

Revelation 3:14-22 "The Church with Jesus on the Outside"

1. One of the main truths the letters to the seven churches root us in is that we are formed by the vision we have of Jesus. Each Church's unique situation is addressed by inviting them to behold Jesus. The church in Laodicea is invited to behold Jesus as the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of God's creation. As a review of the sermon to help shape your discussion what does each title mean, and what would it look like practically to live in light of who Jesus is?

Amen. *This means that something is true and binding, utterly trustworthy. To say that Jesus is the Amen is to say that he is the only sure foundation on which to build our lives every other foundation will crumble, every other foundation will erode beneath us.*

To live in light of Jesus as the Amen would be to recognize the other things we rest our foundation upon. To acknowledge that they are not true and secure and instead move our foundation to rest upon Jesus.

Faithful and True Witness. *This means that Jesus is the perfect expression of the character and purposes of God.*

By his word and witness Jesus lays out for us what it is to be human and what it means to live in light of God's purposes in the world. He is not only our Savior he then is the model for true humanity – for true kingdom living.

The Beginning of God's creation. *This means that in Jesus the entire universe, ourselves included, finds its origin, purpose and future. The way and personality of Jesus are written not only in the pages of scripture but into our very being. His imprint is upon every cell of our body and every aspect of life works best in harmony with Jesus.*

This would mean that every aspect of life needs to be laid at Jesus feet for his direction and wisdom.

2. This letter is the most reflected upon in the contemporary church because many see this letter as perfectly reflecting the state of the modern western church. Do you think this is true and if so, what are the symptoms of a lukewarm response to Jesus?

There could be many responses to this question. I mentioned some in the sermon that could be named to spark further reflection.

John Stott speaks of a skin deep sentimental religiosity.

Tim Keller reflects on the view of Christians in the global south who note the lukewarmness of our faith. They see how comfortable affluent and safe we are and note that we pray far less than them, make much money which we spend on ourselves instead of giving away, we are afraid to acknowledge that we are Christians to those around us when they are going to jail and being killed for their faith.

Martin Luther King Jr. spoke of the modern church being a thermometer which simply measured and reflected the norms of the culture rather than what it should be in response to Jesus – a thermostat that changed the norms of society.

There is a compartmentalizing of faith – Sunday morning worship doesn't necessarily impact the rest of the week in terms of our living.

Our faith doesn't necessarily lead us to live all that appreciably different from those around us.

We are lax with ourselves around matters of holiness.

3. (17) Jesus gives the reason for their lukewarmness as their affirmation "I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing". In what ways does wealth, affluence and prosperity take us away from a faithful response to Jesus?

Self sufficiency – why would I need God to meet my daily needs – give us this day our daily bread – it is my job, skill, money that meets my daily needs.

Money solves a lot of problems which can make us think that we can successfully navigate the things that come regardless of how much

money we have. Death, illness, broken relationship come regardless of how much money is in the bank.

We can often extrapolate success materially to mean we are successful in other areas- wrongly thinking we are smarter than, better than, morally superior to others who don't have success, affluence, wealth and prosperity.

4. (19) Jesus says that those he loves he reproves, meaning he wakes them up to their true state. What are some of the ways that Jesus wakes us up to our true state before him, and that every other foundation other than him is sinking sand?

Circumstances revealing that our foundation on things other than Jesus will eventually erode and crumble.

Giving us a sense of who we are in light of his holiness, wisdom, power, might, and glory.

5. Jesus' response to their lukewarmness is a compassionate word of grace ("I counsel you to buy from me"), and a loving invitation ("I stand at the door and knock"). In what ways do his grace and love lead us to a faithful response to who Jesus is?

We can see the richness of what he has given us through the cross. He became poor that we would become rich, he became sin who knew no sin that we would become the righteousness of God.

He longs for connection, for fellowship, for closeness with us. He exposes our foundations as false not to undercut our joy but for us to find the source of true joy.