

Message to Laodicea (vv. 14-22)

The Address (v.14)

VERSE 14 "To the angel [messenger] of the church in Laodicea write (Καὶ τῷ ἀγγέλῳ τῆς ἐν Λαοδικείᾳ ἐκκλησίας γράψον [*conj kai + art.w/dat.m.s. angelos messenger; angel + art.w/noun gen.f.s. ekklesia church + prep en + noun loc.f.s. Laodicea + aor.act.ind.2s. grapho write*]): **The Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God, says this** [Τάδε λέγει ὁ Ἀμήν, ὁ μάρτυς ὁ πιστὸς καὶ ἀληθινός, ἡ ἀρχὴ τῆς κτίσεως τοῦ θεοῦ [*demon.pro.acc.nt.p. tode this; "says this" + pres.act.ind.3s. lego say + art.nom.m.s. + part as subst amen; title for Christ as the one who speaks what is true + art.w/noun nom.m.s. martus witness; martyr + art.w/adj.nom.m.s. pistos faithful + conj kai + adj.nom.m.s. alethinos true, dependable + art.w/noun nom.f.s. arche beginning + art.w/noun gen.f.s. ktisis creation + art.w/noun gen.m.s. theos God*]):

ANALYSIS: VERSE 14

1. The last of the seven messages constitutes the sharpest rebuke given to the seven churches, to a prestigious congregation in a well-to-do community.
2. This church the Lord reprimands sternly for its lukewarmness.
3. No commendation of any kind appears.
4. The only encouragement in the message is the possibility of repentance and faith towards what the Lord calls "pure gold."
5. The address and message is presented in the normal manner.
6. The message is addressed to the 7th star or messenger of this local assembly.
7. It was the pastor's responsibility to disseminate the contents to his flock.
8. The name Laodicea is derived from a combination of *laos* ("people") with *dikao* ("to rule").
9. It conveys the sense of "the rule of the people," i.e., a democracy.
10. Paul had authority over this church during his first Roman imprisonment (A.D. 60-62), though he had not yet visited here personally (cf. Col. 2:1).
11. He had written the congregation a letter, which some have identified with Ephesians (cf. Col. 4:16).
12. Laodicea was the most easterly and the southernmost of the seven churches, though it was only slightly farther south than Ephesus.
13. Ephesus was almost due west of Laodicea.
14. It was located about 40 miles southeast of Philadelphia and was the natural destination for those responsible for those circulating this book.
15. It was in the Lycus Valley at a critical juncture on a major highway.
16. It was the highway that began in Ephesus in the west, ascended the Maeander Valley and continued eastward to enter the Gate of Phrygia.
17. Beyond this gate was a much broader valley where Lydia, Phrygia, and Caria came together; a valley entered by the Maeander flowing from the north.
18. From the point where the Maeander joins its tributary, the Lycus River, the road follows the Lycus Valley eastward as the Maeander turns north at about this point and becomes too rugged to travel.

19. The Lycus Valley is on two levels with Laodicea occupying the lower level and, not far away Colosse the upper valley about ten miles to the east.
20. A third member of this tri-city combination was Hierapolis lying six miles due north of Laodicea, between the Lycus and the Maeander.
21. The Lycus Valley was one of the most frequent routes of travel from the interior to the west because of the ease with which travelers could travel the road.
22. Laodicea was situated as a guardian of this road, near the spot where the Lycus Valley opened into the Maeander Valley.
23. It also was the place where the road from Pergamum and Sardis on the north crossed the east-west route, on its way to the south (Hemer).
24. Though nearly impregnable because of the arrangement of the surrounding mountains, Laodicea was vulnerable because it was almost completely dependant on others for its water.
25. This weakness hindered the city from taking military advantage of what was otherwise an ideal situation.
26. The aqueducts that brought water into the city were underground, but an attacking enemy could easily learn of their whereabouts and sever them, denying the city its needed water.
27. These aqueducts had been unnecessary during the day's of the city's early settlement.
28. Water from the local stream was sufficient, but as the population increased, it became necessary to import water from outside sources (Ramsay).
29. Little is known of the history of the founding of Laodicea.
30. The probable founder was Antiochus II (261-246 BC), who named the city for his wife Laodice whom he divorced in 253 BC.
31. With its Seleucid origin, it probably resembled Thyatira in constitution and law, but here again, records are too scarce to be dogmatic (Ramsay).
32. Since the city was intended to strengthen the Seleucid hold on the land, its original population would have been chosen from among those loyal to the king.
33. Most were probably Syrians, but a segment of the inhabitants may have been Jewish.
34. Allowance must also be made for some Macedonian colonists.
35. Later, after Phrygia was given to Eumenes by the Romans (189 BC), the loyalty of the city to the west was strengthened by importing new citizens loyal to the Pergamenians.
36. Thus Laodicea and other cities of the Lycus Valley came to have very mixed populations (Ramsay).
37. The city served as the judicial seat of the district of which it was a part.
38. Its location at an important travel intersection also made it a great commercial and financial center, a potential it realized after Rome took control of the area and brought peace to the area.
39. It was an important manufacturing center as well.
40. The main product was a widely sought after soft wool that was glossy black in color.
41. The wool was woven into garments for local use and export.
42. It was in competition with its neighbors in Colosse and Hierapolis, where wool was also manufactured, but apparently was the economic superior because of the peculiar qualities of its wool.
43. The seat of a famous school of medicine was also located in Laodicea, though the temple of "the god of the valley," Men Karou, alongside which the school grew up, was about thirteen miles to the west.

44. The Laodicea physicians followed the teachings of Hierophilos (350-250 BC), who advocated that diseases required compound medicines for treatment.
45. They developed an unusual system of heterogeneous mixtures.
46. A well-known medicine developed by the physicians of this school was applied to the eyes to cure disorders.
47. Commerce, manufacturing, and medicine made Laodicea a wealthy city.
48. The prosperity of the city was demonstrated following the great earthquake of AD 60, which destroyed the city and other cities around it.
49. As was its habit, the Roman government offered substantial aid in rebuilding the devastation.
50. Yet Laodicea was not among those cities who received assistance.
51. Whatever the reason the city was not helped, the citizens rebuilt their own city.
52. Even nearby Hierapolis, a prosperous city in its own right, received imperial aid.
53. Laodicea occupied a strategic location as one of only two entrances into Phrygia from the west, the other entrance point being Philadelphia.
54. As noted earlier Philadelphia fulfilled its responsibility of Hellenizing the region to which it had access, but Laodicea was a miserable failure in this regard.
55. The portion surrounding Laodicea still spoke its native tongue, not Greek.
56. Inscriptions discovered in Laodicea furnish no evidence of the Jewish population in the city, though other records reflect significant size and influence of the Jewish community there.
57. Antiochus III reportedly settled 2,000 Jewish families in Lydia and Phrygia, according to Josephus.
58. Laodicea, founded as a Seleucid city and on the borders of the two territories, was a natural center for immigration.
59. In 62 BC, the Roman governor of Asia refused to allow Asian Jews to send their contributions to Jerusalem.
60. Instead he seized the money.
61. The amount seized in the district of Apameia of Phrygia suggests a population of 7,500 Jewish freemen (not counting women and children).
62. A reference in the Talmud suggests that the Jews of Laodicea were at the peak of ease.
63. The temple of the Phrygian god Men Karou was the center of society and administration as well as the religion for the valley.
64. A market was there, protected by the sacred name for trading with outsiders.
65. The medical school connected with the temple was also there.
66. When Hellenism came to the valley, the people continued to worship the god considered supreme in the district, identifying him with their god Zeus.
67. The Laodicean god was sometimes called Aseis, perhaps a Semitic word meaning "powerful."
68. The introduction of Christianity into the Lycus Valley can be sketched from NT sources.
69. The Holy Spirit prohibited Paul from entering Asia in AD 50 (Acts 16:6), compelling him to traverse only the northern borders of the province.
70. He reached Ephesus via an overland route in AD 52, probably following the upland road through Tralla to the Cayster Valley (Acts 19:1).
71. While he ministered in Ephesus, Epaphras evangelized the Lycus Valley, primarily Laodicea (Col. 1:6-7).

72. By the time Paul wrote Colossians (AD 61), he had not personally visited Laodicea or Colosse (Col. 2:1).
73. His intended visit to Colosse (Philem. 22) did not come until his release from Roman imprisonment (AD 62 or 63).
74. Paul's "letter to Laodicea" (Col. 4:16) (our Ephesians) and his letter to Colosse were unusual, since Paul had not personally been to the Lycus Valley to found these churches.
75. There is the suggestion that Archippus (Col. 4:17), a son of Philemon (Philem. 1:2), was responsible for the establishment of the church in Laodicea.
76. Three churches in three cities—Hierapolis, Laodicea, and Colosse—were closely related because of geographical proximity to each other, with the first two overshadowing the third in importance.
77. Colosse had declined in importance through the decades of the first century AD (Hemer).
78. Christ's self-declaration is threefold.
79. "The Amen" is used only here as a title for Jesus Christ.
80. The definite article makes this a substantive and represents a quality par excellence.
81. This descriptive title presents the Lord as the one in whom absolute veracity is personified.
82. The Greek term is a transliteration of the Hebrew *amen* ("be firm"), and indicates veracity.
83. The Hebrew root signifies that which is "fixed," "true" and implies certainty.
84. The Hebrew noun is used of "truth" in the twofold occurrence "God of truth" in Isa. 65:16.
85. The concept here in the title *ho Amen* is credibility, the absolute certainty that all this person says with respect to the Laodiceans is true and will be accomplished.
86. Since the principal indictment against the Laodiceans is lukewarmness, Christ's virtues of sincerity and truthfulness stand in the forefront as He deals with those whose devotion to Him is only superficial and not substantial.
87. The second part of Christ's self-designation to this church "the faithful and true witness" is intended to make the first "the Amen" more specific.
88. The noun *martus* is sometimes used in a legal sense, sometimes in a historical sense, and sometimes in an ethical sense.
89. In the latter instance it came to be used of those who died for their testimony for Christ (cf. 2:13).
90. The present instance is a narrow application of the historical sense.
91. The thought of Jesus as a witness is a favorite one in John's writings (e.g., Jn. 3:11, 32, 33), but does not occur elsewhere in the NT.
92. Several suggestions about the precise connotation of *martus* in this verse have been advanced.
93. One approach contends that its primary reference is to the witness borne by Christ during His earthly life.
94. This view is apparent in Paul's reference to Christ's witness before Pontius Pilate (cf. 1Tim. 6:13) and Jesus' and John's descriptions of Christ's earthly witness (Jn.5:33; 8:14; 19:35; 21:24).
95. However, this witness is quite remote from the present situation.
96. Another idea relates the word to the witness borne in the Apocalypse.
97. Substantiation of this comes noting that it concurs with the meaning of "the faithful witness" in 1:5 as well as in the rest of the book (cf. 19:9, 11; 21:5; 22:6).
98. This view should be included, but it is not wide enough in scope.
99. Another view limits it to just this seventh message (Alford).

100. Certainly it is because He is the faithful and true witness that His counsel and rebuke are to be taken seriously by the recipients of the seventh letter.
101. This view is persuasive, but is not broad enough to allow for references to Christ's faithful witness elsewhere in the book (cf. 1:5; 19:9, 11; 21:5; 22:6).
102. The best way to take *martus* in 3:14 is to make it comprehensive in covering Christ's reliability as a witness to every divine revelation.
103. This meaning agrees closely with that assigned in 1:5, and is supported by the observation that a faithful witness can be trusted never to misrepresent His message by exaggeration or suppression, with his veracity extending not only to his character but also to his message.
104. This meaning is broad enough to provide for an allusion to the OT source of the total expression (Ps.89:37; cf. Rev. 1:5) as well as agreeing with the focus of the book of Revelation as a whole and the need expressed in the message to Laodicea.
105. Jesus Christ is the epitome of veracity.
106. The adjective *pistos* expresses Christ's entire trustworthiness as a witness.
107. In the NT it describes one who is either trusting (cf. Jn. 20:27; Acts 16:1) or trustworthy (cf. 1 Thess. 5:21; 2 Tim. 2:22; 1Jn. 1:9).
108. It can be applied to a man in either sense depending on context, but in the latter sense it can be applied only to God as it is here.
109. This title given to Christ stands in conspicuous contrast to the Laodicean church, which was neither faithful nor true to its calling.
110. The adjective *alethinous* supplies the dimension of "true" or "genuine" to Christ's witness.
111. The witness of Christ to the truth is a testimony that never falls short of absolute veracity.
112. The third title adopted by Christ is "the beginning of the creation of God."
113. Heretical groups through the centuries of the church age, such as the Arians who denied the deity of Christ, have assigned a passive meaning to *arche* ("beginning") ("one begun").
114. This advocates that Christ was merely the first created being and therefore not God.
115. The obvious fallacy in this interpretation is conspicuous upon consideration of the closer context and the context of the book as a whole.
116. How could a created being command the degree of faithfulness outlined in the message to Laodicea, and how could He make such far-reaching promises as are extended to the overcomer and the one who repents?
117. Such a low Christology is at variance with Rev. 1:8 and 2:8 where Christ is eternal, with 5:13 where He with the Father is distinguished from every created thing as an object of worship, with 19:10 where worship of a creature is forbidden, and with 22:13 where His name "the Alpha and Omega" necessitates His being the source of creation, not the result of it?
118. This error is also out of accord with other writings of John which place so much emphasis on the deity of Christ (e.g., Jn. 1:3; 5:18; 10:30).
119. The view that takes "beginning" in the active sense to mean "beginner," "originator," or "initiator" is clearly preferable.
120. This is the sense supported by Christ's use of the word in Rev. 22:13.
121. At the end of the Apocalypse, it parallels not only *to Alpha* but also *ho protos* ("the first").
122. To be "first," He must have also been the creator.
123. This too is the meaning that corresponds with Paul's response to the doctrinal error that had arisen earlier in nearby Colosse and perhaps had existed in Laodicea because of the closeness of the two churches.

124. Paul had commanded that the letter to the Colossians be read in Laodicea (Col. 4:6).
125. The similarities between the message to Laodicea and Paul's two letters to the churches in the Lycus Valley are striking (cp. Rev. 3:21 with Col.3:1 and Eph. 2:6; Rev. 3:17-19 with Col. 1:27; 2:8, 18, 23 and with 2:2, 3).
126. Paul uses very similar terminology in Col. 1:15 where he calls Christ "the first begotten of all creation" and in Col. 1:18 where he calls Him "the beginning."
127. Apparently both Col. 1:18 and Rev. 3:14 rest upon the use of *arche* in Prov. 8:22.
128. In Colossians Paul was developing Christ's uniqueness as creator and counteracting an error regarding the Person of Christ that reduced Him to the level of a hierarchy of mediating powers.
129. This may not be the point of the usage of this title in this seventh letter.
130. More probably this title serves to counter the materialism lust of the well-to-do membership.
131. Christ is unique and therefore pre-eminent.
132. He has supreme authority and power to execute His words, including the warnings and promises in the message to follow.
133. Christ's veracity and His power stand behind the words of this letter to the Laodiceans.
134. The words "the creation of God" require a sense that is inclusive of all creation.
135. The meaning corresponds to the "all things" (*panta*) of Jn. 1:3 as "the all things" (*tap anta*) of Col. 1:16.
136. His creatorship of all things visible and invisible also anticipates His creation of the new heaven and earth following His thousand-year reign on earth.

Condition of the Assembly (v.15)

VERSE 15 'I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot' (Οἶδά σου τὰ ἔργα ὅτι οὔτε ψυχρὸς εἶ οὔτε ζεστός

[*perf.act.ind.1s. oida know + pro.gen.2s. su + art.w/noun acc.nt.p. ergon work + conj hoti that + conj oute neither + adj.nom.m.s. psuchros cool, cold + pres.act.ind.2s. eimi "are" + conj oute nor + adj.nom.m.s. zestos strictly boiling; fig fervent; hot*]; **I wish that you were cold or hot** [ὄφελον ψυχρὸς ἦς ἢ ζεστός [*interj.. derived from the aorist participle opheilo; this verbal particle is used to express an interjection concerning an unattainable wish as in "would that! or "O that!" + adj.nom.m.s. psuchros cold + imper.act.ind.2s. eimi "were" + conj e or + adj.nom.m.s. zestos hot*]).

ANALYSIS: VERSE 15

1. The Lord goes straight to the heart of the spiritual crisis at Laodicea.
2. As in the previous messages, the Lord follows His self-description with a word indicating intimate knowledge (Οἶδά "I know") that is complete and accurate.
3. When used of humans it refers to something known by observation but when used of divine knowledge it refers to knowledge that is absolute based on the divine attribute of omniscience.
4. The objects of His knowledge are their "works" and in four of the other six messages (2:2, 19; 3:1, 8).

5. The works are not just a manifestation of the outward life but are the product of the inner life.
6. The outward works reflect the inner life.
7. The works may be good or bad as in 2 Cor. 5:10 (“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds (def.art.acc.nt.p. τὰ “the things”) in the body, according to what he has done, whether good (*agathon*) or bad (*phalon* worthless).”
8. The conjunction *hoti* (“that”) is used after verbs of perception to introduce what is perceived.
9. The evaluation focuses on the mediocre approach to all things spiritual that characterized this church.
10. It isn’t that they were bereft of overt activity, it was that they were not applying in the larger arena of divine good activity due to the superficial nature of the teaching ministry.
11. Lukewarm Christianity is always characterized by a flurry of activity much of which is not sponsored by sound teaching from the pulpit.
12. The term “hot” (*zestos*) is the easier of the two to define (adj. occurs here and in v. 16).
13. It comes from *zeo* (to boil), which in the participial form is usually translated “fervent” (cf. Acts 18:25; Rom. 12:11; 2x).
14. Hot describes a believer characterized by healthy spiritual fervor/intensity.
15. This intensity is directed toward the WOG and its demands upon the growing believer.
16. Such ones show enthusiasm for BD.
17. No such unanimity exists with respect to the meaning of “cold” (3x: Matt. 10:42 of cold water; Rev. 3:15, 16).
18. One opinion attaches no meaning to it, either positive or negative.
19. The main reason for this is to avoid having Christ wish anyone to be spiritually destitute (cf. v. 15b).
20. This view goes on to conceive of “cold-hot” as a unit and those who are not “cold-hot” as being indifferent to the responsibility of following Christ without distraction.
21. Combined, the two terms are another way of saying “lukewarm” (Beckwith; Johnson).
22. Separated the two terms have no significance.
23. The water supply of Laodicea lies in the background of this explanation, which has no reference to spiritual fervor.
24. The hot waters of Hierapolis had medicinal value, and the cool, pure water of Colosse provided refreshment.
25. In contrast to these, the waters of Laodicea were halfway between in temperature and served on such purpose, according to this opinion.
26. This approach argues that Jesus rebukes the church for its lack of works, not its spiritual temperature, so no figurative significance is to be assigned to any of the three terms.
27. Yet serious obstacles face this explanation.
28. The cold-hot combination can hardly be intended as another way of saying lukewarm because in the very next breath Christ expresses His desire that the readers be one or the other (v. 15b).
29. How then is the objection that Christ would not want believers to be cold to be answered?
30. Spiritual coldness is preferable to lukewarmness because at least those who are cold are not making a pretense of being faithful to God and His plan.

31. From an ethical standpoint a frank repudiation or indifference is much more honest than pretending to be interested in the teachings of the Bible.
32. To prefer outright indifference or rejection over a half-and-half approach is startling, but to profess biblical Christianity while remaining unaffected by its “whole counsel of God” is a disaster.
33. Another example in the NT of hot and cold believers is Jesus’ use of the term “grow cold” (*psycho*) in the Olivet Discourse (Matt. 24:12).
34. There the culprit is the ever increasing lawlessness of the last days.
35. Rather than stand fast against the prevailing antinomianism many believers will succumb to the evil all around them.
36. Rather than endure persecution and privation many will go along with the trends of the times (i.e., greed, immorality, etc.).
37. It remains to assign the metaphorical “cold” a more precise meaning.
38. One suggestion is that it refers to the unbeliever who has rejected the gospel openly.
39. The problem here should be obvious: why would the Lord prefer that the Laodiceans be unbelievers rather than believers in reversionism?
40. It is infinitely better to have believed in Christ for eternal salvation than it is to have never believed.
41. Another suggestion is that it (“cold”) refers to a believer who is a back-slider.
42. This is much closer to the sense that Christ has in mind.
43. “Cold” refers to someone who is a believer but makes not profession of religion, good or bad.
44. It is someone who has believed but makes no pretense of being a good Christian.
45. So the point is, it is better to not attend a church where the whole truth and nothing but the truth is being taught, rather than attend even an adjusted assembly and not be committed to the doctrine being taught.
46. Lukewarmness is the most contemptible state a believer can get himself in from the divine viewpoint.

The Indictment and Threat (v. 16)

VERSE 16 **'So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold** (οὕτως ὅτι χλιαρὸς εἶ καὶ οὔτε ζεστὸς οὔτε ψυχρὸς [*adv houtos so + conj hoti because + adj.nom.m.s. chliaros lukewarm; 1x + pres.act.ind.2s. eimi + conj kai + conj oute neither + adj.nom.m.s. zestos hot + conj oute nor + adj.nom.m.s. psuchros cold*], **I will spit you out of My mouth** [μέλλω σε ἐμέσαι ἐκ τοῦ στόματός μου [*pres.act.ind.1s. mello be about + pro.acc.s. su + aor.act.infin. emeo spit out, vomit; 1x + prep ek from + art.w/noun gen.nt.s. stoma mouth + pro.gen.s. ego “My”*]).

ANALYSIS: VERSE 16

1. The key term describing their state is *chliaros* (“lukewarm”).
2. It appears only here in biblical Greek.
3. The image behind this metaphor is related to the city’s water supply.
4. The city apparently had an on-going problem with the water temperature.
5. The city’s water came from the hot springs in neighboring Hierapolis.

6. Along the way the water lost some of its heat.
7. The water that made its journey had a temperature somewhere between the extremes in Colosse (cold) and Hierapolis (hot).
8. Such tepid water was not pleasant to drink.
9. The metaphorical meaning of this divine evaluation portrays vividly the Lord's revulsion with respect to the believers at Laodicea.
10. They were like the city's drinking water as it arrived overland.
11. Lukewarmness is seen in their lack of zeal for the whole counsel of God.
12. They maintained a form of orthodoxy but were not fully committed to the realm of revealed truth as they had no doubt once been.
13. The warm part indicates their outward attachment to Christianity.
14. The cold part suggests that they were not committed to the all things of divine revelation.
15. This was especially manifest in the message from the pulpit.
16. This of course affected their works.
17. The seriousness of their condition is manifest by Christ's dramatic (and metaphorical) response.
18. The word translated "spit out" is actually the Greek term "vomit."
19. The verb for "spit" is ἐμπαλίζω.
20. The choice of word expresses the utmost abhorrence by a denunciation that is unparalleled in the other six messages.
21. An OT usage that is parallel to this metaphor is Lev. 18:25, 28; 20:22 where the land is said to "spew out" its inhabitants for the people's corrupt ways.
22. If they continue the spiritual sham, He has no choice but to respond by spewing them out of His mouth, as any person would who ingested something that really upset the stomach.
23. The verb "I will" is actually a present active indicative of *mello*.
24. The term means something that is impending, whether the event is just around the corner or down the road a ways (cf. 1Pet.5:1; Rev.3:10).
25. In prophetic parlance it refers to something that is assured but awaits necessary intervening events.
26. Whether the threat issued by Christ is temporal or prophetic intervening time must elapse.
27. In the case of the former, there would be an allotment of time so the congregation could repent and align themselves with the directive will of God.
28. In the case of the former the Church Age would have to run its course before the Rapture could occur.
29. An example of strict immediacy is Matt.2:13 (cf. 17:12, 22; 20:22; Lk.22:23; Jn.4:47; Rev.2:10; 3:2; 17:8, et al) and example of a long-term event is Matt. 11:14 (cf. 12:32; 16:27; 24:6; Lk.21:7; Rom.5:14; 8:18, et al).
30. This spewing out is not an immediate and special judgment.
31. It is rather a warning of adverse eschatological wrath.
32. The language is intended to awaken these believers to impending danger.
33. That danger is loss and shame at the Judgment Seat of Christ (cf. 1Jn. 2:28 "Now, little children, abide in Him (maintain FHS), so that when He appears, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming.").
34. All believers who fall short of finishing their race will suffer shame and loss (SG3).
35. What is threatened against this assembly is equally true of all believers who remain in reversionism (cf. v. 22).

36. The type of reversionism that characterized this church is seen a major characteristic of the final era of the church age.
37. The sixth trend is so repulsive that the body of Christ on earth will be vomited out of Christ's mouth.
38. This suggests that the Rapture itself is a judgment against corrupt believers.
39. The Church Age will end because the corporate body of Christ on earth is so corrupt that the dispensation will be halted.
40. The implied threat of Romans 11:22 "if you continue in His kindness; otherwise you also will be cut off."
41. As Israel was "broken off" (Rom. 11:17), so will the church, do to its arrogance and negative volition.
42. So the spewing out is a judgment upon corporate Christianity at the end of this dispensation.
43. As corporate Israel was set aside for its corrupt ways, so will the church of Jesus Christ be removed from the scene.
44. As Israel was given a chance to repent but failed to do so (cf. Matt. 21:43), so it goes with the Laodicean era.
45. Obviously the resurrection of the church will purify believers (Eph. 5:27 "that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she should be holy and blameless.").
46. The Rapture will provide the removal of the ISTA, dead works, along with the revelation of the mind of Christ for each believer.

Their False Security (v.17)

VERSE 17 'Because you say, "I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing (ὅτι λέγεις ὅτι Πλούσιός εἰμι καὶ πεπλούτηκα καὶ οὐδὲν χρείαν ἔχω [*conj hoti introduce a reason based on a fact; "Because" + pres.act.ind.2s. lego say + conj hoti; used here a quotation + adj.nom.m.s. plousios rich + pres.act.ind.1s. eimi "I am" + conj kai and + pf.act.ind.1s. plouteo be rich; "have become wealthy" + conj kai + adj.acc.nt.s. oudeis nothing + noun acc.f.s. chreia need, lack + pres.act.ind.1s. echo have*], **"and you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked** [καὶ οὐκ οἶδας ὅτι σὺ εἶ ὁ ταλαίπωρος καὶ ἐλεεινὸς καὶ πτωχὸς καὶ τυφλὸς καὶ γυμνός [*conj kai; adversative "and yet" + neg ouk + pf.act.ind.2s. oida know + conj hoti that + pro.nom.2s. su you + pres.act.ind.2s. eimi "are" + art.w/adj.nom.m.s. talaiporos wretched; 2x Rom.7:24 + conj kai + adj.nom.m.s. eleeinos miserable + conj kai + adj.nom.m.s. ptochos poor, destitute + conj kai + adj.nom.m.s. tophlos blind + conj kai + adj.nom.m.s. gumnos naked*]),

ANALYSIS: VERSE 17

1. Verses 17-18 are an elaboration of what constituted the church's lukewarmness.
2. The opening words of verse 17 are the boastful self-appraisal of the Laodiceans.
3. Secure in their affluence, they were oblivious to their spiritual condition.
4. The material wealth of the Laodiceans is will established.

5. The huge sums taken from the Asian cities by Roman officials during the Mithridatic period and following indicate enormous wealth.
6. The Zenonid family (private citizens of Laodicea) is a remarkable example of the extent of individual wealth (cf. Tarn and Griffith, *Hellenistic Civilization*, 3rd edition, 113).
7. Their pretentious claim was not only that they were rich but that they had achieved it on their own.
8. The combination *plousios eimi kai peplouteka* (“I am rich and have become rich”) is an example of the idiom called *hysteronproteron* that is used regularly in this book (cf. 3:9; 5:2; 10:4,9; 12:10; 19:13).
9. It is an inversion of natural sequence.
10. The perfect tense means “my wealth is due to my own exertions.”
11. Logically, the obtaining of wealth precedes the attainment of a wealthy status.
12. The elaboration *kai ouden chreian echo* (“and have need of nothing”) further reflects the church’s delusional complacency.
13. Complacency and self-satisfaction are often fostered by material comforts.
14. The absence of persecution or other special difficulties, could also contribute to the church’s languid state.
15. No doubt the membership interpreted their prosperity as a sign of divine approbation.
16. They equated spiritual prosperity and well being with material advantages.
17. This mentality exists with the prosperity gospel crowd (cf. 1Tim.6:5 “and constant friction between men of deprave mind and deprived of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain.”).
18. Christ proceeds to lay bare the real status quo of Laodicean Christianity, which is in stark contrast to the delusion of the membership.
19. From the Lord’s perspective their alleged spiritual prosperity was actually spiritual bankruptcy.
20. They had over time imposed this delusion upon themselves and only by volitional realignment to the full knowledge of the truth could they come out from under the fog they were in.
21. Here was a church rich in pride but poor in spirit.
22. The church’s deplorable condition called for a multiple description.
23. The adjective “wretched” is found only here and in Rom. 7:24 where Paul addresses his own predilections with respect to the ISTA/OSN.
24. Someone who is wretched is someone who is bereft of even the most basic necessities of human existence.
25. The adjective “miserable” occurs only here and in 1Cor. 15:19 where it describes someone who has no hope beyond this life.
26. It is better translated “pitiable.”
27. Wretched views the individual from the standpoint of his surroundings, while pitiful describes the person from the standpoint of others.
28. The adjective “poor” (*ptochos*) denotes abject poverty (sometimes referred to as “grinding poverty”).
29. The corresponding verb *πτωσσω* signifies the action of a beggar who crouches and cowers.
30. Such an individual is in view in Jam. 2:2, 3, 5, 6.
31. The adjective is best translated “beggarly” in Gal. 4:9 to describe legalism versus grace.
32. We are to come to the aid of those who are positive and in this condition (Gal. 2:10).

33. Of the five adjectives, this one is the most specific antonym of the Laodiceans' self-concept, that of being rich.
34. The inability to see spiritual verities is reflected in the adjective "blind."
35. It is often used in Scripture of the spiritually blind (cf. Matt. 15:14; 23:16, 17, 19, 24, 26).
36. An excellent example of physical blindness and spiritual blindness is seen in the story of the blind man in John 9: 1-41 (cf. 10:21; 11:37).
37. Spiritual blindness with respect to believers is seen in 2Pet. 1:9 and 1Jn. 2:11.
38. This adjective is used against the background of a city famous for its eye meds.
39. The adjective "naked" denotes the shame.
40. In a city famous for its garment industry comes this descriptive term.
41. Believers who are not dressed with the works of righteousness learned about via GAP will experience shame at the Lord's coming (cp. Rev. 16:15).
42. Those who only hold to a shallow form of godliness and embrace a kind of self-sufficiency are all these things.
43. The designation "lukewarm" is an apt description of affluent American Christianity.
44. We see it in the push for bigger and better church complexes.
45. This is the era of the mega-church and all sorts of gimmicks to raise funds.
46. Sound doctrine is not available in these assemblies (cf. 2Tim.4:3).