

Maps & Pictures Of Laodicea



Map of the seven churches of Revelation (Revelation 2:1-3:22). The book of revelation was written by John from the island of Patmos (southern island on the map to which John was exiled) to seven churches which may have been under his previous leadership. Laodicea is circled on the map.

The water which came from the ground/wells in Laodicea was foul smelling and filled with minerals which would cause vomiting. Here, you can see extensive mineral deposits in pipes in Laodicea near a large fountain complex in the city.



Since the water supply in Laodicea was both insufficient (in its volume) and emetic (caused vomiting), the Laodiceans "piped" their water in from a southern city (Denizli) through a six-mile long aqueduct (see picture). When the water arrived in Laodicea though, it was lukewarm. The people would store the lukewarm water in jars placed in the cool ground until it was ready for drinking.

Laodicea, like Philadelphia to the North, was built in an area prone to earthquakes. When the city was devastated by an earthquake in 60 A.D., they refused Rome's assistance opting instead to rebuild themselves with their accumulated wealth. The exterior walls, pictured to the right, from that rebuilding project are still standing today.



Put Out The Good Silverware

Long Beach Alliance Church • January 15th, 2006 • Pastor Chris Lankford

BEHOLD, I STAND AT THE DOOR AND KNOCK; IF ANYONE HEARS MY VOICE AND OPENS THE DOOR, I WILL COME IN TO HIM AND WILL DINE WITH HIM, AND HE WITH ME.
~REVELATION 3:20 (NASB)

1) The City Of Laodicea

- A) Laodicea was perfectly positioned near two lucrative trade routes which fed incredible wealth into the local populace. The area was especially known for its soft, raven-black wool industry (ironically, the product (it was thought) of the water drunk by the sheep).
- B) Laodicea was the site of a famous school of medicine, connected with the cult temple of Men Karou (god of the valley). The 'healers' of the city developed a compound for curing eye diseases called "Phrygian powder," which brought extensive fame and money to Laodicea.
- C) Laodicea was demolished by an earthquake in 60 A.D. They refused financial assistance from Rome, and chose to rebuild themselves with their considerable wealth.

- D) Despite its advantageous location and great wealth, Laodicea had no natural resources for a water supply. Water had to be brought in through a long aqueduct from the South, and arrived in the city lukewarm.

2) The Example Of Christ's Life For The Church

- A) First, Jesus Christ is described as "The Amen" to the Laodicean church (Revelation 3:14). "Amen" (lit., "so be it") was both an OT divine title (Isaiah 65:16, אָמֵן אֱלֹהֵינוּ, God of amen/truth) and an affirmative statement of Christ character to complete all He sets out to accomplish.
- B) Second, Christ is described as the "faithful and true Witness" (3:14). This would have been in sharp contrast to the Laodicean church, whose deeds were lukewarm (3:15-16).
- C) Finally, Christ is described as "the Beginning of the creation of God" (3:14). This parallel with Colossians 1:15-16 (Colossae was only 10 miles to the southeast), indicates a possible link to the Colossian heresy* which (in part) denigrated Christ's role as creator of the physical world.

* The Colossian heresy, known as "gnosticism," was prevalent in the early church. Gnosticism (from the Greek 'gnosis' meaning "knowledge") was a complex system of belief which held that people could have "special knowledge" of creation and spiritual matters through angels and gnostic practices. While Gnosticism is far too complex to detail here, suffice it to say that Gnostics did not believe that Jesus Christ created the physical world, and felt they had come to this knowledge through special spiritual insights and relationships, much like the New Age Movement of our modern-day setting. I agree here with Hemer, who agrees with Lightfoot (*The Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia in their Local Setting*, by Colin J. Hemer, pg. 184) that the connectivity between Colossae and Laodicea, particularly with the immediate reference to "cold water" (a distinguishing characteristic of Colossae) is too coincidental to be ignored. While there is no overt proof that Gnostic teaching had infiltrated Laodicea, it is my opinion the smug, wealthy, and self-sufficient Laodiceans would have been a paradigm group to syncretize this belief into their lifestyle.

3) A Swift Kick To The Posterior Region

- A) Jesus, noting the local water issues (cold, like Colossae; hot like Hierapolis) calls the Laodicean church "lukewarm" (3:15-16). The church makes Jesus sick, and he is about to "vomit" (spit) them out of His mouth.
- B) In a powerful reversal of perspective, Jesus calls the church "wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked" (3:17). This would have been an unbelievable irony for both the region and the church!
- C) Christ offers help to the miserable Laodiceans by offering to be their new source of wealth (3:18), and warns them to "be zealous and repent" (3:19), a clear warning to heed Christ's strong discipline.
- D) Jesus appeals to the Laodicean church for a deeper relationship with them, an opportunity for more than they ever imagined! They have asked Jesus to dinner, but now they must let Him into the interior of their lives (3:20).

4) We Will Receive ALL We Need From Christ!

- A) As with all the letters to the churches, the overcomer (all Christians, the faithful -- 3:21) will sit with Christ on His throne! The Laodiceans, who fancied themselves as powerful because of their wealth would experience true power as overcomers in Christ!
- B) Jesus Christ reminds us, in this letter to Laodicea, that the most valuable things in the universe are spiritual, not material. The truly rich are those who admit their poverty and seek Christ as their source of wealth.