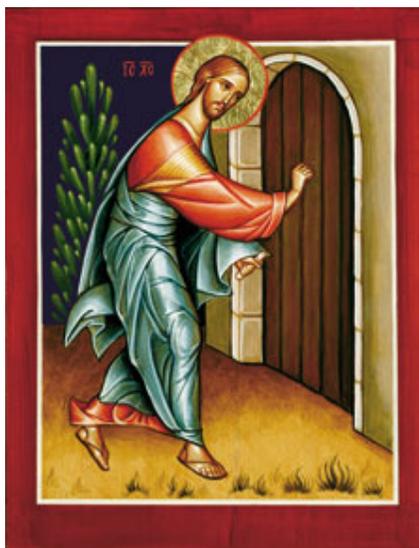


THE BOOK OF REVELATION

Christ's Imperial-Prophetic Address to the Church in Laodicea (3.14-22)



Stop for a Rest to Catch our Breath

1. Sanctification and Submission to God's Word

- a. **John 6.66-69:** After this many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him. ⁶⁷ So Jesus said to the Twelve, "Do you want to go away as well?" ⁶⁸ Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, ⁶⁹ and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God."
- b. **John 17.17:** Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth.
- c. **2 Timothy 3.16-17:** All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, ¹⁷ that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.
- d. **Colossians 3.12-17:** Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, ¹³ bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. ¹⁴ And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.

2. My preparation and calling as a teacher

- a. **Colossians 1.28-29:** "We proclaim Christ, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ. ²⁹ For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me."
- b. Studies in eschatology, millennialism, and apocalyptic literature
- c. *fides quarens intellectum* – "faith seeking understanding" (we're on a quest together!)

3. An apocalypse, signified
 - a. **Revelation 1.1:** The revelation (*apokalypsis*) of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show to his servants the things that must soon take place. He made it known (*sēmainō*; KJV “signified”) by sending his angel to his servant John.

Review From Last Week (Revelation 3.7-13)

1. “the key of David” (3.7): open door to salvation/kingdom; open door for Gospel witness among Jews
2. “little power”: God’s power manifest in weakness (cf. 2 Cor 11-12); Paul’s open door in prison (cf. Phil 1.12-14)
3. “I will make [the Jews] come and bow down before your feet, and they will learn that I have loved you” (3.9): an ironic fulfillment of Isaiah 43.4; 45.14; 60.14
4. “I will keep you from the hour of trial that is coming on the whole world, to try those who dwell on the earth” (3.10)
 - a. John 17.15 (I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one.)
 - b. trial proves faith (repentance/perseverance) and confirms unbelief (unrepentance and cursing)
5. God’s cosmic tabernacle (church and new Jerusalem)

Christ’s Imperial-Prophetic Address to the Church in Laodicea (3.14-22)

“And to the angel of the church in Laodicea write: ‘The words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of God’s creation.’¹⁵ “I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were either cold or hot!¹⁶ So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth.¹⁷ For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked.¹⁸ I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire, so that you may be rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself and the shame of your nakedness may not be seen, and salve to anoint your eyes, so that you may see.¹⁹ Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent.²⁰ Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me.²¹ The one who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, as I also conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne.²² He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”

1. Laodicea in the First Century
 - a. Banking and commercial centre (crossroads in Lycos valley)
 - b. gold, wool, Phrygian powder
 - c. Heirapolis (hot springs) and Colossae (cold springs; cf. Colossians 2.1, 4.13-16)

2. **Christ's Self-identification:** And to the angel of the church in Laodicea write: "The words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of God's creation." (3.14)

- a. "The Amen, the faithful and true witness" (3.14)

Isaiah 65.14-18: Behold, my servants shall sing for gladness of heart, but you shall cry out for pain of heart and shall wail for breaking of spirit. ¹⁵ You shall leave your name to my chosen for a curse, and the Lord GOD will put you to death, but his servants he will call by another name. ¹⁶ So that he who blesses himself in the land shall bless himself by the God of [Amen], and he who takes an oath in the land shall swear by the God of [Amen]; because the former troubles are forgotten and are hidden from my eyes. ¹⁷ "For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth, and the former things shall not be remembered or come into mind. ¹⁸ But be glad and rejoice forever in that which I create; for behold, I create Jerusalem to be a joy, and her people to be a gladness.

Revelation 19:11 Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war.

- b. "the beginning (*archē*) of God's creation" (3.14b)

- i. *archē* = beginning, cause, source, ruler, head
- ii. Christ is the sovereign inaugurating ruler of God's new creation (note connection to resurrection)

Revelation 1.4-6: John to the seven churches that are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before his throne, ⁵ and from Jesus Christ the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler (*archē*) of kings on earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood ⁶ and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Colossians 1.15-20: He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. ¹⁶ For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities – all things were created through him and for him. ¹⁷ And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. ¹⁸ And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning (*archē*), the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. ¹⁹ For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, ²⁰ and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

3. **Rebuke/Accusation:** "I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were either cold or hot! ¹⁶ So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth. ¹⁷ For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked." (3.15-17)

- a. "lukewarm" (3.15-16)

- i. neither the healing waters of the hot springs in Heirapolis, nor the refreshing cold waters of Colossae
- ii. the church is irrelevant; compromised to the point of assimilation; no Gospel witness

b. “I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing” (3.17a)

i. prosperity by means of compromise with idols (at the cost of faithfulness)

Hosea 2.5-8 For their mother has played the whore; she who conceived them has acted shamefully. For she said, ‘I will go after my lovers, who give me my bread and my water, my wool and my flax, my oil and my drink.’⁶ Therefore I will hedge up her way with thorns, and I will build a wall against her, so that she cannot find her paths.⁷ She shall pursue her lovers but not overtake them, and she shall seek them but shall not find them. Then she shall say, ‘I will go and return to my first husband, for it was better for me than now.’⁸ And she did not know that it was I who gave her the grain, the wine, and the oil, and who lavished on her silver and gold, which they used for Baal.

Hosea 12.7-8: A merchant, in whose hands are false balances, he loves to oppress.⁸ Ephraim has said, “Ah, but I am rich; I have found wealth for myself; in all my labors they cannot find in me iniquity or sin.”

1 Corinthians 10.20-21: No, I imply that what pagans sacrifice they offer to demons and not to God. I do not want you to be participants with demons.²¹ You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons. (cf. Revelation 16.13-16)

c. “not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked” (3.17b; cf. Rev 2.9) – *Jesus exposes their spiritual condition*

Ezekiel 16.35-36 “Therefore, O prostitute, hear the word of the LORD:³⁶ Thus says the Lord GOD, Because your lust was poured out and your nakedness uncovered in your whorings with your lovers, and with all your abominable idols, and because of the blood of your children that you gave to them.”

4. **Exhortation and Call to Repentance:** “I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire, so that you may be rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself and the shame of your nakedness may not be seen, and salve to anoint your eyes, so that you may see.¹⁹ Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent.²⁰ Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me.” (3.18-20)

a. church is poor, naked, and blind, but Jesus exhorts them “buy from me gold ... white garments ... salve”

Isaiah 55.1-3: “Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.² Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy? Listen diligently to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food.³ Incline your ear, and come to me; hear, that your soul may live; and I will make with you an everlasting covenant, my steadfast, sure love for David.

b. refined gold and white garments > purity and holiness (sanctified from idolatry)

Job 23.10: But he knows the way that I take; when he has tried me, I shall come out as gold.

Malachi 3.2-3: But who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears? For he is like a refiner’s fire and like fullers’ soap.³ He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and

he will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, and they will bring offerings in righteousness to the LORD.

1 Peter 1.6-7: In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, ⁷ so that the tested genuineness of your faith – more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire – may be found to result in praise and glory and honour at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

c. “Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent.”

Proverbs 3.11-12: My son, do not despise the LORD’s discipline or be weary of his reproof, ¹² for the LORD reproves him whom he loves, as a father the son in whom he delights.

Psalms 94.10: He who disciplines the nations, does he not rebuke? He who teaches man knowledge – ¹¹ the LORD – knows the thoughts of man, that they are but a breath. ¹² Blessed is the man whom you discipline, O LORD, and whom you teach out of your law, ¹³ to give him rest from days of trouble, until a pit is dug for the wicked. ¹⁴ For the LORD will not forsake his people; he will not abandon his heritage; ¹⁵ for justice will return to the righteous, and all the upright in heart will follow it.

Hebrews 12.8-11: If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. ⁹ Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? ¹⁰ For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. ¹¹ For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

d. “Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door”
(3.20a) – *God’s steadfast love and faithfulness*

Song of Solomon 5.1-2: I came to my garden, my sister, my bride, I gathered my myrrh with my spice, I ate my honeycomb with my honey, I drank my wine with my milk. Eat, friends, drink, and be drunk with love! ² I slept, but my heart was awake. A sound! My beloved is knocking. “Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my perfect one, for my head is wet with dew, my locks with the drops of the night.”

Luke 15.28: But he was angry and refused to go in. His father came out and entreated him.

Isaiah 65.1-2: I was ready to be sought by those who did not ask for me; I was ready to be found by those who did not seek me. I said, “Here I am, here I am,” to a nation that was not called by my name. ² I spread out my hands all the day to a rebellious people, who walk in a way that is not good, following their own devices.

Hosea 11.1-11: When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son. ² The more they were called, the more they went away; they kept sacrificing to the Baals and burning offerings to idols. ³ Yet it was I who taught Ephraim to walk; I took them up by their arms, but they did not know that I healed them. ⁴ I led them with cords of kindness, with the bands of love, and I became to them as one who eases the yoke on their jaws, and I bent down to them and fed them. ⁵ They shall not return to the land of Egypt, but Assyria shall be their king, because they have refused to return to me. ⁶ The sword shall rage against their cities, consume the bars of their gates, and devour them because of their own counsels. ⁷ My people are bent on turning away from me, and though they call out to the Most High, he shall not raise them up at all. ⁸ How can I give you up, O Ephraim? How can I hand you over, O Israel? How can I make you like Admah? How can I treat you like Zeboim? My heart recoils within me; my compassion grows warm and tender. ⁹ I will not execute my burning anger; I will not again destroy Ephraim; for I am God and not a man, the Holy One in your midst, and I will not come in wrath.

- e. “I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me” (3.20b) – *restoration of fellowship (communion)*

Isaiah 25.6-9: On this mountain the LORD of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wine, of rich food full of marrow, of aged wine well refined. ⁷ And he will swallow up on this mountain the covering that is cast over all peoples, the veil that is spread over all nations. ⁸ He will swallow up death forever; and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from all faces, and the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth, for the LORD has spoken. ⁹ It will be said on that day, “Behold, this is our God; we have waited for him, that he might save us. This is the LORD; we have waited for him; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation.”

1 Corinthians 10.16-17: The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? ¹⁷ Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread.

5. **Promise:** “The one who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, as I also conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne. ²² He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.” (3.21-22; cf. Rev 1.6; 5.10; 20.4,6; 22.5)

1 John 5.1-5: Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the Father loves whoever has been born of him. ² By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments. ³ For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome. ⁴ For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world – our faith. ⁵ Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

Ephesians 1.16-23, 2.4-10: I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, ¹⁷ that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, ¹⁸ having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, ¹⁹ and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might ²⁰ that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, ²¹ far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. ²² And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, ²³ which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

... 2.4 But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, ⁵ even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ – by grace you have been saved – ⁶ and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, ⁷ so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. ⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not a result of works, so that no one may boast. ¹⁰ For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

Colossians 3.1-4: If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ² Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. ³ For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴ When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. (Cf. Col 3.5-11; 12-17)