

# SEVEN LETTERS to SEVEN CHURCHES



## SMALL GROUP NOTES: Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> August – Week 7 'LAODICEA'

Read Revelation 3.14-22

### Drinking Habits

Are there times when you really want a hot drink and nothing else will do?

What drink? Is there a particular way it has to be made?

How hot does a 'hot' drink need to be?

When is an icy cold drink your favourite beverage?

When might you want a lukewarm drink?

### Jesus the Amen

Right at the start of this letter Jesus is described as 'the Amen' and the 'faithful and true witness' **What is Jesus saying about Himself here?**

You might want to look at [Colossians 1:15-18](#) and [Isaiah 65:16](#).

Tim summarised this in his sermon as Jesus is 'truth' and 'king'

'Jesus is the Amen' - this is a great description of all that Jesus does and is – Jesus is the final word of agreement to everything the father does – in his life, he demonstrates to us that all that God is and all that God does is true.

**Why is it so fitting to start this letter to Laodicea this?**

### Water source

Laodicea was close to Hierapolis, with its soothing hot springs, and Colossae, with its refreshing cool waters, both were piped to Laodicea via the aqueducts but arrived lukewarm. It is this remarkable feature of Laodicea – hot water that cooled down and cool water that heated up – which forms the background to this letter. Jesus speaks to his church with a mixture of sorrow and anger – you are neither hot nor cold. I wish you were one of the other. So because you are lukewarm I am going to spit you out of my mouth.

**How does this local information affect our understanding of these verses?**

**Given this setting, what do you think Jesus' words about being lukewarm mean regarding this church?**

Christ urges the church to be refreshing (cold) or medicinally healing (hot), rather than like the Laodicean water supply. Be able to minister in some valuable way, rather than being worthless, as lukewarm water is!

**What kind of misinterpretation does a lack of this understanding the context create with these verses?**

## **Self-sufficient**

In 1st century Asia Minor, Laodicea was a wealthy city known for its banking, black wool, and medical school (specialising in ophthalmology - eyes). It was so wealthy, in fact, that when an earthquake struck Laodicea in AD 60, the city was able to rebuild itself without any help from Rome. The church in Laodicea is also mentioned in the letter to the Colossians (see especially 4:15, 16).

**How does all this factor into what Jesus says to them in verse 17?**

**To what extent do we (or our churches) think that we are in danger of being self-reliant and think we have no need of Jesus?**

**How does this happen and what does it look like?**

Go back and compare what Jesus said to the church in Smyrna (Revelation 2.8-11) to what he says here to Laodicea.

**What is the contrast you find and what do you think creates this difference?**

Verse 18 can also only be understood from a cultural perspective. He mentions three things that they need to get from him... Refined Gold, White clothes, and salve for their blindness. The three things that the Laodiceans would have thought they had no need for.

**What things today in our culture give us a false sense of security?**

**What might Jesus say we need from him today?**

Take some time to complete the following statement: **“you might be lukewarm if...”**

**What can we do to avoid becoming lukewarm?**

## **Standing at the door**

Verse 20 is frequently memorized and used in evangelism.

**To whom is Jesus speaking in this verse?**

**How does it fit in with the rest of the letter? See John 14:23.**

There are strong echoes in the gospels where the master has returned at an unexpected hour and no one is awake to open up the door (Luke 12.35-48). See also the bridegroom at the door knocking where his beloved lies asleep (Song of Solomon 5.2)

Take a few moments to examine the famous painting by Holman Hunt below or at <https://www.stpauls.co.uk/history-collections/the-collections/collections-highlights/the-light-of-the-world> (more details here on the painting too).

**What do you like about this painting?**

**How well does it capture the ideas expressed in Revelation 3.20?**

## **Whoever has ears**

Every letter in Revelation 2 and 3 ends with the words, “whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”

**What is the Spirit saying to you through this letter?**

**What has the Spirit been saying to you throughout these series?**

**How will you live differently in light of that message?**

