

**Mount Up Wednesday**  
**The Wednesday Night Bible Study Ministry of**  
**East Mount Zion Baptist Church**  
**Dr. Brian A. Cash, Lead Pastor**  
**Kathy Booker, Exec. Pastor and Facilitator**  
**The Study of Revelation**  
**The Letter to the Church at Laodicea**

**Message to Laodicea:**

**14** “And to the angel of the church in Laodicea write: ‘The words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of God’s creation.

**15** “I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were either cold or hot!

**16** So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth. **17** For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked. **18** I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire, so that you may be rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself and the shame of your nakedness may not be seen, and salve to anoint your eyes, so that you may see. **19** Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent. **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 eat with him, and he with me. **21** The one who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, as I also conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne. **22** He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”

**The History of Laodicea:**

The city of Laodicea was founded in 260 BC by King Antiochus II, and is infamously known as the home of the apostate church that was heartily condemned by the Lord Jesus in [Revelation 3:14-22](#). Situated in the Lycus River Valley, Laodicea, a hub of banking, law, and commerce, was frequented by travelers journeying along the east-west and north-south routes of the Roman Empire. [Ephesus](#), one of the most referenced cities in the New Testament, was located about forty miles west of Laodicea.

Besides being a major center of commerce, Laodicea was significant in the Roman judicial system. As the citizens enjoyed no small measure of prosperity, the city was adorned by an impressive amphitheater and other notable monuments. Because of the city’s economic well-being, the Laodicean congregation of professed believers boasted they were in need of nothing, but the Lord Jesus, unimpressed by the city’s grandeur, charged them with spiritual bankruptcy ([Revelation 3:17](#)).

Jesus admonishes this church for being “lukewarm.” The Lord may have been referencing the tepid water supplied by the city’s aqueduct. Unlike the therapeutic hot water that benefited the citizens of Hierapolis (which was north of Laodicea) or the cool, refreshing water enjoyed by the people of Colossae (located to the southeast), the water of Laodicea was scarcely palatable. Water served at a lukewarm temperature is neither pleasant nor satisfying. Jesus [warned](#) the lukewarm Laodiceans that He would spew them from His mouth, just as one might violently expel a

disagreeable-tasting liquid ([Revelation 3:16](#)).

Besides woolen products and sandals, Laodicea exported a locally made eye salve throughout the Roman Empire. The effectiveness of this salve is doubtful, but the Lord made reference to its production. In rebuking the apostate believers for their spiritual blindness, Jesus told them to buy from Him “salve to put on your eyes, so you can see” ([Revelation 3:18](#)).

The city of Laodicea was a thriving, prosperous financial center, but Jesus chastised the church there for saying they had need of nothing when, in truth, they lacked Him ([Revelation 3:17](#)). He was outside the church door, yearning to be invited in and take His rightful place within the church: “Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me!” ([Revelation 3:20](#)).

### **Significance of the Letter:**

The book of Revelation is not the only place in the Bible where we find a reference of a letter to Laodicea. In Paul’s letter to the Colossians 4:16, he mentions a letter that he had written to this church as well. This is considered by scholars to be a lost letter of Paul’s. In this letter from the Lord, Jesus identifies Himself thus: “The Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God’s creation.” These titles emphasize the Lord’s faithfulness, sovereignty, and power to bring all things to their proper completion (the “Amen”).

In contrast to the other six churches, the Laodicean church has nothing to commend it. Jesus begins the message with condemnation: “I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! So, because you are lukewarm—neither hot nor cold—I am about to spit you out of my mouth. You say, ‘I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.’ But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked” ([Revelation 3:15-17](#)). Jesus emphasizes their “lukewarm,” apathetic nature three times. As a result of their ambivalence to spiritual things, Jesus would have nothing to do with them. He would “spit them out,” as the people of Laodicea would spit out the tepid water that flowed from the underground aqueducts to their city. With their apathy came a spiritual blindness; they claimed to be rich, blessed, and self-sufficient. Perhaps they were rich in material things. But, spiritually, the Laodiceans were in a wretched, pitiful condition, made all the worse in that they could not see their need. This was a church filled with self-deceived hypocrites.

“Buy from me gold refined in the fire” is a metaphor from the Bible ([Revelation 3:18](#)) advising believers to seek true spiritual wealth by going through trials and suffering to develop a more genuine and steadfast faith, rather than relying on material riches or worldly wisdom. The “gold refined in the fire” represents a purified character and a deep, tested, and valuable faith in God, which is obtained by surrendering to Him and accepting the trials that refine a person’s inner self, making them spiritually rich.

Additionally, Jesus calls the Laodicean church to repent of its sin by also putting on “and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see” ([Revelation 3:18](#)). Their material wealth had no eternal benefit, so Jesus commands them to come to Him for true, spiritual riches (see [Isaiah 55:1-2](#)). Only Christ can supply an everlasting inheritance, clothe us in righteousness, and heal our spiritual blindness.

The significance of being neither hot nor cold was very important to Jesus. What does this phrase mean to you? Give examples of being “hot” or “cold”.

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| <b>1st</b> | <b>Ephesus</b>      | "Desired"             | <b>The Apostolic Church</b> (c. AD 30–100)      | Commended for hard work and exposing false apostles, but admonished for having "left its first love".                                                                              |
| <b>2nd</b> | <b>Smyrna</b>       | "Myrrh"               | <b>The Persecuted Church</b> (c. AD 100–313)    | Commended for its spiritual richness despite tribulation and poverty. This era ended with the Roman persecutions.                                                                  |
| <b>3rd</b> | <b>Pergamos</b>     | "Married"             | <b>The Compromising Church</b> (c. AD 313–600)  | Describes the church after Emperor Constantine legalized Christianity. It was rebuked for tolerating sin and false teachers after being "married" to the world.                    |
| <b>4th</b> | <b>Thyatira</b>     | "Continual sacrifice" | <b>The Corrupt Church</b> (c. AD 600–1517)      | Represents the church during the "Dark Ages." It was commended for its good works but condemned for tolerating the "prophetess Jezebel," which symbolizes idolatry and immorality. |
| <b>5th</b> | <b>Sardis</b>       | "Escaping ones"       | <b>The Reformation Church</b> (c. AD 1517–1700) | Represents the Protestant Reformation. Though it has a reputation for being alive, Jesus said it was spiritually "dead" and needed to complete its good works.                     |
| <b>6th</b> | <b>Philadelphia</b> | "Brotherly love"      | <b>The Missionary Church</b> (c. AD 1700–1900)  | Represents the Great Awakening and missionary revival periods. This church receives only praise for patiently enduring and is promised protection from "the hour of trial".        |
| <b>7th</b> | <b>Laodicea</b>     | "Rule of the people"  | <b>The Lukewarm Church</b> (c. AD 1900–Present) | Represents the modern church age. The church at Laodicea is described as wealthy yet spiritually poor, "lukewarm," and on the verge of being "spewed out" by Christ.               |