

Lesson 10

The Church of Laodicea - the Apostate Church

Review

Let's do a review of the things for which Christ commends and condemns each Church.

Ephesus

Jesus commends those from the Church of Ephesus for their deeds, their toil, their perseverance, that they cannot tolerate evil men, that they put to the test those who call themselves apostles and they are not and they have found them to be false. Perseverance is used twice so this must have been a strong deed. He also commends them for their endurance for His Name's sake and for not growing weary. But He has this against them: they have been so busy doing, doing, doing, they have forgotten who their first love is. That first love is Jesus Christ who wants them much more than He wants their deeds.

Smyrna

Jesus tells them that He knows their tribulation and their poverty. He knows they have endured the blasphemy of those who say they are Jews, but are not. He has no condemnation for those of the congregation of the church in Smyrna. He knows that they will be martyred for their faith. He tells them to be faithful unto death and He promises to give them the crown of life and also keep them from the second death.

Pergamum

Jesus knows where the Church of Pergamum dwells, in the same place as satan's throne. He commends them for holding fast His name and not denying the faith. However, He has a few things against them. Some of them hold to the teachings of Balaam and the Nicolaitans, causing some to eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit acts of immorality.

Thyatira

He tells the church of Thyatira that he knows their deeds, their love, their faith, their service, their perseverance, and that their deeds of late are greater than the deeds they did at first. However, they tolerate the woman in their church, who was a type of Jezebel of the Old Testament. Jezebel of the Old Testament was married to Ahab, king of the northern kingdom of Israel. Jezebel was the daughter of Ethbal, king of the Sidonians, and Ahab served and worshiped Jezebel's gods. This type of Jezebel in the Church of Thyatira, taught Christ's bondservants to go astray and eat things sacrificed to idols and commit acts of immorality.

Sardis

Christ knew their deeds in Sardis, but He did not see their deeds completed in the sight of His God. The Church of Sardis took pride in being known as a church that was alive,

but Jesus called them a dead church. Jesus has no praise for this church. This church is representative of the church age when the Protestant Reformation occurred. What a

shame that when salvation by faith not works had been righted out and applied to the faith correctly, those in this time frame did not finish the works that they had been given to do.

Philadelphia

Philadelphia was known as the missionary church. Have you ever known missionaries who love their work and their calling and the people to whom they have been assigned? They risk it all, their careers, their marriages, their families, and sometimes even their lives. The Church of Philadelphia's was a pure faith, a complete devotion, all for the sake of bringing the Good News of the Gospel to those who had not yet heard. My friend Pam has that kind of devotion for the people group who live in the small African country of Benin. I love to hear her pray audibly. Her worship and praise, her concern for others, her love for all the saints, just elevates me into the presence of Christ. Her faith is pure, her heart clean, her devotion complete. When I grow up, I want to be like Pam. But, will I be willing to pay the price? And is that my calling? Will the Lord open up doors for me if that is where He wants me? The Lord Jesus knew the deeds of this Church in Philadelphia, and He had placed an open door for them in their missionary pursuits. Even if they had to endure persecution, that open door provided by persecution, historically, would cause the church to grow. No one could shut that door which Christ opened for this church. Christ had no condemnation for this church. Because this church had kept Christ's perseverance, He would keep them from the hour of testing which was coming upon the earth.

Laodicea

We come to the final church of the seven churches of Revelation, the Church of Laodicea. In the title of this lesson, I have called the Church of Laodicea the Apostate Church. What does the word "apostate," mean and why would I use it to identify this church? The first question above can be answered rather easily, but the second question we will come back to after we have looked at the rest of this lesson.

The word, "apostate," can be used either as an adjective or a noun. Used as an adjective, the apostate church is a group of Christian Believers who have renounced a religious or political belief or principle formerly held to as truth by this same group.¹ The Merriam Webster Dictionary online makes this word more specific to the individual "apostate," by saying "an apostate," is one whose beliefs have changed and who no longer belongs to a religious or political group.² We know from both of these definitions that we are going to be looking at a church in Revelation that has a member or has members who will be pulling away from the pure doctrine of the Gospel message to another

¹ Online dictionary, "Apostate"

² Merriam Webster Dictionary online, www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/apostate, November 2016.

teaching(s). This is similar to the churches of Pergamum and Ephesus, who fought the teachings of the Nicolaitans and of Balaam. However, theirs were outside influences trying to come into the churches. The threat to the Church of Laodicea was coming from a different source, from within the church. These threats were self-sufficiency, self-reliance, and how physically wealthy they believed themselves to be. The word Laodicea, actually means, the “people ruling,” as contrasted to God ruling the church.³ Those who are or will be in the apostate church in history will see things as gradations of gray, not black and white. Sir William Ramsay calls Laodicea “the city of compromise.”

History

When Alexander the Great died, he had no heirs. His four generals split up the territory he had conquered. Antiochus of the Seleucids was one of those four generals and he ruled Syria. One of the other generals, Lysimachus, originally ruled Asia including this city of Laodicea. However, Seleucid of Syria managed to take this city from Lysimachus.

Laodicea was 40 miles east and also inland from Ephesus. This city is located at the “Gate of Phrygia.” This gate was open to trade routes from the Oriental East. The city lay in a spectacular valley. The city was named “Laodicea,” after Antiochus’ wife, Laodice. The name, “Laodicea,” means “justice of the people” (the rule of the people vs. God).⁴ There is a great Anatolian temple to the primitive Phrygian god, “Men Karou,” in between the Phrygian Mountains and Laodicea. There was a market place there with all kinds of goods for sale or trade from all over the world. The temple was the very center of all things social, administrative, commerce, and religious.

The people of Laodicea were of a very wealthy Greek culture. Laodicea also had a medical school. Famous Phrygian “eye and ear salve,” was developed there and sent all over the world. It was made out from an odd colored clay from the nearby hills where you can see the cities of Colosse and Hierapolis. Chemical analysis of the clay today reveals that there was nothing in the dirt that had any medicinal value. Laodicea was also a center of industry with extensive banking operations. Zeus or Jupiter, was the principle deity worshipped. Remember, Zeus, had temples in his honor in both Smyrna and Pergamum. I did not see that Laodicea had a temple to Zeus. The city had at least two Roman theaters and a large stadium. The city of Laodicea was abandoned because of earthquake activity. The ruins of the city per se have not been excavated, but the ruins of three Christian churches have been unearthed.⁵

There were two rivers that furnished water into the city of Laodicea. Cold waters came

³ Arnold Fructenbaum, Manuscript 33: *The Seven Churches of Revelation*, (Ariel Ministries, 1983 and 2005), pp. 20.

⁴ Chuck Missler, *Supplemental Notes: The Book of Revelation* (Koinonia House, Inc., 1995), p. 52.

⁵ J. Vernon McGee *Thru the Bible*, Volume 5, (Thru the Bible Radio, 1983), pp. 920-921.

from Colosse and hot water came from the hot springs of Hierapolis. By the time the hot steamy water from Hierapolis got to Laodicea, it was at best lukewarm. The cold, cold water from Colosse also picked up heat on its pathway down from the snow pack of the Phrygian Mountains and it, too, became lukewarm by the time it reached the city of Laodicea. Unfortunately, sulfur was also mixed into the water (probably from the hot springs) that gave it an unpleasant smell and taste.

The Title used for Christ

“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:”

Where do you find this description for Christ in **Revelation 1**?

How is the Messiah described in **Revelation 3:14**?

The *Amen* used here is a title for Christ. This is the only place in the Bible where this word is used in this fashion. J. Vernon McGee says a reference to “Amen” in **Isaiah 65:16** should read, “the God of the Amen,” instead of “the God of truth.” This is how **2 Corinthians 1:20** reads in the KJV, “For all the promises of God in him are yea and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us.” Who is the “Amen,” here?

We have looked at the following verses before in conjunction with *Rishon Va-Acharon* and *Emet Elohim Emet*, but it will not hurt us to go through these again.

Deuteronomy 7:9

Isaiah 44:6

Isaiah 48:12

Revelation 21:5,6

What does “*the Beginning of the Creation of God,*” mean? Does this verse imply that Jesus is a created being?

How do we know this does not refer to Jesus as a created being? See **John 1:1-5**. Record

it below. Set these verses to memory this week. You will be glad that you have them in your memory when you meet those who do not believe that Jesus was, is, and always will be God.

Colossians 1:15-20

Colossians 2:9-10

So what does the “*Beginning of the Creation of God*” mean?

What does “*the faithful and true witness*” imply about the Lord Jesus Christ?

What is your source of truth every day? Do you find truth on the radio station you listen to on the way to your job? Do you find truth in the movies that you either go to on the big screen or watch on your own television? Do you find truth as you meander through your email every morning? Or how about truth from the latest updated news’ stories on the Internet? How about from the pulpit? How about those science books your kids are reading or not reading while in High School? How about truth from Uncle Sam? Now, there is surely one for you. Write your thoughts below:

We probably do find some truth in all of these places. However, how do you know whether it is truth or error? This is what Jesus said: “I am the way, the truth, and the life...” **John 14:6**, and what John said “we are from God; he who knows God listens to us; he who is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error...” **1 John 4:6** and what is our message that we hold up as our plumb line of Truth?

There is only One Truth who is the faithful and true witness today and also in the days of the apostasy.

***Day 2-3* Commendation, Condemnation, Exhortation, the Overcomer**

What is the commendation to the Church of Laodicea?

What is the difference between “I know your deeds,” for the churches of Ephesus, Thyatira, Sardis, and Philadelphia, and the “I know your deeds,” for this church of Laodicea?

Condemnation

Write **Revelation 3:15-16** below:

Lukewarm water has a medicinal purpose. Do you know what that purpose is?

Do you sense an “attitude” in God’s criticism of this Church as neither cold nor hot, but lukewarm?

There is a barrier to seeing the real truth when we make the assumption that we already have the real truth.

What do you think God meant when He said He would rather have them “cold?” What do you think a “cold,” church would look like?

What do you think God meant when He said He would rather have them “hot?” Give an example of one of the seven churches of Revelation that is “hot.”

What attracts you to a certain church? What are your criteria for worshiping at one church over another? My main reason for going to a church has always been, does the church explain the Gospel message often and offer people the opportunity to receive Christ? Secondly, I look at their discipleship program, and thirdly, I look at the main pastor’s stance on Israel. When my kids were young and in the care of youth pastors, my understanding of where these pastors stood on the above issues was critical. Both of my children were very leery of a youth pastor’s friend who came to speak to their youth group who preached that they only had to ask forgiveness for their sins from God one time when they accepted Christ. They never had to do it again. The guy was not invited back to speak to them again, probably because my kids spoke up being very aware that the visitor was not speaking “Truth.”

Instructions and Warnings

The exhortation to the Laodicean church is found in Revelation 3:18-20. What is this exhortation a call, too? Go with your gut feeling on this one.

I believe this exhortation to the Laodicean church is a call to salvation. Yes, there are many today who sit in their church pews every Sunday who do not know the Lord as Savior nor as Lord. I grew up in the Brethren church. The Brethren Church merged with the Methodist Church before I was out of high school. They became known as the United Methodist Church. The men and women of the church my parents went to and I went to during my time under my parents’ roof, were all university professors. The head of my parents Sunday school class was at best a Deist. Do you know what a Deist is?

This is what the Jewish Encyclopedia 1906 says about Deism: “Deism is a system of belief which posits God’s existence as the cause of all things, and admits His perfection, but rejects Divine revelation and government, proclaiming the all-sufficiency of natural laws.” This is Wikipedia’s definition: “Deism, derived from a Latin word “deus” meaning “god,” is a theological/philosophical position that combines the rejection of revelation and authority as a source of religious knowledge with the conclusion that reason and observation of the natural world are sufficient to determine the existence of a single creator of the universe.”

Continuing on in Wikipedia:

“Deism gained prominence among intellectuals during the Age of Enlightenment – especially in Britain, France, Germany and the United States – who, raised as Christians, believed in one God but became disenchanted with organized religion and notions such as the Trinity, Biblical inerrancy and the supernatural interpretation of events such as miracles. Included in those influenced by its ideas were leaders of the American and French Revolutions.” Yes, our founding fathers of our nation were mostly Deists. Now, several in my evening class say that our founding fathers were not Deists. Presently, there have been those who have come forward possessing early writings of the founding Fathers of our country who in their writing glorified the Lord Jesus Christ.

I don’t believe the general men and women who were in my parents’ church had a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. In other words, very few of them were “saved.” When a young man came to my high school church class and talked to the attendees about the second coming of Christ, I didn’t have a clue as to what he was talking about. I thought Christ would come a second time into our hearts one day, but I had never even thought about Him coming back to the earth physically to judge, rule, and set up His Millennial Kingdom. At one point in my life after I had been married for 10 plus years and had two kids of my own and after I had come into a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ, I went with my parents to their church. For me, that Sunday, I had an unusual experience, sitting in the pews next to my parents who were both asleep during the sermon. I’m hesitant to tell you of what I experienced that day, because I don’t want you to think that I’m weird and maybe a bit spooky. But, I am going to tell you anyway, because the experience was real and what I experienced was from God. I smelled burning flesh that day, sitting in the pews, next to my sleeping parents and all their wonderful intellectual friends who were also asleep. Did this rattle me? You bet it did! I made certain both of my parents knew Him before they passed from this earth. I actually think my mom knew Him as a young girl, but her faith shifted after World War II and marriage and working in the wonderful world of science. My dad was 87 before he knelt down at the side of his bed and asked Jesus to be his Savior. There was a confirmation of his decision during his last three weeks of his life, when he couldn’t talk, but he could squeeze my hand as an affirmation of faith.

Why am I telling you these things? It’s because there is a general tendency of Man to go away from God and explain everything according to his own understanding of the natural laws of the world around him. I think it is so strange that men would get together to vote on whether the Bible was inerrant or not. Maybe God should have resigned on

that day after they voted Him out. This is what God says in His inerrant Word; please write the text of Job 38:4-7 below.

What is God's conclusion about Man?

What is your conclusion about God? And then, what is your conclusion about Man?

What will the antichrist promote in that day?

Back to the exhortation in **Revelation 3:18-20**

What does The Messiah encourage the Church of Laodicea to seek?

God calls the Laodiceans spiritually naked. What are they urged to seek from God? What do these white garments represent?

What do you find out about those who are clothed in these white garments according to **Revelation 3:4-5**?

Look ahead to **Revelation 6:11**. How do the Laodiceans see these garments?

What color are the garments in **Revelation 7:9, 13-14**?

Why are the garments above white?

Could the problem be that the Laodicean church is blind and naked? Does this church lack salvation?

This church is urged to use the Messiah's eye salve so that they can begin to see spiritually.

The Overcomer

What is the promise of Revelation 3:23-22?

What is your responsibility in all of this, since it looks like we are in the period of time in history when the Apostate Church seems to be front and center? The apostate in our generation is the one "who is actively propagating within the local church the destructive denials of the Trinity, the Virgin Birth, the Deity of the Messiah, and the Second Coming."⁶ Look at the following verses and comment on them below.

2 John 7-11

⁶ Arnold Fructenbaum, Manuscript 33: *The Seven Churches of Revelation*, (Ariel Ministries, 1983 and 2005), p. 25.

Galatians 1:8-9

2 Timothy 3:5

2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1 Please look at this passage of Scripture as the church worshiping, not necessarily as marriage, although it can be both.

Day 4 **The Church of Laodicea - the Apostate Church**

In day one I asked you why I would identify the Apostate Church with this particular church in Laodicea. Dr. Fructenbaum says that apostasy is “the departure from the truth that one professed to have.” He goes on to say that this does not mean that those who are apostate ever did have the truth.⁷ In my own dealings with people who have left mainstream Christianity for a cult or the occult, they have been lured away by a charismatic leader who possesses some bit of “Christian” truth. Once those who start down this pathway are hurled headlong into the cult, it’s almost impossible to get them away from the cult ever again. A former colleague of mine went after his two children who had been lured into the Moonies. Remember them? He took them with him after a shoot out at the Moonies’ compound. I can think of a certain dietician with a popular weight loss program in the churches across America, who had a “bit of the truth.” When she posted on her website that she did not believe that Jesus was God, many of the churches closed her off, but some of those who knew her program worked for losing weight joined her following, which later became her own splinter church cult off of mainline Christianity. One thing for sure, if a group of people do not preach Christ crucified and Christ, an equal part of the Godhead (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit), that He is God, and has always been God, and always will be God, then you can know they are a cult. This is what Dr. Fructenbaum says about the apostasy teachings.⁸

“The content of apostate teaching involves the denial of the Person and work of Yeshua the Messiah.” See **1 John 2:22-23**. Write this passage down and don’t forget it.

“Secondly, **1 John 4:2-3** comments on the denial of the incarnation.”

“Thirdly, the denial of the 2nd Coming of the Messiah is the concern of **2 Peter 3:3-4**.” Please read the following two passages and record your insight(s) in the space provided.

⁷ Arnold Fructenbaum, Manuscript 33: *The Seven Churches of Revelation*, (Ariel Ministries, 1983 and 2005), pp. 21-23

⁸ Ibid, pp. 22-23

2 Thessalonians 2:1-3

1 Timothy 4:1

In the above two addresses, we see that an apostasy will occur in “the day of the Lord.” “The day of the Lord,” is symbolic of the latter days. You saw this term used in the above passage of Scripture in **2 Peter 3:3-4**. It was used as predictive of the end times’ scenario all through the Old Testament. We also have clear prediction of the apostasy of the church in the latter days in the New Testament as well. In the above **2 Thessalonians 2:1-3** reference, we see the “day of the Lord,” used to mean the Tribulation period. What has to occur before the Tribulation can begin according to these verses?

1.

2.

The Church of Laodicea is a picture of the church in “the day of the Lord,” or the latter times.

In the **1 Timothy 4:2** passage, of what do these seducing spirits speak?

They preach a system of doctrine. Whose doctrine? The doctrine of demons

How do these spirits speak lies?

In **1 Timothy 4:3**, how do these lies, the doctrine of demons play out? What are the demons forbidding and advocating?

What will characterize the last days according to 2 Timothy 1:4-5?

This next passage of Scripture is quite lengthy, but please don’t skip it. As you are looking at this Scripture, answer the following questions:

2 Peter 2:1-22

Do you see anything significant in this passage of Scripture that is like our culture today? Please elaborate.

In Peter's sermon, do you notice any tolerance toward apostasy? How should we view tolerance? What does the apostasy say in our day about tolerance? What does the apostasy say in our day about Christians?

How should we show this (intolerance) to the apostasy or what should we (this) look like to the apostate? These are all valid and certainly timely questions that we need to ask of ourselves, and other Believers.

Please read the tiny book of Jude versus 17-19. This Book of Jude is located right in front of the Book of Revelation in your Bible.
What will the apostates be doing in the "last time?"

I have in my Bible the theme of Jude as being: Instructions on how to build up the church and recognizing the ungodly. Please read the entire one chapter of the Book of Jude and answer the questions below:

From the book of Jude, can you give me a comprehensive description of "the ungodly?"

What are Jude's instructions for the Beloved?

What are God's promises to the Beloved in the Book of Jude?

What are the deeds done by the apostates in Jude 17-19 during "the last time?" I am looking for you to find two deeds.

1. Following after their own ungodly lusts, causing divisions, worldly minded, and devoid of the Spirit

What are the fundamentals of the faith?

What are the fundamentals of the faith written down for us in the Apostle's Creed?

If you do not know or you have never experienced reciting the Apostles Creed, then “google” ‘Apostle’s Creed,’ on the Internet. I did just “google” ‘Apostle’s Creed,’ and this is what I found. This is terribly upsetting. I found the Apostle’s Creed for the traditional, Anglican, the Catholic, the Methodist, the Lutheran, the Christian Reformed, and the Presbyterian on just the first 13 of 1,430,000 hits. Does this give you an idea that we are truly in the days of the apostate church?

I have noticed that many of the individual churches of mainstream denominations are pulling away from the denominations, legally taking themselves out of the denomination in order to secure their investments in their buildings in case of default on property loans, and renaming their churches with a Community Church attachment, i.e., the church I came from in Aurora, CO, has gone from New Life Evangelical Free church to New Life Community Church. When my family first attended Crossroads, it was not called Crossroads Community Church; it was called Parker First Baptist. In fact, the congregation voted on the move to rename the church the first Sunday in 1988 we attended. I remember my husband saying, “I’m not sure I want to attend a “Baptist” church again,” as we drove up and parked. He saw the renaming as a sign, very Pentecostal of him!

Let me get back to the Apostles’ Creed: I believe this is the closest I will come to the traditional Apostles’ Creed from the Book of Common Prayer in the year 1662.

I believe in God the Father Almighty,
Maker of heaven and earth:
And in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord,
Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost,
Born of the Virgin Mary,
Suffered under Pontius Pilate,
Was crucified, dead, and buried:
He descended into hell;
The third day he rose again from the dead;
He ascended into heaven,
And sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty;
From thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Ghost;
The holy Catholic Church;
The Communion of Saints;
The Forgiveness of sins;
The Resurrection of the body,
And the Life everlasting. Amen.

Remember I am looking for 2 deeds here that characterize the Apostate church during

the last days according to the book of Jude 17-19. Record the second one below:

2. Mocking

Because of the above mocking of the fundamentals of the faith, those who do such deeds will convince some but not others causing divisions. How many denominations are there today? This is what came up first when I “googled” “number of denominations in Christianity.” “ ‘Denomination’ is defined as ‘an organized Christian group within a country.’ The Center for the Study of Global Christianity at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary estimated **34,000 denominations** in 2000, rising to an estimated 43,000 in 2012. These numbers have exploded from 1,600 in the year 1900.” How many of these divisions have occurred because the “apostate church” has denied such important and crucial doctrines of the faith, like the Trinity, the Incarnation, and the Second Coming of Christ?

Day 5 Review of the 7 Churches of Revelation

This is our last study day together until next time when we will look at Heaven in Revelation 4 and 5. It has been wonderful spending time with all of you and time in our Savior’s written Word. Remember what the difference between the written Word and the incarnate Word is? We have been given the written Word to shed light on our relationship with the Incarnate Word that is the Lord Jesus Himself. He cares for us so much. I hope during these Thanksgiving and Christmas seasons, you will think back on our past 11 weeks together and will remember what we have learned about our Great and Awesome God who would send His Only Son to this earth in the form of a human baby to grow up as a man and to be our Redeemer from the penalty, the power, and the presence of sin. He is our *Ga’el*, our Kinsman Redeemer. No one else could have paid for our sins, but He could, and He did. He loves you. He cares for you. He will accept you into His presence and you will be washed clean because His Son’s blood was shed on the cross for you. You! My friends! Me, too! Hallelujah!!!

This last day is going to be very different from the way we have been studying so far. What I would like you to do is to write out in entirety Revelation 2 and 3 in their respective corresponding churches. When you have done so, I want you to write the most important thing you have learned about studying the different churches. If you cannot bring this to mind for one or more of them, go back and reread the corresponding lessons.

The Church of Ephesus- Lesson 4

The most important thing I have learned from studying the Church of Ephesus.

The Church of Smyrna- Lesson 5

The most important thing I have learned from studying the Church of Smyrna.

The Church of Pergamum- Lesson 6

The most important thing I have learned from studying the Church of Pergamum.

The Church of Thyatira- Lesson 7

The most important thing I have learned from studying the Church of Thyatira.

The Church of Sardis- Lesson 8

The most important thing I have learned from studying the Church of Sardis.

The Church of Philadelphia- Lesson 9

The most important thing I have learned from studying the Church of Philadelphia.

The Church of Laodicea- Lesson 10

The most important thing I have learned from studying the Church of Laodicea

This is the last verse of the Sabbath Prayer lyrics from Fiddler on the Roof, the Broadway musical. I think it is fitting until we see each other again:

“May the Lord protect and defend you.
May the Lord preserve you from pain.
Favor them, Oh Lord, with happiness and peace.
Oh, hear our Sabbath prayer. Amen.”⁹

⁹ Music by Jerry Bock, lyrics by Sheldon Harnick, book by Joseph Stein,
<https://www.stlyrics.com/lyrics/fiddlerontheroof/sabbathprayer.htm>