

Revival:¹ Our Great Need



SABBATH—JUNE 29

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Revelation 3:14–21; Hebrews 12:7–11; Matthew 25:1–13; Zechariah 3:1–5; Song of Solomon 5:2–5.

MEMORY VERSE: “ ‘Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If any of you hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with you. And you will eat with me’ ” (Revelation 3:20, NIV).

LAODICEA IS THE LAST CHURCH IN REVELATION'S CHAIN OF SEVEN CHURCHES. The name Laodicea means “a people judged.” It is also a perfect symbol (word picture) for God's last-day people.

Laodicea was located in an open valley in southwestern Turkey. It was an important banking city. It was also a center for education and medicine. Its people were independent, proud, and rich.

But what the city lacked was water. The water was piped from a spring five miles south of the city. When the water reached Laodicea, it was lukewarm.² Jesus uses that symbol to show the lukewarm spiritual condition³ of His last-day church. Its people are proud, lazy, and uncaring. It is a church that has lost its desire to serve God. It is a church that needs a spiritual revival (reawakening).

But the Laodicean message also is filled with hope. Christ speaks to His people in love. He offers to meet their heart needs and reawaken their deepest spiritual desires.

1. revival—renewed interest in God and the desire to improve one's spiritual life.

2. lukewarm—halfway between hot and cold.

3. lukewarm spiritual condition—not being filled with love for God and a desire to serve Him.

SUNDAY—JUNE 30**HOPE FOR LUKEWARM
LAODICEANS
(2 Corinthians 5:17)**

Jesus speaks to each of the seven churches in Revelation 2 and 3. In each case, He uses a different name for Himself. Each name shows their spiritual condition. The titles (names) He uses in His message to the church of Laodicea show spiritual renewal for all those who will listen to His call.

Read Revelation 3:14, 15; 2 Corinthians 1:20; John 3:10, 11; and Colossians 1:13–17. Why do you think that Jesus used the titles “the Amen,” “the faithful and true witness,” and “the beginning of the creation of God” while speaking to the Laodicean church in Revelation 3:14, 15?

In Revelation 3:14, the Greek word for “beginning” is *arche*. It can mean “beginning,” especially the beginner of an event or action. Here *arche* means Jesus as the Beginner, or the first cause of all creation. In other words, He is the Creator (John 1:1–3; Ephesians 3:8, 9).

This is very important. Jesus is the One who spoke, and worlds came to life. He is the One who created the earth, the One who spoke life into existence. The all-powerful Creator can create new life. He can re-create new spiritual desires in our hearts. He

can change our spiritual lives. This is the same Jesus who speaks hope to Laodicea.

Read 2 Corinthians 5:17 and Galatians 6:14, 15. What do these verses mean to you?

Why is the Laodicean message a message of hope? What encourages you in this message of strong warning? Which of the three titles (names) of Jesus means the most to you, and why?

MONDAY—JULY 1**A LOVING REBUKE⁴
(Revelation 3:15, 16)**

Why does Jesus give the Laodicean church such a strong rebuke in Revelation 3:15, 16? What does it mean to be lukewarm? What other words might Jesus have used instead of “lukewarm”?

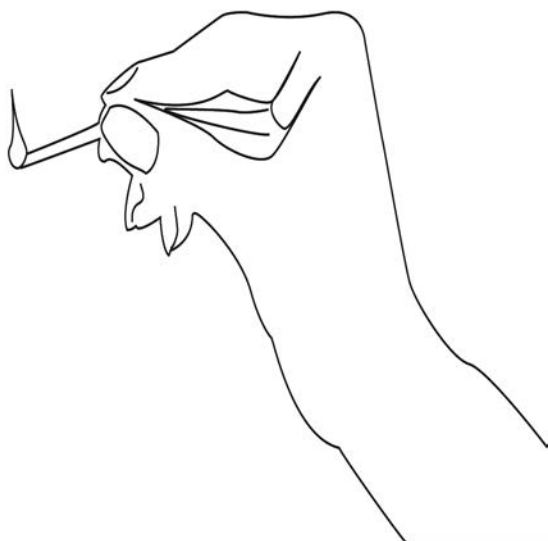
When talking about Revelation 3:15 and 16, Ellen G. White says: “The message to the Laodicean church speaks of those whose religious experience is halfhearted. They do not give strong witness in favor of the truth.”—Adapted from *The SDA Bible Commentary*, volume 7, page 962. This is an interesting report. A lukewarm religious experience has no life. It has the outer shell of Christianity but does not have “meat”

4. rebuke—scolding; warning.

inside. In other words, it looks good on the outside but does not have the living power.

The people of Laodicea are not false or crazy believers. They are just uncaring about spiritual things. The Laodiceans (people of Laodicea) appear to be living holy lives. Paul says that “they will act as if they were serving God. But what they do will show that they have turned their backs on God’s power” (2 Timothy 3:5, NIV). Jesus talks about religious people in His day who “honor me [Jesus] by what they say. But their hearts are far away from me” (Matthew 15:8, NIV).

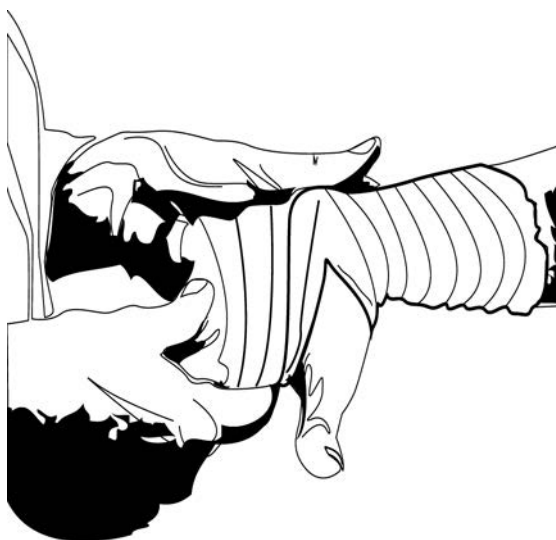
Read Hebrews 12:7–11; Job 5: 17–19; Psalm 94:12; and Proverbs 29:15, 17. Then describe God’s purpose for giving His rebukes (warnings).



Jesus will do whatever it takes to restart a spiritual flame in our hearts.

The Lord loves His people too much to let them be destroyed. He will do whatever it takes to restart a spiritual flame in their hearts. Jesus gives a strong rebuke because His love is so strong. His punishment is given only because of His desire to heal us. The prophet (special messenger) Hosea shares this feeling when he calls his people to repent (turn to God). “ ‘Come. Let us return to the LORD. He has torn us to pieces. But He will heal us. He has wounded us. But he’ll [he will] bandage our wounds’ ” (Hosea 6:1, NIV).

Has God ever used painful or embarrassing experiences to make you humble and to bring you closer to Him? What did you learn from these experiences? How did that help you to not go through them again?



God will bandage our wounds.

TUESDAY—JULY 2**KNOWLEDGE AND REALITY
(Revelation 3:17)**

There is a difference between what Laodicea says and what Laodicea does. There is an even greater difference between the spiritual experience that Laodicea thinks she has and the experience that she really does have.

What does Laodicea think of herself in Revelation 3:17? What is our Lord's opinion of her? How do you think a people could be so blind to their true spiritual condition? In what ways might we be blind about our own spiritual condition?

One of Satan's most dangerous tricks is to blind us to our true spiritual needs. Some of the religious leaders of Jesus' day were blind to their own spiritual condition. They were Bible-reading, Sabbath-keeping, tithing, church members looking for the coming of the Messiah (Chosen One). But many did not know about the kind of spiritual kingdom that He would bring with Him. Jesus called them "blind guides" (Matthew 23:24, NIV). Paul writes to the church at Corinth about "the minds of those who don't [do not] believe" (2 Corinthians 4:4, NIV). This is why Jesus said He came " 'so that the blind will see again' " (Luke 4:18, NIV). In other words, Jesus will restore (make new) the spiritual eyesight that we have lost if we let Him. Every time that

Jesus opens blind eyes in the New Testament, He is showing His desire to open the eyes of our minds in order to help us to know Him clearly.

Read Matthew 25:1–13. In what ways are the foolish virgins and the members of the church at Laodicea nearly the same?

What ways have you found to stay spiritually awake? Why do you think it is so easy to become spiritually lazy? What are some ways to prevent spiritual laziness?



One of Satan's most dangerous tricks is to blind us to our true spiritual needs.

WEDNESDAY—JULY 3**GOD'S CURE (Revelation 3:18, 19)**

There is hope for Laodicea. There also is hope for everyone who is spiritually lazy. Our Lord has medicine for this problem. The fact that the Lord speaks to this church shows that there is hope for the church if His people accept and follow His advice.

Think about Jesus' advice in Revelation 3:18, 19. What does Jesus mean when He talks about "gold made pure by fire" (NirV), and about being clothed in "white clothes," and our eyes being treated with "healing lotion [medicine]"? Read also 1 Peter 1:7; Zechariah 3:1–5; Revelation 19:7–9; and Ephesians 4:30.

"Jesus is going from door to door. He also stands in front of every soul-temple, saying, 'I stand at the door and knock' (Revelation 3:20, NirV). As a heavenly salesman, Jesus opens His treasures, and cries, 'Buy from me gold made pure by fire. Then you will become rich. Buy from me white clothes to wear. Then you will be able to cover your shameful nakedness' (Revelation 3:18, NirV). The gold Jesus offers is pure. It is more valuable than the gold of Ophir because it is faith and love.

"The white robe He invites the soul to wear is His own robe of righteousness [holy life]. The oil for using as eye medicine is the oil of His grace.⁵ This will give spiritual eyesight to the soul in blindness and darkness. This may help the person tell the difference between the workings of the Spirit of God and the spirit of the enemy. Open your doors, says Jesus, who has spiritual riches to share with others. And do your business with me. It is I, your Savior, who advises you to buy these things from me."—Adapted from Ellen G. White,

The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald, August 7, 1894.

Ellen G. White quotes Revelation 3:20, in which she says of Jesus, " 'I stand at the door and knock.' " This statement shows that Jesus knocks; He does not break down the door and force His way in. This means that we must make the choice to let Him in. Ask yourself, "How stubborn am I about not opening the door to Him?" If you are stubborn, ask yourself, "Why? What is holding me back? What sin do I not want to give up? Or what else is it that I find so hard to give up?"



" 'I stand at the door and knock.' "

THURSDAY—JULY 4

A LOVE THAT NEVER LETS GO (Song of Solomon 5:2–5)

Compare⁶ Revelation 3:20 to Song

5. grace—God's gift of mercy and forgiveness that He freely gives us to take away our sins.

6. compare—to show how two or more things are the same or different.

of Solomon 5:2–5. How are they the same? What do these passages show about God’s love?

The evening meal in the Middle East was, and still is, very important. The work of the day was over, and the men returned from the fields for the evening meal. Then the entire family got together to eat at the table. In most examples the large family lived together. So, the number at the evening meal often would be quite a lot. Grandfather and grandmother, brothers and sisters, aunts and uncles, nephews and cousins, adults and children might be there at the table. And, in this grand reunion (gathering) after a hard day’s work, stories were told. Experiences were shared. And advice given. It was a time of fellowship. It was a time of warmth and family closeness. Jesus desires to have fellowship like this with us, too.

How does Christ’s promise in Revelation 3:21 show His heartfelt desire for each one of us?

The book of Revelation speaks about God’s throne more than 40 times. This is more than in any other book of the Bible. At God’s throne, we join in with the heavenly angels and joyously sing: “ ‘The Lamb, who was put to death, is worthy! He is worthy to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength! He is worthy to receive honor and glory and praise!’ ” (Revelation 5:12, NIV). Jesus promises that we can take part in this glori-

ous, joyful event of heavenly celebration after the long history of sin ends.

Christ uses His greatest reason to encourage His uncaring, end-time people. Jesus’ love has given eternity to us. We have royal (kingly) blood running through our veins. We are sons and daughters of the King of the universe. We can rule with Him as King upon His throne forever. Thus, Christ’s greatest reason for waking us from spiritual sleep is His own endless love. This is because He desires to spend all eternity with us. If that is not enough to shake us out of our spiritual laziness, what is? If that is not enough to bring us to our knees seeking revival, what will be enough?

Christ wants to be in fellowship with you. How much do you want to be in fellowship with Him? The answer is simple. How much time do you spend in prayer and fellowship with the Lord? What does your answer tell you about just how lukewarm you might be?

FRIDAY—JULY 5

ADDITIONAL STUDY: “A revival and a reformation⁷ must take place [happen] under the Holy Spirit’s leading. Revival and reformation are two different things. Revival shows a renewal of spiritual life. It is a reawakening of the powers of mind and heart. It also is a resurrection [return to life] from the spiritual death. Reformation shows a reorganization

7. reformation—a change for the better in beliefs, practices, lifestyle, habits, and actions.

or a change in ideas and theories [unproved ideas], habits, and practices. Reformation will not bring forth the good fruit of righteousness if it is not connected with the Holy Spirit's leading. Revival and reformation are to do their special work. In doing this work they must join together." —Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, February 25, 1902.

"The advice of the True Witness [God's Spirit] is full of encouragement and comfort. The churches may still get the gold of truth, faith, and love, and be rich in heavenly treasure. 'Buy from me gold made pure by fire. Then you will become rich. Buy from me white clothes to wear. Then you will be able to cover your shameful nakedness.' The white robe is the righteousness of Christ that may be built into the character [who a person is]. A pure heart will show that a person is washing his or her robe, and making it white in the blood of the Lamb."—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Advent Review and*

Sabbath Herald, July 24, 1888.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① What is so dangerous about being lukewarm? Why can it lead us to deceive (fool) ourselves so easily?
- ② Why do some Christians seem to shine so much while others are equally uncaring? Is it because of different personality types? Or is there something deeper? If so, what?
- ③ Discuss with your class how to avoid becoming spiritually lazy. How can we keep our spiritual experience strong and growing? What are things that we can do as a church group to protect ourselves from becoming "lukewarm"?
- ④ Why do you think God would rather have us "cold" than "lukewarm"? Why is being lukewarm worse than being completely cold? Hint: What is more comfortable, being lukewarm or being cold?