

The Seven Church Attitudes Revealed By Christ in the Book of Revelation

Part 7

Revelation 3:14 [NIV] *“To the angel of the church in Laodicea write: These are the words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God’s creation.”*

Jesus Christ reveals Himself to this type of church or Christian as “the Amen”. The word amen is used at the end of a solemn statement or affirmation in order to guarantee and emphasise its truth.

Amen means that Jesus Christ is one who can be utterly relied upon at all times.

John 1:51 [King James] *“And he saith unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man.”*

John often uses this phrase “*verily, verily...*”

In Greek that phrase is “*Amen, amen, I say unto you.*”

Jesus Christ is the “Amen” as far as God is concerned for He is God, and because He came from God to human beings.

“The beginning of the creation of God.” [King James translation]

This is ambiguous because it could mean two things:

- a) Jesus was the first person to be created
- b) Jesus was the moving cause of all creation

There is no doubt that the second meaning is what is intended.

John 1:1-3 [NIV] *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.”*

Jesus Christ made all things.

Colossians 1:15-16 [NIV] *“He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him.”*

All things created by Jesus Christ but also for Him.

“The ruler of God’s creation” [NIV translation] is a better rendering of the Greek.

Let us now read the message given to this church then meditate on what was said and consider the action that needs to be taken by such a Christian or Christian church.

Revelation 3:15-22 [NIV] *“I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! So, because you are lukewarm, neither hot nor cold, I am about to spit you out of my mouth. You say, ‘I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.’ But you do*

*not realise that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked. I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so that you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so that you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so that you can see. Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest, and repent. Here I am! **I stand at the door and knock.** If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me. To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”*

Laodicea has the sad distinction of being the only church of which the risen Christ has nothing good to say.

Laodicea was the wealthiest of the seven cities.

Laodicea stood literally astride the great road to the east, this made it an important centre for trade.

Laodicea was a great banking and financial centre, and had a medical school that produced eye salve.

Laodicea was a great centre for clothing manufacture.

The sheep that grazed around Laodicea were famous for their soft, viole-black wool that was ideal for outer garments.

Laodicea was proud of these well-known garments.

Laodicea had a very large Jewish population.

All this made Laodicea a city that was so prosperous and wealthy that they felt they had no real need for God.

But the city of Laodicea had one problem, its water supply. At one time an aqueduct was built to bring water to the city from nearby hot springs. But by the time the water reached the city it was neither hot nor refreshingly cold – only lukewarm, an unpleasant drink.

The one attitude which the risen Christ unsparingly condemns is the attitude of indifference, lukewarm towards what He is offering us.

If a person feels intensely about something in one direction, it is at least possible to persuade them to feel intensely in another direction.

Indifference is like a kind of death, in which everything has ceased to matter.

The problem for modern evangelism is **not** hostility to Christianity.

The problem is that to so many Christianity and the Church have ceased to have any relevance at all.

People regard Christianity and the Church with complete indifference, and that is one of the hardest of all barriers to break down.

The only way this barrier can be broken is by personal demonstration that Christianity is a power to make life strong and that God’s grace is able to bring beauty and peace of mind to our lives.

If Christians do not take a stand on anything such indifference leads to idleness.

One thing that God’s Word, the Christian Bible, condemns is idleness.

Proverbs 18:9 [NIV] *“One who is slack in his work is brother to one who destroys.”*

Proverbs 21:25 [NIV] *“The sluggard’s craving will be the death of him, because his hands refuse to work.”*

Proverbs 24:30-34 [NIV] *“I went past the field of the sluggard, past the vineyard of the man who lacks judgment; thorns had come up everywhere, the ground was covered with weeds, and the stone wall was in ruins. I applied my heart to what I observed and learned a lesson from what I saw: A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest, and poverty will come on you like a bandit and scarcity like an armed man.”*

Romans 12:11 [NIV] *“Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervour, serving the Lord.”*

Hebrews 6:10-12 [NIV] *“God is not unjust; he will not forget your work and the love you have shown him as you have helped his people and continue to help them. We want each of you to show this same diligence to the very end, in order to make your hope sure. We do not want you to become lazy, but to imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised.”*

Matthew 25:26 [NIV] *“His master replied, ‘You wicked, lazy servant! So you knew that I harvest where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed?’”*

Laziness and wickedness are linked in God’s eyes.

One impossible attitude of a Christian is neutrality.

Matthew 12:30 [NIV] *“He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me scatters.”*

To refuse to be totally committed to Jesus Christ is to choose to be on Satan’s side, a spirit being who is totally hostile to everything Jesus Christ is doing.

Romans 12:11 [Moffatt Translation] *“Never let your zeal flag, maintain the spiritual glow.”*

Romans 12:11 [Message Bible] *“Don’t burn out, keep yourself fuelled and aflame.”*

“I am rich, I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.”

Laodicea prided itself on its financial wealth.

Some believers today assume that numerous material possessions are a sign of God’s spiritual blessing.

Wealth can easily cause people to feel self-confident and not in a position where they have to cry out to God for help, or realise their need for Jesus Christ.

Luke 18:18-25 [NIV] *“A certain ruler asked him, “Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” “Why do you call me good?” Jesus answered. “No-one is good, except God alone. You know the commandments: ‘Do not commit adultery, do not murder, do not steal, do not give false testimony, honour your father and mother.’” “All these I have kept since I was a boy,” he said. When Jesus heard this, he said to him, “You still lack one thing. Sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.” When he heard this, he became very sad, because he was a man of great wealth. Jesus looked at him and said, **“How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God! Indeed, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.”***

This man’s wealth made his life comfortable and gave him power and prestige.

When Jesus told him to sell everything it touched the very basis of his security and identity.

“*The eye of a needle*” – this could refer to the narrow gateway for pedestrians beside the main gate of the city wall. If a camel was to pass through this gateway all of its load would have to be taken off its back. Jesus was telling this rich man to “*off-load*” the burden of his wealth.

Philippians 4:11-13 [NIV] *“I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through him who gives me strength.”*

Paul’s example is one every Christian should follow as it does not allow wealth to get in the way of seeking God’s Kingdom first in our life.

Matthew 6:31-33 [NIV] *“So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.”*

We need to trust in this promise that Jesus Christ made.

Laodicea prided itself on its clothing trade, and to be clothed in fine raiments was a great honour.

The risen Jesus Christ told the church at Laodicea He saw them as shamefully naked.

Laodicea prided itself in its famous eye salve that was exported all over the world as a remedy for diseases of the eye.

The risen Jesus Christ said the church in Laodicea was blind to their spiritual condition.

The recommendation was to “*buy from Him [Jesus Christ] gold refined in the fire.*”

What does this mean?

1 Peter 1:7 [NIV] *“These have come so that your faith, of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire, may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honour when Jesus Christ is revealed.”*

Faith in Jesus Christ and what He will provide.

When we look to and rely on Jesus Christ He will provide all that these self-reliant Laodicean Christians needed.

“White cloths” – refers to righteousness.

Revelation 19:8 [NIV] *“Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear.” (Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the saints.)*

Romans 4:23-25 [NIV] *“The words “it was credited to him” were written not for him alone, but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness, for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.”*

Trust in what Jesus Christ has done for us will allow God to credit us with Christ’s own righteousness, to cover our sinful nakedness.

Genesis 3:11 [NIV] *“And he said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree from which I commanded you not to eat?”*

Isaiah 64:6 [NIV] *“All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away.”*

“Salve to put on your eyes so that you can see,” [Revelation 3:18].

The raised Jesus Christ is referring to the work of the Holy Spirit with us and in us.

John 14:15-17 [NIV] *“If you love me, you will obey what I command. **And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counsellor to be with you for ever, the Spirit of truth.** The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you.”*

Promise of the Holy Spirit, and what He will do for us.

John 16:7-8 [NIV] *“But I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, **the Counsellor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt** in regard to sin and **righteousness and judgment:**”*

Bring us to repentance.

John 16:13 [NIV] *“But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will **guide you into all truth.** He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come.”*

Lead us into all truth.

Romans 8:14 [NIV] *“because those who are **led by the Spirit of God** are sons of God.”*

Lead us in the right path, so we are not blind to the real reason for life.

Romans 8:9-11 [NIV] *“You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And **if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ.** But if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is alive because of righteousness. And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you.”*

Only with the Holy Spirit working in us are we true Christians who are on the way to receiving eternal life.

This is what the Laodicean type Christian or church is lacking, the powerful, maturing influence of the Holy Spirit.

“The Lord disciplines those He loves...”

Hebrews 12:4-11 [NIV] *“In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. And you have forgotten that word of encouragement that addresses you as sons: **“My son, do not make light of the Lord’s discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, because the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son.”** Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father? If you are not disciplined (and everyone undergoes discipline), then you are illegitimate children and not true sons. Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of our spirits and live! Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; **but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness.** No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.”*

To be disciplined by God shows He loves us and is treating us as His children.

God's purpose in discipline is **not** to punish, but to bring people back to Him so He can mould them into His likeness, His character.

We can avoid much discipline if we constantly stay close to God through prayer, thankfulness and meditating on His Word, the Christian Bible.

“Here I am, I stand at the door and knock.”

God will never force us to take on His character and live a holy life.

We have to choose to submit to Him so that He can implant His character and holiness in us through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus Christ is always an invited guest in our lives.

The knocking at the door can also be taken as a warning that our time of choosing to become a committed Christian is nearly over.

Luke 12:35-40 [NIV] *“Be dressed ready for service and keep your lamps burning, like men waiting for their master to return from a wedding banquet, so that **when he comes and knocks they can immediately open the door for him.** It will be good for those servants whose master finds them watching when he comes. I tell you the truth, he will dress himself to serve, will have them recline at the table and will come and wait on them. It will be good for those servants whose master finds them ready, even if he comes in the second or third watch of the night. But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have let his house be broken into. **You also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.**”*

The return of Jesus Christ is always as near to us as our death.

James 5:7-9 [NIV] *“Be patient, then, brothers, until the Lord's coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop and how patient he is for the autumn and spring rains. You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near. Don't grumble against each other, brothers, or you will be judged. **The Judge is standing at the door!**”*

The time of our judgement is always as near as the time of our death.

Matthew 24:30-34 [NIV] *“At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory. And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other. “Now learn this lesson from the fig-tree: As soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near. **Even so, when you see all these things, you know that it is near, right at the door.** I tell you the truth, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened.”*

There are certain signs in world history that confirm that Jesus Christ's return is very near, knocking at the door of human history.

The reward offered to those who respond to Jesus Christ's knocking at the door of their hearts is to sit with Jesus Christ on His throne of rulership, here on earth.

Matthew 19:28 [NIV] *“Jesus said to them, “I tell you the truth, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne, **you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.**”*

Promise of rulership made to the apostles.

Revelation 5:9-10 [NIV] *“And they sang a new song: “You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. **You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth.**”*

Christians from every nation will be appointed priests [teachers] and rulers of the whole earth.

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This is personalising the message of these letters sent to the seven churches.

This means you and I!!

Why?

The Holy Spirit is speaking so these messages are not local or temporary, they are eternal.

The Holy Spirit is still speaking to us today.

The criticisms demand we should honestly search our hearts and attitudes.

The promises are also for us today for they are also eternal.