

**Lesson 7**  
**Revelation 3:14 - 22**

**Christ and the Churches – Laodicea, the lukewarm church**

**Memory verse:** “To the one who is victorious, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I was victorious and sat down with my Father on his throne.” (Revelation 3:21 NIV).

Laodicea was located in the Lycus River Valley, the southwest area of Phrygia. Of the seven cities in the letters, it is the most south easterly. It is 45 miles southeast of Philadelphia and would be about 100 miles directly east of Ephesus. So these seven letters traverse a little bit of a loop in Asia Minor. Hierapolis, one of the sister cities six miles north and Colossae was ten miles to the east and south. Because of the Lycus Valley being one of the most common routes of travel to the west, people obviously wanting to travel through a valley rather than across mountains.

Laodicea became a very important city. Anytime these cities were on a trade route they became significant. Not only was it a significant city on the east/west trade route, but it was also a significant city on the north/south road from Pergamum and Sardis, moving south to the coast. So they were crisscrossing all these people who went east and west and north and south and coming through the city of Laodicea. It had been founded by Antiochus II in the third century B.C. He named it for his wife.

Crucial to this city was its water supply. There were some local streams in the area but as the population grew and developed the local streams and rivers were inadequate. In fact some of them dried up in the winter. And so water had to be brought in. Well the only way they could bring it in there was by an underground aqueduct. And being very enterprising they managed to build an aqueduct and the water flowed down this aqueduct into the city of Laodicea. It did have an impact on their strength militarily because anybody could come along and conquer them by just cutting off the water supply, finding where the aqueduct was, identifying it, sealing it off and just sitting out and waiting until the siege of the city accomplished its end as the people had no water. And though it was fortified architecturally, an enemy could find the aqueduct and leave them rather helpless. So it never became much of a military power.

A second key feature that's going to come into play in the letter that dominates the city is the commercial aspect. It was very wealthy apparently because it was on the crossroads, north, south, east, west, it became a business hub and it became a banking center for people moving in all directions to put their funds. They became so very wealthy that when in 60 A.D. the city was totally flattened by an earthquake, Rome offered to give them some money to rebuild and they refused it saying they had plenty of their own. The people of Laodicea prided themselves in rejecting the offer of financial help from Rome and rebuilt the city far more beautiful than it had ever been and they did it with their own funds.

While the Apostle Paul was ministering in Ephesus his friend Epaphras evangelized the Lycus valley. And he even evangelized Laodicea, that's in Colossians 1:7. Out of Ephesus where Paul was building this sort of mother church, people were going and founding other churches and Epaphras went to Laodicea about a hundred miles to the east and a bit south and founded the church there. By the time Paul wrote Colossians in the early sixties, he had not personally visited Laodicea or Colossae for that matter. He told Philemon, in verse 22 of Philemon that he wanted to come and visit Colossae. He said he would be soon released and be able to come and visit there.

As with some of the previous churches, the Lord adapted His words to something significant about the city in which the assembly was located. In this case, Laodicea was known for its wealth and its manufacture of a special eye salve, as well as of a glossy black wool cloth. It

also was located near Hieropolis, where there were famous hot springs, and Colosse, known for its pure, cold water.

John Stott once wrote, "The Laodicean church was a half-hearted church. Perhaps none of the seven letters is more appropriate to the twentieth century church than this. It describes vividly the respectable, sentimental, nominal, skin-deep religiosity which is so wide spread among us today. Our Christianity is flabby and anaemic, we appear to have taken a lukewarm bath." Things to learn: 1) Jesus is the Amen, the Truth and the Beginning 2) Dangers of a lukewarm spiritual life 3) Blessings of a life with Jesus

**Discussion questions:**

Q1 The Lord identifies Himself to the church of Laodicea in three unique titles. Explain the three titles.

Q2 What were the real needs of the church at Laodicea which the Lord had identified?

Q3 Using verses 18 to 22, how can a person be encouraged for a change to a fruitful spiritual life in Jesus?