

The Message of Jesus to the
Church at Laodicea
Revelation 3:12-22
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Background and History
Crossing the Hermeneutical Bridges

Reputation

- "A most distinguished city" – Pliny
- Founded in 250 B.C. by Antiochus II
 - Named for his wife, Laodicea
 - He later banished her to Ephesus in order to marry Bernice, the daughter of the Ptolemy king of Egypt
- Built as a fortress city to control trade in Phrygia

Reputation

- The city had no water supply of its own.
- Nearest water was 6 miles away
- They built an aqueduct system of hollowed rock pipes of approximately 3 feet across





Reputation

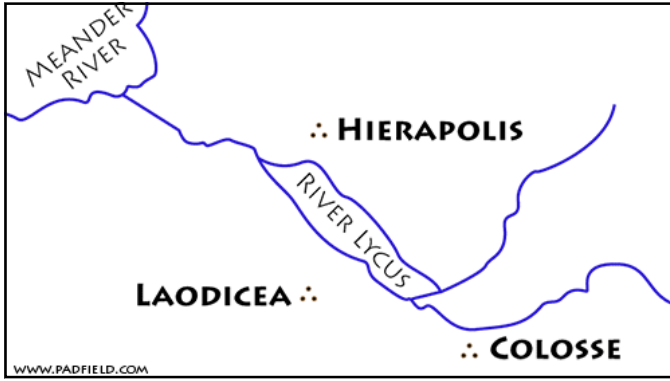
- Became part of the Roman Empire in 133 B.C.
- Two sister cities
 - Hierapolis – Col 4:13
 - Colossae
- Paul mentions Laodicea in Col 2:1; 4:13-16

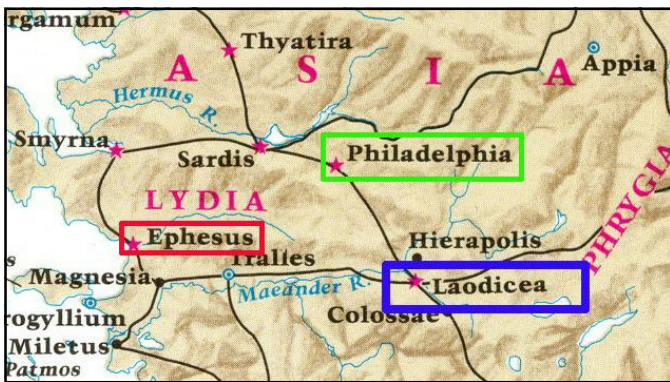
Reputation

- Hit by the same earthquake of 17 AD as Sardis and Philadelphia
- Also accepted help from the emperor to rebuild
- 60 AD hit by another earthquake.
 - This time, the Laodiceans refused help from the emperor and insisted on rebuilding by their own efforts and finances

Setting

- Southwest of Phrygia
- In the Lycus valley
- At the juncture of two important imperial trade routes
 - From the East to Ephesus on the Aegean Sea
 - From the North (Pergamum) down to the Mediterranean Sea at Attaleia







Economics

- A great commercial and financial center
- Wealthiest city in Phrygia and was a great banking center for the region
 - Their pride in their wealth caused them to refuse help to rebuild their city

Economics

- A center for clothing manufacturing
- Famous for its sheep that produced a soft black wool which brought it fame and fortune
 - The most famous was the tunic called "trimita"
 - The city was often referred to a "Trimitaria" because of the fame of their tunic

Economics

- Also famous for its medical school which was associated with the god "Asclepios"
 - Their coins portrayed the heads of two famous physicians, Zeuxis and Alexander Philalethes
- The medical school famous for two things:
 - Ointment for the ears
 - Ointment for the eyes

Politics

- Was made an assize town – seat of Roman Justice to the region

Religion

- Founded with a mix of Syrians and Jews coming out of Babylon
- Perhaps the greatest influence in religion was Judaism
 - There were 7,500 men, based on taxation records
 - The Jews used to send money to Jerusalem but the governor did not allow any currency to flow from Phrygia to Jerusalem

Religion

- The Jews were wealthy and very influential, more than in any other region of Rome
- In fact, their influence and wealth brought enough pressure against the governor so he granted them special permission to follow their own customs and observances. No other religious groups were allowed that privilege

Christianity

- The church was likely founded as a result of the Apostle Paul's missionary work and letter to Colossae; though Paul never visited there
- The church was very wealthy and influential yet persecuted by the large Jewish population

Today

- The city exists as modern "Eski-isar" – "the old fortress"

The Message of Jesus

The Person of Jesus

- The “Amen” – two options
 - Isaiah 65:16 – “The God of the Amen”
 - The word “amen” is often used to guarantee truth, to be completely relied upon as truth, to leave no doubt
 - John 5:19,24; 6:26 – “Truly I say unto you”
 - Greek word for truly is “amen.”

The Person of Jesus

- The True witness – the trustworthiness of Jesus
 - A true witness must see with his own eyes and repeat with accuracy what he/she has seen
- The Ruler of God’s creation
 - Greek word for ruler is “arche”- beginning or originator
 - A clear reference to the pre-existence of Jesus
 - See also Col 1:15ff

The Warning of Jesus

- I know your deeds!
- Neither cold nor hot, but lukewarm
- Questions:
 - What does Jesus mean by that?
 - Why does He wish they were one or the other?
 - What is the significance of lukewarm?

The Warning of Jesus

- Answers:
- 6 miles north was Hierapolis – famous for its hot springs
 - They flowed across a wide plateau and spilled over a broad escarpment (300 feet high and 1 mile wide) directly opposite Laodicea







The Warning of Jesus

- Answers:
 - To the south was Colossae, which had clear cold water flowing through it.
 - The hot pools were healing, the cold water of Colossae was refreshing, but the lukewarm water is of no value.
 - The church is of no value to anyone, even Christ

The Warning of Jesus

- You say you are rich and don't need anything
- They are very poor spiritually.
 - Wretched, pitiful, poor, blind, and naked

The Counsel of Jesus

- They need the riches of Christ – gold refined in the fire
 - A picture of refining spiritual character
- They need white clothes from Christ
 - A picture of purity and truth and rightness
- They need eye-salve from Christ
 - A picture of spiritual sight

The Counsel of Jesus

- Their spiritual state before God, their relationship with Him, is in serious doubt and trouble!
- They believe they have it all, but in reality, have nothing.

The Offer of Jesus

- Rebuke and discipline
 - These come from the love of God to see us repent and be brought back into a right relationship with Him.
- Rebuke and discipline are acts of love, not hate or dislike

The Offer of Jesus

- Jesus offers a restoration to fellowship with Him
 - “I stand at the door and knock”
- Jesus is speaking to Christians! And Jesus is outside of their lives!
- The picture, “The light of the world” by Holman Hunt

The Promise of Jesus

- To those who overcome:
- The right to sit with Jesus on His throne!
 - A position of authority, power, security, and royalty
 - See Romans 8:12-17

Summary/Conclusions

- The Laodicean church is a group of people who have been working to be rich in the world, but not rich toward God.
- They are living for the world and their own desires in it.
- They are useless to God’s kingdom and purposes
