

### The Church at Laodicea—Rev 3:14–21

Laodicea was the chief city of the entire region. It was connected to two other important cities nearby, Colosse and Hierapolis.

The full name of the city was Laodicea on the Lycus (river). Originally known as “The City of Zeus,” the Greek deity considered to be the greatest of the Olympian gods, “the father of gods and men,” and the ruler and protector of all.

Founded between 261 and 253 B.C. by the Seleucid king, Antiochus, and named in honor of his wife, Laodice, the city became part of the kingdom of Pergamon. It passed into Roman hands in 133 B.C. Cicero, the famous Roman orator and statesman, served as governor of the province, residing mostly in Laodicea.

Laodicea was a great center of banking and finance and one of the wealthiest cities of the ancient world! Roman historian, Tacitus, recorded that when it was destroyed by an earthquake in AD 60, Laodicea refused aid from the Roman Empire and rebuilt the city from their own wealth.

Laodicea lay at the crossroads of north south traffic between Sardis and Perga and east west from the Euphrates to Ephesus. It was a prosperous Jewish colony before the Christian era. The city's reputation was for its money transactions, wool industry, and as a center for clothing manufacturing. Black sheep, which grazed around Laodicea were famous for the soft, black wool they produced.

The city was well known for her school of medicine. Two of the doctors from Laodicea were so famous that their names appear on the coins of the city. Galen, the greatest physician of ancient Rome, describes medicinal compounds made in Laodicea, including one specifically for eyes.

Laodicea was dependent on external water supplies. There were hot water springs at Hierapolis, just six miles across the Lycus River valley. The water supplied by the spring was tepid and nauseous by the time it was piped to Laodicea. It was believed that water was also piped in through an aqueduct from Colosse in the South and was so concentrated with minerals that the Roman engineers designed vents, capped by removable stones, so the aqueduct pipes could periodically be cleared of deposits. An aqueduct bringing water into the city ended in a sixteen foot tall water tower which distributed water throughout Laodicea.

Like its water supply, which was neither hot, like the healing springs of nearby Hierapolis, nor cold, like the refreshing waters of neighboring Colosse, the church at Laodicea is said to be lukewarm. In contrast to reference of their doctrine or other outstanding qualities, whether positive or negative, this church is accused of being tepid, neutral, and is not particularly spiritually noteworthy of anything at all but is rather integrated into the general culture and commerce of the city.

## John's Revelation Revealed: Is Jesus Really King?

Week 3, Bonnie Chavda

Excavations have revealed Laodicea had two theaters, one of the largest stadiums in Asia of the type used for athletic and gladiator contests dedicated to Roman emperor Vespasian. It also had a life-sized statue of the goddess Isis, the triple arched Gate to Ephesus devoted to the Emperor Domitian, an inscription erected by a freed slave from Laodicea refers to the manumission of a slave and is dedicated to Marcus Sestius Philemon. It will be recalled that a Philemon who owned the slave Onesimus was a leader in the church of Colossae.

Laodicea is the only congregation about which the Lord had nothing good to say!

Laodicea took great pride in her financial wealth:

“buy gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich.”

Laodicea took pride in its clothing:

“buy ‘white garments that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed.’”

Laodicea took pride in its eye medicine:

“anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see.”

The Greeks had three meals in the day. Breakfast was a piece of dried bread dipped in wine. A man did not go home for the midday meal which was a picnic snack eaten wherever one was at the time. The evening meal was the main meal referenced by the word used here for “sup” or “dine.” It came at the end of the day when work was done and people lingered over it:

“I will come in to him and sup with him and he with me.”