

**JESUS' LETTERS TO THE SEVEN CHURCHES IN REVELATION 2-3**  
**LETTER 7 | THE CHURCH AT LAODICEA: THE LUKE-WARM CHURCH**  
**REVELATION 3:14-22 | 8 NOVEMBER 2009**  
**2ND STREET COMMUNITY CHURCH**  
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This morning we'll go back to **REVELATION 3**, and look into the last of the seven letters Jesus wrote to the churches in Asia Minor in 95-96 A.D. Here are the themes and the structures of these seven letters ...

<b><u>REVELATION 2:1-6</u></b>	<b>EPHESUS</b>	<b>THE LOVELESS CHURCH</b>
<b><u>REVELATION 2:7-11</u></b>	<b>SMYRNA</b>	<b>THE SUFFERING CHURCH</b>
<b><u>REVELATION 2:12-17</u></b>	<b>PERGAMUM</b>	<b>THE COMPROMISING CHURCH</b>
<b><u>REVELATION 2:18-29</u></b>	<b>THYATIRA</b>	<b>THE CORRUPTED CHURCH</b>
<b><u>REVELATION 3:1-6</u></b>	<b>SARDIS</b>	<b>THE DEAD CHURCH</b>
<b><u>REVELATION 3:7-13</u></b>	<b>PHILADELPHIA</b>	<b>THE FAITHFUL CHURCH</b>
<b><u>REVELATION 3:14-22</u></b>	<b>LAODICEA</b>	<b>THE LUKEWARM CHURCH</b>

**THE COMPONENTS OF THE SEVEN LETTERS ...**

<b>COMMENDATION OR PRAISE</b>	<b>WHAT THEY'RE DOING RIGHT</b>
<b>CRITICISM OR JUDGMENT</b>	<b>WHAT THEY'RE DOING WRONG</b>
<b>INSTRUCTION OR CORRECTION</b>	<b>HOW THEY CAN MAKE CHANGES</b>
<b>PROMISE OR BLESSING</b>	<b>THE FRUIT OF THESE CHANGES</b>
<b>EXHORTATION</b>	<b>FINAL WORDS OF WISDOM</b>

Jesus offers the church at Laodicea no **COMMENDATION** or **PRAISE** ... but that's because they were too busy **COMMENDING THEMSELVES!** They thought they were the greatest thing going and giving God all the praise, when in reality they were disgracing God by the way they were living out their faith.

Remember that Jesus is the author of these seven letters, and in each one, He recognizes Himself as the author by using a name (or here, **three names**) for Himself that are found either somewhere else in God's WORD, or in *The New Testament* book of **REVELATION**. In **v. 14** Jesus refers to Himself as **The Amen, the faithful and true Witness, and the Beginning of the creation of God.**

**REVELATION 3:14 (NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE)**

**<sup>14</sup> "To the angel [the messenger/pastor] of the church in Laodicea write: The Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God, says this: [emphasis added]"**

Let's look into each of these three distinct titles Jesus uses for Himself –and see the truth of them in light of God's WORD and what Jesus says in to the Laodiceans, and to you and me gathered here this morning as the flock called 2<sup>nd</sup> Street.

**v. 14 ... FIRST, The Amen ... Amen** is the Greek word "am-ANE" ... and it's a word, much like **hallelujah**, in that it's pronounced the same in almost all languages, including in *The Old Testament* language of Hebrew, and in *The New Testament*

languages of Aramaic and Greek. It's used over 70 times throughout the Bible, but this is the only time it's used as a title for a member of the Trinity.

Most people today think that the word **Amen** is a postscript ... and that without it a prayer isn't really a prayer. But the word actually means, "**absolutely, firmly, faithfully, and without-a-doubt true**". Throughout the Gospels, when Jesus says "**Truly, truly I say to you,**" what He's literally saying is "**amen, amen.**"

And so when Jesus uses this title or phrase for Himself, He's saying, "**I am the One who is firmly, absolutely, and faithfully true.**" And when you and I say **amen** at the end of a prayer, what we're really saying is, "**God, I was absolutely serious about what I just said to You in prayer. I wasn't kidding around with the words I just spoke to You. So be it! No doubt!**"

Therefore, when Jesus called Himself the **Amen, the One who is firmly, and faithfully true**, His words were in contrast to the wishy-washy, lukewarm, flimsy, unfaithful Believers in the church in Laodicea. Jesus is using Himself as the standard and saying to them 2,000 years ago and to you and to me today, "**I'm inviting you to raise the bar and come up to where I am. I want your level of faith to grow.**"

**v. 14, SECOND**, Jesus goes on to say that He is **the faithful and true Witness**. This is a term Jesus uses for Himself in **REVELATION 1:15**, and again, His **faithfulness** stands in sharp contrast to the Laodiceans, who were anything but **faithful**.

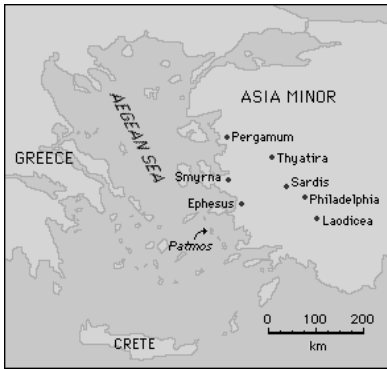
**v. 14 ... THIRD, the Beginning of the creation of God**. When we read this title for Jesus, or at the way the Apostle Paul describes Him in **COLOSSIANS 1:15** when he says that Jesus is the "**first-born of all creation**", it's easy to think that **Jesus was the first thing that God created**. But what Jesus is saying about Himself here and what Paul was saying in **COLOSSIANS 1:15** is that **Jesus Himself is the Creator**. Remember what the Apostle John wrote in **JOHN 1** about Jesus in relation to creation?

#### **JOHN 1:1-3 (NEW LIVING TRANSLATION)**

**<sup>1-3</sup> In the beginning the Word [Jesus Christ] already existed. The Word [Jesus Christ] was with God, and the Word [Jesus Christ] was God. He [Jesus Christ] existed in the beginning with God. God created everything through Him [Jesus Christ], and nothing was created except through Him [Jesus Christ]. [emphasis added]**

If Jesus Christ had been **created**, He would have had to **create** Himself, because as John wrote, "**nothing was created except through Him.**" So what is Jesus saying about Himself here in **REVELATION 3:14** when He says that He's **the Beginning of the creation of God**? The Greek word **beginning** is **ar-KHAY** and it means **the origin, the source, or that by which anything begins to be**. Jesus isn't saying that **He's the first thing created**. He's saying that **He is the origin and the source of all creation ... that everything created has it's beginning, it's genesis, and it's founding in Him.**

#### **MAP OF ASIA MINOR (MODERN-DAY TURKEY) ...**



Laodicea had a large Jewish population, and like other cities in the region, it was a center for Caesar worship, and for the worship of the Greek god of healing by the name of **Asklepios**.

After experiencing a devastating earthquake in 60 A.D. (about 35 years before receiving this letter), Laodicea refused the Roman government's help in rebuilding, successfully relying instead, on its own resources. They didn't need outside help ... didn't ask for outside help ... and didn't want outside help.

Apparently Laodicea was too rich and too prideful to accept help from anyone. And as you'll see later, this is an important characteristic about them. The name **Laodicea** means "**rule of the people**." And prophetically, as their name implies, the church here represents a flock that was ***RUN BY MAJORITY RULE INSTEAD OF GOD*** ... which of course, is never a good idea. Located six miles South of Philadelphia, Laodicea was historically and primarily known for three things ...

1. **MONEY** | Laodicea was the wealthy financial center of Asia Minor.
2. **FASHION** | Laodicea was home to a variety of black sheep that produced wool that was described as being "raven black" in color.
3. **HEALTH** | Laodicea made and distributed medicines worldwide – and was famous for an eye salve called Collyrium –reputed to cure most eye problems.

Another thing Laodicea was famous for, though not in a good way, was their water supply. Water came into Laodicea through a six-mile long aqueduct from a series of hot springs located outside its sister city of Hieropolis. And as the hot water traveled along the aqueduct, it became **lukewarm**, and as such, was then prone to bacterial infestation. And so, when people drank the water in Laodicea without boiling it first, they inevitably got sick and threw up. So that's a little background on Laodicea.

***ILLUSTRATION ... A woman moved to a new city and started working in a downtown office building as a janitor. One Sunday morning she visited a church that she walked by on her way to work each day. The parking lot was filled with beautiful cars and everyone was well dressed. Almost to the sanctuary, a tall, silver haired man in a three-piece suit stepped in front of her and suspiciously asked, "Well, now where are you going?"***

Pointing towards the sanctuary she said, "In there, with everybody else ... to worship the Lord." The man steered the woman over to a side door and asked in a disingenuous tone, "I want you to go home and ask Jesus if *this is the church* He wants you to attend."

The woman replied, "I walk by here each morning and thought it would be a good church to visit. But now that you mention it, I didn't really talk with Jesus about visiting your church". And at that, the

man opened the door, and motioned to the woman to exit. And so, without a chance to even enter the sanctuary, the women left.

The following morning the same man went to a downtown office building on an errand. Walking into the lobby, he saw the woman who'd tried attending his church the day before –there she was, polishing stair rails. He went over and asked, "Did you ask Jesus yet about what we talked about yesterday?" And the woman answered, "Oh, yes, I did." "Well, what did He say?"

Without missing a beat of her polishing the rail, the woman said with a smile, "Jesus said, 'My child, don't feel bad. I've been trying to get into that church for years, and they wouldn't let Me in either.'"

The church at Laodicea, like the church in this story, and many churches in America and around the world had become comfortable with what they had and who they'd become, even though God wasn't. I'm not going to beat you up with Jesus' words here in **REVELATION 3:14-22** ... but it's my hope that each one of us gathered here this morning will invite God to use Jesus' words as a mirror that we hold up to ourselves, to our motivations, to our priorities, and to our faith with honesty and clarity. And then, based on what we see, that we'll make the course-corrections we need to in order to become more like the **FAITHFUL** church at Philadelphia we looked at last Sunday, and less like the **LUKEWARM** church of Laodicea.

**REVELATION 3:15-16 (NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE)**

<sup>15</sup> 'I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot; I wish that you were cold or hot.

<sup>16</sup> 'So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth.

The **lukewarmness** Jesus speaks of here means **being halfway in either direction**. Apparently the Christians in Laodicea weren't **hot** enough to be **hot**, and they weren't **cold** enough to be **cold**. What does it mean to be **hot** or **cold** as a Christian?

The word Jesus uses for **hot** is **dzes-TOS**, which is where we get our word **zest** from ... and it means **boiling hot**, or **zealous**. Remember the disciples Jesus met on the road to Emmaus? They were **white hot** and **zesty**. Here's how they described their faith ...

**LUKE 24:32 (THE AMPLIFIED BIBLE)**

<sup>32</sup> "Were not our hearts greatly moved and burning within us while He was talking with us on the road?"

But the word Jesus uses for **cold** is **psoo-CHROS**. In the 1<sup>st</sup> Century, the word **psoo-CHROS** was used to describe **someone who didn't care, or was completely and utterly indifferent to others or their circumstances, no matter how dire**. In **MATTHEW 24:12** Jesus tells us that in the last days, because of the corruption of sin, many people will be in this state of **cold indifference**.

**MATTHEW 24:12 (NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE)**

**<sup>12</sup> Because lawlessness is increased, most people's love will grow cold.**

So Jesus is saying to the Laodiceans, “**Friends, if you were hot, then I could use you. And if you were cold, then I could work on you. But because you're lukewarm, I can't do anything with you. And that makes Me sick to My stomach.**” And when the Laodiceans heard this letter read they got it –because Jesus used an illustration that was very real to them ... as most, if not all of them had suffered firsthand the sickness related to their polluted, germ-laden, **lukewarm** water.

Most Bible commentaries believe that what Jesus is saying here is that **He'd much rather have us either cold or hot instead of lukewarm**. That He'd rather have a Christian's heart **FOR Him or AGAINST Him, LOVING Him or HATING Him**. And while I get that way of seeing it, I don't believe that's what Jesus is really saying here.

I see Jesus simply making the point that He didn't want the Laodiceans in 95 A.D. or you and me as His followers today in 2009, **to be the same temperature as our environment**. Because when we are it means that it's our environment and not Jesus Christ we're closest to, most intimate with, and drawing our character from.

There isn't one of us who doesn't appreciate a cold glass of water on a **hot** day, or something hot to drink on a **cold** day. But when a drink is the same temperature as its environment is not impressive. And here's our first **FAITH LESSON ...**

**FAITH LESSON ...**

**Jesus is saying to us, “When you have the same *temperature*, the same *character*, the same *flavor* as your environment, you're no different than the world! And like the reflex that happens when you get a mouthful of bad water, I'm going to spit you out of My mouth.”**

**Gang, when we're *FAITHFULLY* following Jesus Christ, we'll stand out as different from the rest of the world. We won't easily blend in with those who aren't yet in a relationship with Jesus Christ.**

Gang, Jesus is calling us to stop the nonsense of trying to please both the world and God. Deep down inside, there's nobody in the world more miserable than the **lukewarm** Christian ... because they have too much of the world to be happy in Jesus, but too much of Jesus to be happy in the world. Here's how the Apostle Paul writes about this **lukewarmness toward God** in the second letter he sent to his friend Timothy, the pastor-teacher of the church at Ephesus ...

**SECOND TIMOTHY 3:1-5 (GOOD NEWS TRANSLATION)**

**<sup>1-3</sup> Remember there will be difficult times in the last days. People will be selfish, greedy, boastful, and conceited; they will be insulting, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, and irreligious; they will be unkind, merciless, slanderers, violent, and fierce; they will hate good;**

<sup>4-5</sup> they will be treacherous, reckless, and swollen with pride; they will love pleasure rather than God; they will hold to the outward form of our religion, but reject its real power. *Keep away from such people.*

Listen to what 19<sup>th</sup> Century British pastor-teacher Charles Spurgeon wrote about **lukewarm** followers of Jesus and how they turn other people away from God ...

**Lukewarm one, what do *worldlings* [non-Christians] see in you? They see a man, who says he is going to heaven, but who is only travelling at a snail's pace; a man who is only half awake; who is as much like themselves as can be. He may be morally consistent in his general behavior, but they see no energy in his religious character.**

From a powerful sermon entitled *An Earnest Warning Against Lukewarmness*, here's how Spurgeon further describes the **lukewarm** church ...

- 1. Lukewarm churches have prayer meetings, but there are few present, for they like quiet evenings home. They may have schools, Bible-classes, and all sorts of programs; but they might as well be without them, for no energy is displayed and no good comes of them.**

**Friends, let's pray with passion and in numbers. Let's have energy rooted in Jesus Christ, and not in our programs or in ourselves.**

- 2. Lukewarm churches have deacons and elders who are excellent pillars of the church, if the chief quality of pillars be to stand still, and exhibit no motion or emotion.**

**Gang, let's make sure that our leaders are leading because they're *discerning* and *filled with God's Holy Spirit*, and not just because they're people of influence.**

- 3. The pastor of lukewarm churches may be a shining light of eloquence, but he is not a burning light of grace, setting people's hearts on fire.**

**Friends, I can't hit a home-run every Sunday, but if my teaching ever becomes not-focused on Jesus Christ, and not rooted in the WORD of God, fire me and find a pastor-teacher whose greatest desire is to shepherd this flock toward being *grounded* and *guarded* in the WORD of God, so that they can take on the character of Jesus Christ more fully, and then live out the will of God more consistently. Promise me that you will do this.**

- 4. In Lukewarm churches, everything is done in a half-hearted, listless, dead-and-alive way, as if it did not matter much whether it was done or not.**

Gang, this is why we have a *MISSION*. So that it will be the compass God can use to help keep us alive, focused, and on course. Inviting people into relationship with Jesus Christ, and then teaching them how to live in Him, loving others, and letting Him live through them ... these things must remain our highest aims, goals, and desires.

5. In lukewarm churches things are respectably done, the rich families are not offended, the skeptical party is conciliated, and the good people are not quite alienated: things are made pleasant all around.

Friends, it's been said that "The role of the pastor is to comfort the disturbed, and to disturb the comfortable." How am I doing? But here's the deal ... if you come to 2<sup>nd</sup> Street week after week and don't sense God and me using God's WORD and worship to provoke you toward maturity and change in your faith, then we've become a lukewarm church. And if that happens, either light a fire of revival here and invite the rest of us to come into the fire, or find another church.

Spurgeon's list was much longer, but you get the point. He's telling us to wake up, and to be a cool refreshment to those who are parched, and a hot challenge to those who are letting the world set their priorities instead of God. And now, as we come to v. 17, we come to the *CORRECTION* Jesus brings to the church at Laodicea ...

**REVELATION 3:17 (NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE)**

**<sup>17</sup> 'Because you say, "I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing," and you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked,**

Because Laodicea was the financial center of Asia Minor, it was written that the church there had many wealthy Christians in it. Including people in the textile industry making cloth and clothing, and folks in the business of manufacturing medicines. And in the midst of this wealthy, self-dependent climate, Jesus says that whenever our trust and our grounding is in anything other than Jesus Christ, our attitude will quickly become, "**Hey I've got money [fame, a title, power, etc...] ... so I don't need anything else. Certainly not God.**" The problem with having lots of money is that so many worldly problems go away if you just throw money at them.

**ILLUSTRATION ... The other night I was watching The Discovery Channel show "*American Chopper*". It's a show that's been on for ten years now, and it's made the stars, Paul Sr., Paul Jr., and Mikey Tuetul multi-millionaires and given them worldwide fame. But during the last season Paul Sr. and Paul Jr. had a falling out and have now parted ways and aren't speaking to one another. It's not just a story line. It's their life.**

And on that episode I saw the other night, Paul Sr., said, “Our success has been the worst thing that could have ever happened to our family.” How sad.

We all know ... from our own stories, and from the stories of others, that money, or, frankly, too much of anything, be it power, fame, or a title, is what so often keeps us from being totally dependent on God for **EVERYTHING**, big and small. How many of you **KNOW IN YOUR KNOWERS**, that getting to that place where we're right with God isn't a matter of becoming financially poor, but becoming spiritually poor? Jesus said in **MATTHEW 5:3** ... “**Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.**” And I see another **FAITH LESSON** for us here ...

### **FAITH LESSON ...**

It doesn't matter how much or how little money we actually have in our bank account - we must be poor in spirit [humble] for our life with God to work. We have to realize we have nothing, are nothing, can do nothing, and that we have need of all things in order to move past being lukewarm Christians and become maturing disciples.

The church at Laodicea lacked **spiritual poverty**. They looked at their **FINANCIAL AND PHYSICAL CONDITION** and said, “**we're rich, we're wealthy, and we have need of nothing.**” But Jesus looked at their **SPIRITUAL CONDITION** and said you're “**wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked**”. But then in **v. 18** God offers them some **INSTRUCTIONS** or **CORRECTIONS** ...

### **REVELATION 3:18 (NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE)**

**<sup>18</sup> I advise you to buy from Me gold refined by fire so that you may become rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself, and that the shame of your nakedness will not be revealed; and eye salve to anoint your eyes so that you may see.**

Again, **true riches** don't come from earthly wealth, but from godly character that God the Father has refined in us by the fire of difficult times. When a person doesn't have Jesus in their heart, they can have all the wealth to buy anything in sight, but still be utterly discontent. Like the Apostle Paul said to Timothy, they can have a **form of religion**, and still **deny the power of God** in their lives.

Throughout God's WORD, **white garments** often refer to the **robe of righteousness** that Isaiah spoke about in **ISAIAH 61:10**, and that are given to those who are in Jesus Christ. The Laodiceans were known for glossy black wool and the beautiful garments made out of that wool, and yet Jesus said to them, “**You might be fashion divas, on the covers of GQ and Vanity Fair but what you really need are righteous garments of white, the covering of My grace**”.

The Laodiceans were “**blind**” to the reality that they were living in a fool's paradise ... a proud church that was about to be rejected. And the same Jesus who said, “**Anoint your eyes with eye salve**”, is the One Who, in **JOHN 9** put **mud into the blind man's eyes** in and restored his sight. And isn't this the way God often works on our behalf? The Great Physician almost always allows **IRRITATION** to bring about **ILLUMINATION**.

In other words, we have to have an awareness of, and a frustration with the problems in our lives, before we can begin to see that Jesus is the One we're looking for, the One who can heal us, and the One who can put back together the pieces of our lives.

**REVELATION 3:19 (NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE)**

**<sup>19</sup> 'Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline; therefore be zealous and repent.'**

How many of you know that coaches are always be the hardest on the players in whom they see the most promise? Likewise, Jesus' love is expressed in His **reproof**, and His **discipline**. And so He commands the Laodiceans, and those of us gathered here today to make a decision to **repent**, and to continue on in **zeal**. How long has it been, since you've been on your face before the Lord Jesus Christ saying to Him with a repentant, confessional heart, "**Jesus, search and clean the thoughts in my mind, the words in my mouth, and the bitterness in my heart.**"?

**REVELATION 3:20 (NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE)**

**<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 him and will dine with him, and he with Me.'**

Friends, whether we're using this as an invitation to people who aren't yet in a relationship with Jesus Christ, or as a word of instruction to any church that finds itself in the **lukewarm** condition of Laodicea, notice that Jesus is standing **OUTSIDE**.

***"CHRIST AT HEART'S DOOR" BY WARNER SALLMAN ...***



Many of you have seen Warner Sallman's painting "*Christ At Heart's Door*," where Jesus Christ is standing outside of the door knocking. If you look closely, you'll see that there's no door handle on the outside of the door ... it only opens from the inside. That is a picture of the door of our hearts.

And like the church that Jesus was trying to get into for years, leaving Jesus **outside** is a terrible place for any individual or church to keep Him. Is Jesus **outside** of you this morning? Is He standing **outside** knocking, waiting for you to let Him in? Is today the day when you'll open the door and let Him in?

Why does Jesus stand **outside** the door and knock? Why does He wait until someone opens the door? Doesn't He have every right to break down the door, or enter some other way? Yes He does. But Jesus allows every person to make their own choices ... from salvation to everyday decisions. And we have to make the choice to repent from our pride and self-sufficiency, from our human wisdom, and from our cowardly compromise. Because only then will we be rescued from **lukewarmness** and enter

into an **intentional, hot, zealous** relationship with Him. Here's the **PROMISE**, or the **BLESSING** Jesus offers to the church at Laodicea, and to you and to me ...

**REVELATION 3:21 (NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE)**

**21 'He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.**

Laodicea is the worst of the seven Churches, and yet Jesus offers them the most intimate **PROMISES**, showing that nobody is beyond God's loving, rescuing hands.

As followers of Jesus Christ, few of us would want to identify ourselves with the church at Laodicea. We'd much rather have Jesus send us the letter He sent to the church at Philadelphia ... the **FAITHFUL** church. But gang, we desperately need to hear what the Holy Spirit is saying in all seven of these letters, because they're all to the **churches** ... which includes 2<sup>nd</sup> Street. Oh, God, may You deliver us from the self-reliant, compromising **lukewarmness** that marked the church at Laodicea.

Let me close this morning's teaching with a reading that Tim Hansel shares in his book *When I Relax I Feel Guilty* ... words originally penned by a man named Wilbur Rees ...

***THREE DOLLARS WORTH OF GOD / by Wilbur Rees***

**I would like to buy three dollars worth of God, please.  
Not enough to explode my soul or disturb my sleep.  
Not enough to take control of my life.  
I want just enough to equal a cup of warm milk.  
Just enough to ease some of the pain from my guilt.**

**I would like to buy three dollars worth of God, please.  
I would like to find a love that is pocket-sized.  
I don't want enough of God to make me love a black man,  
or pick beets with a migrant. Not enough to change my heart.  
I can only stand just enough to take to church when I have time.  
Just enough to equal a snooze in the sunshine.  
I want *ecstasy*, not *transformation*.  
I want the warmth of the womb, but not a new birth.**

**I would like to purchase a pound of the Eternal in a paper sack.  
If it doesn't work, I would like to get my money back.  
I would like to buy three dollars worth of God, please.  
I would like to hide some for a rainy day.  
Not enough for people to see a change in me.  
Not enough to impose any responsibility.  
Just enough to make folks think I am ok.  
Could I just get three dollars worth of God, please?**

Gang, it's time to stop playing church ... it's time to stop following Jesus half-heartedly. Our heart's desire has to be more than simply being containers to hold a tame, safe God. Our heart's desire has to be for God's dangerous but life-giving

passions to flow into us, and then out of us into the world. Let's not settle for **three dollars worth of God**.

Because what Wilbur Rees writes about is a domesticated, predictable, non-transformational God, **WHO IS NOTHING LIKE THE GOD WHOSE SON JESUS CHRIST STEPPED OUT OF HEAVEN SO THAT HE COULD STEP INTO OUR LIVES**. Let's close our worship time this morning by reading together Jesus' final words from *The Sermon On The Mount*, in **MATTHEW 7** from Eugene Peterson's paraphrase **THE MESSAGE**.

**MATTHEW 7:24-29** (THE MESSAGE)

**24-25** These words I speak to you are not incidental additions to your life, homeowner improvements to your standard of living. They are foundational words, words to build a life on. If you work these words into your life, you are like a smart carpenter who built his house on solid rock. Rain poured down, the river flooded, a tornado hit - but nothing moved that house. It was fixed to the rock.

**26-27** But if you just use My words in Bible studies and don't work them into your life, you are like a stupid carpenter who built his house on the sandy beach. When a storm rolled in and the waves came up, it collapsed like a house of cards.

**28-29** When Jesus concluded His address, the crowd burst into applause. They had never heard teaching like this. It was apparent that He was living everything He was saying - quite a contrast to their religion teachers! This was the best teaching they had ever heard.

**REVELATION 3:21-22** (NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE)

**22** 'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'

For the last time in these letters we're told to hear what the Holy Spirit says. And friends, if Jesus thinks that this phrase is important enough to bring to us seven times, then let's not back down from really listening to it seven times. Jesus knows we're slow to learn and slow to change. He knows that one day we're like the man who builds his house on the rock, and the next day we're back to being sand-dwellers.

And so I remind you once more that all seven of these letters from Jesus are for all churches to receive, study, understand, and live into. And more than that, the **EXHORTATION** at the end of each of these seven letters is to "**He**" (singular), meaning that **every individual** (including you and me) should hear and heed all the words of all seven of the letters. Blessed be the WORD of the Lord.

**FIRST SAMUEL 10 ... OUR DESIRE FOR A KING ... PLEASE COME PRAYING AND EXPECTING!**

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