

WHAT DOES A LUKEWARM CHURCH LOOK LIKE?

NUMBER 163

AUGUST 2021

Revelation 3:14-18 says "To the angel of the church in Laodicea ... because you are lukewarm, ... I will spit you out of My mouth. ... you say, "I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing, ..."

Revelation 2:1-6 says "To the angel of the church in Ephesus ... you have perseverance and have endured ... have not grown weary ... But I have this against you, that you have left your first love ... remember from where you have fallen ... repent and do the deeds you did at first ..."

The verses from which these portions were taken were written to the congregations at Laodicea and Ephesus, likely around AD 95. The congregations were probably established in the 50s so they were about 40 years old.

The congregation at Laodicea was judged to be lukewarm, to be spat from Jesus' mouth, while their self-appraisal was that they were rich and wealthy and needed nothing.

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BE STRONG AND COURAGEOUS!

"Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be courageous; be strong." (I Cor. 16:13 NIV)

At a time when the world seems upside down, we put our trust in God. God knew us before creation, he determined our time and place and numbered our days. He holds each one of us in the hollow of his hand. We need not fear because his timing is perfect. God's message through all time is to "be strong and courageous."

BE ON YOUR GUARD: *"So be on your guard, not asleep like the others. Stay alert and be clearheaded." (I Thes. 5:6 NLT)*

Our adversary, the accuser, knows he can defeat us with fear. What he offers is trust in material things, which is idolatry. *"But the Lord is faithful; he will strengthen you and guard you from the evil one." (2 Thes. 3:3 NLT)*



THE OCTOBER 24 CAMPAIGN HAS BEEN DELAYED DUE TO THE CURRENT COVID FLARE-UP. WATCH HERE FOR RESCHEDULING.

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GREATER HOUSTON CHURCH LEADERS WORKSHOP

OCT. 9, 2021
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The congregation at Ephesus was judged to have lost their first love, that they had fallen, needed to repent, and needed to do their deeds they as they had done at first. This in spite of the fact that they had persevered and not grown weary! It is probably reasonable to say they were lukewarm.

This probability hits to close to home to many of us.

What these verses do not say about the churches at Laodicea and Ephesus is:

1. That they were not active.
2. That they did not have a lot a members involved in ministries and activities.
3. That they did not have good places to worship.
4. That they did not have a good preacher.
5. That they did not have good Bible classes (which didn't actually exist until the 1780s).

What this COULD say:

This could say your congregation is active, has a lot of ministries and activities, has a good facility, a good preacher, and good Bible classes, and still be lukewarm. If that is the case, then what is the measure of lukewarm? The Bible doesn't give a definition of lukewarm, so we must infer it from what the Bible says.

What it DOES say:

The Bible says a lukewarm church may believe, even subconsciously, "I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing". That must be a reasonably self-satisfied statement as to what your congregation has accomplished. Might it frequently mean that conversations are more about what the congregation did in the past rather than what it is are doing now?

The Bible says "...you have left your first love ... remember from where you have fallen ... repent and do the deeds you did at first ..." One would presume that the members and leaders still love Jesus and his church, so that is not what Revelation is talking about. The one thing that might characterize what most churches have left, or have lost, is the enthusiasm for telling others about Jesus and his church. That is, personal evangelism. Has the church as a whole, and members individually, stopped personal evangelism efforts, and substituted sending money to missionaries to do it for you now? "Do the deeds you did at first" would seem to match the early church enthusiasm for personal evangelism, which is non-existent in many congregations today.

The Bible says "...you have perseverance and have endured ... have not grown weary...". Apparently, the congregations were faithful in keeping on at doing some things, but not everything, that they were doing at first. That would match our efforts today: we keep on having services, classes, and activities for our members, while we have stopped with personal evangelism activities.

Continued on page 3

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WHAT DOES A LUKEWARM CHURCH LOOK LIKE? P. 3

If you have a better explanation for these verses, let us know and we will print them. Until then, we would suggest that our decline pattern indicates lukewarmness in most of our congregations. In other words, if you want to see what a lukewarm congregation looks like, you can most likely look in a mirror. If that seems like a harsh statement, consider that as we as a group were declining in attendance on average about 1.71% per year before Covid in a US population growing at 0.6%/year. That means there must be numerous congregations flatlining or declining. To this day, we have never heard a single congregation admit to lukewarmness; many of our congregations must be deluding themselves on this matter. Let's all look in the mirror!

If that is a scary thought, it is meant to be. If it is true the judgments of Revelation 2 and 3 might apply to you, it should be of serious concern to you.

Let this be a wakeup call for all of us, and our congregations. John tells us "Do the deeds you did at first". That is an encouraging statement. It says do not be so bound up by your current traditions and practices that you cannot go back and do the deeds you did at first. If your congregation cannot "think out of the box" enough to figure out how to restart member engagement and personal evangelism, ask for help.

A good start would be to get someone from outside to give an objective appraisal of your congregation. Don't have someone tell you what you want to hear; have them tell you what you need to hear. The Leadership Workshop advertised in this issue an excellent resource for getting help.



BE STRONG AND COURAGEOUS!, p. 2

STAND FIRM IN THE FAITH: *"Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain."* (1 Cor. 15:56 NIV)

BE COURAGEOUS: *"But Christ, as the Son, is in charge of God's entire house. And we are God's house, if we keep our courage and remain confident in our hope in Christ."* (Heb. 3:6 NLT) The opposite of courage is cowardice. The word coward is mentioned only one time in the Bible. See if you can find the reference.

BE STRONG: It is not our strength but God's great power in us that enables us to be the light of the world. *"Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power."* (Eph. 6:10 NIV)

Elizabeth Brown, Texarkana, TX

"A Back Porch"

My daughter walked onto the back porch one afternoon. It was one of those afternoons when the weather's warm, the breeze is on and off, but the bugs were truly bothersome. She commented out loud that "it's so nice to be able to be in a screened porch where we can experience the weather but we're protected from the bugs and the hot sun. Then she turned and commented further: "It's like that in Christ too!" "For the shields of the earth belong to God; He is greatly to be exalted." *Psalm 47:9*

Dave "Tud" Nance

THE WORLD IN CHAINS AN INHERITANCE

The world is bound by chains of conformity. People who submit to chains of conformity die in chains at the will of their oppressors. World powers assert authority under the belief that “might makes right” to achieve selfish purposes and have demonstrated that they will stop at nothing to achieve domination by enforcing conformity.

Jesus teaches disciples that the “meek” (humble, patient, gentle, kind, and subservient to God) will be blessed, for they will inherit the earth. The earth that disciples inherit today is a broken world and people in chains are poor in spirit, mourning, hungering and thirsting for righteousness, mercy, peace and relief from persecution. (Matthew 5:1-12) Disciples today are under the constant fire of insults and false accusations of doing evil, just as Jesus Christ himself was falsely accused of being under Satan’s power. (See Matthew 12:22-37) Jesus endured every sin, blasphemy and false accusation against himself, saying these would be forgiven; but he warned that anyone who speaks against the Holy Spirit would not be forgiven, either in this age or the age to come. He reminded his disciples that a tree is recognized by its fruit – good or bad. Similarly, “out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks,” revealing both good and bad stored up in the heart. The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him; the evil man brings evil out of the evil stored up in him. But I tell you that men will have to give account on the day of judgement for every careless word they have spoken. For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned.”

In view of the scope of irrational behaviors being exhibited today, the tsunami of hateful rhetoric, and the complicity of COVID-19 pandemic compromising ever more urgent health emergency care worldwide to disguise the true toll of death, might it not be appropriate to consider the teachings of Paul concerning personal responsibility? “Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God – this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is – his good, pleasing and

perfect will.” Romans 12:1-2

What then will be the choice of the people of America? Will we bow in submission to advocates of change in a “progressive” descent in quality of life to achieve equalization of social services, social justice and innovative mediocrity with global populations suffering in chains of conformity and hopeless spiritual pathos ---OR--- will we stand with God fearing Americans forever committed to collaborating with one-another to forge a more perfect union visualized by generations of patriots who sacrificed themselves to right our wrongs, honor love for brotherhood and country, create legacies of opportunity for future generations, and serve as a beacon of hope to the world? Can we not see that our diversity is our strength, our blood, our bond, and the foundation commandment of our faith: “Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another”. America’s Constitution was conceived by like-minded people committed to one another, being one in spirit and purpose; to secure the unalienable rights to Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of happiness. Amendments by perceptive leaders have sought to strengthen these guarantees for everyone, without exception, in spite of persistent evils which are common to man everywhere who seek to destroy the good accomplished at our finest hours. The commitment and dedication of patriotic leaders to this visionary form of a Republic is at the heart of “American Exceptionalism” which is so powerful a force for good that we are threatened as never before in our history by determined forces of evil both foreign and domestic.

Let us all together consider a Proverb of Scripture:
“The righteous will never be uprooted,
But the wicked will not remain in the land”.
Proverbs 10:30

Leroy Grubbs, Harrison, Ohio

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LEADERS WORKSHOP

HEALING AMERICA

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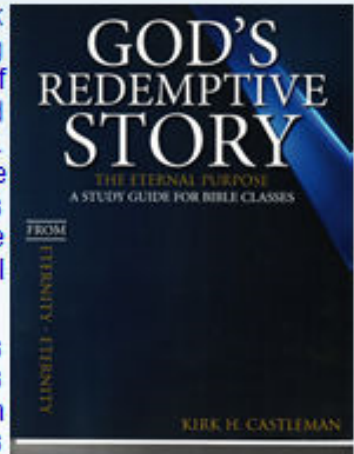
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Dave Blanchard

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734-516-6008

A 13 lesson book written by a long time Church of Christ minister and servant of Jesus. Intended for Bible Class studies, this book can also be used for personal evangelism.



Most Bible class study books on this subject begin with Genesis 3. This study however, lays

the foundation by beginning with a basic study-outline of Biblical History, which is sorely lacking among many Christians today. Then after laying this foundation, it seeks to present a "Synthesis of Scripture" by asserting that the theme of all the Bible is Jesus, His Death, Burial, and Resurrection! The Eternal Purpose of God for Redemption is then presented with an in-depth study of Ephesians 1, and other New Testament passages which describe God's redemptive plan.

It is not until the fourth lesson that God's Eternal Purpose in Genesis 3 is presented. Then other Promises, Pictures, Prophecy, and Prep-

"AN EXCITING STUDY OF GOD'S POWER AND REVELATION IN HUMAN HISTORY"

aration, are fully described. This study includes a description of the Davidic Covenant, as well as a helpful approach to Old Testament Prophecy.

This guide is helpful for all Christians, but especially new Christians who need an understanding of God's eternal desire for all the world!

This book can be bought on Amazon for \$10.

IMPOSSIBLE FOR EVOLUTION #119 - WATERPROOFING FEATHERS

If bird's feather's were of made of a waxy material and were naturally waterproof, it might be considered something possible for atheistic evolution to accomplish. Birds, however, were not accidentally given waterproof feathers.

Some birds, including ducks, have a very dense plumage which tends to shed water, but that doesn't make them waterproof. As a practical matter a dense plumage would tend to soak up a lot of water and make birds (including ducks) very heavy. In many cases it would make flight difficult for them, if not impossible.

Waterproofing is very different than shedding most of the water due to dense plumage. To waterproof their feathers, the birds must spread waterproofing oil on their own feathers. This waterproofing is done as it preens itself, obtaining preen oil from a Uropygial Gland, which produces the oil and excretes it through a nipple-like structure called a Papilla (as seen on the back of the bluejay pictured below). This complex process is programmed into the bird's DNA, giving it the ability to thrive in its environment.

Additionally, it is not sufficient that the Uropygial Gland just makes the preen oil. The pappila must be positioned where the bird can access it with his beak; the bird must rub its beak and/or head on the nipple like structure to collect the preen oil, and then rub its beak and/or head on his feathers to coat them and waterproof them.

This preening behavior must to be done over the bird's entire body. It is hard, dedicated work which sometimes takes up to 25% of the birds waking hours to accomplish. This during his preening process. The birds also tend to zip the barbs on their feathers together to assist in the waterproof process



Bluejay photo from Elaphe1011



Duck from KQED

The DNA programming to make a Uropygial Gland is not something that would happen over many years through repeated errors in the reproduction process. That this complex process exists is clear proof of an intelligent designer.

Information collected from Wikipedia

Benton F. Baugh



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- (5) Sunday morning worship: A church growth sermon

See <https://occg.institute/services/refocus/> for more specific information.

For more information, contact:
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- 10 - I almost had a psychic girlfriend ... But she left me before we met.
- 11 - OK, so what's the speed of dark.
- 12 - How do you tell when you're out of invisible ink?

Steven Wright

ADVERTISING POLICY:
Any scriptural event relating to more than one congregation at no cost

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