

Laodicea : The Church That Made God Want To Vomit

- Located 40 miles southeast of Philadelphia.
- One of the wealthiest cities of the day
- Known for its fashion, finance, and healthcare
- When an earthquake destroyed Laodicea in AD 60, their tax revenue was so great, they didn't need any assistance from Rome to rebuild
- The people of Laodicea were economically prosperous but spiritually bankrupt, fashionably dressed but spiritually naked, they had 20/20 eyesight but were spiritually blind.

Characteristics:

1. Description of Jesus (3:14)

- a. **“the Amen”**: Amen is translated as “truth” and points to something that is true and binding. **When you offer a prayer end your prayer with amen, what are you actually saying?** We are asking him to agree with what we are saying. We are saying that we believe that it is something that is part of God's will, and we're asking God to use his power to bring it about. Jesus is saying He is the truth—God's final word.
- b. **“the faithful and true witness”**: The Laodiceans had a reputation for saying and doing anything necessary to help their well-being and economic interests. Jesus spoke truth not dependent on those things.
- c. **“the beginning of the creation of God”**: Jesus is the source of all that was created, therefore, he had the authority to judge what he had created

2. Praises (?): NOT A SINGLE THING!

3. Admonitions (15-18)

- a. **Jesus looks at this church and sees a church that is neither cold or hot. He literally says it makes him nauseous to see this. Why is a lukewarm church make Jesus so sick to his stomach?** 10 miles east of Laodicea was the city of Colossae, known for its refreshing cold springs. Six miles to the north was Heirapolis, known for its healing hot springs. Laodicea was on a plateau with no springs, so it had to pipe its water through stone aqueducts. Either place the water came from, by the time it reached Laodicea, it was lukewarm and tepid to the point of being nauseating. **Where do you feel you that you fall?**
- b. **Why would Jesus rather someone be completely cold and denying him rather than just being lukewarm? Do lukewarm Christians pose an even greater threat to the spread of the gospel than any atheist ever could?** Lukewarm Christians try to serve God and at the same time serve themselves. Lukewarm Christians have one foot in this world and one in the next. They observe Jesus's convenient commands, but ignore His difficult ones that actually take some effort. Worst of all, they confuse and mislead unbelievers more than those who reject Christ completely. **HOW??**
- c. **Is this saying that they are not Christians?** Not necessarily, but it doesn't change the fact it makes Jesus sick and Jesus is warning them.

- d. **What causes a Christian to become Lukewarm?** Whatever thing, whether it be money, power, social status, ability, your personality, your family status, your church status, your works, anything.... That causes you to think or feel you don't need God. **What is your spiritual temperature? Burning Hot, Dead Cold, or Lukewarm?**
 - e. **What is the cure??** Replacing material wealth with spiritual wealth: Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control, for starters. Once you take your eyes off yourself, and put them on God and others, your on your way! If you are lukewarm, agree with Jesus's assessment about yourself, repent, then do something about it. It's time to hand some things over!!
4. **Admonitions (19-22)**
- a. **Why does Jesus reprove and discipline those he loves? What about parents? Do you believe a parent would be called a "good parent" if they did not discipline their children?** Parents should love us so much that they won't allow us to behave in certain ways. Parents love us so much, they won't just leave us alone and say "oh well, nothing I can do to change them". God is the same way. A loving father who loves us too much to not try and correct us when we stray.

VERSE 20: Jesus is portrayed as standing at the door, knocking, waiting for us to open the door and let him in. Is he knocking at your heart today? Right now?

VERSE 21: Jesus is inviting you to be an overcomer and sit with him AT HIS THRONE!! Is there something you need help overcoming right now?

VERSE 22: Jesus is asking you to hear these evaluations of these churches, and to examine your own heart.

BREAKOUT DISCUSSION: FINDING PEACE IN THE UNKNOWN PARTS OF GOD

A faithful pastor receives a cancer diagnosis

A family on vacation and gets a call their home caught fire

A child is born without sight

9/11, wars, famine, natural disasters, murders, addictions, disorders, birth defects, pain, suffering, this list goes on....

*As we continue, we are under the assumption that you or the person asking these questions DOES believe in God. If they don't, then what's the point of talking about why a "fictional" God does or does not do things. As a Christian, you would have to handle your responses a little differently.

If you have never wondered or asked why the world is the way it is, you will. The Bible is full of people that cry out to God because they cannot understand why certain things happen.

- Job lost his oxen and donkeys, his servants were killed, his sheep burnt up, his servants taken away, and his children killed. He was afflicted with painful sores from his head to his feet. Job questioned God.
- The Psalms is full of people crying out to God because they do not understand why certain things are happening.

- All the disciples were martyred in painful ways in the name of Jesus Christ!

I'd like to cover some points to help you to somewhat understand, but also find peace in what you cannot fully understand:

Do you worship a made-up God or the REAL God of creation?

- Do not let the world define who God is
- Do not let your very limited understanding and knowledge define who God is
- Your personal opinions do not change who God is
- The only things we know about God are what He has decided to reveal to us

How has God revealed Himself to us?

- Creation
- The Bible
- Jesus Christ (The Word made flesh)
- Personally (His Spirit speaking to your spirit)

What are His attributes?

- God is Awesome : By considering creation's vastness, complexity, beauty and order, we can get a sense of the awesomeness of God.
- God is Eternal : God has no beginning or end. He is immortal and infinite.
- God is Immutable : He is unchanging which means He is absolutely reliable and trustworthy.
- God is incomparable : There is no one or thing like Him in works or being
- God is Inscrutable, unfathomable, unsearchable, and past finding out as far as understanding Him completely.
- God is Just : He is no respecter of persons in the sense of showing favoritism
- God is Omnipotent : He is all-powerful and can do anything that pleases Him, but His actions will ALWAYS be in accord with the rest of His character
- God is Omnipresent : He is present everywhere and at any time. He created time and resides outside of it, choosing when and where to insert Himself into time.
- God is Omniscient : He knows the past, present, and future, including what we are thinking at any moment. He knows every possible choice and how it affects everything afterwards.

Why do we need Him?

- He alone can meet our deepest needs and longings of our hearts
- God alone is worthy of worship and devotion
- God is righteous and will ultimately make all wrongs right
- God is sovereign and nothing can thwart His purposes
- God is truth. He is incorruptible and cannot lie.
- God is Holy, separated from immorality and hostile towards it
- God is gracious and His grace includes goodness, kindness, mercy, and love
- God loves you and has provided a way to join his family through Jesus Christ

POINT: God is an infinite being, and no human can fully answer some of the God-sized questions we have, but through God's Word and His Holy Spirit, we can understand much about who God is and what He is like.

Why did God create a world with death and evil in it? God's original creation was without death and without evil in it. God only wanted them to lean on Him for EVERYTHING. To bring EVERYTHING to Him out of love. There was not even a need for them to know what was right and wrong because if they brought everything to Him, they would never take the wrong path. God warned them what would happen if they left their first love.

They disobeyed God. They removed God from the throne of their hearts and put themselves there. They decided they wanted to make their own choices in what was right and wrong. The downfall of this is that if you can choose right, you can choose wrong. In God's justness, there was a punishment for this rebellion. Creation was broken and death was born. Death is not a natural part of this world. It was not supposed to be this way.

Ever since the fall, sin reigned in the world. God is not responsible for the death, suffering, pain, disease, and brokenness in the world, mankind.

I know it is right here that many will say it IS God's fault because He created everything and He knows everything. That God is ULTIMATELY responsible. This question has plagued the most brilliant theologians since the beginning of time.

God's Sovereignty and Humanity's Free Will

- 1. It is impossible for us to fully understand the relationship between God's sovereignty and man's free will and responsibility:** Only God knows how they work together in His ultimate plan of salvation. **Does that put you off the hook?**
- 2. You have to admit your inability to fully grasp God:** Going too far to either side of this will result in a distorted view of salvation. You must ask yourself if you have any of the attributes we listed about God. Do you know absolutely everything? Do you know every possible outcome of every situation and how it affects everything else? Do you reside outside of time? Can you create a universe out of your mind? Are you perfectly Holy? Are you perfectly Just? Are you eternal, unchangeable, sinless, omnipresent, fully righteous...?
- 3. Do not ignore what you DO know about God simply because of the things you cannot know:**
 - a. Did God choose to create you?**
 - b. Does God want a relationship with you?**
 - c. Has God spoken to you?**
 - d. Has God already given you all the evidence you need to follow Him (even with there are some lingering unknowns)?**
 - e. Does God provide you a way to come back to Him?**
 - f. Does God provide a way to "ultimately" beat death?**
 - g. Does God have an eternal home waiting for you?**
- 4. Are your questions just a smokescreen?** Often, people will choose to ignore all the things we do know about God and focus on those few unknowns. They then use these unknowns to "excuse" them from following God. The unknowns of God do not cancel out all the things we do know about God.

5. **God's eternity you cannot fully grasp** : There has never been a moment God did not know absolutely everything is there is to know about this universe from the beginning to the end. There is no "before" or "after" in God's omniscience. Everything is just as much NOW to Him as THEN or AFTER. There never was a "time" God thought, "You know what, I'm going to create a universe with people in it", because time is an invention of God. God is not limited or controlled by time as this universe is. Once again, you cannot fully understand this, but there are many things you CAN understand about God. What about those??

Foreknowledge does not equal cause

We cannot fully understand how God's sovereignty and man's free will work together, but there is one way to look at this logically. When faced with the dilemma about God knowing everything so He is the cause behind all the bad things that happen, we need to realize a few things.

1. **Understand what foreknowledge is**: The Bible points out SPECIFICALLY "*in God's foreknowledge, he...*". Foreknowledge is knowing something before it actually occurs. This can only be done by a being that exists outside of time itself that can see the future, the past, and the present all at once.
2. **Everything God does is based on His foreknowledge** : God allows and doesn't allow certain things to happen. God chooses to sometimes intervene and sometimes to not. We are not privy to this foreknowledge, He is, so we may not always understand the why, but we can be sure God have a purpose in what He does.
3. **Even God cannot predestine things to happen without knowledge of the situation** : God is not making irrational decisions on the fly. He's not constantly changing his mind. He knows all things, future, past, and present, so he's not waiting to see what choices we make; he already knows them all, but we still have a responsibility and free will to choose God or deny God.

Finding peace in what you DO know

God has provided us with everything we need in order to believe and follow Him:

Where do you see God?

Have you ever really even looked?