

Have You Checked Your Temperature Lately?

What on earth does your temperature have to do with Christian faith, you ask. As born-again Christians we know that belief in Jesus and His message, along with the purpose and meaning of His life, death, resurrection and ascension, are both the essence and substance of our faith. With that firmly in hand and in our hearts, it was our Lord Jesus Himself who admonished us to check our temperature. Perhaps, you may have missed this as I did even after numerous readings of the New Testament. Until recently I did not personally relate to the message. It seems to be directed to a specific group from the ancient past, and certainly not to me.

The particular message to which I am referring may be found in Revelation 3:14-22 which is the last of seven epistles which our Lord Jesus dictated to John. It was directed to the church of Laodicea whom the Lord saw as neither hot nor cold, but of lukewarm temperature, worthy only of being spewed out of His mouth. This lukewarmness was the result of the influence of comforts and riches, which they viewed as attesting to the adequacy of their spiritual condition. While they saw themselves as well off, comfortable and sufficiently religious, our Lord saw them as “wretched, miserable and poor, blind and naked” in terms of their faith and condition of their immortal souls. Surely they prayed, attended services, even gave to the poor etc., but perhaps did so in a perfunctory, duty-like obligatory manner without much heart or zeal or spiritual sincerity, being only “lukewarm” in these attributes and in their faith in Jesus. As we all know, the Scriptures in its entirety, was written for the learning and edification of all of us, past, present and future. This letter to the Laodiceans was written to us. The appropriateness of His message to them is every bit as relevant to us today. They too were a Christian church, a church that, to the Lord, had obviously fallen away, cooled off perhaps even unknowingly in its collective opinion. As a result of their relative physical comforts and prosperity, they apparently felt less need for the spiritual “heart” which our Lord demands of those who would be His own. It is not difficult to notice that we too live in

times and in a place of relative prosperity and comfort, which can promote some of the same feelings of sufficiency and temptations toward a lukewarmness of faith. It seems to be human nature to drift away, soften or cool off from a true and hot spiritually relevant faith, the more prosperous and comfortable we become in terms of earthly riches.

There have been many commentaries written regarding these seven letters to the seven churches as found in Revelation 2 and 3. They make a compelling case, which illustrates that these, in the order written, symbolically represent seven stages or periods of time in the history of the church from its beginning to the end times. As faithful Christians we take the Scriptures very seriously and the proven accuracy of the prophets literally. Therefore, I believe that most of us readily conclude that we are now living somewhere in, or very near the end times. In this context it is not difficult to see that the Lord's description of the church at Laodicea represents very well much of the present day Christian church. Of course, each of us likes to believe that we individually belong not to the church of Laodicea, but instead to churches like Philadelphia or at least Smyrna. However, before we firm up that sort of conclusion, it would be best to check our collective and individual temperatures in order to be sure that we haven't slipped into the comfortable and insidious "lukewarm" waters of Laodicea

Clearly the Lord's "report card" to each of the seven churches is as relevant now as it was then. No doubt these individual qualities of which the Lord made note in each of the churches, was meant to be edifying to all the churches and to us today. Note that He ends each letter with "He that has an ear, let him hear what the spirit says to the churches" (plural). Surely even today there are to be found remnants of Ephesus or Smyrna or any of the others, even though our present day church is most typified by Laodicea.

What I find most beautiful and heartening are the closing words of this last letter, verses 20-22, "...behold I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in, and will sup with him, and he with me. To him that overcometh will

I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and I am set down with my Father in his throne.” Wow!! Where in the world can you get a better offer than that!

Interestingly, and I believe prophetically, our Lord didn't give the church any direction by which it could correct itself as He did for the other six churches. Instead He chose to offer salvation only to individuals of the church body. This may seem to suggest that the church had drifted too far from the faith to be worth saving, so He chose to “spew” it out of His mouth and instead to offer His fellowship and salvation only to the remnant individuals capable of hearing His “knock.” It would seem that this situation is eminently current in most of the denominational churches, at least in this country.

If you have that fire in your belly for worldly achievement, please consider redirecting that heat to raise your spiritual temperature to the boiling point. While you are doing that, don't walk, run to the door and let Jesus in while He is yet knocking.