

## MINISTERIO LA FUENTE



# RIVERS OF LIVING WATER

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## ARE YOU LIVING IN LAODICEA?

Let's start by reading Revelation 3:14-22. The apostle John has been exiled to the island of Patmos because of his stand for Jesus Christ. Jesus appears to him and gives him a message for the church in Laodicea. As we read, let's look at the historical city of Laodicea. *And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God; <sup>15</sup>I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. <sup>16</sup>So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of my mouth.* (Revelation 3:14-16 KJV) Laodicea was located in the Lycus Valley a few miles from the hot calcium waters of modern Pammukale in Turkey. Tourists still visit the hot calcium springs. Nearby Colossae was also known for its sources of refreshingly cold and pure drinking water. Laodicea, however, did not have its own water source. The city's water supply was drawn from these hot waters, but the water would arrive to the city lukewarm, and need to be reheated. One could not drink the lukewarm water; one would spit in out of one's mouth.

*Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked* (Revelation 3:17 KJV) Economically speaking, Laodicea was very rich, and was the banking centre for the whole of Asia Minor. In AD 60 the city was devastated by earthquake, and Rome offered financial grants to help rebuild, but unlike other cities at the time, Laodicea refused the help and rebuilt out of her own resources.

*Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: <sup>18</sup>I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see.* (Revelation 3:17-18 KJV) We have just mentioned the wealth of the city and the pride it took in that wealth. The city was strong in the manufacture and sale of textiles and garments. A lot of the city's wealth came from the production of excellent black wool, from which the town's factories made garments, marketed all over the world. Laodicea also had a fine medical school, which specialized in the treatment of eye troubles, and was famous for an eye-powder which it produced, called 'Tephra Phrygia' This eye salve was seen as a miracle remedy and was also exported.

*As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.* (Revelation 3:19 KJV) So Laodicea was a city where the people were content and complacent because of their wealth and economic success. They were comfortable and felt they had need of no help from man or God. These attitudes had infected the church, and the church was therefore complacent and comfortable, not interested in cultivating its relationship with God. It was lukewarm, just like the waters of the city, and it felt it had need of nothing. So Jesus sends this message to the church, seeking to correct them, because he loves them. This message was not written to the whole city. It was written to the church in the city. And Jesus said they were wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked. And that if something did not change, he would vomit them out of his mouth. He would not tolerate indefinitely the indifference of his people in Laodicea.

*Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me. <sup>21</sup>To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne. <sup>22</sup>He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.* (Revelation 3:20-22 KJV)

This message was not just intended for the church in Laodicea 2000 years ago. It is written in God's word because it is a message to the Bride of Christ in all times. It is a message to us, here and now, today. And we need to listen.

**The church was complacent and comfortable, not interested in cultivating its relationship with God.**

Let's look again at the message. Remember, this is not just a Bible study designed to increase your Bible knowledge. God wants to speak to your life and my life, today. And remember, this letter was not written to lost people. It was written to the Church. To you and I.

*And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God (Revelation 3:14 KJV).* The names that Jesus uses to introduce himself here are chosen to speak directly to the condition of the church in Laodicea and the condition of some of our Christian lives today.

He is the "Amen". "Amen" means, "So be it". Paul tells us that all the promises of God are Yes and Amen in Christ Jesus. If we are in Christ Jesus, God wants to see his promises come to pass in our lives. But they will not come to pass if we do not obey. (2 Corinthians 1:20) "*The faithful and true witness*". Jesus witnessed and testified to mankind by faithfully showing us what his Father's will for us is. He was faithful and true even though it caused him much suffering and led him to be murdered on a cross. It cost him. If we are going to follow Jesus, we must understand that being a faithful and true witness will cost us. We cannot be in love with our comforts and conveniences. "*The beginning of the creation of God*". Jesus is referred to elsewhere as the "firstborn from among the dead" (Colossians 1:18), or "the firstborn among many brothers" (Romans 8:29). When we are born again, God raises us spiritually from the dead. We become one of Jesus' younger brothers or sisters. The new creation that God began with Jesus, he wishes to continue in us. Jesus was the beginning of God's new creation; we are the continuance. This means that he wants to express himself through our lives. This shows that God expects our lives to bear fruit, to show the new creation that he has made us to be. He expects them to speak of his nature and his reality. If they are not doing so, something is wrong and we are not fulfilling our destiny or purpose. It is not enough to just be saved. That is just the beginning.

*I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. <sup>16</sup>So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of my mouth. (Revelation 3:15-16 KJV)* These believers were doing "works", and God knew about their works. But something was dreadfully wrong. Jesus had nothing good to say about their works or about the church. There was nothing to praise or commend in it. What was wrong? **They were lukewarm, indifferent.**

What does it mean, to be lukewarm? Well, what does it mean to be hot in our relationship with God? To be hot for God, means that our relationship with him is absolutely the most important thing in our lives. It means that we are willing daily to make decisions to honor and obey and love him, at the expense of everything else. It means that we listen to him and obey him. It means that even when we struggle and fail, we get up and go on, knowing that he loves us and that our relationship with him is the most important thing in our lives.

And what does it mean, to be cold? It means to be living entirely for oneself. To have absolutely nothing to do with God. To be a heathen. To live for pleasure with no pretence of religion.

God says he would rather we be hot or cold, but not lukewarm. So, to be lukewarm is to be somewhere in-between. **It means to have a relationship with God, but that relationship does not govern your whole life.** You are content to just "get by". You will do the minimum you feel is necessary to keep your relationship with God going, but no more. If you live like this, you are neglecting Jesus Christ.

Oh yes, the lukewarm believer may be involved in many Christian activities. But his life does not revolve around Jesus Christ. He is really living for himself, even in the midst of all his Christian activities. His Christian activities are therefore selfish. He is neither hot, nor cold. He is complacent in his RELATIONSHIP with Jesus; and therefore because he is neglecting that relationship, he cannot hear God showing him the good works that HE wants him to do. And even if he is aware of the things God wants him to do, he does not do them, he just makes excuses and then does the things that he wants to do, even the "Christian" things. He is neglecting Jesus Christ.

Just like a wife can neglect her husband, a husband their wife, or a parent their child, so we can neglect Jesus Christ. Does this describe you? Are you neglecting your wonderful Lord and Savior?

*This people have I formed for myself; they shall shew forth my praise. <sup>22</sup>But thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob; but thou hast been weary of me, O Israel. <sup>23</sup>Thou hast not brought me the small cattle of thy burnt offerings; neither hast thou honoured me with thy sacrifices. I have not caused thee to serve with an offering, nor wearied thee with incense. <sup>24</sup>Thou hast bought me no sweet cane with money, neither hast thou filled me with the fat of thy sacrifices: but thou hast made me to serve with thy sins, thou hast wearied me with thine iniquities. (Isaiah 43:21-24 KJV)*

**God expects our lives to bear fruit, to show the new creation that he has made us to be.**

We were formed for what reason? To show forth God's praise. Not to live for ourselves, but to live for him. You may say, "Oh, that is too difficult, I'm just a sinner saved by grace..." Are you born again? Then Jesus lives in you. So it **is** possible to live for God and not for yourself. You have no valid excuses. You are no longer cold, because you are born again. You should be hot. But maybe you are lukewarm.

In this passage in Isaiah, God shows us that he desires that we expend ourselves in our relationship with him. Does he need our sacrifices and expressions of love? No, but he desires them. Not because he gives us some law that we must do this; but because he is worthy of all our attention and honor and obedience. He desires that we bless him through our attitudes, through our devotion to our relationship with him, through our obedience to his commands. But like the Laodiceans, are we saying that it is too much for God to ask? Are we saying that we are too tired or too busy to live fully for him? Are we making excuses for being lukewarm?

One thing is clear, God hates lukewarmness, and he hates indifference. He cannot bear it. So much so that he says he will spew the lukewarm out of his mouth. The lukewarm water of Laodicea was not useful in its lukewarm state. The lukewarm believer is not useful in the kingdom of God. Yes, he continues to be a child of God and saved, but he is not fulfilling God's wishes for his life. What a shame.

*Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: (Revelation 3:17 KJV)*

Notice the difference between what the Laodiceans thought about their condition, and what Jesus said about their condition.

There are thousands if not millions of believers the world over who say to themselves, "Well, I am saved, I have my ticket to heaven, so I am spiritually rich and need nothing more. I can therefore live how I wish..." These believers are dreadfully deluded. They think they are well, so they are not even aware of their need. They are on dangerous ground. In truth they are indifferent and complacent; according to Jesus they are wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked. Remember, Jesus was speaking to the church here, not to the world! He was speaking to believers like you and I. **Did you know, it is possible to be a child of God, who is saved, and at the same time be spiritually poor, naked, and blind?**

*I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see. (Revelation 3:18 KJV)*

**W**hat is the cure for our spiritual poverty, nakedness, and blindness?

Jesus says we must "buy of me..." Why should we "buy" anything from Jesus? Is not our salvation a gift? Yes, our salvation is a gift and there is nothing we can do or add to pay for it. But, growth in Christ is not a gift. It costs us. Ongoing relationship with Christ costs us. Obedience to Christ costs us. *"Some things must be parted with, but nothing valuable; and it is only to make room for receiving true riches. Part with sin and self-confidence, that you may be filled with his hidden treasure."* (Matthew Henry)

What should we buy from him? *"Gold refined in the fire, that thou mayest be rich"* - this is true faith, refined through trials. We should not ask for trials to come. But if we want to follow Christ, they will come, and he will use them to refine our characters and strengthen our faith, which is of more value than gold. (1 Peter 1:7) How do we "buy" that gold? By picking up our cross daily and following him. By daily choosing to obey him whatever the cost. By choosing to build up treasures in heaven through our obedience, rather than focusing on building up treasures on the earth.

We should buy *"white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear"*. We are spiritually naked without Christ. But if we have been born again, we are clothed in white garments. Our white garments represent the holiness of Christ that is given to us as we trust him for our salvation when we are born again. (Rev 7:13-14) But we must choose daily to clothe ourselves with the new creation. To live in accordance with the purity of the garments he has given us. (Ephesians 5:24) Christ has given us his holiness, but we must choose to walk in it through obedience to him, moment by moment. (Rev 19:8).

*"and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see."* What is this eye salve? It is the word of God. How do we learn to see? As we renew our minds with the word of God, we learn to see things from God's perspective. To buy this eye salve, we must take the time and make the effort to renew our minds; we must be willing to give up our own wisdom and reasoning and put ourselves in agreement with the word of God.

**Lukewarmness means to have a relationship with God, but that relationship does not govern your whole life.**

*As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.* (Revelation 3:19 KJV) Why did God say these things to his Bride in Laodicea? And why does he say them to us, today? Because he loves us. That is why he rebukes and disciplines us. So how should we respond? Quit being lukewarm. Get out of your apathy and complacency. Instead, be zealous. Repent.

*Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.* (Revelation 3:20 KJV) This verse is often used in evangelism to encourage people to ask Jesus to come live in their hearts. But Jesus is speaking here to the church, to people who already have him in their lives. He wants to enter into deeper relationship with us.

This is the key. Are you born again? Is your relationship with Jesus the center of your life? Have you been neglecting your relationship with him? He is standing at the door of your heart, knocking and calling out for you to open up your heart to him and cultivate your relationship with him as the most important thing in your life.

If our relationship with Jesus is just a nice little addition to our life, then we are lukewarm and we are offending God. If our relationship with Jesus is somewhere on our list of priorities, and not the most important thing, the very center of our life, then we are lukewarm and we are offending God.

We must allow our relationship with him to be the most important thing in our life. Everything must revolve around that relationship. Anything less, is lukewarmness. And it makes God want to spew us out of his mouth; that is to say, although we remain his children, he cannot use us for his glorious purposes in his kingdom.

*To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.* (Revelation 3:21 KJV) At all costs, we must overcome. What must we overcome? We must overcome the temptation to live for ourselves instead of living for God. We must overcome the temptation to be addicted to comfort and to an ease rather than longing to do God's will whatever the costs. We must overcome the lie that says that God can be just a nice addition in our lives rather than the very center of our lives. We must overcome the temptation to say like the Laodiceans, "I have need of nothing..." **We desperately need God and we desperately need to grow in our relationship with him.**

We must overcome the temptation to be lukewarm.

We have spent many months in this ministry building a foundation in your lives of the grace and mercy of God. You know that he loves you and that if you have been born again you are saved. Now we must begin to understand that God hates lukewarmness and apathy.

Brothers and sisters, you are good people. You would not be here if you did not want to grow in Christ. We love you. But lukewarmness can be so subtle, so deceiving. The Laodiceans did not realize they were lukewarm until Jesus sent a message directly to them, warning them. We must realize that if Jesus is not the very center of our lives, we are lukewarm and the words of Jesus to the Laodiceans apply to us also. **If we want our Christianity to be an addition to our life that makes us better people, but do not want Jesus Christ to govern absolutely every aspect of our life, then we are lukewarm.** We must repent.

**H**e requires all of us to give him the central place in our lives and our daily choices.

He requires that we honor him by cultivating our relationship with him, spending time with him and renewing our minds and attitudes in the word of God.

He requires that we do the good works that he is telling us that we need to do.

Do we want to be useful in the kingdom of God? Or do we want to sit there with our arms folded, waiting for our journey to heaven? Do we want to do the minimum possible in our fellowship and obedience to Christ? Or do we want to pour out our love, honor and obedience on Jesus?

So, let's repent if in our hearts, minds or lives we have had areas that have been lukewarm or apathetic towards Christ, if we have given him less than the best, if we have given him less than everything.

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