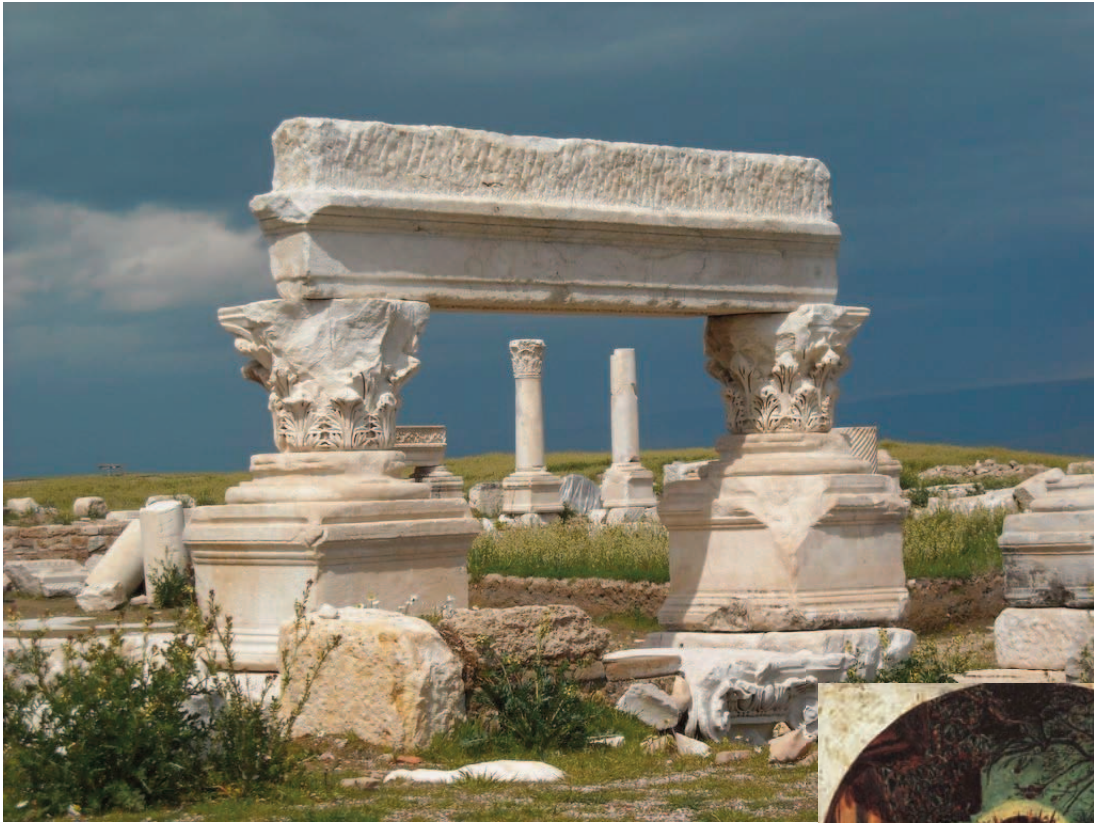


Anyone with ears to hear must listen to the Spirit and understand what he is saying to the churches.



"Write in a book everything you see, and send it to the seven churches in the cities of Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea."

Laodicea

Laodicea was one of the most important cities in the region of Asia Minor. It was built on seven hills, just like Rome, which signified the importance placed upon it. Laodicea minted its own coins, had many theatres, a gymnasium, a water system, a sports stadium — they were affluent.

Laodicea was mentioned by Paul in his letter to the Colossians (2:1, 4:13-16), which was about 11 miles to the east. It was a city that was very religious and was a seat of the early church. Yet, it was the only church of the seven about which Christ had nothing good to say.

"I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth. Because you say, 'I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing' — and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked."

The problem with the church was different than the other seven. In a way, it was similar to Sardis, which Jesus described as dead. Where Jesus had warned Sardis to wake up, he doesn't appear to find a remnant here.



Revelation 3:20

"Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, then I will come in to him, and will dine with him, and he with me"

One of the most famous paintings inspired by Revelation, *The Light of the World* by Holman Hunt reflects themes similar to Luke 12:35-38.

In Sardis, Christ said the church was dead. However, he did find a few who had not soiled their clothes. What was different with Laodicea? Do you think Jesus holds them to a higher standard or was there something more?



In Colossians 4, Paul tells the church to share his letter with Laodicea. Although written before Revelation, consider the warnings to “Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful” and “See to it that you complete the ministry you have received in the Lord.” Could these offer a clue as to what is going on in Laodicea?

Laodicea was between the cities of Hierapolis and Colossae. Hierapolis was a resort city with hot springs and spas. Colossae was known for pure and cold spring water. As you can imagine, the water downstream would have been lukewarm and dirty. Laodicea had fresh water piped into the city because the water there was undrinkable. Revelation is a book of symbols. The people there would certainly have understood the “lukewarm” metaphor.

Jesus clearly saw the people there as different. The introduction to this letter is the only one that does not use titles from chapter 1 to describe Jesus. **How does the description “the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God’s creation” contrast with Jesus’ opinion of Laodicea?**

In John 7:38-39, Jesus’ gift of salvation is described as a river of living water. Following this theme, what can we discern about the church at Laodicea? Even though he had no praise for them, Jesus still offered hope to the Laodiceans. What promises are made to them and how do these compare to the other six churches and what do they mean to us today?

REFLECTION: In the 7 letters to the 7 churches, we have seen real people with real spiritual problems. We have seen people who have let the world around them become stumbling blocks in their faith. Some were distracted, some were persecuted, some were led astray. Some were so religious that they lost compassion. All fall short of God’s glory. In your own thoughts, what are the lessons of the seven churches and can we apply them in our lives today? Many people today look at Revelation as a book of end times doom and gloom, but it is also a book of hope and a reminder that salvation comes through the lamb.