

THE HISTORY OF LAODICEA

We have learned how important the cultural history is of each of the seven churches of the Book of Revelation.

One of the important lessons that we have learned from the study of the cultural history associate with these churches is *“If the church doesn’t change the culture, the culture will change the church.”*

**This lesson will study seven aspects of the cultural history of Laodicea and how it influenced
The church of Laodicea.**

- 1. Laodicea lay on the south bank of the River Lycus, approximately 100 feet above the valley floor on a flat plateau. It is the modern city by the name of Pamukkale.**

The city was located in a triangle of cities with Colossae (southeast) and Hierapolis (northeast) to Laodicea (Col.4: 13).

- 2. Pliny relates that Laodicea was formerly known as Diosopolis and Rhoas.**

It was rebuilt and renamed by Antiochus II after his wife, Laodike, whom he divorced eight years after ascending to the throne in 261BC.

“It was founded by Antiochus II (261-246BC) of Syria, who named it for his wife, Laodike, and who populated it with Syrians and with Jews who were transplanted from Babylonia to the cities of Phrygia and Lydia.” (ISBE, pg.1836)

- 3. Laodicea suffered repeated earthquakes. In 60AD, the city was destroyed and rebuilt with finances from the wealth of the Laodicean during the reign of Nero.**

Tacitus wrote, “One of the famous cities of Asia, Laodicea, was that same year overthrown by an earthquake, and, without any relief from us, recovered itself by its own resources.”

- 4. Laodicea was a banking and financial center and it minted its own coins because of its wealth. This seems to be the result of its success in agricultural and textile business (black wool). It was independently wealthy.**

“The wealthiest city in Phrygia during Roman times, it was widely known for its banking establishments, medical school and textile industry. Its major weakness was lack of an adequate water supply. Each of these characteristics is reflected in the letter.” (NIV, Rev.3:14)

“Rev.3:18, refers to three items in which Laodicea took great pride: financial wealth, an extensive textile industry and a famous eye salve.” (NIV, Rev.3:18)

5. Laodicea has been labeled as one of the chief medical center of Phrygia.

“Mounce comments that it was established in connection with the temple of Men Carou thirteen miles to the north and west. It boasted such famous teachers as Zeuxis and Alexander Philalethes (who appear on coinage). Ramsey notes that the Laodicean physicians followed the teaching of Herophilos (330-250BC) who, on the principle that compound diseases require compound medicines, began a strange system of heterogeneous mixtures. Two of the most famous were an ointment from the spice nard for the ear, and an eye-salve made from the ‘Phrygian powder’ mixed with oil.” (Galen vi.439)

6. Laodicea didn’t have an adequate water supply within the city. It had been built for its defensive position overlooking the road system.

“In contrast to Hierapolis with its medicinal hot springs or Colossae with its refreshing supply of cold water, Laodicea had to fetch its water through high-pressure stone pipes from hot springs at Denizil, some five miles away, and by the time it reached Laodicea the water was lukewarm.” (Bruce, pg.15)

“As it traveled through the pipes the water cooled, making it neither hot nor cold, and quite nauseating because of its mineral content.” (Rev.3:14-22 by Paul Bartz)

“Hot may refer to the hot, medicinal waters of nearby Hierapolis. The church in Laodicea supplied neither healing for the spiritually sick nor refreshment for the spiritually weary.” (NIV, Rev.3:16)

“I know *your* deeds (works), that *you* (*church*) are (eimi/ p.a.ind) neither cold (psuchros) nor hot (zestos), *I would* (*opheilo/a.a.ind*) that you were cold or hot.” (Rev.3:15) (2 Pet.3:9)

7. Historians think that Epaphras, Timothy, and Mark probably pastored this church. (Col.1: 7; 2:1; 4:12-13).

“For I bear him (Epaphras) witness that he has a deep concern for you and for those who are in Laodicea and Hierapolis.” (Col.4:13)

“Greet the brethren who are in Laodicea and also Nympha and the church that is in her house.” (Col.4:15)

“And when this letter is read among you, have it also read in the church of the Laodiceans; and you, for your part read my letter that is coming from Laodicea.” (Col.4:16)

Today there is no Christian church in the area and Islam is the predominant religion.

<p>HOME WORK: How are lukewarm believers described and what is the spiritual solution to being lukewarm according to Rev.3: 15-20?</p>
