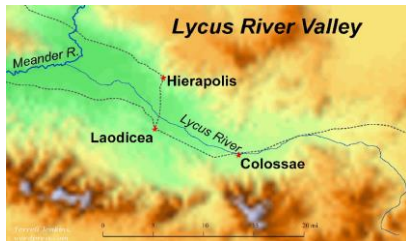


## Lukewarm Laodicean Vomit

In Yeshua's message to the church of Laodicea he says: "*I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth.*" (Revelation 3:15-16)



To get a better picture of the hot and cold images used in this passage, one needs to understand the culture and location of Laodicea. Laodicea was centrally located only six miles south of Hierapolis and eleven miles west of Colossae. Because Laodicea lacked a natural water supply, it was dependent on its neighbors for this vital resource and therefore drew water from Hierapolis and Colossae, as well as from other surrounding sources. By the time the water reached Laodicea, it was "lukewarm", neither "hot" nor "cold".

### Hierapolis – Source of the Hot Water

Hierapolis [Ἱεράπολις G2404] was an ancient Greek city located on hot springs in classical Phrygia in southwestern Anatolia. Hierapolis means: sacred city. The hot springs have been used as a spa since the 2nd century BC, with many patrons retiring or dying there. The great baths were constructed with huge stone blocks without the use of cement and consisted of various closed or open sections linked together. There are deep niches in the inner section, apparently including the bath, library, and gymnasium. Its biblical significance lies in the fact that Hierapolis has the Tomb of Philip the Apostle.



### Colossae – Source of the Cold Water

Colossae [Κολοσσαί G2857] was a city of Phrygia in Asia Minor, in the upper part of the basin of the Maeander, on the Lycus, situated on a hill near the junction of the Lycus with the Meander, and not far from the cities Hierapolis and Laodicea. Colossae means: colossal. It was one of a triad of cities in the area (the other two being Laodicea and Hierapolis), resting at the foot of Mount Cadmus. The holiness and healing properties associated with the waters of Colossae during the Byzantine Era continue to this day, particularly at a pool fed by the Lycus River at the Göz picnic grounds west of Colossae at the foot of Mt. Cadmus. Locals consider the water to be therapeutic. Its biblical significance lies in the fact that the book of Colossians was addressed to the church here and that Philemon lived in this city.



### Laodicea – Recipient of Lukewarm Water

In the Revelation message to the Laodicean church, Yeshua speaks of the luke-warmness of Laodiceans, that they were "neither cold nor hot. This local allusion would have been clear to citizens of Laodicea, who knew of the cold, pure waters of nearby Colossae, the hot, mineral laden waters of nearby Hierapolis, and the lukewarm waters they received at their location.

The word, **hot**, then refers to hot mineral spring waters, generally 95 degrees or warmer. Hot water has many medicinal benefits, such as:

- it relieves the pain and stiffness of arthritis.
- it reduces muscles spasms and alters the sensation of pain, reducing stress.
- it stimulates circulation boosting the health of the body's tissues by carrying oxygen & nourishment to the cells.
- it loosens mucus, relieves sinus congestions, and opens breathing passages when breathed as steamy vapors.
- it increases body metabolism, stimulating the intestinal tract and the liver, aiding digestion.
- it stimulates the immune system
- it can help promote feelings of physical and psychological well-being.

The word, **cold**, then refers to refreshing spring waters, generally 60 degrees or cooler. Cold water also has many medicinal benefits, such as:

- it relieves the pain and inflammation after acute injury or surgical procedures.
- it lowers the temperature of the injured tissue, which reduces the tissue's metabolic rate and helps the tissue to survive the period following the injury.
- it quickly cools and keeps the body at an optimum temperature to reduce swelling for up to 2 hours.
- it contains health-restoring minerals like lithium, calcium and magnesium, which help sustain healthy blood and oxygen levels.
- it serves as a detoxifying agent to flush out toxins, can provide an added energy boost, and can increase mental alertness for those who drink it regularly.
- it can reduce the amount and severity of headaches at high altitude, when taken in quantity.
- it relieves depression helping to promote feelings of physical and psychological well-being.

### **The Industrial Qualities of Laodicea**

*Gold, wool clothing, and eye salve represent the three major industries of Laodicea:*

1. A banking center for the province of Asia Minor, including money lending, currency and gold exchange. So huge were its assets that, when it was demolished by a first-century earthquake, the city refused Rome's offer of help, rebuilding with its own funds.
2. A textile center where glossy, black wool was woven into garments called *trimata* that that was prized by the wealthy all over the world. Clothes reveal status: A man in a well-tailored suit falls into a different category than a beggar in rags.
3. A major medical school known worldwide where an eye salve called *kollourion* [κολλούριον G2854], or Phrygian powder, was made from a local stone which was reputed to cure certain kinds of eye diseases. Another salve supposedly healed ear problems. People came from all over the Roman world in search of the many pharmaceuticals and remedies for their ailments.

A Laodicean deals with wealth on a scale few people have seen in the history of the world. Writers of the ancient world speak openly of their envy of Laodicean wealth. They dress better than most other people, and, they have medical facilities that rival any other facility in the world. They truly believe that they are quite self sufficient.

### **However,**

Their one weakness was the water supply. Water had to be piped in to Laodicea. Cold water could come from the abundant supply at Colossae, and hot water from Hierapolis. But by the time it reached Laodicea, it arrived at temperature that can only be described as lukewarm.

### **The Spiritual Condition of Laodicea**

#### **Gold and Wool**

Yahweh has no objection to a person having wealth or wonderful clothing. A person is, however, to buy gold refined in the fire (1 Peter 1:7, Revelation 3:18), and get proper white garments (Isaiah 61:10, Revelation 19:8). Yahweh does not want a person to be zealous at making money, making great clothes, building a house, or at filling his social calendar, but instead to be zealous making disciples!

The Laodicean is distracted with busyness, with this world, with getting ahead in life, with everything else rather than what he should be involved in – Yahweh instructs the Laodicean to be busy with the things of God.

The Laodicean is so well dressed that he pretends to be righteous Yahweh instructs the Laodicean to dress himself in the holiness of God to cover his spiritual nakedness and self-righteousness.

### Eye Salve

A person looks at their material and social circumstances and evaluates them-self as spiritually sound. On the other hand, Yahweh looks at the same person and sees spiritual poverty.

The Laodicean allows his wealth to lead him into self-satisfaction, self-sufficiency, and complacency, and pretends to be righteous in his own right. His heart is lifted up and he is so focused on his own well-being that he cannot see God – Yahweh instructs the Laodicean to get eye salve so he can see his spiritual condition clearly.

### Spiritual Compromise

The Laodicean judges that he is balanced, right in the middle, and has no need to change his position. However, since Laodicea was so dependent upon other sources for their water, they became masters of appeasement, accommodation, and compromise! In short, lukewarm!

Like Balaam, the Laodicean has built a façade. Externally, he looks righteous but all the while inside he is totally hypocritical. In his heart of hearts the Laodicean believes that he really does not need God at all – Yahweh instructs the Laodicean to “*store up for themselves wealth in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and burglars do not break in or steal*” (Matthew 6:20).

### Conclusions

The geographical and water delivery backgrounds, then, give us a more accurate biblical interpretation of what Yeshua was saying. The imagery states not that “**hot**” is good and “**cold**” is bad, but that both hot and cold water are useful, whereas lukewarm water is useless. The Laodicean church was providing neither *healing for the spiritually sick* (as would hot water from Hierapolis), nor *refreshment for the spiritually weary* (as would cold water from Colossae)! The church was simply providing lukewarm water which was not helpful at all. It was, in fact, useless for any kind of healing or medicinal benefit. For this reason, Yeshua says he would vomit [εμέω emeo G1692] them out of his mouth.

As Christians, we are to provide either **hot water** or **cold water** to those who are spiritually sick or weary. Which water will you give to others in their need – hot water or cold water? Give one or the other, but do not give lukewarm water and be vomited out!

As Christians, we are to be like refined gold, dressed in righteousness, and see clearly. We are to be spiritually discerning and not hypocritical. Our treasures are to be in heaven, not here on the earth.

One does not want to be found wanting as one asks: “How close are we to the return of our Lord and Savior, Yeshua Ha’Mashiach?”

### Final Comments

Many scholars, pastors, lay people, and others explain this to mean that Yeshua wishes you were either for him or against him, that you are “*on fire*” for him, or giving him a “*cold shoulder*”, that you would choose either to be holy or unholy, that you would choose good or evil.

*One cannot use modern English idioms of the words hot and cold to interpret 2000 year old Hebrew statements written in Greek! To do so is to show a blatant ignorance of proper biblical exegesis.*

**Never, ever**, does Yahweh desire or encourage us to choose against good and choose evil, to chose against Yahweh and choose Satan. Scripture is loaded with passages that encourage us to be holy, to be set apart, to separate ourselves from worldly things and choose the things of heaven.

Yahweh/Yeshua changes **not** – he is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow. Yahweh/Yeshua does **not** change his tune in this passage and thereby contradict the rest of his scripture.

Here is a video with a similar conclusion: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YFxeZK\\_2xpY](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YFxeZK_2xpY)

## NOTES

**Revelation 3:14–18 NASB** - "To the angel of the church in Laodicea write: The Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God, says this: 'I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot; I wish that you were cold or hot. 'So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth. '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, 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."

### Hierapolis

Hierapolis /ˌhaɪəˈræpəlɪs/ (Ancient Greek: Ἱεράπολις, lit. "Holy City") was an ancient Greek city located on hot springs in classical Phrygia in southwestern Anatolia. Its ruins are adjacent to modern Pamukkale in Turkey and currently comprise an archaeological museum designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Its biblical significance lies in the fact that the site has the Tomb of Philip the Apostle.

The hot springs have been used as a spa since the 2nd century BC, with many patrons retiring or dying there. The large necropolis is filled with sarcophagi, most famously that of Marcus Aurelius Ammianus, which bears a relief depicting the earliest known example of a crank and rod mechanism. The great baths were constructed with huge stone blocks without the use of cement and consisted of various closed or open sections linked together. There are deep niches in the inner section,[clarification needed] including the bath, library, and gymnasium.

### Colossae

Colossae was located in Phrygia, in Asia Minor in the upper part of the basin of the Maeander, on the Lycus..[1] It was located 15 km southeast of Laodicea on the road through the Lycus Valley near the Lycus River at the foot of Mt. Cadmus, the highest mountain in Turkey's western Aegean Region, and between the cities Sardeis and Celaenae, and southeast of the ancient city of Hierapolis. (Colossians 1:2; 4:13,15,16) see Reve 1:11; 3:14). Colossae was located 120 miles east of Ephesus in the Lycus River Valley in ancient Phrygia, part of the Roman territory of Asia Minor. It was one of a triad of cities in the area (the other two being Laodicea and Hierapolis), resting at the foot of Mount Cadmus. Its biblical significance lies in the fact that the book of Colossians was addressed to the church here (Col 1:2) and that Philemon lived in this city.

At Colossae, Herodotus describes how, "the river Lycos falls into an opening of the earth and disappears from view, and then after an interval of about five furlongs it comes up to view again, and this river also flows into the Maiander." [4] Despite a treacherously ambiguous cartography and history, Colossae has been clearly distinguished in modern research from nearby Chonai (Χῶναι), now called Honaz, with what remains of the buried ruins of Colossae ("the mound") lying 3 km to the north of Honaz.[5][6][7]

St. Paul is supposed by some to have visited Colossae and founded or confirmed the Colossian church on his third missionary journey. (Acts 18:23; 19:1) It was about 12 miles above Laodicea, and near the great road from Ephesus to the Euphrates, and was consequently of some mercantile importance. It was also near Hierapolis.

With Hierapolis and Laodicea these cities, Colossae was destroyed by an earthquake in the tenth year of Nero, about A. D. 65, while Paul was yet living. It was soon rebuilt independent of the support of Rome.. The church of Christians in this city, to whom Paul wrote, seems to have been gathered by Epaphras, Colossians 1:7-9 4:12,13. In modern times the place is called Chonos.

<https://www.bibleplaces.com/colossae/>

<https://christiananswers.net/dictionary/colossae.html>

### Streams of Cold Water

In John's message to the Laodicean church (Rev 3:14-22), he speaks of the luke-warmness of Laodicea, that they were "neither cold nor hot" (vv. 15-16). This local allusion would have been clear to citizens of Laodicea, who knew of the cold, pure waters of nearby Colossae. The holiness and healing properties associated with the waters of Colossae during the Byzantine Era continue to this day, particularly at a pool fed by the Lycus River at the Göz picnic grounds west of Colossae at the foot of Mt. Cadmus. Locals consider the water to be therapeutic.



## G2854 κολλούριον kollourion

Revelation 3:18):

A Phrygian powder mentioned by Galen, for which the medical school of Laodicea seems to have been famous (see Ramsay, The Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia), but the figurative reference is to the restoring of spiritual vision.

The illustration described here is as if the Laodiceans were on trial and Christ, the Faithful and True Witness, is testifying against them. As the Source of all creation, He is not fooled by their diplomacy and compromise: He sees their witness is unfaithful and untrue. In fact, the word Laodicea means "judgment of the people," and the entire letter is a study in contrasting judgments, the Laodicean's and God's. The physical man looks at his material and social circumstances and evaluates himself as spiritually sound. On the other hand, the spiritual God looks at the same person and sees spiritual poverty.

### What the Bible says about Eye Salve

<https://www.bibletools.org/index.cfm/fuseaction/Topical.show/RTD/cgg/ID/3851/Eye-Salve-.htm>

<https://www.bibletools.org/index.cfm/fuseaction/Topical.show/RTD/cgg/ID/248/Laodicea.htm>

Revelation 3:15-16

Christ admits the truth about them. "I know your works [obedience and service], that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot" (Revelation 3:15). Why does He wish this? Because if they were either cold or hot, they would be useful to Him. Lukewarm Christians send confusing messages. In this state, being useless to Him, He spews them out of His mouth. All the messages to these seven churches highlight works because they are evidence of how Christians conduct their relationships with God. Works reveal the heart. They are a gauge of one's witness and spiritual state.

Metaphorically, what does lukewarmness signify here? To define it to this point, a rough definition might be "that which gives no refreshment, or that which has neither the cleansing properties of hot water nor the refreshing properties of cold." Modern synonyms of the word "lukewarm" give illuminating insights into its use in this letter: lacking ardor, enthusiasm or conviction; moderate; mild; unemotional; halfhearted; hesitant; indecisive; irresolute; uncertain; uncommitted; unresponsive; indifferent; impassive; languid; phlegmatic; apathetic; nonchalant; lackadaisical.

Recall the hallmarks of Babylon: pride, self-glorification, reliance on wealth, satiety, complacency, avoidance of suffering. Although he has the abilities and resources to be a great witness, the Laodicean is complacent, self-satisfied, bored with or indifferent to the real issues of life. For a Christian, the real issues are faith in Christ and our Christian responsibility. And to do the work Christ has called us to, our loyalty and devotion must be to Him, first and foremost!

A problem arises, however, in "spotting" a Laodicean—these qualities do not necessarily show on the outside. Why? Remember Christ describes a spiritual condition. This is a matter of the heart. What does He want to see in him? He wants the Laodicean to get off the fence—to be one way or the other, cold or hot. Conversely, the Laodicean judges that he is balanced, right in the middle. But his concept of balance is skewed. Why will he not move off the middle? He feels he has it good there! If he moves left or right, he fears that he will suffer! Thus, he has no desire to move.

Then what happens? The Laodicean must compromise. This is interesting in light of what the history books record. Ancient Laodicea's main line of defense was conciliation and compromise! Why? Again, the answer lies in the city's inadequate water supply, making it very susceptible to the siege of an invading army. By having its tenuous water supply cut off, the city was at the mercy of its attacker. With no water, it could hold out for only a short while. The Laodicean solution? They became masters of appeasement, accommodation, conciliation, and diplomacy. Peace at any cost! How did they appease? They bought their enemies off! Laodicea used its wealth to conciliate and compromise.

Christ uses the attitude of the surrounding environment to illustrate that those in the church of Laodicea are affected by the attitudes of the world. Without even realizing it, they behave exactly like their unconverted neighbors. They are worldly. Though they are not out on the streets robbing banks, raping, looting, murdering, mugging old

grandmothers, or abusing children, in their hearts they have the same general approach to life as Babylon has. Theologically, spiritually, they hold the same values as Babylon, proved by their works. Spiritually, they become very adept in avoiding the sacrifices that might be necessary to overcome and grow in character, wisdom, and understanding. In other words, they are skilled in appeasing Satan and their own consciences.

Christ says He will spew, or vomit, the Laodicean from His mouth! That is how He views this attitude of compromise with principles, ideals, standards, and truth!

Some may expect Laodiceans to be lazy, but on the contrary they are often workaholics. Satan has foisted this false concept of Laodiceanism onto the church. One cannot become "rich and increased with goods" by being lazy! Their problem is a faulty setting of priorities. They are very vigorous people, but they are vigorous in areas that fail miserably to impress their Judge, Christ. Vigorous in conducting business and other carnal affairs, they are lackadaisical in pursuing the beauty of holiness, which is their calling. They are not vigorous or zealous in maintaining their prayer life with God or in studying. They are not energetic in making the sacrifices necessary to love their brethren or in developing their relationships with others. Nor are they enthusiastic about guarding the standards and principles of God. By erring in the setting of priorities, they victimize themselves.

Over the last fifteen years of his life, Herbert Armstrong expressed deep concern about the church becoming Laodicean. Because of the plethora of activities this world offers, he saw that ultimately they distract us, cause us to set wrong priorities, and keep us from putting our time, energy, and vigor into godly things. He often cited Daniel 12:4 as a telltale sign of the last days: "Seal the book until the time of the end; many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase." Are we busy in this age? Satan is a slick strategist, and he really deceives anyone who allows himself to believe that busyness and prosperity are signs of righteousness.

#### Revelation 3:15-20

Laodicea is described as being materialistic, self-satisfied, no longer interested in doing God's work whether it is in their personal lives or as a public proclamation. Jesus Christ's rebuke here is the strongest in the Bible! When He says He will vomit them out of His mouth, it shows great distaste - His own people are not enthusiastic or zealous about doing a work!

Their estimation of themselves strongly implies spiritual self-satisfaction. They evaluate themselves on the basis of their material wealth, but when God looks, He judges them on the basis of their spirituality and finds they lack a great deal. Being worth nothing, they had to be spit out.

Their spiritual condition is so bad that the Savior is on the outside looking in! He has to knock on the door, as it were, to be let into services or into their lives. It is no wonder that He says that He will vomit them out! So He says, "If any man hear my voice. . . ." If anyone is willing to repent, He will come in. He is appealing to anyone in that condition to change his or her attitude.

#### Revelation 3:15-19

Obviously, these people are not meeting the conditions of their relationship with God even though they are His children. Their lackadaisical, wishy-washy, self-righteous attitudes and self-absorbed, self-satisfied lives are totally unacceptable to Him. He casts them from His presence and commands them to change their ways. There is no covering for the conduct of their lives here.

#### Revelation 3:17

A Laodicean deals with wealth on a scale few people have seen in the history of the world. Wealth has a power that produces an intriguing result. In a section of scripture Moses wrote in the last month before Israel crossed into the Promised Land, God warns us of it: "When you have eaten and are full, then you shall bless the LORD your God for the good land which He has given you" (Deuteronomy 8:10). God is definitely not against His people prospering or even getting rich. Many of His servants, like Abraham and David, were wealthy beyond imagination (Genesis 13:2; I Chronicles 29:1-5).

Instead, He describes a general principle, a natural trend, which happens to most when they begin to accumulate wealth. Most people cannot handle prosperity, and though God wants us to have good things, He desires us to have them in a way that will not damage us spiritually. His concern for the Laodicean is that, as the world reaches a pinnacle of luxury and wealth, he will be distracted by the magnetic appeal of all those beautiful things. He says in effect, "Don't forget your first priority!"

#### Revelation 3:17-19

The wealth of the Laodicean is not the problem. His problem derives from allowing his wealth to lead him into self-satisfaction, self-sufficiency, and complacency. His heart is lifted up. These attitudes lead him to avoid self-sacrifice by which he could grow spiritually. People normally use wealth to avoid the hardships of life, and although there is nothing intrinsically wrong with that, a person not spiritually astute will allow the comforts of wealth to erode his relationship with God. In his physical wealth, the Laodicean is poor in the things that really count and blind to his need. He no longer overcomes and grows. His witness is no good - and useless to Christ.

God reveals His love for the Laodicean when, rather than giving up on him, He gives him a punishing trial. He allows him to go through the fire, the Great Tribulation, to chasten him for his idolatry, to remind him of his true priorities, and to give him the opportunity to repent.

#### Revelation 3:17-19

God is willing to go to great lengths to get our attention and get us to turn so that we will buy gold refined in the fire, get proper white garments, and anoint our eyes with eye salve. He is trying to get us to repent, which is what chastening is all about.

The Laodicean has the same problem. He is blind to God at work in his life and in the lives of others. Why? Because he is busy doing something else. The Laodicean is not lazy; he is instead distracted with busyness, with this world, with getting ahead in life, with everything else rather than what he should be involved in—the things of God.

God wants him to be zealous, but not at making money, not at building his house, not at flitting off to various vacations, not at filling his social calendar. No, God wants him to be zealous for Him!

However, a Laodicean pretends to be righteous. Like Balaam, he has built a façade. Externally, he looks like a good guy, and righteous too, but all the while, inside he is something else: He is totally hypocritical. This is one of the Laodicean's problems. He is so focused on other things—usually his own well-being—that he cannot see God. Since he has everything all figured out, and all his needs and many of his desires are met, he in his heart of hearts believes that he really does not need God!

Christ's advice to the Laodicean is to get eye salve so he can see. It is not so that he can see other people or other things, but so he can specifically see God! He also wants him to produce righteousness, so he can put on that white clothing representing pure character—so he can "purchase" the spiritual riches that actually mean something, the heavenly treasure Jesus speaks about in Matthew 6:20 (Instead, store up for yourselves wealth in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and burglars do not break in or steal.).

Richard T. Ritenbaugh

Balaam and the End-Time Church (Part 2)

#### Revelation 3:18

Gold, clothing, and eye salve represent the three major industries of Laodicea: banking, textiles, and medicines.

Gold, spiritual riches (I Peter 1:7), contrasts with the word "poor," and fire symbolizes trial. God advises them to obtain spiritual riches produced through trials, which the self-sufficient Laodicean avoids by compromising.

"White garments" contrast with their nakedness. Clothing helps us to distinguish people and groups. Because of the differences between men and women's clothing, sexual distinctions can be made. Clothes reveal status: A man in a well-tailored suit falls into a different category than a beggar in rags. Clothing provides a measure of comfort and

protection from the elements. It hides shame and deformity. Biblically, God uses it to symbolize righteousness (Revelation 19:8). He instructs the Laodicean to dress himself in the holiness of God to cover his spiritual nakedness, self-righteousness.

Their need of eye salve contrasts with their blindness. Commentators understand it to represent God's Spirit coupled with obedience. The combination of the two gives a Christian the ability to see - to understand spiritual things. "But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God" (I Corinthians 2:10-11). "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; a good understanding have all those who do His commandments" (Psalms 111:10).

First-century Laodicea sat astride two major trade routes. The first road ran from Rome eastward into Asia Minor, then beyond to Cilicia where Paul was born. At Derbe it split: One leg went to the south through Damascus and on into Egypt; the other leg struck across the east to Mesopotamia, the ancient home of Babylon. Connecting the city to southern Europe through Byzantium, the second route entered Laodicea from the north and continued to the Mediterranean.

The founders built the city in the Lycus Valley where these routes crossed. This provided Laodicea with unlimited opportunities for trade but caused other significant problems. Ideally, prosperous cities are built close to abundant natural resources, especially water. Great cities are usually founded on deep natural harbors or on the banks of navigable rivers where water is abundant. Unfortunately, Laodicea was not established near an adequate water supply. More driven by trade, its builders located it where the roads crossed.

However, the city had much in its favor, and of special note were its three main industries. The Laodiceans produced a glossy, black wool that was prized by the wealthy all over the world. No one knows whether its rich color came from a particular strain of sheep that they bred in the area, or whether they dyed it, but the quality of the wool is indisputable. In fact, they cornered the market in this commodity, producing tremendous wealth.

Their second business was medicine. Laodicea boasted of one of the most renowned medical schools in the world, and with it came all of its associated industries like pharmaceuticals. They produced a world-famous salve, reputed to cure certain kinds of eye diseases. Another salve supposedly healed ear problems. People came from all over the Roman world in search of remedies for their ailments.

These two industries produced a third that multiplied their already vast wealth—banking. Laodicea became a center of currency exchange and money lending. Cicero, it is said, cashed huge bank drafts there. So huge were its assets that, when it was demolished by a first-century earthquake, the city refused Rome's offer of help, rebuilding with its own funds.

So Laodicea had a monopoly in textiles, a world-renowned medical industry, and a prosperous financial center. Writers of the ancient world speak openly of their envy of Laodicean wealth. Record after record attests to their status.

Their one weakness was the water supply. Water had to be piped in to Laodicea. Cold water could come from the abundant supply at Colossae, but by the time it traveled the ten or so miles from the cold springs, it was lukewarm. About six miles away in Hierapolis were hot springs, but that water, too, was lukewarm when it reached Laodicea. Whether they piped in the cold or the hot water, it arrived at Laodicea lukewarm.

What does Christ mean by this metaphor? Cold water stimulates and invigorates. Nothing refreshes more than drinking a glass of cold water on a hot day. And hot water? It is useful for health. Not only do we mix it with teas, herbs, broths, and the like, but it also works as a solvent, good for cleaning just about anything.

What does lukewarm water do? Christ's complaint against the Laodiceans is revealed here: It is good for nothing! The Laodicean is useless to Him. Lukewarm water is an emetic: It makes one vomit. In terms of God's work, a lukewarm Christian is useless. The other traits of Laodiceanism spring from this characteristic of uselessness. As Head of the church, Christ cannot use them in the spiritual state in which He finds them. We should think of this in terms of biblical symbolism: Water represents God's Holy Spirit.



John W. Ritenbaugh  
The World, the Church, and Laodiceanism

<https://www.thatttheworldmayknow.com/laodicea>

#### History

The leading city in the valley during the first century, Laodicea was destroyed by an earthquake in AD 60. According to Roman writer Tacitus, Rome offered to pay for the city to be rebuilt, but the people declined, saying that they were wealthy enough to restore their own city.

#### Industry

The city was renowned for three main industries:

A banking center for the province of Asia Minor, including a gold exchange; The textile center where glossy, black wool was woven into garments called trimata that were prized in the Roman world; The location of a major medical school known worldwide and where an eye salve called Phrygian powder was made from a local stone.

#### Geography

Located in the fertile Lycus River Valley, the city had no nearby water source, so tepid, mineral-filled, and nauseating water was piped in from six miles away.

#### What Happened to the Church in Laodicea?

Church history records that the church in Laodicea remained dynamic after most churches in Asia disappeared. One of its bishops was martyred for his faith in AD 161, about seventy years after John wrote his warning to the city in Revelation. In AD 363, Laodicea was the location chosen for a significant church council. So, it appears that the church in Laodicea learned its lesson and God continued to bless the Christian community there for sometime