

# THE SEVEN CHURCHES OF ASIA

## *The Church That Shut Jesus Out*

*Program #1053*

**Eddie Parrish & Mark Teske**

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EDDIE: Could you imagine a congregation of the Lord's church that had actually closed Jesus out? There was such a church, and we'll study about it today.

EDDIE: We're glad that you've joined us today on *The Truth In Love*. Mark Teske is on the program again as we conclude our series of lessons on the seven churches of Asia from Revelation chapters 1 through 3. We're going to be looking at the church at Laodicea in just a moment, but before we do that, I want to ask Mark what he thinks are the major lessons that have been important in his mind as we've gone through this study.

MARK: One of the things that jumps to mind as I review some of these letters to the churches was that being tolerant and putting up with error, which is seen as a virtue by many in our world today, was condemned, and churches who came in on the hard side of those who were in error were commended for their actions. That's something which is contrary to the culture we live in today. Another thing that really jumps out at me is how actively involved Jesus was. As head of the church, we see Him very skillfully managing the church of which He is the head. We also see Him very effectively leading and directing in the things that He said, in the commendation, the condemnation, and the admonitions He gives to them. Another thing that really jumps to mind is how surprising some of these things were to the congregations. They

thought everything was fine and they were in good shape, when in reality, there were some problems and some things they needed to work on. The self-examination that's so very difficult for all of us was something in which some of them had fallen short.

EDDIE: Yes. Those were great lessons, and all point to the practicality of God's word. All of those things are lessons that those congregations needed and lessons that people today need as well.

MARK: "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."

EDDIE: Absolutely. And that brings us to what is said about this last congregation, the seventh of these that are listed in the first few chapters of Revelation, and that's the church in the city of Laodicea. We will say a little about the city itself before we look specifically at the congregation. It was located about 90 miles east of Ephesus, and 11 miles west of the city of Colosse. It was a city that was famous for essentially three things. In Laodicea there was a school of medicine. And in that school, they had developed a very effective ointment for the eyes, for eye irritations and things of that nature. Jesus, I think, will have something to say about that in His statements to the church. That was something for which the city of Laodicea was famous. They also made garments of a glossy black wool for which they were well known. You may remember that Thyatira was famous for its purple garments and purple dyes. Also, Laodicea was a great trade and banking center, which made it one of the wealthiest cities in the Roman empire, in the entire empire, not just in Asia Minor. So it was a very wealthy city. And there'll be something said about their wealth as Jesus talks to the church. And in this particular wealthy environment, where all these other things existed, there also existed a congregation of the Lord's people. One of the tragedies of Laodicea is that Jesus breaks with His traditional look at these congregations where He normally says something positive about the church. Nothing positive is said about Laodicea.

MARK: As Jesus starts this letter, He begins in one traditional way by identifying Himself. He identifies Himself first of all as the Amen, which I honestly think is a strange identification. But there's some good

order to be saved so that you can be in His fellowship where you need to be. If you'd like to have a copy of today's lesson, we'd love for you to have it. We offer it in audiocassette format or CD or DVD. All you have to do is contact us at P.O. Box 865, Hurst, Texas, 76053 or through our e-mail address, [requests@thetruthinlove.com](mailto:requests@thetruthinlove.com). You can also access our web site where there's a lot of good information and order information from the web site, too, [www.thetruthinlove.com](http://www.thetruthinlove.com). We have some written materials as well, a good booklet called *From My Heart To Yours* by Maxie Boren that we'd love for you to have. Contact us, and we'll be glad to fulfill your request. Thank you again for watching. We'll see you next time.

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are. That's deadly ignorance. And we cannot afford to be in that position ourselves. How many churches today exist that think they're in fellowship with Christ when in reality they're not? That's deadly ignorance.

MARK: It's of interest that in the church in Sardis, there were a few who still had not stained their garments, and had not soiled themselves. We don't read about any of that in Laodicea. The other thing we don't read about here is that He doesn't threaten to remove the candlestick. Apparently, the candlestick had already been removed. But He's still at the door. God never takes away our free will and there's still that opportunity that we can always come back to Him. There's no sin we can commit that is so grievous that the blood of the cross can't cover. And that's a lesson that we all really need to take to heart. Jesus can cover any sin regardless of what it is. We just need to be willing to go back to Him, if we have been in a right relationship with Him to begin with.

EDDIE: Right. And that leads us to the lesson regarding the power of one. Notice how Jesus says, "If any man would open the door, I would come in." You mentioned that at Sardis there were these few that had not defiled their garments. And as you correctly pointed out, that wasn't the case with Laodicea. Jesus was on the outside, but He said if any man (just one) would open the door, He was ready to reestablish His fellowship with them. It's important for us to think about the power of one person being able to bring the Lord back where He needs to be.

MARK: And the power of one person reaching out toward Jesus for salvation is a very important principle that each and every one of us can do.

EDDIE: That's right. And maybe that's what you need to do. Maybe you are outside the fellowship of the body of Christ and you need to be in Christ where all spiritual blessings are found. In just a moment at the end of our program, there's going to be a listing of the steps to salvation that the Bible teaches, and you need to look at those seriously and read the Bible verses for yourself and do what God expects you to do in

meaning there.

EDDIE: There is. The word itself, 'amen' literally means to be firm or true. Our English word 'amen' is transliterated basically from the old Hebrew and Greek word pronounced something like amane, meaning something that expresses certainty. The promises of God are all called amane, or amen in II Corinthians 1:20. Jesus often began some of His famous statements with the words "amen, amen," translated in some of our English versions as "verily, verily I say unto you," or "truly, truly, I say to you." It's the same word whereby we get the word amen. It expresses that truthfulness and certainty. And as we pointed out with some of the other descriptions that Jesus gives of Himself, He is laying again the foundation that what He's about to say to this church is firm, true and certain.

MARK: He also calls himself the Faithful and True Witness, which again illustrates that He is very true, active, involved, and walking among these lampstands. He is observing these things firsthand. And being the deity that He is, He has the omniscient power, and He understands the substance of what's going on. And His judgment about the situation is faithful and true. He says in the very next verse, "I know your works," (Revelation 3:15). That's a phrase that we've seen in each of these letters. He's there, and He understands and knows what's going on.

EDDIE: He also refers to Himself as the Beginning of creation. Not in the sense that He was a created being, but in the sense that He is the source of creation. It's said of Him in John 1:1-3 that everything was "made through Him and without Him nothing was made." The same point is made in Colossians 1:16 and Hebrews 1:1-3. All of those passages make the point that God the Son was the active agent in the creative process. And that certainly implies His authority as well. After His identification of Himself, we get to that condemnation I mentioned earlier. In Revelation 3:15-17, He gets to the matter about which He condemns them. No commendation here, and nothing positive is said about this church. Only something negative.

MARK: He says, "I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. So then, because you are

lukewarm and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of my mouth." That is a strong condemnation.

EDDIE: Some people don't think that the Lord has a side to Him that is stern. And we spoke, especially when we were talking about the church in Ephesus, about how they were commended for their intolerance of error and how some people don't think that coincides with the spirit of Christ. Here, Jesus was very stern with these brethren. And He was very stern with some of His enemies when He walked the earth. In Matthew 23, we see those very severe woes that are pronounced upon the Pharisees, and He says some very stern things about them. And with the congregation here, He says you're neither cold nor hot. They were not completely lifeless like Sardis was. Remember, Sardis was the church that was dead but didn't know it. He says you're not lifeless like them, but you're not zealous like Ephesus was. They were somewhere in between Sardis and Ephesus. And He describes that as being lukewarm. Now, this may have a reference to something geographically to their area. History books, as well as geography books of that area and time, tell us there were mineral springs that were near Laodicea and travelers would often stop and drink from them. But the waters from these springs were lukewarm, and a bit tepid, and would even sicken some of the unsuspecting travelers who weren't ready for that kind of tepid, lukewarm water. Jesus says you're lukewarm, and it makes me sick.

MARK: When we try to look at the modern day understanding of this compromising, which has been condemned before, we see that they're not willing to fully commit. And God has done this several times. We look back in the book of Joshua where Joshua tells the people, "Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell," (Joshua 24:15). You can't serve God and somebody else. You must commit. You must make a decision, commit yourself and go fully forward into that. None of this straddling the fence. God says that somebody who's wanting to straddle the fence makes Him sicker than anything.

EDDIE: Back in another Old Testament reference, in I Kings 18 when Elijah the prophet stood on the top of Mount Carmel with 450

MARK: The invitation is there; He wants a right relationship and He wants things to be right. In fact, that's the reason He came to this earth and died on the cross, to save that which was lost and to bring us back to Him. The love of God was made manifest through the cross. He has a strong desire, but He's not going to force His way in. He's not knocking the door down and forcing us. He's knocking gently and asking us to please come, yet not coercing us. The knocking is there, but it's not so overwhelming that we can't say no. But that knock is there if we're willing to do our part and open the door to let Him in.

EDDIE: It's interesting that when He says, "I stand at the door and knock," the word 'stand' is in the perfect tense in the Greek language, which is the idea of a past action with abiding results. It's almost as if it could be translated, "I have been and am standing at the door." In other words, Jesus has been there for quite some time. He's been out of their fellowship for quite a period of time, but the whole time, He's been at the door. He's been there, ready to come back in and be a part of them. He had not given up on them totally and completely. This idea of knocking, in the present tense, is I have been standing at the door, and I am presently knocking. So like you said, He's not going to pound the door down, but He is trying to get their attention so that they would have the opportunity to let Him in. This concept of Jesus being at the door and outside the congregation is a very important lesson. But what about their ignorance? That too is an important thing that comes out in the letter to this church.

MARK: They thought everything was fine with Jesus. But in fact, He told them this was the worst of all situations. In actuality, they had turned their backs on Him, and were just going through the motions. They were doing some of the things and were partially there, but not fully committed. And they thought that was okay. As we try to apply this to ourselves, I wonder how often that is the case with us, that we have people who aren't committed and aren't on fire. Maybe we endure persecution by some who say we are religious fanatics. Call me what you like, but I want to be on fire for Jesus.

EDDIE: This was a congregation that Jesus had severed His fellowship with, and they were completely oblivious to it. He says you don't even know how wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked you

give them. He then counsels them to buy from him the salve that could cure their spiritual blindness. Remember the city of Laodicea was known for the school of medicine that had developed this eye salve. Jesus draws from all those cultural things that Laodicean people would be familiar with, and gives them spiritual application and says you're naked. You need to be clothed with good spiritual clothing. You need eye salve from Me that will cure, not any kind of physical blindness, but your spiritual blindness so that you can see yourselves as you really are. And with all of those strong warnings that He gives them, again, He says I counsel you to do this. These were not expressions of malice or hatred, but these warnings were expressions of love.

MARK: True, genuine love. Because He's using illustrations and symbols that they're familiar with, this would have a lot of meaning for the people to whom it was delivered. And here we are nearly 2,000 years afterward looking back at it historically, and some of the images are not quite as vivid as they would be to the people in Laodicea, but there's still something to be gained from them. "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches." There is something we can gain from this. Even though the symbols and figures He uses are very specific to the people, situations and conditions in the city of Laodicea, there's still plenty of meaning for us.

EDDIE: And He says basically, you need to be zealous and repent. He offers them the encouragement that whoever overcomes, "I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I have also overcome and sat down with My Father on His throne," (Revelation 3:21). The Lord offers them needed counsel, and He offers them a promise just like He offered all the other congregations that He had something against, that they could come to Him and receive some very special blessings. And He says to them, "I stand at the door and knock," (Revelation 3:20). And again, what picture does that conjure up in our minds? It's Jesus on the outside of this congregation. They had shut the Lord out. He did not consider Himself in their fellowship. They closed Him out. That's how serious this was. But He would come in again among them if they would repent. And we'll talk about some of the special lessons that I think we can pull from this particular circumstance with this church here at this time. And one of those lessons has to do with Jesus standing at the door.

false prophets of Baal, he had King Ahab on one side and Elijah on the other, and then in the middle were the fickle Hebrew people. It's interesting that in that great showdown where you have these evil false prophets with wicked King Ahab and Elijah, the first words at this big gathering that Elijah speaks are to the people of Israel. He doesn't say anything to Ahab, or anything to the false prophets. He turns first of all to the people of Israel that are standing there just to watch. And he says, "How long will you falter between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow Him," (1 Kings 18:21). And it makes the same point. You can't straddle the fence. God expects us to make a choice, and He expects us to make the right choice. And here in Revelation 3, Laodicea was evidently a very fickle and wishy-washy type of congregation that would not take a stand. He even says I wish you were cold or hot. He said I'd rather you be dead cold than to be lukewarm. Now, obviously, He wants them to be hot in the sense that they are zealous and fervent for things righteous and true, but He says that because of this lukewarmness, He will vomit them out of His mouth. He says this kind of activity makes me sick to my stomach. It's hard to find words that are stronger in condemnation than the words He uses for this group of Christians.

MARK: And clearly that compromise is something that we can't do. We can't falter between the two opinions. We have to fully commit ourselves. If we're not willing to fully commit ourselves to God, we're only fooling ourselves. He's not fooled. He is a faithful and true witness. He sees through this and we're not fooling Him. We're only fooling ourselves. God has no purpose for that and He says to get rid of it. I don't want you to be lukewarm. This is the worst of every possible situation; what you're doing is fooling yourselves and trying to fool others.

EDDIE: What you say about not fooling God brings to my mind Galatians 6:7 where Paul said, "Be not deceived. God is not mocked." In other words, you're not going to make a fool out of God. "Whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption." Now, the positive side of that is, if you "sow to the Spirit, you will of the Spirit reap everlasting life." His point is, look, you're not going to make a monkey out of God. You're not going to fool God. He is the faithful and true witness. He is the amen, the

firm, certain, and true one. And these Christians who were lukewarm were not going to fool God. He knew them inside and out, and He knows everyone today to that same degree.

MARK: God is not the only one who's sickened by this halfway in between idea. Hypocrisy is one of the worst things that somebody within the church can possibly do, because not only are they falling short, but they're bringing reproach upon the church by their actions. People look at that and say on Sunday morning, he's a Christian, but Monday through Saturday, his Christianity is gone. People see through that hypocrisy, and that makes them more angry than anything, just like it does God. This isn't something that is looked favorably upon by anybody. Yet there are so many people who fit into the category of being lukewarm, and aren't willing to fully commit to God.

EDDIE: Sad but true. He goes on in His description there by calling attention to the difference between the way the Laodiceans viewed themselves and the way Jesus viewed them, which was the accurate picture. In Revelation 3:15-17, they viewed themselves as rich, wealthy and in need of nothing. I read a story one time about the city of Laodicea, that in AD 60, a great earthquake had devastated the city, and they had to go through a massive rebuilding project. And the empire of Rome offered to help them in rebuilding the city. We mentioned another city in one of our previous lessons that had an earthquake and was rebuilt by Roman tax dollars. Rome also offered that to Laodicea. Since they were so wealthy on their own, they said no, thank you, we'll rebuild it ourselves. This was a wealthy place, and they viewed themselves as rich and in need of nothing. But Jesus said...

MARK: "You are wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked," (Revelation 3:17). That is a very graphic description of an ugly situation. We must realize who it is that's saying this to them, this is God and Jesus. I John 4:8 says, "God is love." If we can't reconcile these different aspects of God that, yes, absolutely He is loving and the epitome of love, but at the same time, when we try to deceive and mock Him by this half-hearted committal, He has no part of that. Then we see the wrath and justice of God that demands that this be taken care of.

EDDIE: All of what we've said is true about how this sickens God and how He is tired of it among His people. One of the interesting things is, when we get to verses 18 and 19 and Jesus issues a warning to the people, He begins that warning by saying, "I counsel you." Those are the type of words that express the idea of this being advice from a friend. This is somebody who is still being gentle with these people even though they have removed themselves so far from Him and have actually shut Him out, as He'll talk about in just a moment. But He comes to them with this warning and admonition, and He begins it with those words of gentleness. It reminds me of the way the writer of Hebrews dealt with a similar situation in the latter part of Hebrews 5 where the writer talks about how these people ought to be teachers, but they still needed to be taught the first principles of the oracles of God, and if they're not careful (going to chapter 6), he says, you crucified the Lord afresh, and put Him to an open shame, (Hebrews 6:6). Then right after that in Hebrews 6:9, he says, "but, beloved, we are confident of better things concerning you." The only time the word 'beloved' is found in the book of Hebrews is there, right after that very stern statement. He says beloved, we know you can do better. And it's almost as if that's what Jesus is saying. Your lukewarmness makes me sick, but I come to you to give you the counsel of a friend. He gives them various admonitions about what they need to do to fix their problem.

MARK: One thing that's important to see is that the problem is indeed fixable. As horrible and tragic as it is, nothing's impossible with God, and this horrible situation can be resolved. Within themselves, they have the ability, with God's help, to rectify the situation. Then He tells them what they need to do. And as serious as this warning and rebuke is, they really need to pay attention to how to fix it.

EDDIE: Yes. He says the only true wealth that you have is wealth that you are to buy from me. Purchase from me "the treasures of wisdom and knowledge", Paul would call it in Colossians 2:3. They had clothing that they could get from Christ. But the only clothing that would help them is not the glossy black wool garments for which the city of Laodicea was famous. They needed to get from the Lord garments of purity and holiness, white garments that would clothe their nakedness. Remember, He said you're wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked. They needed the spiritual covering that only the Lord could