

TO THE CONQUERORS

OCTOBER 25, 2026 / CLASS 7 / STUDENT HANDOUT

Revelation 3:14-22 – Laodicea

Part I. In class

The story behind the letter

Hosea 2:8–9, 14–15

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. **9** Therefore I will take back My grain in its time, and My wine in its season, and I will take away My wool and My flax, which were to cover her nakedness. ... **14** Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak tenderly to her. **15** And there I will give her her vineyards and make the Valley of Achor a door of hope.

- In Hosea, Israel is the LORD's bride. He gave her everything, she did not know it was His, and He came back for her.
- Laodicea's letter has three parts:
 - What Jesus _____. (3:14–17)
 - What Jesus _____. (3:18–20)
 - What Jesus _____. (3:21)

Group work

Read your passage beside Laodicea's letter. What do they share?

Group 1: Isaiah 65:15–17 and Psalm 89:35–37

Isaiah 65:15 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 truth, and he who takes an oath in the land shall swear by the God of truth; 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.

Psalm 89:35 Once for all I have sworn by My holiness; I will not lie to David. **36** His offspring shall endure forever, his throne as long as the sun before Me. **37** Like the moon it shall be established forever, a faithful witness in the skies.

What we found: _____

Group 2: Leviticus 18:24–28 and Hosea 12:8

Leviticus 18:24 Do not make yourselves unclean by any of these things, for by all these the nations I am driving out before you have become unclean, **25** and the land became unclean, so that I punished its iniquity, and the land vomited out its inhabitants. **26** But you shall keep My statutes and My rules and do none of these abominations, either the native or the stranger who sojourns among you **27** (for the people of the land, who were before you, did all of these abominations, so that the land became unclean), **28** lest the land vomit you out when you make it unclean, as it vomited out the nation that was before you.

Hosea 12:8 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."

What we found: _____

Group 3: Hosea 2:8–9, 14–15; Jeremiah 4:30; Song of Solomon 5:2–6

Hosea 2:8 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. **9** Therefore I will take back My grain in its time, and My wine in its season, and I will take away My wool and My flax, which were to cover her nakedness. ... **14** Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak tenderly to her. **15** And there I will give her her vineyards and make the Valley of Achor a door of hope.

Jeremiah 4:30 And you, O desolate one, what do you mean that you dress in scarlet, that you adorn yourself with ornaments of gold, that you enlarge your eyes with paint? In vain you beautify yourself. Your lovers despise you; they seek your life.

Song of Solomon 5:2 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." **3** I had put off my garment; how could I put it on? I had bathed my feet; how could I soil them? **4** My beloved put his hand to the latch, and my heart was thrilled within me. **5** I arose to open to my beloved, and my hands dripped with myrrh, my fingers with liquid myrrh, on the handles of the bolt. **6** I opened to my beloved, but my beloved had turned and gone. My soul failed me when he spoke. I sought him, but found him not; I called him, but he gave no answer.

What we found: _____

1. What Jesus sees

Revelation 3:14–17

14 To the angel of the church in Laodicea write: The Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God, says these things: **15** I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were cold or hot. **16** So, because you are lukewarm and neither hot nor cold, I am about to vomit you out of My mouth. **17** Because you say, "I'm rich, and I have grown rich, and I need nothing" — and you don't know that you are wretched and pitiable and poor and blind and naked —

- Laodicea said, "I need nothing." What did Jesus see?

"The Amen, the faithful and true witness" (group 1)

- "The Amen": Isaiah 65:16 calls the LORD "the God of Amen" (Hebrew).
- "The faithful witness": Psalm 89 calls the moon "a faithful witness in the skies" to God's oath about David's throne.

- "The beginning of the creation of God": Isaiah 65:17, "I create new heavens and a new earth."

"Because you are lukewarm" (group 2)

- **What have you heard lukewarm means?** _____
- It is said of their _____. (3:15)
- "I wish you were cold or hot." He wants _____. (3:15)
- Lukewarm water was what people drank to _____.
- The _____ vomited out the people who defiled it. (Leviticus 18:25, 28)
- Hot: "_____ in spirit, he spoke and taught" (Acts 18:25). Cold: "_____ to a thirsty soul" (Proverbs 25:25).

What lukewarm does not mean

- Not Laodicea's _____. That story starts in 1957. The city's water came from springs, and Strabo calls it "potable."
- Not "cold = _____." He says, "I wish you were cold."
- Not a _____ of the day. No ancient writer uses "neither hot nor cold" as a proverb.

"I'm rich, and I have grown rich, and I need nothing" (group 2)

- "I'm rich" is _____ boast. (Hosea 12:8; 3:17)
- Laodicea says it needs _____. (3:17)
- Jesus sees "wretched and pitiable and _____ and _____ and _____." (3:17)
- "And you _____." (3:17)

2. What Jesus offers

Revelation 3:18–20

18 I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined by fire in order that you may be rich, and white garments in order that you may be clothed and the shame of your nakedness not be revealed, and eye-salve to rub on your eyes in order that you may see. **19** Those I cherish, I reprove and discipline. So be earnest and repent. **20** Behold! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in and dine with him, and he with Me.

"I counsel you to buy from Me" (group 3)

- The LORD gave His bride the silver and gold, "and she _____." (Hosea 2:8)
- He took back His wool and flax, "which were to cover her _____." (Hosea 2:9)
- Jerusalem dressed herself in scarlet and gold and painted her eyes for lovers who _____. (Jeremiah 4:30)

- Jesus offers gold refined by fire, white garments, and eye-salve: "_____." (3:18)

"If anyone hears My voice and opens the door" (group 3)

Proverbs 3:11 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.

- "Those I cherish, I _____ and _____." (3:19)
- "If anyone hears My voice and opens the door": anyone in the _____. (3:20)
- "I will come in and _____ with him, and he with Me." (3:20)
- The bride's meal: "blessed are those called to the _____ of the Lamb." (19:9)
- The bride at the end is clothed: "She was given _____ to wear, bright and clean." (19:8)

3. What Jesus promises

Revelation 3:21–22

21 To him who conquers I will give a place to sit with Me on My throne, as I also conquered and sat down with My Father on His throne. **22** Let him who has ears hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

"A place to sit with Me on My throne"

- "As I also conquered and _____ with My Father on His throne." (3:21)
- God "_____ with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus." (Ephesians 2:6)
- "I saw thrones, and they _____ on them." (20:4)
- The church told "you are... poor and blind and naked" is offered _____. (3:17, 21)

"I know your works"

- Sardis had a name for being _____, and it was dead. (3:1)
- Philadelphia had a little power, and He set _____ before it. (3:8)
- Laodicea said, "I need nothing," and it was _____ and _____ and _____. (3:17)
- To him who conquers: white garments, a pillar in God's sanctuary, a place on _____. (3:5, 12, 21)

Part II. For study later

1. The title: the Amen, the faithful and true witness

Revelation 3:14; Isaiah 65:16–17; Psalm 89:35–37; Colossians 1:15–18; 4:13–17.

- **The city**
 - Laodicea sat in the Lycus River valley, a few miles from two other towns with churches: Hierapolis to the north and Colossae to the east.
 - Epaphras, one of Paul's coworkers, started the churches in all three towns (Colossians 1:7; 4:12–13).
 - Paul's letter to the Colossians was meant for Laodicea too: "when this letter has been read among you, have it also read in the church of the Laodiceans" (Colossians 4:16).
- **"The Amen"**
 - Jesus calls Himself "the Amen." Here it is a name, not the word that ends a prayer.
 - The name comes from Isaiah 65:16, which in Hebrew calls the LORD "the God of Amen" twice.
 - The Greek translation of the Old Testament, which the early churches read, put the same words as "the true God."
 - Jesus' title in 3:14 has both: "the Amen, the faithful and true witness."
- **"The faithful witness"**
 - Psalm 89 is God's oath that David's family will always have a king on the throne. The psalm points to the moon as a lasting witness to that promise.
 - Jesus calls Himself that faithful witness. The letter opens with this title and ends with Jesus seated on His throne (3:21), the throne the psalm promised.
- **"The beginning of the creation of God"**
 - "Beginning" here means the origin and source: everything God made came through Him.
 - Paul said the same in the letter that was read at Laodicea: "the firstborn of all creation. For by Him all things were created... He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead" (Colossians 1:15–18).
 - In Isaiah, the verse right after "the God of Amen" is about a new creation (Isaiah 65:17).
 - So Jesus is the source of the first creation and the beginning of the new one.

2. Lukewarm: the evidence

Revelation 3:15–17; Leviticus 18:24–28.

- **"Lukewarm" describes what they do.** Jesus began His charge against Sardis the same way: "I know your works, that you have a name for being alive, and you are dead" (3:1).
- **Lukewarm water was what you drank to make yourself throw up.**
 - Celsus, a Roman medical writer of the time: "He who after a meal wants to vomit, if he does so easily should first take tepid water by itself" (*On Medicine* 1.3.22; also 1.8.4).
 - The Greek doctors gave the same advice (the Hippocratic writings; Galen).
 - The *Life of Aesop*, a popular story: Aesop, a slave who cannot speak, is blamed for eating his master's figs. He drinks lukewarm water and brings up only water. His accusers drink it, and up come the figs.
- **Being vomited out is a threat from the Law of Moses.** Leviticus in Hebrew says the land "vomits" out those who defile it. The Greek translation softened it to "be provoked." Revelation uses the plain word "vomit," following the Hebrew.
- **"Hot" can mean zeal that speaks and serves.**
 - Apollos at Ephesus: "being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things concerning Jesus" (Acts 18:25).
 - Paul: "Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord" (Romans 12:11).
 - The word translated "fervent" in both verses means "to boil." It is the verb behind Revelation's word "hot."
- **"Cold" can mean something that refreshes.**
 - "Like cold water to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country" (Proverbs 25:25).
 - "Whoever gives one of these little ones even a cup of cold water because he is a disciple... will by no means lose his reward" (Matthew 10:42).
 - In the first century people asked for hot water or cold water, at meals and in the public baths. Getting lukewarm water when you asked for hot was a common annoyance.
- **Right beside "lukewarm," Jesus says what is wrong with them:** "you say, 'I'm rich...' — and you don't know" (3:17). He does not say "lukewarm means this." He puts the two next to each other.
- **The water-supply explanation does not hold up.**
 - The explanation: Hierapolis had hot springs, Colossae had cold water, and Laodicea's water arrived lukewarm by aqueduct.
 - It started in 1957 with two British visitors. No one before them had connected the letter to the city's water.
 - Archaeologists digging at Laodicea since 2003 have found:

- The city's water came by aqueduct from springs under Mount Salbakos, about five miles south. None of it came from Hierapolis.
- The lime crust in Laodicea's pipes is the same as in the pipes at Hierapolis, Ephesus, and other cities. It comes from hard spring water, which Roman engineers preferred.
- A Roman governor's decree from about AD 114 praises Laodicea's "plentiful water from very abundant sources."
- Hierapolis's hot springs were not drinkable. Hierapolis and Colossae both piped in spring water, just as Laodicea did.
- Strabo, a geographer writing about AD 20, says Laodicea's water leaves stone deposits, "although their water is potable," that is, drinkable.
- Sources: Mark Wilson, *Lycus Journal* 8, 2023, and Tyndale Bulletin 76, 2025; Strabo, *Geography* 13.4.14.
- **It was not a common saying of the day.**
 - No Greek, Latin, or Jewish writer of the time uses "neither hot nor cold" as a proverb.
 - No Greek writer before Revelation calls a person "lukewarm" in loyalty or faith. Latin poets did call fading love "tepid."
 - The closest is the philosopher Seneca, about AD 64. An opponent of his compared a man who is "neither happy nor wretched" to lukewarm water between cold and hot, and Seneca rejected the comparison (*Letter* 92.21).
 - The picture worked because everyone knew what lukewarm water was good for.

3. "I'm rich" and the bride who got rich

Revelation 3:17–18; Hosea 12:8; Hosea 2; Jeremiah 4:30.

- **"I'm rich" is a quotation of Ephraim (the northern kingdom of Israel) in Hosea 12:8.** In the Greek translation of Hosea, "I have grown rich" is the same word Laodicea uses in 3:17. That form of the word appears nowhere else in the New Testament.
- **Hosea 2 tells the story of a bride who grew rich.**
 - In Hosea, Israel is the LORD's wife. He gave her everything, and she gave the credit to her lovers, the false god Baal (Hosea 2:8).
 - So He takes back what covered her (2:9).
 - Laodicea is in the same place. It does not know that it is "poor and blind and naked" (3:17), and Jesus offers it "white garments in order that you may be clothed and the shame of your nakedness not be revealed" (3:18).
 - Laodicea was known for its black wool. In Hosea the LORD takes back His wool; Jesus offers white garments.
- **Smyrna and Laodicea are opposites.** Smyrna was poor, and Jesus told it, "you are rich" (2:9). Laodicea said it was rich, and Jesus told it that it was poor.

- **What Jesus offers answers what Laodicea lacked:** gold for the poor, white garments for the naked, eye-salve for the blind (3:18).
- **Jeremiah 4:30 has the same three things in one verse.** Jerusalem dressed herself up with clothes, gold, and eye paint for lovers who wanted her dead. Jesus offers Laodicea the same three things, from Himself and for its good.

4. The discipline and the door

Revelation 3:19–20; Proverbs 3:11–12; Hosea 2:14–15; Song of Solomon 5:2; Luke 12:36–37; Revelation 19:8–9; Zechariah 13:9.

- **Jesus corrects Laodicea because He loves it.** 3:19 uses both of Proverbs 3's words, "reprove" and "discipline." Like a father with a son, Jesus corrects the church He loves.
- **Jesus is outside, knocking, and asking to come in.**
 - He says this to the church in Laodicea, so "anyone" means anyone in that church.
 - In Hosea, after the discipline, the LORD woos His bride again and gives her "a door of hope" (Hosea 2:14–15).
 - In the Song of Solomon, the bride hears her beloved at the door: "A sound! My beloved is knocking. 'Open to me'" (5:2).
 - In Jesus' parable, the master comes home and knocks. When the servants open, he seats them at his table and serves them himself (Luke 12:36–37).
 - The house belongs to Jesus, and still He knocks and asks to come in and eat with them.
- **The meal behind the door is a wedding feast.** "Blessed are those called to the marriage supper of the Lamb" (19:9). The bride at the end of the book is clothed in fine linen (19:8). The church that was naked is offered the bride's clothing.
- **Zechariah 13:9 runs in the same order as 3:18–20.**
 - "I will put this third into the fire, and refine them as one refines silver, and test them as gold is tested. They will call upon My name, and I will answer them."
 - Zechariah has the refining first, then the people calling and God answering. Laodicea's letter has gold refined by fire (3:18), then His voice and the open door (3:20).

5. The throne

Revelation 3:21; Ephesians 2:6; Revelation 20:4.

- **The church told it is "poor and blind and naked" is offered a seat on Jesus' throne** (3:17, 21).
- **Paul says believers are already seated with Christ:** God "raised us up with Him and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 2:6).
- **Revelation shows them seated:** the word "sit" appears only once more in the book. "I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was given to them" (20:4).

6. Isaiah behind the letters to Philadelphia and Laodicea

Isaiah 60:14; 62:2; 65:15–17.

- Both letters draw on the last chapters of Isaiah.
- Isaiah 60:14 says Zion's enemies "shall bow down at your feet" and call her "the City of the LORD, the Zion of the Holy One of Israel." Jesus promises Philadelphia that its enemies will "come and bow down at your feet" (3:9).
- Isaiah 62:2 says, "you shall be called by a new name that the mouth of the LORD will give." Philadelphia's letter ends with a new name (3:12).
- Isaiah 65:15–16 gives God's servants "another name," and in the next verse calls the LORD "the God of Amen."
- Revelation follows the same order: Philadelphia's letter ends with a new name (3:12), and Laodicea's letter begins with "the Amen" (3:14).

7. The discipline of a son

Hebrews 12:2–7; Deuteronomy 8:5, 17.

- Hebrews 12 quotes Proverbs 3:11–12 and follows the same order as the end of Laodicea's letter.
 - First the shame and the throne: Jesus "endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God" (12:2).
 - Then the discipline: "The Lord disciplines the one He loves" (12:6).
 - Laodicea's letter has the shame of nakedness (3:18), the discipline (3:19), and the throne (3:21).
- Moses warned that wealth makes people forget God: "Beware lest you say in your heart, 'My power and the might of my hand have gotten me this wealth'" (Deuteronomy 8:17).
 - The same chapter says, "as a man disciplines his son, the LORD your God disciplines you" (8:5).
 - Wealth and a father's discipline in one chapter, as in Laodicea's letter.

8. "I'm rich" elsewhere in Revelation

Revelation 18:3, 7, 15–19; 1 Corinthians 4:8.

- The word "grow rich" comes back in Revelation only in chapter 18, for the merchants who grew rich by trading with Babylon (18:3, 15, 19).
- Babylon boasts the way Laodicea does: "I sit as a queen, and I'm not a widow, and I will never see mourning" (18:7).
- Paul used the same kind of irony with the church in Corinth: "Already you have all you want! Already you have become rich! Without us you have become kings! And would that you did

reign" (1 Corinthians 4:8).

- Laodicea is offered real riches and a real throne.

9. The shut gate and the meal

Ezekiel 44:2–3.

- In Ezekiel's vision of the temple, the east gate stays shut because the LORD has entered through it, and only the prince may sit there to eat: "This gate shall remain shut; it shall not be opened, and no one shall enter by it, for the LORD, the God of Israel, has entered by it. Therefore it shall remain shut. Only the prince may sit in it to eat bread before the LORD" (Ezekiel 44:2–3).
- In Laodicea the door is shut too, but Jesus stands outside it and offers to come in and eat with them (3:20).
- For every Ezekiel and Zechariah reference in these chapters, see "Ezekiel and Zechariah: Additional References" on the church app.