

What Is a Laodicean?

by J.B. Stoney

A Laodicean is someone who has light but lacks the power to apply it, focusing on human needs rather than Christ, and the remedy is to invite Christ to come in and sup with us, embracing the new creation and Christ's power.

Scripture: Matthew 16:23, Revelation 3:14

Topics: "Church Condition", "Spiritual Transformation"

Description

J.B. Stoney preaches on the state of the church, focusing on the progression from Philadelphia to Laodicea, warning against becoming Laodicean - having light but lacking the power it should produce. He emphasizes the danger of being focused on pleasing man rather than Christ, leading to a state where the church is unfit for Christ but fit for the beast. Stoney highlights the importance of practical application of light, urging believers to exclude the human element and ensure that the light they have produces Christ in them. He concludes by pointing to the remedy for Laodicea, which is to open the door to Christ, allowing Him to come in and transform their lives.

Transcript

Revelation 3: 14-22

It is very important for us to understand what is the state of things in the church; and when I say "church" I mean the whole house of God, not the real thing, the body of Christ, but that which will be spued out of the Lord's mouth when He comes. It is very important for us who are on the verge of this, if not quite in it, to understand what will produce it.

We may say, thank God, we know we are of the true thing; but still it is a great thing for us to see what produces and conduces to this state of things that Christ will thus spue out of His mouth, so that we may not in any way be helping it on ourselves. In the beginning of Revelation 2 I find the church has lost her first love, and in the end of chapter 3 He will do without her as a witness.

In Laodicea the vessel of testimony is spued out of His mouth. And the terrible thing is that as soon as He thus rejects it, there is another power ready to pick it up - a power that rises and says, This just suits me! The church unfit for Christ is fit for the beast. As soon as Christ has done with the church, the beast will arise and say, I will carry it, as we get it in chapter 17. Now this is a terrible thing - a very serious thing, if we lay it to heart, to see how it is produced; and I think none of us can escape censure on the point,

though we may escape judgment. For it is evident that Laodicea springs out of Philadelphia; it is evident that the state of the last of the churches is consequent upon the preceding one. What then is a Laodicean?

There are four phases of the church of God which run down to the end; these are Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea: Thyatira being Romanism; Sardis, the Reformed religion; Philadelphia, the last revival - the most of brilliant unfolding of the truth that had been lost; and after this, Laodicea, Latitudinarianism. I will explain first what a Laodicean is, and seek to apply it to our conscience afterwards.

A Laodicean, then is one who has got Philadelphian light and has not got Philadelphian power. You see a Laodicean is not in system; he is neither in Romanism nor in Protestantism, and you must be in either of these two to be in system. I trust this will come home very closely to every one of us. It is a very important thing to get light, and light does lead out of system; but light is not everything.

A Laodicean is one who has got light, but who has not that which the light should produce. Hence the Lord appears to Laodicea, saying, "These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God". A Laodicean says what even a rich man would not say: "I ... have need of nothing". I would say to any such, You have got the light, but you have not got Christ in power.

A Rationalist said, "I have got rid of the author of Christianity, but I have kept the morality of it", and that is just what the beast might say. What does he want Christianity for?

He wants Christianity to so improve the man that he may be independent of God. The Christianity of the present day will issue in Babylon, that great city where there will be the aggregate of all that suits man upon earth, where everything that magnifies him will be brought together, where man will get on without God.

We are not Babylon, and, thank God, never shall be the harlot; but we are warned that we fall not into the state of things that will characterize her. I may say here, there are two great structures going on at this present moment - the new Jerusalem and Babylon; the one the bride of Christ, the magnificent display of all that He is; the other all that naturally suits man; every natural beauty will be found in it. The one, all of Christ, when there is nothing of Adam; and the other, where there is nothing of Christ. Just as the bridegroom forms the bride, so it is here: everything in the new Jerusalem will suit Christ.

She will come down from heaven, having the glory of God, to show out the beauty of Christ here upon earth, where we have all failed. In Babylon, on the other hand, will be found all that gratifies man. People often say, What is the harm in this or in that? But that is not the way to put it.

The question, whether it be a bit of furniture or a bit of dress, is whether it suits Christ or whether it suits man. Is it meeting man in his natural tastes, or is it meeting Christ in the counsels of God? God tells us what things are coming to, in order that we should not in any wise contribute to them. What a sad thing it is to think that the light we have may only minister to our condemnation!

If you receive the light that comes out of Philadelphia, and do not have the same time refuse the human element, you are preparing for Laodicea. Suppose any one says to me, I know I have received the grace of Christ. I say, That is all very well; but what are you studying?

Are you trying to improve people's natures - trying to make a man good-tempered or temperate? Then you are working at the old creation. And you have got light from Christ, the beginning of the creation of God! It

is a fearful thing in the sight of God to have light and not to walk according to it.

In all the great theological works you will not find the new creation taught; and yet the authors were true godly men. Why then was not the church spued out of Christ's mouth long ago? Because they had no light.

Now, when we have light, if it prove ineffectual to produce Christ, we are nauseous to Him. All through Scripture we find instances to prove what I am saying. I say, then, a Laodicean has light; but man in nature is his object, and not Christ.

The first example I find is that of Eve. She had light, but she did not act up to her light. The word of God told her not to eat of the tree, and she did. It was a very bad case I admit, but it is a case.

I give up the light in self-consideration; she had the pure light in a state of innocence; it was perfect light from God Himself; and what a power of sin was that in her when she said, I will give up the light and please myself.

That was Laodicean in principle; and when the church gets to that state the Lord says, It does not suit Me. It cannot be of any use. There are more examples of this in the word that I could possibly think of or put together now; but one or two will show you how the principle of the evil comes in. Who was it helped the children of Israel into idolatry? No one less than Aaron, the brother of Moses. Was there a want of light there? No; he had plenty on light, but he wanted to please the people. He was the one who was to carry out the words that Moses gave him from God, and this very man, whilst Moses was gone up the mountain to God, says: Give me your gold, and I will make a calf for you. People talk of light, and are boastful of it; but with the knowledge of that light, I say, take care that you keep out the human element.

If you are ministering to man in any way, no matter how - be it in your house, your furniture, your dress, anything - you are just paving the way for Laodicea, you are helping it on, for you have got light and are not walking in the practical power of it. It is a point that must be settled practically. The crisis is coming when people will say: There is plenty of light. They are trying to improve man by it, and Christ really is unthought of.

Can you say people are more for Christ now than they used to be? I know that years ago saints used to be far more for Christ with less light than they are now. I turn to another case, in 1 Samuel 15. The point to get hold of, and it is a difficult one if a person does not work it out in his own heart, is that we are the people who are to blame, because by giving a place to the human element in our preachings and teachings, we have produced a type of Christianity which is very human.

In this chapter king Saul is sent to destroy Amalek. There is no mistake about what he is to do; he is not in the least ignorant; yet he keeps what suits himself, while he destroys the vile and refuse.

He could not say he was not able to walk up to the light; but he spared the best, that which ministered most to man, what most pleased himself. Again, in 2 Kings 5, Gehazi is sent to communicate the truth to Naaman. Gehazi has the truth; but, when the prophet will not take anything from Naaman, he will.

This is the principle. "Went not mine heart with thee", says the prophet, "when the man turned again from his chariot to meet thee? Is it a time to receive money, and to receive garments, and oliveyards and vineyards, and sheep, and oxen, and men servants, and maid servants?" - all to suit himself. Then he adds: "The leprosy therefore of Naaman shall cleave unto thee, and unto thy seed for ever. And he went

out from his presence a leper as white as snow".

That is a Laodicean. He had light, but he considered for himself; he had not self-control, not self-mortification enough, to keep himself from coveting things that belong to Naaman. I turn out to the New Testament, to Matthew 16. Here the Lord says to Peter: "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father which is in heaven".

The greatest light is shown to Peter; nothing could have been more wonderful than the Father giving such a revelation to him; it was light of the highest order. He had been given this light about the church. And, would you believe it, that this very man, in this very same chapter, foreshadows what a Laodicean is! He has the light about the church, but he will not have the cross.

Read farther on: "Then Peter took Him, and began to rebuke Him, saying, Be it far from Thee, Lord: this shall from not be unto Thee. But He turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind Me, Satan: thou art an offence unto Me; for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men".

Thus it is possible that the person who has the greatest light may make the greatest mistake. Peter wants to spare the man. How differently the apostle Paul uses the cross! "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world".

If this be so, what is left of you? Why, the new creation, and nothing else. That is what is left - a new creation, not only a new creature. The same Person who was going to build this wonderful structure, the church, is the One who will set aside man in His cross.

Oh, says Peter, I do not like that! Then, says the Lord, you are Satan. That is exactly the principle of the thing, and this is where we have to judge ourselves. The light is here, and the question is whether I am bringing out that upon earth which will shine out in the new Jerusalem. It was thus that the Lord left His disciples here. He could say of them: "All mine are Thine, and Thine are Mine, and I am glorified in them".

Truly we have failed in this; but He turns round in the book of Revelation and says: You are the Bride to Me, though you have failed in everything else. I make only one more remark. The apostle says in 2 Timothy 1: "All they which are in Asia be turned away from me".

It was not that they had turned away from Christianity, but that they would not have Paul's teaching; they would not have Christ instead of the man here.

And when you leave Christ out of Christianity it is Laodicean, and sinks into Babylon; when you leave Christ out of Christianity Christ does not want the church. I would warn you to see to it, that the more light you have, the more you exclude the human element.

People have gone on for 1800 years, knowing but little and with but little light; and till the light came, the Lord, as it were, says, I tolerate it all.

But now all is changed. We can no more speak of the ignorance: the light has been given us. If the light increase, be careful to see that the light produces Christ in you practically. And now, having shown you what a Laodicean is, I will show you the remedy for it, how the Lord can keep you from being one, and how He can deliver you if you now are one.

He says, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him and he with Me".

It is not any particular truth He brings in; He brings in Himself. He says: I will make you know Me in the intimacies of daily life; I will come and sup with you and then you shall learn what it is to sup with Me. I will throw Myself into all your circumstances, and then you will come to Mine. We get the practical illustration of it in John 11 and 12.

First, the Lord walks beside Mary to the grave of Lazarus, and weeps with her there. And then she says, anointing Him for His burial: This world, with all its beauty, is nothing to me! He is gone out of it, and I have buried it all with Him in His grave. The day we live in is a critical one. I am sure it ought to be a solemn thought that we are a corrupting instead of a sanctifying people, when we propound light without promoting and manifesting Christ, the new creation. The Lord lead our hearts to understand how we may thus only injure souls instead of being a blessing to them.

The apostle tells us in Timothy that unless we have conscience about what we believe, we shall make shipwreck. May we take the subject to heart for His name's sake!

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