Revelation 3:14-22 – The Church with Christ on the Outside

John Stott suggested that *"Perhaps none of the seven letters is more appropriate to the church at the beginning of the 21st century than this. It describes vividly the respectable, sentimental, nominal, skin-deep religiosity which is so widespread among us today."* This last of the seven messages to the churches is indeed one of the hardest hitting, but it is also the most inviting as we'll see.

Warm Up Question(s) – choose one

- What is the nastiest food or drink you ever tasted?
- What are some foods or drinks that taste better cold or hot than at room temperature?
- If you could have dinner with anyone in the world, whom would you pick? Why?

Discussion Questions

1) **Read Revelation 3:14-22.** Jesus introduces Himself as the "Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God's creation." Why do you think Jesus chose these specific titles for a church that was struggling with compromise and self-deception?

2) How did the church at Laodicea describe itself? How does Jesus describe it? Why the difference?

3) Historically, Laodicea (in contrast to the cold refreshing water of Colossae or the healing hot springs of Hierapolis) was know for having to pipe in their drinking water so that it was "lukewarm" by the time it arrived at their city. How does understanding this local geography impact how you interpret Jesus' metaphor of being "lukewarm"?

4) Practically speaking, what do you think a "lukewarm" faith looks like[1]? Are their stories or examples of "lukewarm" faith in the Bible (e.g. the stories in Luke 14 vs. Luke 15)?

5) The Laodiceans claimed, *"I am rich…and do not need a thing."* How can physical wealth, comfort, or stability trick us into thinking we are spiritually healthy (cf. Mark 4^{18-19})?

6) How does Jesus describe their true state (v.17b)? How can a church or an individual be or become so completely blind to their own actual spiritual state (cf. Judges 16^{20})?

7) Jesus invites them to buy gold refined in the fire, white clothes to wear, and salve for their eyes. What do these three symbolic items represent in contrast to Laodicea's famous local industries of banking, black wool, and eye medicine (cf. 1 Peter 1^{6-7}; 3^{3-4}; Matt. 9^{36-38}; Mark 8^{22-25})?

8) Why does Jesus rebuke and discipline this church (v. 19)? How does viewing His hard words through this lens impact the way we heard and receive hard truths from Scripture?

9) Verse 20 (*"I stand at the door and knock"*) is often used for evangelism, but it was originally written to a church. What does it mean for Jesus to be standing *outside* His own church, and what does it look like to open the door to Him personally and as a congregation?

10) What does it mean to "overcome" in a culture of extreme comfort? What stands out to you about the promise to sit with Jesus on His throne?

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[1] Some examples at https://jdgreear.com/8-signs-lukewarm-christian/