look back and they have lost the vitality in their relationship with the Lord. They have not been able to manage the increase. That is what happened to the Laodiceans. The increase of their external blessing was bigger than the increase of their spiritual life, so they lost out. It is a really serious loss.

It seems noble to say these sorts of things. People say, “That is really neat but it is not really that practical.” Beloved, we need to say “no” to increase when it gets in the way of the increase of our relationship with the Lord. It is real, it is not just a hypothetical situation. It is real in many people's lives. It is unthinkable to people to actually say “no” to the increase in opportunities.

We have a lot of ministries here at IHOP-KC which are growing and flourishing—a lot of open doors. Some really have the wisdom to say “no” to some of the open doors. Others cannot bear the idea of missing an opportunity to get bigger. We do not want to forget why it is that God prospers us, whether He prospers us in economics or in influence. In favor He prospers us for His own purposes to establish His covenant.

OUR SOUL MUST PROSPER

Now of course John, who wrote the book of Revelation, also wrote this in 3 John 2: “Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers,” It is not enough to prosper in all things externally. Our soul must prosper. We must be growing in

spiritual vitality with a vibrant heart or the very increase will end up being a great hindrance in our life in the big picture.

One more point on finances, because it is such an important part of the Laodicean problem and this problem is happening in the church in America: it is more difficult for the rich to enter the kingdom of heaven. Jesus said it—the ultimate psychologist, Jesus, the man with the greatest insight into the processes of the human heart—He said, “I want to tell you something, I will tell you for sure: “It is not impossible, but if you are rich, whether in finances or in influence or in favor, it will be more difficult to experience the kingdom of heaven” (Mt. 19:23, paraphrased).

INTENTIONALLY CULTIVATE YOUR LIFE IN GOD

Now the answer is not to automatically cast increase aside. The answer is to diligently, with an honest heart, ask what the Holy Spirit is saying each step of the way. Jesus said in Matthew 19:23: “It is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven.”

Now do not think of rich in money only. Think of rich in influence and rich in favor. It is not impossible by any means, but it is just hard. As long as you know it is hard, half the battle is won right there by being aware that God-given increase brings with it spiritual difficulty. I am going to say it again, “God-given increase brings with it spiritual difficulty.” It is hard to enter, meaning, to experience the kingdom of heaven. That difficulty does not stop after you are born again.

I find that the more my ministry increases in size and influence, the more difficult it is to stay focused and connected to the Lord. I have seen that over the years—a few times in the last 30 years I have lost my way in the wake of increase. You know, some time goes by, some months or longer and it becomes clear to me. I have had to make real radical changes to make sure I have time to cultivate my life with the Lord.

Your life in God will not automatically grow. It must be cultivated intentionally. And that intentional cultivation takes time. It takes time to have a vibrant heart. I remember one pastor told me years ago. He said, “When I hear you talk it is almost like you say that there is a relationship between how much time you spend with the Lord, and how tender your heart is with the Lord.”

I said, “Absolutely there is a relationship”—although it is not the only point. I said, “There is an absolute correlation between the time we spend with God and the growth of our heart.” The part which was shocking to me is that that principle was shocking to him.

He said, “I have never thought such a thought.”

I had to bridle my tongue. No really! I just had to. I said, “You have never thought such a thought, that there is a correlation between how much time you spend with God and how tender your heart is in the Spirit?”

Now we do not have to lose our way with riches. I am not talking about just money but I am talking about money, I am talking about influence, I am talking about favor. We do not have to lose our way, but most do. Just the truth of history is that most do. They become more spiritually shallow and they do not know it.

THE CHURCH OF LAODICEA

A little introduction, just a short introduction to the church of Laodicea: Laodicea was a wealthy city. It was a center of banking, manufacturing and medicine. One of the things it was famous for was its medical school. The medical school there had developed a treatment, a special treatment to cure specific eye diseases. That is what Jesus refers to when He talks about eye salve. They all knew about the eye salve. The eye salve was an eye treatment, a cream they put on their eyes when they had a certain disease. Jesus is saying, "Treat your spiritual eyes in the way that your city is treating their physical eyes" (v. 18, paraphrased).

THREE DESCRIPTIONS OF JESUS HEART

Now Jesus is going to give three descriptions of His heart and of His ministry to them. Each of these three descriptions tells us how He feels about us. they give us insight and they tell us what He will do for us if we call on Him to do it.

The descriptions in each of these seven letters are specifically related to the temptation to compromise which was experienced by each of the churches. These three descriptions also correlate with the promise that He gave them.

So if we are challenged by the compromise of the Laodiceans and we are zealous to have the promises of the Laodiceans, we want to really understand by the Holy Spirit these three dimensions of Jesus' heart and of His ministry toward them.

First, He calls Himself the Amen. Secondly, He calls Himself the Faithful and True Witness. He is a witness before God. He is God's witness. He is a faithful and true one. So first He is the Amen. Secondly, He is the Faithful Witness, and thirdly, He is the Beginning of the creation of God.

THE AMEN

The Amen. Again, this is going to help us overcome the compromise of the Laodiceans and to enter into the promises which He gives the Laodiceans—both of them. "The Amen" means that which is true. Most of you are aware of that. Or it means "that which is promised or established". He calls Himself "the Amen of God" for several reasons. Number one because His promises are true, but it is more than that. It is more than that. The "Amen" was pronounced by the congregation or by an individual whenever the person or the congregation agreed with the promises of an oath and the negative consequences of breaking that oath.

So when a person said, "Amen", they said, "I agree with the promises and I agree with the conditions. I am willing to accept the negative consequences because I am binding myself to the consequences, positive ones as well as negative ones."

TO BE IN FULL AGREEMENT

So when they said, “Amen”, they were saying, “I am in full agreement”. And when Jesus names Himself “the Amen of God” (v. 14 paraphrased), He is saying, “As a man I lived in perfect agreement with My Father. I did not just believe from My heart the promises that He had for Me, but I lived in agreement with the promises, the conditions and the consequences if the conditions were not kept” (v. 14, paraphrased).

When Jesus offers Himself to us as the Amen of God, He is saying, “You have got to come to Me on My terms and not just agree with My promises, but agree with the conditions too. So, I am the Amen of God.

The Amen does not only mean the good is true. The Amen means the bad is true too. All the promises of God are “yes” and “amen”, but so are the judgments of God unless there is repentance, because God cannot break His word. He cannot violate His character in any way. So, when the Lord reveals Himself to me as the Amen, it is as if He is saying, “Mike I want you to agree with Me in the way I agreed with My Father when I walked on the earth.

THE FAITHFUL AND TRUE WITNESS

He is more than the Amen of God. He is the Faithful and True Witness. He speaks what is reliable. He speaks what is truthful. This is particularly important to the Laodiceans because He is going to tell them the truth—positively and negatively. Both of them are extreme.

He is going to give them promises so high, so seemingly too good to be true that He says, “Before I even tell you the promises I want to tell you that I am a faithful witness” (v.14, paraphrased). “Yes, in the resurrection I will dine with you. I will have meals with you and unhindered fellowship, for real. I will do this” (v. 20, paraphrased).

The believer says, “Really?”

He says, “Really! I will give you a position in My eternal government, a position of authority” (v. 21, paraphrased).

FAITHFULNESS IS A REQUIREMENT

Now, all believers do not have a position of authority in Jesus’ government. All believers have a role in the kingdom but the vast majority will not have positions of authority in the kingdom. There are real specific requirements of faithfulness. It does not matter what your gifting is. You can have very little training and very seemingly minimal gifting, yet you could have a high position of authority and involvement in the kingdom in the age to come, strictly based on faithfulness.

I call the judgment seat of Christ “the great equalizer”. It does not matter who you know or what your giftings are in this age if you say “yes” with diligence and zeal you will have that position in the age to come.

Now, why do we want a greater position with the Lord in the age to come? Because we want to work closely with Him. We want to be with Him where He is. We want to be doing what He is doing.

I want to be involved in the government of the kingdom in the age to come because He is, and because what happens in the government is important to Him. I want to talk to Him. I want to be close to Him. I want to do the things that are highest on His heart, which is part of being involved in the government of His kingdom.

So He offers them these great promises and then He adds to it, “I will give you gold in the age to come. I will give you garments even in the age to come, and I will give you the spirit of revelation in this age and the age to come” (v.18, paraphrased).

JESUS SPEAKS WITH PERFECT SPEECH

He says, “I am a true witness. I am not exaggerating any of this. You can count on all of this. No matter what it costs you to obey Me, if you do it you will find out I was a faithful witness to the promises. I did not exaggerate any of them” (v. 14, paraphrased).

But as truthful as He is in the positive He is equally truthful in the negative. There is no flattery. There is no exaggeration in His Word to His people, because He loves us. Jesus speaks with perfect speech. In our context we would call it a bridled tongue. He does not add to the promises. He does not flatter. He does not reduce. He does not exaggerate in any way.

JESUS: THE BEGINNING OF GOD’S CREATION

He goes on to call Himself “the Beginning of the creation of God”. Now the word “beginning” throws people off. A lot of the cult groups through history will use this phrase and several like it, thinking that Jesus was maybe the first one created, or at least that He was created.

Jesus is uncreated like the Father and the Spirit. There was never a time Jesus did not exist. He is forever the uncreated God. And now, from the incarnation on, He is fully man.

Being the beginning of the creation of God does not mean the beginning in terms of time, it means that He is first in terms of the cause of the creation of God. As God, before creation, He was the first cause which brought it into being. As a man He is the first in authority over the creation of God, as the son of David because He lived obedient as a man. God the Father is giving Him authority over all creation. It is His’ as a man. So He is the beginning of—the source or the cause of—creation and He is the beginning or the first in authority over all creation. That is what He is telling them.

Now why is He mentioning this to them at this time? There are several reasons. Number one: the Laodiceans were very impressed with their financial opportunities and their prosperity. Jesus was in essence saying, “Look who is talking to you. I have more money than all the Roman Empire. Look who I am. I am the beginning, I am number one. I am the source of creation itself. How

much more is this, than the money you are impressed with” (v. 14, paraphrased). He says, “I can give you favor beyond anything that you can get, Laodicea. I have the power to give you a place on My throne, because I have the first position of authority over all” (v.21, paraphrased). He is trying to awaken them to pay more attention to Him than to their opportunities.

That sounds obvious but it is so common for a businessman or a businesswoman or a ministry that has a little increase going, to be so enraptured in their increase, so preoccupied with it. Jesus says, “I am the Beginning. I am the first in authority over all creation. Come to Me. I have the power to set you in the place I have called you to, far beyond anything you can touch right now in this age” (v. 14, paraphrased). That is what He is saying to them.

CORRECTION FOR COMPROMISE

The affirmations for faithfulness. You know, five of the seven churches were affirmed. Two of them, Laodicea and Sardis, were the only ones which were not affirmed.

Now He is going to give them the correction for their compromise. He says in Revelation 3:15-16 (paraphrased): “I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish that you were cold or hot, but because you are spiritually lukewarm, because you are passive”—to be lukewarm means to be passive in their relationship with the Lord—He says, “Because you are neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth” (v.16).

This is an interesting concept, because He makes it clear to them that He is only correcting them because He loves them so dearly. So this does not mean that He despises them. That is not what He is talking about. If He despised them He would not be correcting them.

He says in Revelation 3:17: “Because you say, ‘I am rich, I have become wealthy, and I have need of nothing, and you do not know’”—He describes them in five ways. Now He is speaking as the Faithful Witness.

TENDER CORRECTION

Mostly you are not going to find someone in the body of Christ who loves you and who will talk this straight to you. It is rare to have somebody speak with tenderness with this kind of clarity—with tenderness. So if you have that person in your life, bless them. Do not get rid of them because Jesus is speaking in tender love, but with precision.

If they do not see it now they will have to come face to face with it at the judgment seat of Christ. I have said through the years, “Lord shock me now. Do not shock me then.”

That is what He is doing to the Laodiceans, but this is the sort of thing the Holy Spirit would say to somebody who is listening. He is not saying, “I despise you.” As a matter of fact in Revelation 3:19 (paraphrased) He says, “I love you. I have plans for you. As a matter of fact I am inviting you to rule in My kingdom with Me and to dine with Me. I really like you. I want to have dinners with you, many of them.”

TO BE HOT IS TO BE FERVENT

He says, “You are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot”(v. 15). Now to be hot is to be fervent. It is the word “fervent” from Romans 12, where Paul the apostle says that we should be fervent in spirit. I think it is Romans 12:11. To be hot is the same word as fervent. He says, “I wish you were fervent. If you are not fervent I would actually rather that you would be cold” (v. 15, paraphrased).

Some commentators will use cold as, you know, cold is refreshing and hot is on fire. I do not think that is what it means although I understand that concept. I think He is saying, “I wish you were fervent, but I actually I would rather you be cold” (v. 15, paraphrased). Because if you are cold at least you know you are in trouble, but a person who is lukewarm is in trouble and they are very difficult to reach.

When a person is under the pain of a cold heart, I mean, when nothing is moving—they cannot feel His presence at all and they have no sense of connection with God, whether believer or unbeliever—I know a lot of believers like this. They become desperate—they can. They have ears to hear. They are paying attention because of the pain of the coldness. Though Jesus does not want anybody to be cold, there is a better chance of them repenting in their great need, with their burden of spiritual coldness. They are easier to convert when they know they are in trouble.

THE LUKEWARM CHURCH IN AMERICA

Much of the church in our nation is lukewarm. I believe this is the clearest prophetic word for the church in America. It is wealthy, lukewarm, and pretty confident that they are doing well. It is a disaster. I want to say that strongly. The church in our nation is in a serious, serious position before God right now. And the church is getting bigger, richer and more confident and has less insight than possibly any time in America’s history.

The Lord loves the church in America. If we love the church in America we don’t want to flatter her. We do not want to rail against the church. We want to speak tenderly but honestly.

HE DOESN’T DESPISE THEM

He says, “Because you are lukewarm I am going to vomit you out of My mouth. Now what this does not mean—He is not saying, “I despise you.” He says the very opposite because in Revelation 3:19 He says that He loves them, and in Revelation 3:20 He says that He wants to have many dinners with them, and deep fellowship in Revelation 3:21. He wants to have fellowship with them forever. So, it is not that He despises them. He has not lost interest in them at all.

What He is saying is, “My heart is sick” (v.16, paraphrased). When somebody vomits they are sick. He says, “My heart is sick. My stomach is sick. When I look at you it hurts Me because I see what you are lacking in your relationship with Me. It actually hurts My heart. It hurts My stomach. When I look at you it hurts Me” (v.16, paraphrased). That is what He is saying. He is not saying, “I despise you.” He is saying, “It pains Me, but I am not going to let go of you” (v. 15-16, paraphrased).

I WILL VOMIT YOU OUT OF MY MOUTH

That is number one, but there is a second dimension which is pointed out here. There is a warning. One is a statement of His emotion of pain, because He wants them so badly, but there is a point in time where He will bring His discipline to a whole other level. The phrase He uses is, “I will vomit you out of My mouth” (v. 16, paraphrased). This is a clear reference to Leviticus 18 where it talks about—it uses this figurative language. Look, I will just read it. Leviticus 18:25: “For the land is defiled; therefore I will visit the punishment of it’s iniquity upon it, and the land will vomit its inhabitants out.”

Now that is obviously not literal. It is figurative, it is a word picture. “You shall therefore keep My commandments—or My statutes—lest the land vomit you out when you defile it” (v. Lev 18:26-28).

Now what this is talking about—in this figurative language—is that the land was a place which was in the position to bless them—a position of blessing and favor. Israel was vomited out of the land. Deuteronomy 28 actually came to pass when they were taken into Babylonian captivity in 587 BC. They were taken as slaves, as prisoners out of the land in order to wake them up as a nation. So they were removed from the place of blessing to wake them up. Not because the covenant with them was over, but to wake them up, to assure that the covenant promises would eventually come to pass.

The language is that the land—the place of favor, the place of blessing—there was an expulsion out of the land is the idea. They were driven out of the land, out of the place of blessing.

A WARNING IN ORDER TO WAKE THEM UP

Now this is the main passage in the Scripture where this language is used. Jesus is actually warning them. He is revealing the pain He feels toward them because they have so much potential, because of His love for them.

He says, “I will vomit you out” (v. 16). In other words, “I will remove you from the place of blessing if that is the only way I can wake you up” (v. 16, paraphrased), just like the land vomited its inhabitants out—which of course was the nation of Israel—in order to wake them up, in order that the covenant would eventually be fulfilled.

That was the purpose of it. It was not to cast them off. It was to wake them up. Jesus is saying this clearly in reference to Leviticus 18. There is an ominous tone to this when He is quoting Leviticus 18—this is really serious. “I am in pain and I am going to wake you up even if it causes you pain, because I am in pain about our relationship. You say you are rich and you are wealthy” (v. 17, paraphrased)—He is talking about financially rich.

It is as if He says, “OK, you are rich. This has been My blessing, it has been My hand which has been upon you.” That is the confusing part. Financial riches really is the favor of God, but it is

the favor of God in order to awaken love—grateful love—in them. Not to make them too busy for God.

THEY WERE INTOXICATED WITH THEIR BLESSING

How many ministries have we seen over the years, any number of us—God’s favor is on them, they have influence and increase. And that very influence and increase causes them to lose their walk with God. It happens all the time.

He says, “You say that you have need of nothing” (v. 17, paraphrased). It is as if He says, “You ought to be desperate. You ought to be more focused on crying out to God, on rending your heart, on filling your heart with the Word, and waiting before Me, but you do not see any great need.”

This is their arrogance. They just went on trying to manage their increase so it would keep increasing—their external increase. And their hearts were getting smaller and smaller, but it did not trouble them. This is the epitome of arrogance before God: that it is good enough to do it my way even though God is beckoning me through His Word to do it in another way. They were intoxicated. They were not desperate. They were intoxicated with their blessing.

MORE LORD!

Many people say, “I need more of Jesus.” I rarely meet a believer who does not—who would not say this. I have not met too many believers who say, “I have need of nothing.”

You meet them particularly in a Charismatic type context. They say, “Oh, I have got to have more of God, more of the Spirit, more of God, more of the Spirit, but the way they spend their time and money say something different.

I mean it is really normal for everyone to say, “I need more of Jesus, anything, anything Lord.” They say “Lord we need more of You.”

And the Lord answers back and effectually says, “Oh, I want more of you.

“More Lord!”

And it is as if the Lord says, “More, Mike! Mike, I want more of you!”

It is true. “More Lord, I want more of You.”

He effectually says, “I want more of you as well.”

It is very common—I mean, it is the culture of the prophetic church—to cry out for more of God. I mean, it is common to have language for it, but the way we spend time and money says something opposite to the truth of a lifestyle of seeking more.

YOU ARE WRETCHED

He says, “You do not know” (v. 17)—and He gives them five descriptions. These are tender. They really are. The reason they are tender is because they are true. They are the real analysis of the church in this city which was famous for its medical school. He is giving them a diagnosis which will cure them.

He says, “You are wretched”—that would mean calloused and spiritually dull—you are wretched” (v. 17). Now “wretched” seems like such a horrible word. Nobody would ever use it on themselves, but a lot of people would say, “My heart is unmoved. I do not feel God’s presence in the Word. I am spiritually dull.” Just go all the way and say, “I am wretched.” That is what that means. He says, “You are spiritually dull and calloused at the heart level. My Word does not move you. Maybe it used to, but it has not moved you in a long time” (v. 17, paraphrased).

YOU ARE MISERABLE

“You are miserable” (v. 17). “Miserable” means physically sick, spiritually sick. Now one of the signs of a person who is in the intensive care unit—somebody who is really miserable, I mean they are really sick—they have no appetite. One of the signs of somebody’s recovery from a really critical illness is that they regain their appetite.

So many believers have almost no appetite for the Word or prayer or God’s presence. I am talking about in their personal life. They can go to meetings as long as the music is good, but I am talking about just them and God—they have almost no appetite. I mean—I appreciate that and have mercy on that—but they do not think of themselves as miserable, as sick. They think of it as normal because they are so accustomed to it. So, they are calloused and they are unmoved. They do not have an appetite for the Word.

A lot of folks would say, “Well, that is kind of me.”

“Well, that is wretched and miserable. That is what that is.”

“Oh, I thought I was doing pretty good. You know, my friends say I am on fire.”

“Well your friends do not get to vote at the judgment seat of Christ.” For real, where I am going and where you are going, nobody else gets to vote except for the Lord.

YOU ARE POOR

He says, “You are poor, you are spiritually deficient, you are not strong. Not just that you are spiritually deficient, but you are weak”—poor and weak would be the same idea. “You have not accumulated any eternal treasure in the age to come. You are poor. Literally poor in the sense of having treasure in the age to come. You do not have anything acquired for the age to come. You are poor, you are weak, you are blind. You lack revelation of God and of yourself”—your own condition—“and you are naked” (v. 17, paraphrased). What He is saying is, “You do not have garments” (v. 17, paraphrased).

OUR ETERNAL GARMENTS

There is so little understanding about spiritual garments in the age to come. Now we all have the gift of righteousness. Every born again believer has the gift of righteousness. The gift of righteousness, the robe of righteousness is foundational to every believer, but you will have many garments in the age to come.

I say this as a bit of a joke but it is—it gives a good word picture. You know a lot of folks think there are going to be several billion believers all with the same white T-shirt for billions of years. That is all they are going to have, billions of people with one white T-shirt each, for billions of years.

God made the city with marvelous jewels and splendor and color. The food is awesome and so are all the assignments, but He forgot the clothing thing. Everyone has a white gown, period, that is it, for billions of years.

That is just wrong. Your life will have many, many dimensions and types of clothing for every different situation in the eternal city. Everyone's clothing will be different. A lot of people's clothing they will lack the evidence of rewards because the gift of righteousness is a free gift. Their garments will shout and speak of their spiritual passivity and their selfishness in this age. They will wear them.

Jesus is saying this several times in the book of Revelation. He says, "You want to avoid the shame of that reality" (v. 18, paraphrased). Now, you have confidence with God. You know that He loves you, but your garments will proclaim widely your spiritual shallowness and selfishness in this age. He says, "You *do* want to have clothing in the age to come which depicts your spiritual vitality in this age" (v. 18, paraphrased). This is something most believers never think about, but it is repeated quite a few times in the Bible.

BUY FROM ME GOLD REFINED IN THE FIRE

Now He says, "I counsel you to get three things: get gold, get gold refined by fire. The point is that you would be rich" (v. 18, paraphrased). All three of these exhortations: gold, garments and eye salve all three of them have an application in this age and all three of them have an application in the age to come. "Buy gold that you may be rich" (v. 18).

We are rich spiritually in this age by having a vibrant heart, but we are rich in the age to come with real gold in terms of our crowns, our garments, and our dwellings. There is real treasure in the age to come which you will really, really care about.

You say, "No, I am just happy with Jesus. That is good enough." Well Jesus is the One advising us to get gold.

Some think that maybe Jesus got a little bit off here. Actually I mean that. I have talked to believers through the years about eternal rewards and they say, "I am not really into that."

I say, “So, you think Jesus was a little misguided, right? You think Jesus did not grasp how pure your motivations were, so He added a defiling motivation to you?”

They say, “Lord it is good enough just to have you.”

It is as if the Lord says, “Well, maybe you are going to want this.”

ETERNAL REWARDS

In other words to cast off eternal rewards as irrelevant or secondary is to say that Jesus was a little misguided in pressing the point. Of course He was not. This is Jesus, saying, “I really advise you to get gold. You really want it” (v. 18, paraphrased).

There is gold in this age—that would be our character and our heart transformation. That will be gold in the age to come for billions of years. And the purpose of gold is to be rich. That is the point of it.

I unashamedly want to be great in God’s sight in the age to come and I want to be rich in heaven. I want treasure related to my heart responses in this age. I decided many years ago to cast aside religious false humility which said that Jesus missed it when He pressed us to do this. I am agreeing with Him. He knows what He is talking about.

BUY FROM ME BRIGHT GARMENTS

He went on and said, “I secondly advise you to get garments” (v. 18, paraphrased). Now the word “white” in some translations is “bright” and as we will see in a minute, in Revelation 19 it is the word “bright”. There are many different colors in our garments but they are dazzling and they are bright in the glory of God.

The reason you want white garments—He is talking to born again believers here who have the gift of righteousness. He is not talking to unbelievers. He is not telling people to earn their salvation. He is talking to people that have the gift of salvation. That is already done, it is settled. No, He is talking about rewards. The reason you want these garments is that you may be clothed with them, that you may wear the expression of the intimacy in your relationship with the Lord, your nearness to Him, and your position with Him, so that your shame of not having these garments would not be revealed—would not be shone forth.

ANOINT YOUR EYES

Then the third thing He says is, “I advise you to anoint your eyes” (v. 18, paraphrased). In Laodicea it was a physical process. They took this cream, so to speak, this powder mixed together with liquid and they would put it on their eyes. They used natural things to heal their eyes.

When He says, “Anoint your eyes” (v. 18)—now only the Holy Spirit can anoint our eyes in the spiritual sense of opening the eyes of our heart—Ephesians 1:17-18. Only the Holy Spirit can

open the eyes of our heart, but the anointing of the eyes means, “Put the ointment on your eyes” (v. 18, paraphrased). In other words, “Take the steps that are necessary to get spiritual vision.” To anoint your eyes means to put ointment on them and that was a natural thing they did in that city when their eyes were diseased.

In our context it means to sit at the feet of Jesus, to take time. Go through the natural processes which position you to gain revelation of the Lord. That is what it means to anoint your eyes. The word “anoint” throws people off because “anoint” always means the Holy Spirit. “Put the cream on your eyes” (v. 18, paraphrased), is what He is really saying, because people—believers and unbelievers—would anoint themselves with oil. They would anoint themselves with perfumes and all kinds of things. “Apply the ointment” (v. 18, paraphrased), is what He is saying.

Are you anointing your eyes? Are you taking the natural steps in your schedule and at the heart level. Are you putting the cream on your eyes? Are you putting yourself in a position to receive revelation from the Lord?

“Well Lord, here I am if You want me. Give me revelation. You know where I am at if You want me.”

It is as if the Lord says, “It doesn’t work that way. You know where I am at if you want Me. You sit before Me. In that way you are anointing—you are putting the natural cream on your eyes, so to speak.

GOD’S REBUKE IS A SIGN OF HIS LOVE

Then He goes on to say, “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten” (v. 19). Now it is interesting that the word “love” here in Revelation 3:19 is the word “philio”. You know Philadelphia, the city of brotherly love. We all know about agape love, the unconditional love, God’s kind of love. This is “philio”. This is the affectionate love, the enjoyment. God never uses the word “philio” to unbelievers.

You know “God so loved the world”, that is “agape”, but here He is telling these compromising, spiritually passive believers, “I “philio” you. I have affection for you ” (v.19, paraphrased). This is not just the distant love of God for an unbeliever. It is as if He is saying, “I am going to chase you down and if you say “no”, you do end up in the lake of fire.”

This is an affectionate, relational love. He says, “I love you. That is why I am rebuking you and I want you to repent zealously. I want you to do radical things—radical! Be zealous! Do not repent a little bit. Make massive changes in the way you carry your heart, what you do with your time, what you do with your money, what you do with your words. Make radical changes, not little baby steps. Be zealous! Repent with zeal! Be fervent” (v. 19, paraphrased)!

YOU WILL DINE WITH ME

We will just end with this: He gives the two promises. The two promises for the overcomers: “They will dine with Me” (v. 20, paraphrased). Of course you know that in the ancient world to

dine with somebody was a lot more than having a coffee with somebody. It was a covenantal meal. It was a statement of permanent, deep friendship, where they would open their heart to one another. He is saying, “I will open My heart to you. We will open our hearts and covenant ourselves together as friends” (v. 20, paraphrased), is what He is saying in essence. That is the language He is using.

Now of course the Lord has made a covenant with every believer, but He is talking about it in friendship language here. He says, “I want friendship with you, Laodiceans. You are making My stomach sick and My heart sick. If I have to vomit you out of the place of blessing to wake you up, I will, because I love you, because I want deep friendship with you”—Revelation 3:21—“I want to share My throne with you. I want you to sit with Me the way I sit on My Father’s throne.

TWO THRONES

Now there are two thrones here in Revelation 3:21. There is the Father’s throne in heaven and there is Jesus’ throne on the earth. That is what this is talking about. It is talking about Jesus’ throne as the son of David—His Millennial throne is what He is talking about. Jesus is on a throne next to the Father right now as the son of David, as a man.

Now, I mean, Jesus is fully God. He is the uncreated God. Jesus is as uncreated and as much God as the Father and the Spirit are, but the throne on which Jesus is sitting is a throne which He inherited because of His obedience as a man—the throne of David. That is the throne He has on the earth which He is going to share with us—the government of the earth—as a human being.

I STAND AT THE DOOR AND I KNOCK

He says, “I stand at the door, I knock, I knock” (v. 20, paraphrased). I mean, this is so powerful. He says, “I knock. I will not give up. I will not draw back” (v. 20 paraphrased).

The Lord is knocking. This may be the 50th time you have heard the cry. Let go of what you are doing and press in. The Lord says, “I am going to keep knocking, because I love you. I am not giving up on you” (v. 20, paraphrased). He is knocking! He is knocking! He is knocking!

Keep knocking. Keep knocking. He says, “I will not open the door of your heart. You must open it” (v. 20, paraphrased). But He says here, “If anyone hears My voice, I do not care what kind of bondage you are in, I do not care what kind of compromise you lived in the last week or the last ten years, if anyone opens the door I will come in and this whole thing, all these promises will be set into motion” (v. 20-21, paraphrased).

Amen and amen! Let’s stand. We are going to ask the Lord to touch our hearts as we open our hearts to Him. We are going to ask the Lord to come and touch us, to give us grace.

I want to call us, as we are standing up in the presence of the Lord, to not just repent, but to repent zealously. I do not want to be just a little bit more on fire than the guy I know over there or the guy next to me or something. I want to walk in the fullness of what He has for me. And that is what you want. I do not want to be just a little bit hotter than some other guy. That means

nothing. So we are standing before the Lord. We are gazing on His throne. The Lord says, “I want you to be hot. I do not want you to be lukewarm just because all the others are” (v. 15, paraphrased).

We are going to talk to Him now for a few minutes.