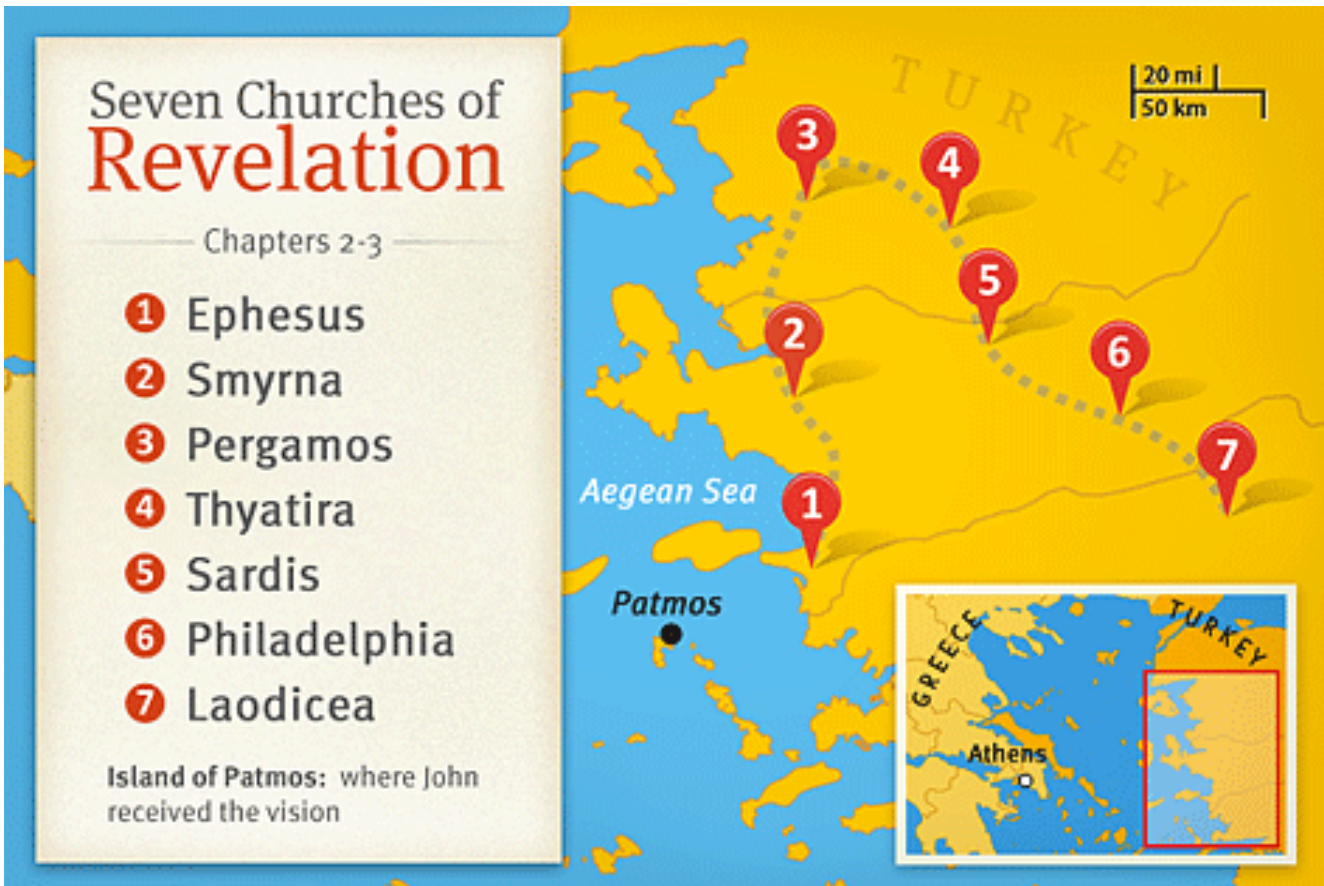




DISCIPLESHIP UNIVERSITY AT
FAITH BAPTIST CHURCH
PROP 4500: REVELATION

Part IX: Message to Laodicea – Wholeheartedness

THE CHURCHES OF ASIA



BACKGROUND: CITY OF PHILADELPHIA

- *Laodicea stood about 40 miles southeast of Philadelphia along the main Roman road that created the circle in this region. The city had been founded sometime between 261 BC and 253 BC by the Seleucid king Antiochus II and named in honor of his wife. We know it had to be founded prior to 253 BC, because that's when he divorced her. Over the years it endured many attacks from different opponents, and though it did not have the natural fortifications that some of the other cities had, it was able to hold out against these attacks. Some of these attacks occurred after it had been bequeathed to Rome in 129 BC, and for their*

loyalty to the Republic, Roman citizenship was conferred to many of its more affluent inhabitants by Marc Antony.

- *The city lies in the Lycus River valley and was part of a “tri-city” area. The other cities were Hierapolis (which was about 6 miles due north, and on the north bank of the river) and Colossae (which was about 10 or 11 miles to the ESE, on the south bank of the river like Laodicea). While we don’t know for certain who established the church in this city, we have a possibility in Epaphras (Col. 1:3-8, 4:12). If Epaphras was crucial to the founding of the church in Colossae under Paul’s ministry in that area (cf. Col. 2:1), then we might suspect that he was involved in Laodicea as well, but we simply don’t know for certain.*
- *Laodicea was a major commercial center in this region, and though it was not as old as Colossae, it soon came to surpass that city in terms of importance. Like the other cities in this region, it was prone to earthquakes and the devastation that came from them, and it was completely destroyed in AD 60 by an earthquake. However, unlike the other cities in this area, it did not apply for any imperial subsidy from the emperor and instead rebuilt itself on its own.*
- *Laodicea was known for three major things, each of which comes into play in terms of the message that Christ has for this church.*
 - *First, the city was a major center for financial and banking operations. As such, there was great prosperity in the city and among its people.*
 - *Second, the city was widely known for its textiles, especially the wool that was produced here. It was both incredibly soft and raven-black in color, which some contemporary accounts attributed to the water that the sheep drank.*
 - *Third, Laodicea appears to have been the chief medical center for the area (Phrygia). There was a large medical school here (along with the worship of Asklepios, the god of healing), much like Pergamum. One of the medicinal treatments for which Laodicea was well known was eye salve, which some have said was created by finely ground Phrygian stone.*
- *Finally, this tri-city area was also known for different types of springs. In Hierapolis, there were medicinal hot springs, which were famous in the area and to which many people traveled (think of it as a modern day spa center). Colossae had very cold springs, which were renowned for their refreshing qualities (remember, this is a time long before refrigeration or ice cubes, so to get a cold drink of water in a hot climate was a wonderful thing indeed). Laodicea, it seems, had its water piped into it via aqueducts from both of these areas, but by the time the hot and cold springs got there, they had become lukewarm.*

- *Today, all that is left of Laodicea are ruins. You can see from them that this was once an opulent city and must have been magisterial in its day. Of the church here, however, there is no surviving aspect. This is interesting, because the city actually held one of the ecumenical councils of the church in AD 363.*

CHARACTERISTIC OF CHRIST

There are three characteristics of Christ found in this message (v. 14):

- *First, He is the _____.*
 - *What does this word mean?*
 - *What does Christ mean when He describes Himself with this phrase? Cf. II Corinthians 1:20*
- *Second, He is the _____ and _____.*
 - *What does Christ mean when He describes Himself with this phrase?*
- *Third, He is the _____ of God's _____.*

- *Have you experienced a time when your “fire” has gone out? What led to this happening?*

- *How can we prevent this from happening? Cf. Rom. 12:11, II Tim. 1:6, Gal. 6:9*

- *What, then, does this mean, that He would rather His people be icy cold for Him?*

- *Second, He says that the Laodiceans are*

(v. 17).

- *He points out that they have said, “I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing...” Do you think that this describes the church in the Western world today? Why or why not?*

- *Pride supplants the rightful position of God in our lives and replaces Him with the self. While the Laodiceans believed they were self-sufficient, Christ saw them as they really were: wretched and pitiable. What can we do on our own? Cf. John 15:5*

- *What happens in a church that is prideful? How do these things inhibit the work Christ has called the church to do?*

- *Third, Jesus says that despite their pride, they were really*

_____,
_____, and
_____ (v. 17).

- *What does this evaluation of the Laodiceans tell us about God?*

- *Were the Laodiceans aware of their true conditions?*

- *Does this describe us as well? How do we discover our true spiritual condition?*

CORRECTION

Jesus offers three corrections for the church at Laodicea.

- *First, He counsels them to do away with their _____ (v.18).*
 - *Christ “counsels”...*
 - *...to “buy from Me”...*
 - *...“gold refined by fire...white garments...and salve to anoint your eyes”...*

instructive for all people in all places in all time. Isn't that what we have been learning throughout our study so far? While the church at Ephesus struggled with their love and the church at Pergamum with false doctrine, each could benefit from the message that Christ delivered to the other. There might have been encouragement or there might have been conviction, but in either case, God's people are built up if they will but "hear" what the Spirit is trying to say. There are aspects about these churches that apply to Faith Baptist Church today, and there are things that don't. There are aspects that apply to the church universal today, and there are things that don't. May we be encouraged to follow Christ wholeheartedly in the things He commends, may we flee from those He condemns, and may we have the discernment to distinguish between the two, especially when the enemy does his best to camouflage them.