

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

THE COMPLACENT CHURCH
Revelation 3:14-22

This month marks the 97th anniversary of the voyage of the Titanic.

This great ship really had a reputation that preceded it. Even before its maiden voyage, it was touted as the fastest, safest and most luxurious ship in the world.

It was so luxurious that it had its own swimming pool, gymnasium, Turkish bath and extremely elegant first class staterooms.

There was also widespread belief that the Titanic was an unsinkable ship.

In fact, The White Star Lines publicity brochure advertised that the Titanic was designed to be unsinkable.

The Irish News and Belfast Morning News contained a report describing the 16 watertight compartments as practically unsinkable.

The ship was considered to be so safe that it only contained 20 lifeboats, enough to accommodate only half of its passengers.

However, during the ship's maiden voyage a warning went out about icebergs in the North Atlantic.

For whatever reason these warnings went ignored and the Titanic continued full steam ahead as if invincible.

Unfortunately at 11:40 PM on April 14, 1912, the Titanic hit an iceberg.

The accounts from some of the survivors, inform us that many on board were quite complacent and went about business as usual.

Even the staff members were not initially concerned about the event, because they were on the unsinkable Titanic.

There was widespread complacency and a false sense of security among the designers, the owners, the staff members and the passengers.

But less than three hours later at 2:20 AM April 15, 1912 the unthinkable happened, the unsinkable Titanic sank.

This morning as you turn to **Revelation 3:14-22**, we will examine the message to the Titanic of the seven churches of Asia Minor.

We will examine the message to the complacent church in Laodicea.

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At the time of this letter, the church in Laodicea was considered to be a great church, a wealthy church, a strong church in one of the most affluent cities in Asia Minor.

Laodicea was known as an important banking center at the cross roads of two major trade routes.

It was also home to the textile industry specializing in products made from black wool. This soft and glossy black wool was made into clothes and woven into carpets.

Laodicea was also the location of an important medical school that was famous for the development of an eye salve made from Phrygian powder and used to treat eye diseases worldwide.

Because of its worldly success, the church in Laodicea had become indifferent to its real spiritual need. In fact they professed to have need of nothing.

Doubting the absolute authority of the Word of God, it had imbibed much of the humanistic philosophy of the intellectual world of the day.

In other words, it was actually a church, which was quite complacent and like those on the Titanic possessed a false sense of security.

But it is a church that we can learn a great deal from. Let's read!

This morning, we will examine 4 aspects of the message to the church in Laodicea so that we might understand the characteristics which Christ desires His church to possess.

Remember, that these seven churches in Revelation provide us a view of the various characteristics of different churches.

We are seeking to understand those characteristics that Christ both commends and condemns these seven churches for so that we might better understand what Christ expects of us as a church.

First, we must understand the Correspondent with the church in Laodicea (Revelation 3:14).

While we know that it is the Apostle John who is writing down the words of this book, it is actually Christ who is giving him these instructions (**Revelation 1:11**).

So, Christ is the real correspondent in this letter. Since He is the one communicating the message, it is important for us to consider how He describes Himself to the Laodiceans. How does He describe Himself here in this message?

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He refers to Himself in verse 14 as, “*the Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God...*”

What does this description of Christ communicate about His character?

- **It communicates that Christ is the All-Conquering One.**

First, He is called, “the Amen.” The word is a transliteration from the Hebrew and means, “truth, certainty, affirmation, or that, which is firm, fixed or unchangeable.”

Amen is often used in Scripture to affirm the veracity of a statement.

Jesus uses this term frequently in His own teaching when He would say, “Verily, Verily I say unto you... or Truly, Truly I say unto you...” which would indicate both the importance and the truthfulness/certainty of what He was teaching.

It is interesting that the apostle Paul refers to Jesus as our *Amen* in **2 Corinthians 1:20**.

It is important for us to remember that these descriptions of Christ in Revelation 2 and 3 often harken back to the vision of Christ in Revelation 1.

I believe the use of *Amen* here reminds the readers of what was said about Christ in **Revelation 1:5-8** where a double Amen is used. READ

In light of this context, we see that Jesus is the Amen. He is the all-conquering one. It is through the person and work of Christ that all of God’s promises are fulfilled and guaranteed.

He is the One who is eternal God!
He is the One who loved us!
He is the One who provided a way of salvation for us!
He is the One who released us from our sins by His blood!
He is the One who has made us a kingdom of priests!
He is the One who will return as conquering King!
He is the One who guarantees it all!
He is the Amen!

This is what the complacent, wealthy, prideful church in Laodicea needed to be reminded of.

They may have thought they had need of nothing, but nothing they had could be guaranteed. They really needed the Amen; they needed Christ.

What else does this description of Christ communicate about His character?

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- **It communicates that Christ is the All-Convicting One.**

Notice that He is called, “*the faithful and true witness.*”

This statement also looks back to **Revelation 1:5**, where Christ is also referred to as a *faithful witness*.

A faithful witness is one who can be trusted never to misrepresent his message by exaggeration or suppression; his veracity extends not only to his character, but also to the contents of his message.

Christ is a faithful witness in the sense that He is trustworthy to be believed. His testimony never falls short of the truth. He is completely trustworthy and perfectly accurate.

This was an appropriate way to begin the letter to the Laodiceans, because it affirmed to them that Christ had accurately assessed their condition.

His statements about their church were not diluted, distorted, or double-tongued. In fact His diagnosis was correct.

This of course forms a striking contrast to the church, which was neither faithful nor true.

The Lord Jesus is the All-Convicting One. He is the faithful and true witness. He does not have to be politically correct. He lovingly tells it like it is.

What else does this description of Christ communicate about His character?

- **It communicates that Christ is the All-Controlling One.**

The text says that He is the beginning of the creation of God.

In the English, this statement could be easily misconstrued, but in the Greek, it is clear.

It does not mean that Christ was the first person created, but rather that Christ Himself is the source or origin of creation.

Through His power everything was created. Christ is the creator and sustainer of all things.

Is this what the Scriptures teach? YES!!!

John 1:3 says in regards to Christ, “*All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.*”

Hebrews 1:2-3 says in regards to Christ, “*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. And He is the radiance*

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of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power...”

Colossians 1:15-17 says in regards to Christ, *“He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. 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 through Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.”*

Christ is the All-Controlling One; He is the creator and sustainer of all things.

What a picture of Christ, the correspondent with the church in Laodicea. He is the all-conquering, all-convicting, all-controlling Lord of the Universe.

He is the One, who is examining the deeds of this church. It is the penetrating gaze of the Lord that has examined the hearts and lives of His church and found them wanting.

It is important for us to have a right view of Christ. By understanding that He is the all-conquering, all-convicting, all-controlling Lord of the Universe, then we might be able to avoid the error of our day that is propagated by so many, self-centered complacent churches.

Second, we must understand the Condemnation given to the church in Laodicea (Revelation 3:15-17).

Unlike the other letters, there is no commendation given to the church in Laodicea. Christ moves straight to the condemnation by telling them that He knew their deeds.

Deeds always reveal the true spiritual state of a person. Just as Christ states in **Matthew 7:6**, *“You will know them by their fruits...”*

Although, salvation is wholly by God’s grace through faith alone, deeds confirm or deny the presence of genuine salvation just as James chapter 2 teaches.

The deeds of the Laodicean church revealed that they did not possess a genuine relationship with Christ. Instead they were unregenerate.

How do we know they were unregenerate?

- **Their deeds revealed a sickening condition.**

The first analysis was that they were neither cold nor hot, but lukewarm. Christ goes so far to say that He wished that they were cold or hot, but since they were lukewarm, He would spit them out of His mouth.

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I believe that this is a very misunderstood passage. Many tend to interpret “cold” as being a negative trait and “hot” as being a positive trait. Thus the church in Laodicea was somewhere in the middle.

But Christ states in verse 15, *“I wish that you were cold or hot.”*

What does He mean by that statement? Would the Lord actually desire something bad, negative, or spiritually inappropriate?

NO!!! May it Never Be!

Actually, Christ is using metaphorical language drawn from Laodicea’s water supply.

The city’s water traveled several miles through an underground aqueduct before reaching the city. The water was foul, dirty and tepid. It was lukewarm.

The water was not hot enough to relax and restore, like the hot springs in nearby Hierapolis. They would seek to pipe that hot water in, but by the time the water got to Laodicea it was lukewarm.

Nor was it cold and refreshing like the stream water in Colossae that was also lukewarm by the time it was brought down into Laodicea.

Instead, Laodicea’s water was in a useless lukewarm condition. (i.e. Lemoore water)

Christ was using this metaphorical language to speak not of the water supply, but to the spiritual state of those in the Laodicean church.

They were not icy-cold and refreshing, nor were they hot, boiling or fervent. They were simply lukewarm.

Their deeds, which Christ knew full well, revealed that they gave the appearance of being spiritually alive, but were really spiritually dead.

They professed to be Christians, but their deed revealed otherwise. As lukewarm water to the Laodiceans was sickening so was the compromise of the Laodicean church to Christ. He was sickened by their smug, self-righteous, hypocritical condition.

Because they were lukewarm, it made Christ so sick that He said that He would spew them out of His mouth.

This is not referring to a gentle spitting, but the Greek term [EMEO] really speaks of a harsh vomiting. Let me ask you a question: Was Christ pleased with the Laodicean church?

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NO! Christ was not pleased with the lukewarm state of the Laodicean church. They made Him sick!

- **Their deeds also revealed a sickening complacency.**

The Laodiceans said that they were rich, have become wealthy and have need of nothing.

They thought they were all that. They thought they stood head and shoulders above all other churches. They thought that they were ok.

If this type of church existed today, They would think that they have the best speaker, the best programs, the best worship, the best music, the best youth group, the best facilities etc....

While they thought they were rich, and needing nothing, Christ described them as being wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked.

The term *wretched* identified their unsaved condition and serves as a synonym with the following word *miserable*.

The term *miserable* used here and in **1 Corinthians 15:19** describes one who does not believe in the resurrection. It pictures one who is worthy of extreme pity and in peril of eternal death.

The following three terms played off the industries that the city was famous for (banking, textiles, and eye salve).

The term *poor* depicts one who is utterly destitute; being humbled to a beggarly position.

Living in such a lively banking center, the idea of being poor would be a nightmare for these people. Although they possessed physical wealth, spiritually they were destitute.

The term *blind* speaks of an inability to perceive spiritual things. They were blind to the truth. Although the city developed an eye salve to help the world to see, they themselves could not see the truth.

The term, *naked* is a play on words referring to the textile industry. They were dressed in the finest black wool, but spiritually they were naked.

Christ recognized their complacency and hypocrisy. They claimed to be rich, wealthy, and in need of nothing. But the truth of the matter was that they needed a savior. They needed salvation.

They professed to be fine, but were not. They were completely destitute and unregenerate.

They needed to hear the gospel message communicated by the apostle Paul to the nearby church in Ephesus in Ephesians 2:1-10. Let's READ.

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Third, we must understand the Counsel given to the church in Laodicea (Revelation 3:18-20).

How were they to respond. Knowing that Christ is the faithful and true witness. Knowing that His testimony was clear and that they were lacking. What counsel does Christ offer the church in Laodicea?

He offered a three-fold counsel:

- **Christ calls for the church to place a requisition.**

READ—Verse 18...

Laodicea was a wealthy church in a strong banking and retail environment, so it only makes sense that He would speak to them in such terms and tell them that they needed to make a purchase.

What were they to purchase? It is interesting that once again Christ hits on the three important industries of the city.

First in respect to the banking industry, He says that they should purchase gold. Not just any gold, but gold refined by fire.

As gold is put through the flame, the impurities rise to the top and are easily wiped away.

But Christ is not talking about physical gold here, because the Laodiceans had all the gold that they wanted.

He was not talking about investing in gold, although it was probably a safe investment.

Actually gold represented the priceless riches of true salvation, which would bring them into a real relationship with Christ, just as **1 Peter 1:3-7** indicates. [READ]

Second, in respect to the garment industry, He calls for them to purchase white garments that will clothe the shame of their nakedness.

They weren't really running around naked. This wasn't a call for them to put on clothes. They had all the clothes they wanted. Remember that this is where they produced soft and shiny black wool.

The white garments here actually speak of Christ's holiness and righteousness that clothes all true believers, making them acceptable in God's sight.

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It was a call for them to remove the garment of the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with lust and deceit; and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness, and holiness of truth just as Paul speaks of in **Ephesians 4:22-24**.

Third, in respect to the medical community, they were to purchase eye salve so that they could anoint their eyes to see.

They needed their spiritual blindness healed with the salve of salvation applied by Christ.

They desperately needed Christ to open their eyes so that they might turn from darkness to light.

Christ calls for the Laodiceans to buy all three things (gold refined by fire, white garments and eye salve), which symbolize true redemption.

Christ offered them spiritual gold, spiritual clothes, and spiritual sight.

- **Christ also calls for the church to practice repentance.**

READ verse 19...

In order for the Laodiceans to come to salvation, a necessary step in the process is to repent.

Repentance is an often overlooked in the church today. But the New Testament call to salvation always includes repentance.

Repentance means that you realize that you are a guilty, vile sinner in the presence of a holy and perfect God, that you deserve the wrath and punishment of God and that you are hell bound.

It means that you begin to realize that this thing called sin is in you, that you long to get rid of it and that you need to turn your back on it in every way, shape and form.

Thus, repentance is a turning from this sin and turning to God. It is a complete change in direction.

It is moving from serving the world and self , to serving God.

This is not a politically correct concept. This is not a concept that is popular in the world today, but it is a necessary step in coming to faith in Christ.

- **Christ also calls for the church to provide a reception.**

Read verse 20...

Here we have another one of those verses that are often ripped out of its context.

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This verse has often been used in countless Christian tracts and evangelistic messages to depict Christ's knocking on the door of the sinner's heart.

But it is actually broader than that. The door that Christ is knocking on here, is the door to the Laodicean church.

Christ stood at the door to the Laodicean church and knocked; if anyone in the church would hear His voice and open the door, then He would come in to him and dine with him, and he with Christ.

The picture of Christ outside the Laodicean church strongly implies that there were no believers there at all. They were a spiritually dead church!

Unlike Sardis, they weren't mostly dead, they were completely dead spiritually.

Christ was extending the opportunity for those in the church of Laodicea to come to faith in Him and He was guaranteeing that if they repented and received Him that He would truly have fellowship with them.

As He does in each of these seven messages, Christ closes with a challenge.

Lastly, we must understand the Challenge given to the overcomers in Laodicea (Revelation 3:21-22).

READ verses 21-22.

Remember that overcomers are clearly defined for us in **1 John 5:4-5**. [READ]

Not everyone who darkens the door to a church is a genuine believer in Christ, but those who overcome the world and genuinely believe in the Lord Jesus Christ are referred to as overcomers.

So Christ is offering a challenge to those who overcome in the Laodicean church.

Like in each of these messages this challenge is two-fold:

- **First, this challenge includes a guarantee (Matthew 19:28-29; Revelation 5:10; 20:6).**

What does Christ promise those who repent and turn to Him in faith?

Those who heard Christ's message and believed, therefore becoming overcomers were guaranteed fellowship and rule with Christ.

Christ promises to share His throne with believers, which symbolizes the truth that in Christ's future Messianic Kingdom, we as believers will reign with Him.

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A truth introduced by the Apostle Paul in **2 Timothy 2:12** and will be brought to fulfillment as described in **Revelation 20:6**.

- **Lastly, this challenge includes guidance.**

As He does in each of these seven messages, Christ closes the letter with an exhortation for the churches to heed the truths found in the seven letters. He says, “*He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.*”

The church in Laodicea is a church that has excluded Christ from their fellowship in selfish, materialistic, self-dependence.

It is a church where Christ stands on the outside, excluded by the church’s apathy. Thus, the call is to hear, to open their ears.

For this complacent, lukewarm, unbelieving church, they were to Repent of their sin, turn to faith in Christ or face certain judgment.

{??Knights Tale Illustration??} William Thatcher a peasant squire passes himself off as a nobleman and takes the jousting world by storm. The only thing that stands in between William and his dream of becoming the world champion of jousting is the bad boy of the sport, Count Adhemar. But newly Knighted, Sir William faces his adversary head on and without body armor he knocks Count Adhemar off his horse. It is at this point that we pick up the story, where Count Adhemar is immediately evaluated....(show video clip)... You have been weighed; you have been measured; and you absolutely have been found wanting.

My prayer for us as a church is that Christ would not find us wanting as He did the church in Laodicea.

I pray that we as a church would avoid the complacency of the church in Laodicea, by having a genuine relationship with Christ.