

• Each of the seven churches is challenged

• Final letter – a challenge to wholeheartedness and enthusiasm

Each of the seven churches in Revelation 2–3 is challenged about one particular matter. In Ephesus the issue was lost love, and in Smyrna it was the challenge to face extreme suffering. In Pergamum it was a matter of holding on to the gospel against idolatry, and in Thyatira it was a matter of refusing to compromise with immorality. At Sardis the issue was spiritual reality, and in Philadelphia it was a matter of grasping hold of opportunity. Now in the last of the seven letters there is a challenge to wholeheartedness and enthusiasm.

For the last time we have (i) a command that the letter should be written, and (ii) a description of Jesus taken from 1:9–20. <sup>14</sup>*To the angel of the church in Laodicea write: The words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of the creation of God.* <sup>15</sup>*I know your works. I know that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish that you were cold or hot!*

### 1. Jesus knows his churches with piercing knowledge

**1. Jesus knows his churches with piercing knowledge.** This has been a constant theme in these messages to the churches. Jesus' eyes were 'like a flame of fire', said Revelation 1:14. To one church he says: 'I know your works . . . I know that you cannot tolerate wicked people . . .'<sup>1</sup> 'I know also that you are enduring patiently . . .'<sup>2</sup> To another church he says, 'I know your tribulation . . . I know the blasphemy of those who say they are Jews . . .'<sup>3</sup> To another he says, 'I know where you live . . .'<sup>4</sup> To another: 'I know your works . . .'<sup>5</sup> And again: 'I know your works . . .'<sup>6</sup>

☐<sup>1</sup> 2:2  
☐<sup>2</sup> 2:3  
☐<sup>3</sup> 2:9  
☐<sup>4</sup> 2:13a  
☐<sup>5</sup> 2:19  
☐<sup>6</sup> 3:8

• Jesus who is utterly trustworthy has penetrating knowledge of the church in Laodicea – and us

Now this penetrating knowledge of Jesus is mentioned again in stronger words than ever. Jesus is 'the Amen', the one who is utterly trustworthy ('Amen' means 'Truly'). He is 'the faithful and true witness' who will never let us down, never tell a lie, never lead us into deception. At the same time he is 'the ruler of the creation of God'<sup>1</sup>, controlling both us ourselves and all the circumstances around us. Now he says to the Laodiceans: 'I know . . . I know . . . I wish . . .'  
Jesus has a searching knowledge of us, and he has wishes about us.

☐<sup>1</sup> 3:14

### 2. Jesus wants our zeal and enthusiasm

• No commendation – only criticism for lukewarmness

**2. Jesus wants our zeal and enthusiasm.** In this letter there is no word of commendation! There is only (iii) the word of criticism. It goes on to speak of the great danger of being 'lukewarm'. <sup>16</sup>*So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I am about to spit you out of my mouth.* <sup>17</sup>*For you keep saying, "I am rich, and have acquired great riches. I have need of nothing." But you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked.'* God hates lukewarm Christians. He prefers sincere pagans (who are spiritually cold!) to Christians who are neither hot nor cold. What is a lukewarm Christian? He or she is someone who is a Bible-believing person, a man or woman who has a basic faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. But they are not 'on fire' with zeal for God. They are content with where they are spiritually already, proud of what they have achieved so far ('I am rich . . .'). They have no sense of the need to make any further progress ('I . . . have need of nothing'). They lack spiritual ambition. And they are totally unaware that there are levels of Christian experience which are far beyond where they are at present. (They are 'wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked' but do not know it.)

• They have no sense of the need to make any further progress

### 3. Jesus gives us counsel to enable our recovery

- Faith
- New spiritual vision from the holy Spirit

### 4. Jesus gives us warnings and encouragements

- Rebuke
- Chastisement
- A deliberate decision to respond – ‘opening the door to Jesus’
- Blessing for those who overcome lukewarmness

3. **Jesus gives us counsel to enable our recovery.** There follows the advice of the heavenly Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>18</sup>*‘I give you some advice: buy from me gold refined by fire, so that you may truly become rich.’* Refined gold is a symbol of persistent faith. *‘Buy white clothing, so that you may clothe yourself, and that the shame of your nakedness will not be made obvious.’* The white clothing is zeal for pure and energetic living for God. Then it becomes obvious that we are alive to serve God energetically. *‘Buy ointment with which to anoint your eyes, so that you will see.’* The ointment is the work of the Holy Spirit giving us new spiritual vision.

4. **Jesus gives us warnings and encouragements.** <sup>19</sup>*‘Everyone that I love, I reprove and chasten.’* When we are lukewarm he at first rebukes us with his word. Then he is likely to let something happen to us that chastises us by his mighty power. The answer is to wake up to the things of God and do a turn-around. Jesus says: *‘So be zealous and repent.’* He invites us to closer relationship with him. <sup>20</sup>*‘Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to that person, and will sup with him, and he with me.’* Jesus is wanting closer fellowship with us. He is like a person outside a door calling or knocking on the door because he wants to come in. ‘Opening the door’ means to take a deliberate decision to respond to him. When we do there is a two-way fellowship between us. He puts things before us to enjoy. We put to him the things we need to tell him. If we overcome our lukewarmness there is blessing for us. <sup>21</sup>*‘The person who overcomes – to such a person I will give the privilege of sitting down with me on my throne, as I also overcame, and sat down with my Father on his throne.’* You will reign with Christ. There will be new authority in your life. <sup>22</sup>*‘He who has an ear let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.’*



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