

May I invite you to take your Bibles and turn to Revelation chapter there? This morning we come to the final letter to the seven churches. And in a moment we will look at verse 14 through 22.

Seldom do we hear our secular news media and politicians use biblical language. But here of late they seem to mention at least one word that we find in the Bible quite a bit, the word “hypocrite.” And whenever it is used it evokes great hostility towards the object of such a derisive epithet.

While reasonable people have some measure of discerning hypocrisy in their politicians, I find it fascinating that many cannot see it in themselves nor in their religious systems. In the New Testament the Greek term *hypokrites* denoted an actor that played a part in a Greek drama. They would literally hold a large oversized mask over their face to represent whatever the character was that they played. Jesus directed his most stinging rebukes towards hypocrites; pictured most graphically, of course, by the scribes and the Pharisees. Frequently we would hear him say, “Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites.”¹

In Matthew’s gospel where the term is used the most it is used to describe religious people who do not act spontaneously from their heart, but rather with a premeditation designed to impress other people. The hypocrite is forever creating new rules and ceremonies and rituals to obey in order to convince himself and to convince others of his spirituality. And eventually the religious actor believes that he is truly the spiritual person that he pretends to be. If you speak a lie long enough you ultimately believe it. His life of pretending no longer becomes a role, but a reality, at least in his own mind. He no longer sees the sham.

His conscience becomes so seared by years of pretending that he actually believes his own lies. Paul spoke of this in 1 Timothy 4:2, “By means of the hypocrisy of liars seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron.”² The idea is that because of the demonic deceptions that people believe their conscience becomes desensitized as though their spiritual nerves have been cauterized by burning and all that is left is scar tissue.

My friends, this was the Church at Laodicea, an apostate church filled with pretenders, hypocrites who were convinced of their own spirituality. They believed that they were spiritually rich when, in fact, they were utterly bankrupt. Like countless people today they professed Christ, but they did not possess him.

Jesus described these self deceived Christians in Matthew seven as the many, not the few, the man who on judgment day will cry out in desperation saying:

“Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?”

¹ Matthew 23:13 (and seven other references).

² 1 Timothy 4:2.

"And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.'"³

Perhaps more than any of the other six churches, the Church at Laodicea is a picture of the 21st century Christian church, apostate churches filled with many passionate, loving, kind, even zealous people, but who have no understanding of the gospel and who do not truly know nor do they love the Lord Jesus Christ. With this background, let's read what the Lord has to say to the church at Laodicea. Revelation three beginning in verse 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, says this: "I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot; I would that you were cold or hot. So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth. 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. Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline; be zealous therefore, and repent. 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. 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. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."⁴

May I give you some historical context? This is very important as we endeavor to understand what God has to say to this church and, ultimately, to all of us.

Laodicea was the terminal destination of the postal route and also of this particular dissemination of these seven letters. It stood on a high plateau in the Lycus Valley about 40 miles southeast of Philadelphia. The city was founded by Antiochus II around 250 BC and he named the city after his dear wife Laodice whom he divorced a few years later.

It was part of a tri-city grouping consisting of Colosse—which was about 10 miles to the east—and Hierapolis, six miles to the north. Hierapolis was famous for its hot springs useful for medicinal purposes, whereas Colosse boasted fresh, cold, life giving water. Unfortunately, Laodicea's primary water source was from underground aqueducts that were neither hot nor cold, but only lukewarm and disgusting to the taste.

Laodicea had a mixed population of Syrians and Jews and Macedonians and the dominant religion there among the pagan Gentiles centered around the Phrygian god Men

³ Matthew 7:22-23.

⁴ Revelation 3:14-22.

Karou. And as Hellenism gradually found its way to Laodicea and invaded that culture, they merely identified this god with the attributes of Zeus.

We have no information about the founding of the Christian church there in Laodicea. However, as we read Paul's letter to the Colossians we learn that both Epaphras and Archippus evangelized the Lycus Valley so, no doubt, one of them helped to plant that church.

Laodicea was an extremely wealthy city, a city of commerce that was strategically located on the north south road from the Mediterranean Sea to Pergamum and the east west road from Ephesus into the interior. They were so wealthy that they refused Rome's financial offer to help them rebuild after the city was utterly demolished by an earthquake in AD 60. In fact, they were so prosperous that they even contributed heavily to rebuild the neighboring cities around them. They spent their vast resources on building theaters and public bath houses and a magnificent stadium for entertainment. They even had their version of shopping malls to satisfy their insatiable appetite for material things.

Most of their wealth came from three primary industries. First, that of commercial banking where the financiers made many millions of dollars off of their lending. And then, secondly, they had their own drug industry, a prescription drug industry, shall we say, where they had a variety of medicines, especially that of a highly sought after eye salve thought to cure eye disease. And then, thirdly, they had a textile industry where they manufactured a variety of things, but especially a very popular, soft, wool cloth, a glossy black cloth used in making garments and other textiles. And much of what the Lord has to say to this church will be linked to their water supplies and these three industries.

As we examine this letter know that by now the messenger who has received it has been left alone to deliver this solemn epistle from the Lord to this Church. Undoubtedly, he has read it thoroughly, probably many times. And now with fear and trepidation he comes before the church in Laodicea and he would have begun with Revelation chapter one and verse one reading all that the Lord has to say and finally he comes to chapter three and verse 14. And here we read, verse 14, the Lord's introduction. He says, "And to the angel,"⁵ or to the messenger or pastor, "of the church in Laodicea write: The Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God, says this."⁶ My, what a sobering and fitting introduction. He begins His self description with a foundational title. "The Amen." The Greek term is a transliteration of the Hebrew word amen (aw-mane') which means, "be firm." It denotes that which is fixed, that which is established, that which is true and unchangeable. In other words, he is the final word of authority.

Then He adds to that, "the faithful and true witness."⁷ And here He adds even more specificity and further defines His title of "the Amen." This, of course, stands in stark

⁵ Revelation 3:14.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

contrast to the character of this apostate church. He is saying, “The One who is the final word and authority, the faithful and true witness is the One that will now address you who are *not* faithful and true.”

And then He adds, “The beginning of the creation of God.”⁸ This appellation is very significant because of the heretical views being espoused in that region, especially in the neighboring city of Colosse, that taught that Jesus was not God, but He was created by God. This was the heresy Paul addressed in his epistle to the Colossians some 35 years earlier which Paul commanded, by the way, to be read to the church in Laodicea as we read in Colossians 4:16.

Unfortunately, the English translation of this phrase is a bit confusing and ambiguous, but such is not the case in the original Greek. It says, “He is the beginning,” *he arche* (hay ar-khay’) meaning “He is the beginner.” “He is the originator.” “He is the initiator.”

You see, like the Colossians, they were caught up in the heresy of Gnosticism. *Gnosis* (gno’-sis) in Greek means “to know.” So they believed they had the ascended, secret knowledge available only to the spiritually elite. And central to their teaching was that Christ was some created being. I might add that this is still common among the cults.

The apostle Paul addressed this head on. For example, in Colossians 1:15 he says, “He is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation.”⁹ First born is *prototokos* (pro-tot-ok’-os). It means He is the supreme or preeminent One. He went on to say:

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.¹⁰

You see, the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ is crucial in order to understand any element of spiritual truth. And certainly it is undeniable throughout the entirety of the Apocalypse.

In fact, in Revelation 22:13 the Lord says, “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.”¹¹ In other words, Christ is the source of creation, not the product of it.

Because the Laodiceans denied the deity of Christ they were not believers. There might have been some believers there, but for the most part they were not believers. Yet, sadly, like their sister church in Colosse they had convinced themselves that they were the enlightened spiritual elitists. So from the outset the Lord sets them straight on this crucial

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Colossians 1:15.

¹⁰ Colossians 1:16-17.

¹¹ Revelation 22:13.

issue. He says, “The Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God, says this.”¹²

Now I would imagine if we had been there we would have seen some jaws begin to drop, backs begin to kind of straighten, nostrils begin to flare, and they are thinking, “Whoa, wait a minute here.” And, perhaps, some of them even shook their head in humble agreement.

Now to help us grasp the meaning of what follows I have divided this text into three parts. We will look at the *problem*, the *punishment*, and the *promise*. And unlike the other six churches, the Church at Laodicea receives no commendation, only condemnation. Yet even at that, dear friends, we see that the Lord is merciful and He calls them to repentance, calls them to salvation.

First, the *problem*. In verse 15 He says, “I know your deeds.”¹³ In other words, “I see all that you do with an eye of perfect omniscience.” And He goes on and He says:

...that you are neither cold nor hot; I wish that you were cold or hot. So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth.¹⁴

In other words, “Your spiritual service sickens Me like your tepid, foul smelling polluted water sickens you.” “You are neither cold nor hot. I would that you were cold or hot.”¹⁵ Now what is the meaning of this contrast? In that day the word “cold,” *psychros* (psoo-chros’), was used to describe spiritual indifference and hostility towards the truth. We see, for example, the Lord’s use of this term in his Olivet Discourse in Matthew 24 and verse 12 when He described unbelievers deceived by false teachers as those whose “love will grow cold”¹⁶ just prior to his Second Coming.

So, he is saying, “You are not spiritually cold.” In other words, “You are not indifferent and hostile to the gospel and openly reject it. You are not like that.” But neither are you “hot,” *zeontes* (dzes-on-tes’). It means “boiling, boiling over,” a metaphor describing one who is fervent, who is passionate, who is on fire for God and his glory. “You are not like that.” We see this term used in Acts 18:25 to characterize Apollos who was mighty in the Scriptures. That text says that he was one who was “fervent in spirit,”¹⁷ meaning he was *boiling hot in spirit*. He goes on to add that “he was speaking and teaching accurately the things concerning Jesus.”¹⁸ We see the concept, as well, in Romans 12:11 where we are

¹² Revelation 3:14.

¹³ Revelation 3:15.

¹⁴ Revelation 3:15-16.

¹⁵ See Revelation 3:16.

¹⁶ Matthew 24:12.

¹⁷ Acts 18:25.

¹⁸ Ibid.

encouraged to be “fervent in spirit,”¹⁹ *to boil over, to maintain our spiritual heat.* “[Be] fervent in spirit; serving the Lord,”²⁰ the text reads.

So drawing from the imagery of cold waters of Colosse and the hot waters of Hierapolis, the Lord is saying to them, “You are not cold or indifferent and hostile to the gospel like most unbelievers. But neither are you hot, boiling over with fervent zeal to honor me. You are in a third category, the worst category of all. *You are lukewarm.* I wish you were either openly hostile to the truth or I wish you embraced it with fervent zeal. But you are the in between pretenders, hypocrites, fakes, phonies who think you are saved, but you are lost.”

Now, beloved, I think you would agree with me that these are always the hardest to reach. The most easily offended when confronted by their deeds that are merely external and not from the heart. We must understand that Scripture teaches that a person can profess Christ as Savior; he can be morally pure; he can be actively involved in his church and ministry; he can have conviction of personal sin, even have absolute assurance of salvation. But those things neither *prove* nor *disprove* the genuineness of a man’s faith. The true test is the condition of his heart, that which nobody sees, where there is a genuine turning from sin and a decreasing evidence of it, the evidence of a transformed life.

The true test is when a man in his heart has a passionate love for God. He has a secret devotion to God and His glory. He has a disciplined life of prayer where he longs to commune with the Lover of his soul. He has a genuine selfless love and humility, a love for the brethren as well. He will see a separation from the world. He will hate what God hates and love what God loves. You will see a submission to the lordship of Jesus Christ in heartfelt obedience. You will see measurable spiritual growth in his life. You will see a hungering and thirsting for righteousness. He will know that within his heart he has a genuine appetite for the Word of God and he will have a passion to protect and to proclaim the truth of sound doctrine.

And, beloved, the Lord did not see any of this in this church. They were neither cold, hostile, unbelievers, nor were they hot, fervent, genuine believers. There were tepid, putrid hypocrites.

So, he says, “I will spit you out of My mouth.”²¹ In other words, “You are literally sickening to me.” This is the revulsion of spurious faith and, thus, the title of my discourse to you this morning.

Can you imagine their reaction? The Lord doesn’t pull any punches, does He? And He goes on to describe their condition, drawing familiar concepts in their culture.

Verse 17, He says, “Because you say, “I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing,” and you do not know that you are...”²² And then he lists five things.

¹⁹ Romans 12:11.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Revelation 3:16.

First of all, “wretched.” It means vile, despicable. Paul uses it in Romans 7:24, “O wretched man that I am!”²³ He uses it to describe his utter grief and frustration over the effects of sin in his life. Not only are you “wretched,” but you are “miserable.” And this term pictures someone who deserves extreme pity because of the current condition of their soul that will ultimately perish in an eternal hell unless he repents.

And, He adds, “You are poor.”²⁴ This term is one that pictures a beggar that is cowering and crouching in his destitution. What a contrast to the fabulous wealth they enjoyed. “And you are blind,”²⁵ He says. That is, “You are unable to see spiritual truth. You have no discernment despite your famous eye salve.” And, “naked,” He adds. As we study the word of God we see that salvation is sometimes depicted as a garment. But they did not have it. How strange and how sad to be naked in a place famous for beautiful garments.

It is easy for many people to think that because they are living in an affluent culture that somehow God is prospering them spiritually. And it is hard for many people to distinguish between material and spiritual blessing. Many erroneously believe that if they have the former, they possess the latter. It is as if they are saying, “Since I am free and affluent materially, I must be equally free and prosperous spiritually.” But, dear friends, that is a tragic deception.

It has always been fascinating to me that faithful, Christ-honoring churches inevitably emerge out of the ash heap of persecution and suffering. Whether it is the Atheistic, Communist countries of Eastern Europe or Russia or China or even the violent opposers of Christ that we see in the Muslim countries, genuine Christianity will thrive in these oppressive, poverty stricken environments.

By contrast, wherever there is religious freedom and prosperity—as in Europe and in the United States—you see the Church of Jesus Christ gradually wither away into oblivion. It is as if it has no impact whatsoever on the culture. After all, who needs Christ when you have Visa? Why strive to obey Christ and seek His blessing when you have every imaginable creature comfort? Why submit to His Lordship when you are totally free to obey no one but yourself? Why pray when you are totally self sufficient? Why lay up treasures in heaven when we have so many things to enjoy here on earth? And, beloved, imperceptibly the church becomes more *like* the world, more in *love* with the world until eventually it cannot be distinguished *from* the world. So the Lord clearly articulates their problem.

And then, secondly, He gives them the *prescription* or the instruction. And here He tells them to buy three items from Him, each being a picture of genuine, saving faith. Verse 18 he says, “I advise you to buy from Me...”²⁶ Now let me pause here. You must understand this is sarcasm. He is asking them to buy that which they cannot afford and

²² Revelation 3:17.

²³ Romans 7:24.

²⁴ See Revelation 3:17.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Revelation 3:18.

that which cannot be purchased. And, frankly, this is further evidence of the Lord's biting condemnation of their perceived self-sufficiency and spirituality.

First, He says, "I advise you to buy from Me gold refined by fire so that you may become rich."²⁷ "Rich," referring to being *spiritually rich*, in contrast to their abject spiritual poverty that they refused to acknowledge. Now, "gold refined by fire" is pure gold. The dross and impurities have been burned off. And this symbolism is found in other passages and it is emblematic of genuine saving faith that can withstand suffering and trials and produces the fruits of righteousness, unlike the spurious dead faith that they possessed.

We read it, for example, in 1 Peter 1:7 where Peter is speaking to those who possess such a faith though they are, as he says, being "distressed by various trials, so that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ."²⁸

Secondly, he says, "Buy from Me...white garments so that you may clothe yourself, and that the shame of your nakedness will not be revealed."²⁹ Now this is drawn from the unclean filthy garments of Isaiah 64:6 and Zechariah 3:3,4. And this represents the vile nature of the unregenerate. It is as though He is saying to them, "Unlike the black wool for which you are famous that symbolizes the condition of your heart, buy from Me the white garments of salvation producing deeds of righteousness that will validate genuine saving faith. Clothe yourselves with this," he says, "that the shame of your nakedness will not be revealed."³⁰

As we study the Word of God we learn that *shame* and *nakedness* are often synonymous terms in Scripture. They are many times used as a symbol of exposure and judgment as in Ezekiel 16:35-43. And there apostate idolatrous Israel is pictured as a harlot who would be stripped bare in public because of her spiritual adulteries. In ancient Israel profligate, immoral women were treated in this way to make them a public spectacle of contempt before they were stoned. They would be stripped publicly.

So we must understand the Lord's tone here with the Laodicean Church continues to be very biting, very judgmental. They needed to be clothed in the robes of righteousness. Then, with Isaiah, they could say, "My soul will exult in my God; For He has clothed me with garments of salvation, He has wrapped me with a robe of righteousness,"³¹ Isaiah 61:10.

And then, thirdly, the Lord says, "Buy from Me... eye salve to anoint your eyes so that you may see."³² Despite their eye salve and their perceived ascended spiritual knowledge. He is telling them that, "You are spiritually blind. You are utterly bereft of spiritual

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ 1 Peter 1:6-7.

²⁹ Revelation 3:18.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Isaiah 61:10.

³² Revelation 3:18.

discernment. Therefore, you are in need of the cure of regenerating grace that only the Spirit of God can impart so that you can see the truth.” They were in need of the very remedy that the Lord commissioned Paul to administer to the Jews and the Gentiles. In Acts 26:18 we read that he is to, “open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me.”³³ So the Lord reproves these unbelievers for their spurious faith, for their shame, for their spiritual harlotry, for their refusal to see the truth through eyes of genuine repentance and faith.

And then He appeals to them in verse 19. “Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline; therefore be zealous and repent.”³⁴ The word “love” here is from *phileo* (fil-eh’-o). It denotes a fondness or an affection that one would have towards another person, a loving behavior between friends and relatives that would often include acts of hospitality and concern for other individuals. This is very different than the *agape* (ag-a’-pay) love that is used in verse nine in his letter to Philadelphia that portrays the overwhelming depth of God’s love for believers.

So because the Lord has a personal affection and genuine concern for these unbelievers he calls them to repentance. And He says, “Those whom I love, I reprove.”³⁵ The word “reprove” refers to a verbal rebuke that is designed to expose a person’s sin and bring them conviction. Not only does He say, “I reprove,” but He adds, “And discipline,” which means to instruct or to correct. This is the severe discipline of love that exceeds mere verbal reproof, but also includes corrective actions.

Then He says, “Be zealous.” The Greek word means to develop a new habit. And the term is also related to *zestos* (dzes-tos’), translated “hot” that we read about in verse 16, to boil over with a fervent spirit. In other words, “I want you to be zealous rather than remaining lukewarm.” Therefore, He says, “Repent. I want you to decisively commit yourself to a different attitude and a different course of action.”

The Lord’s love for these lost religionists then motivates Him to warn them of impending judgment and offer them hope. He says in verse 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 will dine with him, and he with Me.”³⁶ Now the picture of the Lord standing at the door at knocking is one of immediacy, one of urgency. And it is drawn from the Song of Solomon, chapter five and verse two where the bridegroom is pictured knocking on the door of the bridal suite asking the bride to open the door and to allow him entrance.

This text is often used in personal evangelism to portray the idea of Christ standing outside of a sinner’s heart and knocking on a door to gain entrance. But, beloved, there is nothing in this context to justify such an interpretation. To grasp the meaning of this

³³ Acts 26:18.

³⁴ Revelation 3:19.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Revelation 3:20.

passage we must learn how this *standing at the door and knocking* concept was understood by the recipients of this letter in that day.

I am convinced that we must understand this in the eschatological context of the book of Revelation and the imminent return of the Lord Jesus Christ in judgment. *The Lord is here referring to the door of his Second Coming where He will once again physically enter the earth to judge the wicked and to bless the redeemed.* This is in keeping with the strong judgmental language the Lord uses in verse 16 regarding His revulsion for their lukewarm hypocrisy. And this is how the early church understood this figure. It portrayed the Lord's return.

For example, in Matthew chapter 24 in the Lord's Olivet Discourse in verse 33 Jesus admonishes us to be discerning of the signs that will precede His return. And He said, "When you see all these things, recognize that He is near, right at the door."³⁷ And in Luke chapter 12 verse 35 we see the same figure being used by the Lord in the context of impending judgment and the urgent need for readiness. He says:

Be dressed in readiness, and keep your lamps lit. Be like men who are waiting for their master when he returns from the wedding feast, so that they may immediately open the door to him when he comes and knocks. Blessed are those slaves whom the master will find on the alert when he comes.³⁸

And in verse 40 he says, "You too, be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour that you do not expect."³⁹ So the Lord is saying in verse 19, "I want you to repent because," verse 20, "Behold," that is, "Focus your attention on what I am about to say." "Behold, I am standing,"⁴⁰ literally, "I have established a fixed position and I am standing at the door and knocking,"⁴¹ a deliberate ongoing action to get your attention.

And He says, "If anyone hears My voice and opens the door..."⁴² that is, "if anyone heeds My invitation to repent," "I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me."⁴³ So they must repent and be converted in order to be prepared for the Lord's return, for the Lord's entrance, and thus experience the reward of His blessing. Otherwise they will experience the wrath of His judgment.

And what is the reward? He says, "I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me."⁴⁴ This is such a fascinating concept to me. You see, because the Lord is longsuffering, He continues knocking even to this day. But one day the knocking is going to stop and He will once again enter the earth, not to seek and to save, but to reward the

³⁷ Matthew 24:33.

³⁸ Luke 12:35-37.

³⁹ Luke 12:40.

⁴⁰ See Revelation 3:20.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Revelation 3:20.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

faithful or judge the wicked. And the reward will include, for the faithful, this idea of Him coming in and dining with us and we with Him.

Once again, the intimate fellowship of this supper that the Lord is speaking of is eschatological. It is pictured in the wedding feast of the Messianic Kingdom, as we read in Luke 22, that is, “the marriage supper of the Lamb” which is a symbolic meal that will begin at the establishment of the millennial kingdom and continue throughout the entire 1000 years.

We read more of it in Revelation 19:7. The Lord says”

Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready. It was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. Then he said to me, "Write, 'Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.'"⁴⁵

Indeed, this was the wide spread hope in the early church. We read about it in Luke 12:35, once again, where Jesus tells us to, “Be dressed in readiness.”⁴⁶ And in verse 36 we are to be men, “waiting for their master when he returns from the wedding feast, so that they may immediately open the door to him when he comes and knocks.”⁴⁷

And then in verse 37 he says, “Then he,” referring to the Lord, “will gird himself to serve.”⁴⁸ Can you imagine that, the Lord serving us? “He will gird himself to serve, and have them [referring to us] recline at the table, and will come up and wait on [us].”⁴⁹ Unbelievable.

We see this marvelous picture expressed in the fellowship that we enjoy at the Lord’s Supper, at the time of communion when we celebrate all that the Lord has done for us and the unity that we have with Him and the hope that we have when one day we will enjoy eternal fellowship with Him. I just marvel at the love of God to warn sinners of impending judgment and then call them to repentance. My, what mercy, what grace. And to think that He wants fellowship with people like those of Laodicea. And, worse yet, people like you and like me.

Verse 21. “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.”⁵⁰

This is astounding, dear friends. Here He offers believers more than just fellowship with Him—as incredible as all of that will be—but He also offers the privilege of reigning

⁴⁵ Revelation 19:7-9.

⁴⁶ Luke 12:35.

⁴⁷ Luke 12:36.

⁴⁸ Luke 12:37.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Revelation 3:21.

with Him. Can you imagine such a thing? The Lord's promise is drawn from the vision that Daniel received in Daniel 7:27. And there we read, "Then the sovereignty, the dominion and the greatness of all the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be handed over to of the saints, the people of the most high."⁵¹ As Paul said in 2 Timothy 2:12, "If we endure, we will also reign with Him."⁵²

Oh, dear friends, the glory that awaits the redeemed! And how fitting that this final letter ends with a warning of coming judgment and the offer of grace to those who repent.

So the stage is now set for all that will follow. All of the horrors that should cause every sinner and every apostate church to shutter at the threat of being spewed from His mouth in the coming days of tribulation judgment which, according to verse 10 of chapter three, "is about to come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth."⁵³

So He closes, "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."⁵⁴ May this warning stir our hearts to faithful obedience, to perseverance, and give us hope as we anticipate the day when we enter into the presence of His glory blameless with great joy.

Let's pray together.

Father, thank you for these truths that provide such insight into your love and your mercy, but also into your holiness and your wrath. Lord, thank you for your saving grace for we, too, were once like those at Laodicea. And through no merit of our own you saved us. Lord, we praise you for such love. And, Lord, we would pray for those who do not know you, especially those who are caught up in the lies of self-deception. Lord, would that you break through those walls of deceit and convict them of their sin that they might embrace you as Savior and Lord. We ask all of this in Jesus' name and for his glorious sake. Amen.

Transcript Explanation: Each transcript is a rough approximation of the message preached and may occasionally misstate certain portions of the sermon and even misspell certain words. It should in no way be considered an edited document ready for print. Moreover, as in any transcription of the spoken word, the full intention and passion of the speaker cannot be fully captured and will in no way reflect the same style of a written document.

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⁵¹ See Daniel 7:27.

⁵² 2 Timothy 2:12.

⁵³ Revelation 3:10.

⁵⁴ Revelation 3:22.