

**SPIRITUAL LUKE-WARMNESS: AN EXEGETICAL PAPER ON REVELATION
3:14-22**

ROBINAH KUNIHIRA

M21/M05/010

**A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO BISHOP TUCKER SCHOOL OF DIVINITY AND
THEOLOGY IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF
THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF DIVINITY OF UGANDA CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY.**

August, 2024



**UGANDA CHRISTIAN
UNIVERSITY**
A Centre of Excellence in the Heart of Africa

SPIRITUAL LUKE-WARMNESS: AN EXEGETICAL PAPER ON REVELATION

3:14-22

BY

ROBINAH KUNIHIRA

M21/M05/010


**A DESERTATION SUBMITTED TO BISHOP TUCKER SCHOOL OF DIVINITY
AND THEOLOGY IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR
THE AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF DIVINITY OF UGANDA
CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY.**

AUGUST 2024

DECLARATION

I, Robinah Kunihiro declare that this dissertation is my original work and has not been submitted to any University for any award. All sources of information have been acknowledged.

ROBINAH KUNIHIRA



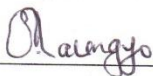
Date: 22.08.2024

APPROVAL

This dissertation has been submitted with my approval as university supervisor.

SUPERVISOR

REV. CAN. PROF. EDISON M. KALENGYO



Date: 22/08/2024

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I acknowledge my Diocese of Ruwenzori for identifying and trusting me with Theology training opportunity. I appreciate the Diocesan Education Committee and the Bishop of Ruwenzori Rt. Rev. Reuben Kisembo Amooti in particular for recommending me for the financial support from the Diocese.

I would like to express my deepest gratitude, to Bishop Tucker School of Divinity and Theology for generously financing my Theological study of Master of Divinity by offering me a scholarship. May the Almighty God reward a hand that gives.

My supervisor Rev. Canon Professor Edison Kalengyo contributed immensely to the shaping of this work since the proposal development stage. I am highly indebted to him for his tireless advice, criticism and corrections that have sharpened me as a Theologian researcher and resulted to the quality of this work.

I highly appreciate the presence and efforts of all academic and non-academic staff of Bishop Tucker School of Divinity and Theology (BTSdT)- Uganda Christian University, especially Revd. Prof. C. Byaruhanga, Revd. Prof. E. Kalengyo, Revd. Prof. P. Nyende, Revd. Dr. J. Obetia, Revd. Dr. M. Isabirye, Revd. Dr. E. Mukeshimana, Revd. Dr. S. Opol, Revd. Can. A. Turyahabwe, Revd. Can. R. Ekirunga and Ms. J. Mutabule. Thank you for guiding me in your different capacities.

Many thanks go to my classmates whose warmth and mutual support enabled me to persevere and finish this research. These include: Revd. Z. Bwambale, Revd. Joel Musasizi, Mr. E. Mpagi, Mr. J. Bihozagara, Mr. F. Beinomugisha, Mr. I. Ssebulime, Mr. P. Mugume, Mr. S. Omaido, Mr. P. Barasa, Mr. E. Etatai, Mr. M. Ndawula and Ms. Sandra Musenero. Thank you so much for your academic assistance in various ways.

Most importantly I wish to acknowledge the Lord's guidance that has seen me this far, without his favour I would not have made it.

ABSTRACT

This study is an exegetical work on Revelation 3:14-, delving into how best it is applicable in the contemporary church. Due to growing cases of lukewarm character in the contemporary church, the study sought to apply Revelation 3:14-22 to the situation among Christians with an aim of drawing practical solutions to enhance godliness. It was guided by these research questions; What is the message of Revelation 3:14-22: What are drivers of spiritual Luke-warmness in the contemporary church; What lessons can we draw from Rev 3:14-22 to bring home godliness. The specific objective was to draw guiding Christian values from Revelation 3:14-22 by ascertaining the nature and drivers of Luke-warmness in the church, and finally apply the message of Revelations 3:14-22 to address spiritual Luke-warmness in the contemporary church.

Commentary method was employed proceeding verse by verse, presenting exegetical observations as they relate to the text since this was library-based research. Additionally, the research used contextual analysis, to demonstrate the manifestation of spiritual Luke warmness in the church today.

The Major study findings are: (1) The Lord Jesus is the originator of God's creation: (2) Omniscience nature of the Lord Jesus Christ: (3) Sin as a barrier between God and humanity: (4) Complacency and misuse of God given resources: (5) Material possession is not necessarily a sign of God's blessing: (6) There is wealth whose source is not Godly: (7) Jesus Christ fills the spiritual bankruptcy and covers nakedness: (8) Jesus' relentless desire for every one's freedom in eternity. The study concludes by noting that the church as an institution and individual Christians should: (1) Enhance obedience to God; (2) Fight the Lukewarm character; (3) Teach against prosperity gospel; (4) Openly condemn evil; (5) Provide good counsel / Institute Christian education; (6) Church Leaders should be exemplary; (7) exercise Love, forgiveness and reconciliation.

TABLE OF CONTENT

DECLARATION	Error! Bookmark not defined.
APPROVAL	Error! Bookmark not defined.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT.....	ii
ABSTRACT	iii
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1 Background and motivation for the research.....	1
1.2 Research Problem	1
1.3 Research questions.....	1
1.4 Research objective	2
1.5 Specific objectives	2
1.7 Methodology.....	8
1.8 Dissertation structure	8
CHAPTER 2: CONTEXT OF THE BOOK.....	9
2.1 Introduction	9
2.2 General Background	9
2.3 Historical context	12
2.4 Literal Context	13
2.5 Theological Themes.....	15
2.5.1 Willingness to Suffer for Christ is the Path to Ultimate Victory.....	15
2.5.2 The Sovereignty of God in Human History.	16
2.5.3 The New Creation as fulfilment of Biblical Prophecy.....	17
CHAPTER 3: MESSAGE OF REVELATION 3:14-22	18
3.1 Introduction	18
3.2 Preliminary analysis.....	18
3.3 Translation variation:	19

3.3.1	Translation analysis	20
3.4	Textual variation:	20
3.5	Key Exegetical Issues	39
3.5.2	Omniscience nature of the Lord Jesus Christ	39
3.5.3	Sin as a barrier between God and humanity	40
3.5.4	Complacency and misuse of God given resources	40
3.5.5	Material possession is not necessarily a sign of God’s blessing	40
3.5.6	There is wealth whose source is not Godly	41
3.5.7	Jesus Christ fills the spiritual bankruptcy and covers nakedness	41
3.5.8	Jesus’ relentless desire for every one’s freedom in eternity	41
3.6	Exegetical synthesis	42
CHAPTER 4: NATURE AND DRIVERS OF LUKEWARMNESS IN THE CONTEMPORARY CHURCH.....		43
4.0	Introduction	Error! Bookmark not defined.
4.4.1	Bandwagon worship.....	44
4.4.2	Syncretism	45
4.4.3	Corruption and embezzlement.....	45
4.4.4	Complacency	46
4.4.5	Prayerlessness and spiritual bankruptcy.....	47
CHAPTER FIVE: SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH TO CONTEMPORARY CHURCH		48
5.1	Introduction	48
5.2	Doctrinal significance	48
5.2.1	Lord’s attributes as the Amen, the Faithful and true witness and beginning of God’s creation.....	48
5.2.2	The nature of human character: The omniscient God exposes the character of believers in Laodicea as he does today	49

5.2.3	Corruption through materialism	49
	Prosperity and riches have continued to corrupt the minds and souls of believers including the church leaders to-date.....	50
5.2.4	God’s discipline and desire for every one’s freedom in eternity.....	50
	Quite often, the church is at cross roads dealing with Christians who fall into depression and stress resulting from suffering.....	50
5.3	Practical significance	51
5.3.1	Sovereignty of God:.....	51
5.3.2	Need for true Spiritual riches	52
5.3.3	God’s discipline and forgiveness.....	54
5.3.4	The Lord’s deliberate desire of redemption	55
5.3.5	Hearing, listening and heeding to Holy Spirit	56
CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION		56
6.1	Conclusion.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
BIBLIOGRAPHY		58
APPENDICES 1: PLAGIARISM CERTIFICATE		60

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background and motivation for the research

Every day, Christianity and evangelism experiences bring the desire to see change in the lifestyle leading to godliness and positive impacts of the gospel among Christian communities. The church is continually growing numerically and geographically and so is the intensity of sin and lukewarmness among Christians. This triggered the opinion that as Christians we might be harbouring lukewarm character as described by the Lord in Revelation 3:15. The goal of this research was to apply the principles of Bible exegesis to determine the message of Revelation 3:14-22, and suggest its application for believers today that can be helpful to address the lukewarm character. The society today boasts of numerous Christians and a functional physical church in particular. The growing sin and moral decadency in various spheres of the society drove the researcher to dig deeper and learn from the experiences of the church in Laodicea. One wonders whether the church no longer attaches value to matters of spirituality, do not take it seriously, do not understand what is being preached or doubt the existence of God.

1.2 Research Problem

There is a growing proclivity of lukewarmness among the Christian community in the church. This corrodes evangelism and salvation efforts as well as abuses the existence of Christianity in the society. This study sought to relate and apply Revelation 3:14-22 to the contemporary Luke warmness situation among Christians with an aim of drawing practical solutions to enhance Christian values in the church. This study sought to address the following research questions:

1.3 Research questions

1. What is the message of Revelation 3:14-22?

2. What are drivers of spiritual Luke-warmness in the contemporary church?
3. What lessons can we draw from Rev 3:14-22 to bring home hands-on godliness?

1.4 Research objective

To determine the message of Revelation 3:14-22 and how it is applicable in the contemporary church.

1.5 Specific objectives

The study aimed at drawing guiding Christian values from Revelation 3:14-22 by ascertaining the drivers of Luke-warmness in the church, cases of complacency and finally apply the message of Revelations 3:14-22 in the church to address spiritual Luke-warmness in the Christian community.

1.6 Literature review

This literature review presents an examination of books, commentaries and articles that generally focus on the book of Revelation with a special emphasis on how chapter 3:14-22 can be applied to the contemporary church. This review demonstrates that spiritual temperature can be affected by sickening compromise, conformity to the world, complacency and idolatry. It also shows that in order for the church to continue in genuine fellowship with God and to cross the threshold into heavenly blessings and eternal life, it is necessary to repent, transform and to rely entirely on God, the creator and ruler of all creation amidst the changing social and economic patterns of the world.

Luke warmness is manifested in the church differently ranging from one Christian to another. A lukewarm Christian is one who is lazy in his or her relationship with God. Half-hearted rather than wholehearted. They put in minimal effort rather than maximum, resulting in mediocrity rather than excellence. They are casual rather than intense and are normally laid-back, standing divided with one foot in the church, the other in the world. Spiritual lukewarmness describes

someone who claims to be a Christian, but doesn't live a life indicative of a Christian. They compromise the Bible, create their own doctrines to fit their lifestyle choices and do not accept the truth of God's word as authoritative nor follow the will of Christ. To such, Jesus had some strong words in Rev 3:14-16.

One preacher described lukewarm as “slightly approvable life to God, but not being fully dedicated to God because the things of this world have stolen your focus.”¹ Lukewarm Christianity hails human over God’s opinion and this causes Christians to find reasons to sin, also to look at the church as another charitable organization and a community without commitment.

The eighteenth-century writer and preacher Samuel Davies wrote of “The Danger of Lukewarmness in Religion.” He noted then that “There are a few unfashionable creatures who act as if they looked upon religion to be their most important concern, who seem determined, let others do as they will, to make sure of their salvation, whatever becomes of them in other respects.”² As to the generality of men, they are very indifferent about it. They will not indeed renounce religion entirely; they will make some little profession of the religion that happens to be most stylish and reputable in their country, and they will conform to some of its institutions; but it is a matter of indifference with them, and they are but little concerned about it. Lukewarm Christians give Christianity a bad name. They are representing Christ, but not acting like Him. Andy Manning (1962) termed them as “Bad advertisements”. This kills the church and distances many souls away.

Charles Spurgeon the nineteenth century English preacher had some profound words on the subject in his sermon ‘Earnest Warning About Lukewarmness’. He noted that “Luke warm

¹ Andy, Manning. *The Problem of Lukewarmness*. Journal of Evangelical Visitor LXXV 8 (April 16, 1962) 2

² Samuel, Davies, (1961). *The Dangers of Lukewarmness in Religion*. Cited in the Puritan Reformed Journal 2 Issue 1 (2020) 246.

Christians were not infidels, yet they were not earnest believers; they did not oppose the gospel, neither did they defend it; they were not working mischief, neither were they doing any great good; they were not disreputable in moral character, but they were not distinguished for holiness; they were not irreligious, but they were not enthusiastic in piety nor imminent for zeal: they were what the world called moderates”.³ He further argues that lukewarm church communities manifest everything done in a half-hearted, listless, dead and alive way, as if it did not matter much whether it was done or not. The right things are done, but as to doing them with all your might, and soul, and strength, a lukewarm church has no notion of what that means. However, they are neither hot for truth, hot for conversions, hot for holiness, nor fiery enough to burn the stubble of sin, nor zealous enough to infuriate Satan, nor fervent enough to offer themselves as a living sacrifice on the altar of their God. They are not so cold as to give up their work, their prayer meetings, or the gospel; if they did so, then they could be convinced of their error and brought to repentance.

Andy Manning notes that Money is a great danger to spiritual health since many Christians turn to idolizing it. He argues that material prosperity is a very big problem for Christians⁴. The more one succeeds and prosper in life, the less they sense need for God. “If you are poor, then you see your need for God. But if you are rich, then it is harder to see your need for God”. Outwardly there aren’t many problems that money can’t solve. If you get sick, you can buy medicine. If you get hungry or cold, you can buy food, clothing, and shelter. If you need to travel, you can pay for transportation. If you’re bored, you can pay for entertainment. So, what do you need God for? This is illustrated in Proverbs 30:8-9 “*Give me neither poverty nor wealth; feed me with the food I need. Otherwise, I might have too much and deny you, saying, ‘Who is the Lord?’ or I might have nothing and steal, profaning the name of God.*” Mark 10:25

³ Charles, H. Spurgeon. *Earnest warning about Lukewarmness*. Grand Rapids: Baker Akademics. 2020. 5-7.

⁴ Manning. Problem of Lukewarmness 5-6

says “*It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God.*” Also 1 Timothy 6:9-10 “*But those who want to be rich fall into temptation, a trap, and many foolish and harmful desires, which plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, and by craving it, some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.*” Therefore, the need to amerce so much riches becomes a relevant danger to spiritual health. It has been cited as a major problem affecting the church in America by Andy Manning. He argues that in America Christians are so affluent. Even the so-called “poor” in American are not living in abject poverty, but have their basic needs met that is food, clothing shelter. Beyond that, most of the poor in America have air conditioning, transportation, a closet full of clothes, access to medical care and education, flat screen TVs, internet access, and smartphones. It’s hard to see your spiritual poverty when you are physically rich.

As Mark Major a Ugandan Christian puts it, A lukewarm Christian does more harm to the body of Christ than Satan ever could. “It was lukewarm Christians that I first encountered as a young teen when I gave my life to Jesus”. He goes on to give an account of his dire experience in Lukewarmness: “It almost killed me spiritually.” As he interacted with lukewarm Christians in early days of his salvation, he began to feel isolated as a committed Christian since all colleagues thought he is taking “Godly things” too serious. He later slid into compromise and easy spiral ending in a lifestyle of sin and a feeling of complete estrangement from God.

William Barclay (1959) observed that “The unique fact that Christianity brought to this world is that God is the seeker of men. No other religion has the vision of a seeking God.”⁵ In his book “Out of Nazareth”, Donald Baillie cites Montefiore, the great Jewish scholar, who said that the one thing which no Jewish prophet or Rabbi ever conceived of is the conception of

⁵ Barclay, William. Cited in Andy Manning. *The problem of Lukewarmness*. Journal of Evangelical Visitor LXXV 8 (April 16, 1962) 6

God actually going out in quest of sinful men, who were not seeking him, but who were turned away from him.”⁶ This is an example of grace and forgiveness as illustrated in Rev 3:20. Even though He is disgusted by the Laodiceans, the Lord still offers them a relationship. He stands ready to forgive and reconcile.

God’s call and deliberate reaching out to sinners yields repentance and transformation in the church. In the last three chapters of *‘Reclaiming the Church’*, Cobb explores what a reclaimed church; one restored to vitality would look like. Instead of exploring specific strategies of change, he describes the content of a transformed churchly life. However, transformation is one of the church's two options for addressing the issue of lukewarmness. The route of renewal is one that the church should take as well. Renewal is the term Cobb uses when the church focuses on its own interior problems and seeks to recover the church's authentic tradition in order to correct various cultural idolatries.⁷ Transformation for Cobb, includes renewal, but fosters broader societal engagements and even global concerns. And because transformation calls for genuinely theological responses, it is important that the church be as clear as possible about the meaning of salvation.

Edward Farley (1997), noted a massive cultural transformation, called by some the rise of the postmodern era, to have transformed everything thus contributing to Lukewarmness. These dimensions tackle many aspects like travel and tourism, reading, the "high arts," popular arts, health care, gender roles, the places where "wisdom" is deposited and sought, the relation of religion to the state, family continuity, sexuality, patterns of physical activity. In and through these institutional changes, spirituality in church has been changed. This complex of economically driven changes has displaced the church as the primary location of values and

⁶ Manning. Problem of Lukewarmness 6-7

⁷ Cobb, J.B (1997). Cited by Roger S. Gottlieb. *Spirituality: What it is and why it matters*. New York: US. Oxford University Press (2013) 102-111.

institutional loyalty and as the primary community of human relations. And this displacement is true even for groups who rely on Jesus, church and the Bible as fundamental for their identity.

In discussing Lukewarmness in the church, John B. Cobb Jr stressed both global and local crises of social suffering. Cobb strongly presents his criteria for vitality not as statistical but theological and ethical. He notes that a denomination or religious movement can be vital in the statistical sense of new churches built and congregations expanded, yet still be lukewarm. Cobb is clearly raising the issue of what used to be called piety: - a spiritual quality of life in the church. He also cites intensity. According to Cobb, Lukewarmness means a low intensity of shared feeling. Low intensity is both a low degree of passionate interest the kind that generates real disagreement and dispute and a low valuation of faith and church on the full spectrum of held values. For Cobb, then, the idea of Church vitality indicates intense passion or interest and also the retention of faith's centrality that is "Seek first the kingdom of God."

The reviewed literature addresses a lukewarm church and mainly suggests that such a church displays the following profile: it is indifferent to its own theological confusions, uninterested in responding to challenges that confront its traditions, and isolated from the major problems and issues of its social environment. This research however delves into the life of an individual Christian who may be part of such a bigger church congregation that attends to general theological confusions, responds to social and environmental challenges but his or her spiritual life is indifferent to Christian values. Another gap the research seeks to arrest is the systematic impact of Lukewarmness to the broader church as individual Christian practice lukewarmness. The Lord does not see as man sees. "Man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart." We might see someone that's putting on a good show, and we think, "Man, what a spiritual giant," but God sees up to the heart of the matter. The Pharisees prayed long prayers. They seemed to be zealous for God's law. They tithed down to the spices in their cabinet. To men, they looked like they were so spiritual and so close to God, but Jesus said they were like

whitewashed tombs. Outwardly, they looked primeval to men, but inwardly they were filled with dead men's bones and all manner of corruption (Mathew 23:27).

1.7 Methodology

This was a library-based research and secondary data was used. The commentary method was employed proceeding verse by verse, presenting exegetical observations as they relate to the text. The research used historical criticism to identify messenger, audience, setting and original purpose of the message of Rev 3:14-22. In addition, Literary criticism was used to analyze the various literary aspects of Revelation and preliminary analysis in order to establish the book's literary context. Finally, the research used contextual analysis, to demonstrate the manifestation of spiritual Luke warmness in the church today by integrating doctrinal and practical significance.

1.8 Dissertation structure

The research was structured in six chapters. Chapter one talks about the background and motivation to the research, the research problem, research questions, research objectives, reviewed literature, methodology and structure of the research. Chapter two talks about the context of the book of Revelation discussing the book's general back ground, historical context, literal context and theological themes. Chapter three presents the message of Revelation delving into preliminary analysis, translation variations, translation analysis, textual variation, summary of key exegetical issues and exegetical synthesis. Chapter four discusses the nature and drivers of lukewarmness in the contemporary church, chapter five presents significance of the research to contemporary church while chapter six is conclusion.

CHAPTER TWO: CONTEXT OF THE BOOK

2.1 Introduction

This chapter deals with General background of the book of Revelation with special emphasis on authorship, dating, audience and genre. It also discusses the historical and literal context of the book with special focus on 3:14-2. Major Theological themes of the book of Revelation are also discussed with focus on how they feed into 3:14-22.

2.2 General Background

Revelation is an apocalyptic prophecy with an epistolary introduction addressed to seven churches in the Roman province of Asia, in what is now western Turkey. The seven cities where the churches were located are close together, near the Island of Patmos and the western coast of Turkey.

The author of this book is John (1:1,4) who wrote down what is revealed to him or what he saw in his vision as message to the seven churches. While the entire book constitutes the prophecy, the letters to the seven individual churches are introductions to the rest of the book, which is addressed to all seven. While the dominant genre is apocalyptic, the author sees himself as a Christian prophet. The author's matter-of-fact approach and his extensive knowledge of the precise conditions that existed in each of the seven churches indicate that he wrote as a person of authority to Christian communities that were in some sense under his jurisdiction. The name John occurs four times in Revelation. In 1:1, he designates himself as a "servant" who serves as a vital link in making known "what must soon take place." In 22:8, he is the one "who heard and saw these things." His role as Seer is joined with that of faithful witness in 1:9, where he writes, "I, John, your brother and companion in the suffering and kingdom and patient endurance that are ours in Jesus, was on the island of Patmos because of

the word of God and the testimony of Jesus” (also in 1:4). Within the book itself, however, there is no specific indication as to who exactly this John was. There exists several suggestions and scholarly theories about the person of the author. Dionysius of Alexandria speculates that it may have been John Mark, the young man who accompanied Paul and Barnabas on the first missionary journey (Acts 13:5), but then appears to dismiss the idea on the historical grounds that John returned to Jerusalem instead of going with them into Asia.⁸ More so, there exist no significant linguistic similarities between Mark’s gospel and the Apocalypse, nor does the Evangelist display characteristics of a visionary possessed of a strong prophetic consciousness. Clement of Alexandria cited the Apocalypse in several places and accepted it as the work of John the apostle.⁹ Writing from Carthage Tertullian quotes from all but four chapters of Revelation, holding it to be the work of the apostle John.¹⁰ An important witness for the apostolic authorship of Revelation has more recently come from the Gnostic materials discovered in 1945 at Chenoboskion in Upper Egypt¹¹. One of the documents is the Apocryphon of John, which cites Rev 1:19 and claims to be written by “John, the brother of James; these who are the sons of Zebedee.”

The authorship of the book of Revelation can be dated to either during the reign of Domitian (A.D. 81-96) or towards the end or immediately after the reign of Nero (A.D. 54-68).

In reference to Domitian rule, of Irenaeus spoke of the Apocalypse as “For it was seen, not long ago, but almost in our generation, near the end of Domitian’s reign.”¹² Although Hort, along with Westcott and Lightfoot at Cambridge, regarded the work as originating during the reign of Nero or shortly thereafter, he admitted that “if external evidence alone could decide,

⁸ Robert, H. Mounce. *The book of Revelation* Michigan: U.S.A. Eerdmans Publishing Company Grand Rapids 1998. 38

⁹ Mounce, *The book of Revelation*. 39

¹⁰ Mounce, *The book of Revelation*. 39

¹¹ Mounce, *The book of Revelation*. 39-40

¹² Mounce, *The book of Revelation*. 42

there would be a clear preponderance for Domitian.” The words of Irenaeus are later quoted by Eusebius. While Clement of Alexandria and Origen in the early third century do not actually use the name of Domitian, there is little doubt that he is the emperor they have in mind. Later references quite explicitly place the Apocalypse in the time of Domitian: Victorinus, Eusebius and Jerome.

The book of Revelation provides evidence that the background is one of conflict between the demands of a dictatorial secular power and allegiance to the Christian faith. The Roman Emperor is personified as a beast who demands universal worship (Rev 13:4; 15-17; 14:9; 16:2; 19:20), insisting that everyone bear his “mark” or be put to death (13:15-17; 14:9; 16:2; 19:20; 20:4). These references can be reasonably interpreted only in terms of the development of the imperial cult, specifically in Asia Minor. However, it was not until the reign of Domitian that failure to honour the emperor as a god became a political offense and punishable. W. G. Kümmel notes that under Domitian “persecution of Christians by the state on religious grounds took place for the first time.”

While the picture of universal enforcement of the imperial cult given in chapter 13 is a forecast rather than a descriptive account of the conditions under Domitian, all the elements were present in the final decade of the first century from which a reasonable projection could be made. The imminent conflict of loyalties between Christ and Caesar indicates that the Apocalypse should probably be placed no earlier than the reign of Domitian.

While the picture of universal enforcement of the imperial cult given in Revelation 13 is a forecast rather than a descriptive account of the conditions under Domitian, all the elements were present in the final decade of the first century from which a reasonable projection could be made. The imminent conflict of loyalties between Christ and Caesar indicates that the Apocalypse should probably be placed no earlier than the reign of Domitian.

There is also an argument for the early dating to Nero's reign factoring in the interpretation of the number 666 (13:18) as a cryptic reference to Nero. When Nero (n) Caesar is transcribed in Hebrew letters (rather than Latin or Greek), the numerical value comes to 666. This identification, according to Zahn, was first suggested by Fritzsche in 1831. At least Irenaeus in the third century, when discussing the various conjectures known to him, did not even mention Nero as a possibility.¹³ The tentative nature of this interpretation offers no substantial ground for determining date of composition. Therefore, the study dates the composition of Revelation around 81-96 CE during the Domitian reign.

2.3 Historical context

Laodocia was one of the wealthiest of the seven cities of Asia Minor. It was located in the Roman province of Phrygia approximately 17 kilometres west of Colossae, and 10 kilometres south of Hierapolis. It was approximately 160 kilometres east of Ephesus. It was on a major road which gave it an advantageous position of a trade route making it an important and one of the flourishing cities of Asia minor (Collin 2000). It was located alongside a spur of a hill between the narrow valley of rivers Asopus and Caprus which discharged into the Lycus. In the city, was a building Laodicea, which is ascribed to Antiochus II Theos in 261-253 BC in honor of his wife Laodice, implying it was probably founded on the site of the older town. Laodicea in the Greek, is translated "*lah-od-ik'-i-ah*" which means justice of the people. The name of the city is a compound Greek word: *laos* meaning people, nation, or crowd; *dike* means custom, law, judgment, penalty, or punishment, depending on the context. From that, most conclude that the founders of Laodicea saw themselves as a people of justice or law-abiding people. It could also mean the people ruling or the judgment of the people.

¹³ Gordon, D. Fee. *Revelation. A New Covenant Commentary*. Cambridge: United Kingdom. The Lutterworth Press 2011. 119

Economically, Laodicea was known for wealth in banking industry, manufacture of wool and a medical school that produced eye ointment. The city had always had a problem of water supply, so at one time an aqueduct was built to bring water to the city from hot springs. By the time the water reached the city it was neither cold nor refreshingly warm, only lukewarm. This water status became the appropriate description of the church in Laodicea at the time Revelation was written for it had become as bland as the tepid water that came into the city. Luke -warm here became the key word.

“Lukewarm” is from “*chliaros*” *klee ah rahs* meaning “barely warm, lukewarm.” It does not mean the church was doing nothing. It means their “deeds” were not acceptable. Feeling satisfied about oneself and even keeping busy is not a guarantee one is pleasing to the Lord. Busy work is not the work of God. “Cold” is from ‘*psuchros*’ *psoo krahs* meaning “cold, chilly.” It can even denote cold to the point of freezing. Jesus used this word in Matthew 24:12 to describe the faith of some. “Hot” is from “*zestos*” *zeh stahs* meaning “hot, boiling hot. It is used in Acts 18:25 and Romans 12:11. In 18:25, this man had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent burning in spirit, he was speaking and teaching accurately the things concerning Jesus, being acquainted only with the baptism of John; not lagging behind in diligence, fervent burning in spirit, serving the Lord.

2.4 Literal Context

The book of Revelation was written with the aim of revealing the full identity of Christ and give warning and hope to all his believers. It was addressed to the seven churches in Asia and all believers everywhere. The seven churches to whom John wrote were facing persecution that took place under Emperor Domitian (A.D 90-95). John received the visions when Roman authorities had exiled him in the island of Potmas. John who had been an eye witness of the incarnate Christ, had a vision of the glorified Christ. God also revealed to him what would take

place in the future judgement and the ultimate triumph of God.

The book of Revelation is an apocalyptic prophecy as indicated in 1:1, where it designates the supernatural unveiling of that which is about to take place. The term apocalypse means the revealing of divine mysteries. In its prologue, a blessing is pronounced upon the one who reads, hears, and takes to heart the words of “this prophecy” (1:3). Again, in the epilogue, we find a similar saying, pronounced by Jesus Himself: “Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy in this book” (22:7). An angel tells John in 22:10, “Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book.” This same angel apparently regards John as among the prophets, because he speaks in verse 9 of “your brothers the prophets.” Revelation is called a prophecy twice more in 22:18-19. Revelation is a very special kind of prophecy. Not only is it the only book of the NT that deals almost exclusively with the future, but it is also the most thorough going example of biblical apocalyptic prophecy. It is the book from which the genre apocalypse takes its name. Though it was not the first apocalyptic work, it is the most characteristic and well known of all apocalyptic works. The very first word of the book is *apokalypsis*, meaning an unveiling, uncovering, or revealing of something previously hidden. From this word we get the name “Revelation”. Many things that were previously hidden regarding the future are now revealed in this book.

Revelation also has elements of an epistle. Following the preamble in 1:1-3, there is a typical epistolary introduction in Vs. 4-5, following a style similar to that of the Pauline epistles. First, the name of the writer is given, followed by the identification of the addressees. Finally, there is a salutation, wishing grace and peace to the recipients from the triune Deity. In the subsequent vision of 1:9-3:22, seven letters are dictated by the glorified Christ to John, to be sent to the seven churches named in 1:11. Each of these letters, in turn, follows a slightly modified epistolary form in which the recipients are named before the author identifies himself. Instead of a salutation at the beginning, Jesus moves directly to the point: “I know your deeds,”

but ends with an individual appeal and promise to each church. The book itself also ends with an epistolary close composed of appeals and promises and a final benediction: “The grace of the Lord Jesus be with God’s people, Amen.”

The passage in 3:14-22 is a subsection within a bigger section of John’s visions of Christ to the seven churches of the ancient Roman province of Asia in the present-day Turkey. These are the churches; Ephesus (2:1-7), the church in Smyrna (2:8-11), the Church in Pergumum (2:12-17), the church in Thyatira (2:18-29), the church in Sardis (3:1-6), the church in Philadelphia (3:7-13) and finally the church in Laodicea (3:14-22). The visions explain the broader theme of willingness to suffer for Christ being the path to ultimate victory.

In verse 14-22, the omniscient Lord poses a charge to a Luke-warm church, full of complacency and idolatry (14-17), calling them to repentance and fellowship with him (18-19) as well as a promise to eternity on a heavenly throne (21).

2.5 Theological Themes

2.5.1 Willingness to Suffer for Christ is the Path to Ultimate Victory.

One of the main themes of the book is to exhort believers to remain faithful to Christ in spite of present sufferings and in spite of the temptation to engage in idolatry represented by compromise with the world-system, because this faithfulness will eventually be rewarded in the heavenly kingdom. Even as the cross turned out to seal Christ’s victory over Satan, so the present suffering of Christians seals their victory over the powers of darkness. Even while, like Christ, Christians suffering tribulation and hardship (1:9) also share in Christ’s kingly reign (1:6). In this present age, believers may suffer physical hardship, but their spirits will be kept safe (11:1-12). The church’s persecutors, on the other hand, will find themselves in the same position as Satan. The book demonstrates that even as Satan’s apparent victory triggered his

ultimate defeat, so the present evil actions of unbelievers (11:10) are only laying the basis for their final judgment (11:13, 18). Notice that after the portrayal of the heavenly kingdom in 21:1-22:5, the final words of the book revert to the command to remain faithful. The heavenly visions rallied in the book serve as motivators for Christians now suffering in adversity to hold to the glorious promises of God and not to fall away. And so, in the same way, Christians today should still read Revelation and allow its portrayal of the divine majesty to motivate us to continued faithfulness. Christians are to live according to the values of this new world, not those of the world in which they live.

2.5.2 The Sovereignty of God in Human History.

In chapters 4 and 5, John is given a vision of the throne room of God. The word “throne” appears nineteen times (in these two chapters out of thirty-four times in the book as a whole), and signifies the sovereignty of God. In the vision, the Lamb is given a place of equal honour by God Himself, and so the chapters as a whole portray the victory of God and the Lamb. Because this vision serves as the introduction to all the subsequent visions in the book, its significance is to demonstrate the authority of God and of Christ over all that is about to unfold in the remainder of the book. The trials of the believers, the apparent triumph of the forces of the enemy, the eventual destruction of the latter, and the victory of the church are all under the sovereign control of God. It is therefore true to say that, according to Revelation, the hand of God is directly behind the tribulations of believers as well as those of unbelievers. Such trials are sent by God to refine His people. Not only that, but the OT passages which influence the visions of the seals, trumpets, and bowls also picture God as the cause of the woes which befall believers and unbelievers alike (Zech. 6:1-8; Ezek. 14:21; Lev. 26:14-33) and their use in the seals in Rev. 6:2-8, or the sending of the Exodus plagues as formative for the trumpet and bowl plagues). The mystery as to how God would allow believers also to suffer is answered throughout the book: God’s strategy is to use the woes to refine their faith, while reserving

unbelievers for ultimate punishment. As the heavenly vision leads into the picture in chapter 6 of the horsemen and the initial unleashing of the divine judgments, it is clear that the resurrected Lamb (6:1) is in control of what is happening. The cross has been transformed from tragedy into triumph, and so also will God transform the earthly woes of believers into heavenly and eternal victory. The people of God have no other destiny during the church age than that of the Lamb during His earthly ministry. This is why Rev. 14:4 says that “they follow the Lamb wherever He goes.”

2.5.3 The New Creation as fulfilment of Biblical Prophecy.

The main prophetic themes of both Old Testament and New Testament culminate in the new covenant, the new temple, the new Israel, and the New Jerusalem, all of which are summed up in the concept of the new creation. These themes appear in 21:1-22:5 at the climax of the book. In both Revelation and other parts of the New Testament, these realities are seen to have already begun to be fulfilled in Christ. That is, believers as the new creation, the church as the new Israel, and so on. These prophetic realities are then consummately fulfilled, especially as envisioned in 21:1-22:5.

CHAPTER THREE: MESSAGE OF REVELATION 3:14-22

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents detailed exegesis of Revelation 3:14-22 with specific consideration of preliminary analysis, translation variations, translation analysis, textual variations and exegetical synthesis. In deciphering the message of the text, other aspects like grammatical features, composition techniques and figures of speech were also analyzed.

3.2 Preliminary analysis

14: “And to the angel of the church in Laodicea write: The words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of God’s creation (ESV).

15: I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were either cold or hot!

16: So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth.

17: For you say, “I am rich. I have prospered, and I need nothing, not realising that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked.

18: I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire, so that you may be rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself and the shame of your nakedness may not be seen and salve to anoint your eyes, so that you may see.

19: Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent.

20: Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If any one hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me.

21: The one who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, as I also conquered and sat down with my father on his throne.

22: He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches”.

3.3 Translation variation:

This is a verse-by-verse translation of message of the text starting with verse 14. The study considered English Standard Version (ESV), New Revised Standard Version (RSV), Revised Standard Version (NRSV) New International Version (NIV)

3:14: **Καὶ τῷ ἀγγέλῳ τῆς ἐν Λαοδικία ἐκκλησίας γράψον Τάδε λέγει ὁ Ἀμήν, ὁ μάρτυς ὁ πιστὸς καὶ ἀληθινός, ἡ ἀρχὴ τῆς κτίσεως τοῦ Θεοῦ**

“And to the angel of the church in Laodicea write: The words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of God’s creation” (ESV).

“And to the angel of the church in La-odice’a write: The words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of God’s creation” (RSV)

“And to the angel of the church in Laodicean write: The words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the origin of God’s creation” (NRSV).

“To the angel of the church in Laodicea write: These are the words the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God’s creation” (NIV).

3:15-16 **Οἶδά σου τὰ ἔργα, ὅτι οὔτε ψυχρὸς εἶ οὔτε ζεστός. ὄφελον ψυχρὸς ἦς ἢ ζεστός. Οὕτως ὅτι χλιαρὸς εἶ, καὶ οὐ ζεστός οὔτε ψυχρὸς, μέλλω σε ἐμέσαι ἐκ τοῦ στόματός μου.**

“I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were either cold or hot! So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth” (ESV).

“I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were cold or hot! So, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nr hot, I will spew you out of my mouth.” (RSV).

“I know your works; you are neither cold nor hot. I wish that you were either cold or hot. So, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I am about to spit you out of my mouth” (NRSV).

“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” (NIV).

3.3.1 Translation analysis

The term angel is used in all these versions whereby, in the original version it is referred to as messenger and this is in line with the further explanations in NIV. This means all the message being delivered has a source and the writer is a medium.

The NIV stipulates that the message in question are real words of the Amen and ruler of God’s creation.

All translations highlight the importance of the message in question. The source is an authority to all God’s creation.

All translations point to the omniscient God to whom nothing is hidden.

There is a clear charge on being indecisive in their ways of faith.

The NIV makes it clear that the audience is required to take a stand in their deeds of faith in order to magnify their relationship with God.

All versions indicate God’s exhausted tolerance with the audience and the pending result of their nauseating deeds to him.

The NRSV and NIV show the timing of God’s pending action. It is almost immediate.

3.4 Textual variation:

3:14: And to the angel of the church in Laodicea write: The words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of God’s creation.

This verse clarifies and confirms the source and proper destination of the message. “And unto the angel of the church in Laodicea write” phrase alludes to those and concerning those, in the church, who alternately believe from themselves, and from the Word.

“This in the message from the one who is the Amen, the faithful and true Witness,” signifies the Lord as the source of the Word, which is the Divine truth from Him.

“The beginning of God’s new creation,” signifies the originator of God’s all creation. The Lord Jesus speaks of Himself as the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God.

As the Amen, He is the embodiment of faithfulness and truth, and the one who guarantees and fulfills the promises of God. He is also the originator of the creation of God, both material and spiritual. The expression, “the Beginning of the creation of God” does not mean that He was the first person to be created; He was never created. Rather, it means that He began all creation. It does not say that He had a beginning, but that He is the Beginning. He is the origin of the creation of God. And He is pre-eminent over all creation. This corresponds with John 1:1 that “In the beginning the word already existed. The word was with God, and the Word was God”.

In this verse, the word ἀρχή (literally translated as beginning or principle) reveals the status of the exalted Christ which in Col 1:18 is equated with πρωτότοκος ‘first born with supremacy (over all creation) as in Col 1:15 and Rev 1:5 (faithful witness). The word ἀρχή can mean ‘beginning’ in the temporal or casual sense. In the Prologue to the gospel according to John, the meaning is in the first-place temporal: the Word was ‘in the beginning with God’ (John 1:1-2). This also features in Proverbs 8:22 “the Lord possessed me at the beginning of his work, the first of his works of old”. In early Christianity, the term ἀρχή was similarly used as a title for Christ¹⁴. But already the temporal understanding is complemented by the casual. Jesus is the beginning because ‘he leads and rules’ everything. This understanding is in line with the thought of John 1, and indeed of Col 1, where the Word shares pre-existence in creation (John 1:3-4), and Christ is the origin and destiny of all things (Col 1:16-17). It may be concluded that

Turner, C.H. *Journal of Theological Studies*. Oxford University press January, .27.106 (January, 1926) 113-129.

while ἀρχή in Rev 3:14 refers to the temporal sense to Christ's pre - existence, it goes on to include the notion of the Son sharing in the Father's creative handwork (he is the origin of God's creation). This justifies the expression 'beginning and the end' as used in Rev 21:6 and applied to the exalted Christ in 22:13 (1:8, 17). Silberman also argues that all three titles of the exalted Christ in this passage reflect Jewish speculation on Prov 8:22, 30 and Gen 1:1; and they are well known OT appellations of wisdom.¹⁵

At the beginning of this composition, the description of Christ deserts from the vision in 1:16-18 in favour of a series of brief sobriquets. Christ here identifies self as "the Amen", affirming the truth about God the father to which he is a bearing witness. Second, he is the "faithful and true witness" language from 1:5 with the addition of adjective "true." Third; he is "the beginning of God's creation. In some versions, "ruler of God's creation" (NIV). This encompasses all God's creation. This is a most striking tag both for the Apocalypse as a whole and for this passage in particular. The closest assertion to it in the NT is the affirmation by Paul in Colossians 1:15 that the Son "who is the image of the invisible God is also "the firstborn over all creation". Paul's clause almost means that his relationship to creation is that of "the firstborn", and thus he is the rightful heir of all creation, just as he was the first creator at the beginning.¹⁶ The apparent reason for this appellation here has to do with Laodicea's location near one of the better-known natural phenomena in the ancient world. These titles themselves, as in the other six letters of Rev (2-3), are related to the reminder of the message to Laodicea, and therefore to the life of the community. This church needed new life and power, and was spiritually at lower ebb than any of the remnant. According to verses 15-17, the Laodiceans are lukewarm, and thus they need to be spiritually renewed. The Amen, the faithful and true

¹⁵ Silberman, L.H. *Farewell to O AMHN: A Note on Rev 3:14*. Journal of Biblical Literature -JBL 82 (1963) 213-15.

¹⁶ Gordon, D. Fee. *Revelation. A New Covenant Commentary*. Cambridge: United Kingdom. The Lutterworth Press 2011. 58-67

witness, wants them to become zealous and committed (18-20). Otherwise, the judgement will follow them (16b). The exalted Christ stands at the door, waiting for a faithful response (20). But if there is repentance (19), discrimination can lead to salvation and the conquerors will receive a reward to become part of Christ's new creation (21).

Furthermore, Christ's self-introduction here as the faithful, true Witness and Beginning of the creation of God goes back to John's description of Christ in 1:5 as the faithful witness and firstborn of the dead and to the declaration of Christ in the vision that He was dead and is now alive forever (1:18). Christ as the beginning of God's creation refers here not to the events surrounding the world's creation and foundation but to the resurrection, the new creation expected in the latter days. In the same way as Paul describes Christ as "the beginning, the first-born from the dead" in Col. 1:18. Jesus is also described as the Amen, which is a Hebrew equivalent of faithful and true. The only other place in the Bible where "Amen" is used as a name is Isa. 65:16, "He who is blessed in the earth shall be blessed by the God of Amen" (translated as "God of truth" in NASB, NIV). And what is the blessing of this God of Amen? It is nothing other than the creation of a new heavens and a new earth (Isa. 65:17); a new creation, of which Christ in His resurrection is the Beginning. Christ therefore identifies Himself to the Laodiceans as the Amen, the faithful and true Witness, precisely because He is the beginning of fulfillment of Isaiah's new creation prophecy (Isa. 65:16-17), and this quality of faithful witness is so woefully lacking in them. More to that, they need His resurrection power as the firstborn of the new creation, for they are spiritually dead and need revitalizing, which will no doubt lead to effective witness in the pagan culture. Even at Sardis, a faithful remnant remained in a mostly dead church, but no such remnant is identified here, and there is no commendation of any sort for the Laodicean church.

3:15-16: I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were either cold or hot! So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth.

The opening phrase “I know your works” (Οἶδα τὰ ἔργα σου, ‘I know what you are doing’) is typical of the all-knowing God who sees in people’s hearts (1 Sam 16:7; 1 Chr 28:9; John 2:24). The one who walks among the lampstands ‘knows’ his people and their actions. John 2:24 demonstrates that Jesus ‘knew all people. As it stands in the book of Revelation, the words “I know your works” are neutral; they can refer to achievement or failure (Rev. 2:3, 4; 3:8, 15). The Lord’s emphasis on ‘works’ is noteworthy in the book of Revelation since the composition also aims at clarifying and strengthening faith. Faith is demonstrated by action; and this accounts for the NT demand for works in the believer which are worthy of faith (Eph. 2:8–10; Jas. 2:18–26).

In the case of the Laodicean community, Christ ‘knows’ that its members are neither cold nor hot (ψυχρός ὅρτε ζεστός), but ‘lukewarm’ (χλιαρός). As a result, he is on the point of ‘vomiting’ them out of his mouth. These are figures of speech corresponding to attitudes of hostility and friendliness towards the risen Lord¹⁷. In the wisdom literature of the Old Testament, the images of ‘cold’ and ‘hot’ relate to personal restraint or lack of self-control respectively (Prov. 17:27; 15:18). Here the imagery is apparently indicative of the spiritual temperature of the Laodiceans: their works and actions indicated they were neither ‘against’ Christ nor ‘for’ him; and this precisely expressed their lukewarmness as detailed in verses 17 and 18.

The description of the church in Laodicea as lukewarm was based on the prevailing geographical conditions to bring out the contextual spiritual meaning. Beale 2015 investigates that, “If some consider hot to be good, cold to be bad and lukewarm to be mediocre, why would Christ say He would prefer them cold to lukewarm?” The answer reveals a different perspective on these levels of temperature. As indicated in the NT, Laodicea had two neighbours, Hierapolis and Colossae (Col 4:13) in the letter addressed to the latter. Hierapolis had hot waters which

¹⁷ Smalley, S. Stephen. *The Revelation to John. A Commentary on the Greek Text of the Apocalypse*. London: U.K. Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (SPCK), 2005.117-119

possessed medicinal effects, while Colossae had cold water, which was also thought to be healthy. Laodicea had no good water source however, and had to pipe it in. By the time it arrived, it was lukewarm and dirty, fit only for spitting out¹⁸. Important to note is that it was generally held to be true in the ancient world that cold and hot water or wine were beneficial for one's health, but not water which was lukewarm.¹⁹ Likewise, the Laodiceans' faith and witness did not have a healthy effect on the people who lived around them. One of the main reasons for their ineffective faith was their sickening compromise with idolatry.²⁰

Christ now exposed the spiritual condition of the church in Laodicea to be no better than the city's water by asserting that "I will spit you out of my mouth" (Vs 16). If the Laodiceans will not identify faithfully with Christ in their culture, then neither will Christ identify them as faithful witnesses together with Him. However, Rudwick and E.M.B. Green point out the difficulty in the accepted interpretation that ζεστός, γλιαρός, and ψυχρός are to be applied absolutely to persons, as denoting spiritual fervour.²¹ They show that: such usage is almost unparallel and that 'cold' and 'hot' seem to be presented as indifferently desirable alternatives. If coldness is commended it can hardly mean apathy. They argue that the water-supply of Laodicea was warm, and suggest tentatively that a contrast was implied with the hot medicinal waters of Hierapolis and the cold pure waters of Colossae. So, the church was judged for its ineffectiveness rather than its half-heartedness, for the barrenness of its works rather than its spiritual temperature²². This explanation seems to be correct since it connects the original context, and in general correctly related to the local circumstances of the city of Laodicea.

¹⁸ Beale, David G.K *Revelation: A short commentary*. Michigan: UK Eerdmans publishing. 2015.107.

¹⁹ Beale. *Revelation: A short commentary* 109.

²⁰ Craig, S. Keener. *The NIV Application Commentary*. Pub Zondervan: Michigan Grand Rapids, 2000.

²¹ Hemer, C.J. (1986). *The Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia in their Local Setting*. England U.K. JSOT Press. Sheffield Academic Press Ltd. The University of Sheffield 1986. 203

²² Hemer. *The Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia in their Local Setting*. 2023-207

The imagery of Christ being on the point of ‘vomiting’ the lukewarm Laodiceans out of his mouth (μέλλω σε ἐμέσαι ἐκ τοῦ στόματός μου ‘I am about to vomit or spit you out of my mouth’) is vivid, and evokes the nauseant effect of drinking lukewarm water. It implies rejection. This Lord’s decision in verse 16 is a result of the church at Laodicea being neither cold nor hot. It was sickeningly lukewarm. The Lord would have preferred it to have been extreme in its indifference or its zeal. Instead, it was lukewarm enough to deceive people into thinking that it was a church of God, and so disgustingly lukewarm about divine things as to nauseate the Most High.

17: For you say, “I am rich. I have prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked.

Given the material wealth of the Laodicean city as discussed in chapter 2, this community was claiming to be spiritually rich as well. These members of John’s congregation wrongly thought they possessed real affluence of all kinds, because they had amassed a fortune and become self-sufficient. The repeated use of the first-person pronoun, ‘I’ in this verse, underlines the arrogance of the assumption by individual believers. Their complacency is reminiscent of the rich farmer in the parable of Jesus (Luke 12:16-21). The claim, ‘I am rich, I have made my fortune’, features in Hosea 12:8, where Ephraim’s exclamation is recorded, ‘I am rich, I have gained wealth for myself’. To this outburst the prophet replies, ‘Ephraim has given bitter offence, so his Lord will pay him back for his insults’ (verse 14).

As for the Laodiceans, the situation is deeply ironic. Those who thought that they had all they needed are shown to be spiritually bankrupt. They (the Greek pronoun, σύ, ‘you’, is emphatic) have collectively become a ‘pitiful wretch’. This expression translates two Greek adjectives, ταλαίπωρος ‘wretched’ and ἐλεεινός ‘pitiful’). The former is used in the NT only here and at Rom. 7:24. Three further adjectives are used to describe the condition of this church. The

Laodicean community is also said to be ‘poor, blind and naked’ (πτωχὸς καὶ τυφλὸς καὶ γυμνός ‘poor and blind and naked’). The article (ὁ, ‘the’), hidden in the translation, governs all five descriptions; and this demonstrates that five aspects of the same condition are being presented here. The final three adjectives almost certainly contain allusions to the city’s local scene (Vs 18). Despite its financial wealth, it is ‘poor’; despite its medical school and famous eye-salve, it is ‘blind’; and, in the face of its flourishing textile industry, it is ‘naked’.

In contrast to Christ’s assessment of being wretched, pitiful, poor and blind, the church of Laodicea was complacent, considering itself to be in good condition because of its material prosperity. Revelation uses the words rich and wealthy to describe those who have prospered by association with the corrupt and ungodly world system (6:15; 13:16; 18:3, 15, 19), and the charge is that the Laodiceans as in other cities of Asia Minor have allied themselves with the local economic forces linked there to idolatry and immorality.²³ The Laodicean idolatry is pointed to by observing that not only are the words rich and wealthy in this verse applied elsewhere in the book to unbelieving merchants who have intercourse with idolatrous Babylon (18:3, 15, 19), but also overtly to those who make gains by involvement with idolatry (Rev 6:15, alluding to the idolaters of Is 2:10-21; and 13:16). It is a consistent theme of Scripture that wealth has to be handled carefully and stewarded to God’s glory or it will consume its owner (Mat. 6:24; Luke 6:20-21, 25-26; 12:13-21; 16:1-15; Acts 5:1-10; 1 Cor. 4:8; 1 Tim. 6:5-10, 17-19). Such an all-consuming pursuit of wealth leads to idolatry. This does not only abuse the glory of God the creator of all creation but corrodes his fellowship with the church.

Rev 3:17 is however not an endorsement of poverty just like in the OT times where part of God’s blessing on Israel was its prosperity. The scripture, however, draws our attention to how we use what God has given us. A Christian’s prosperity is measured by how much he gives

²³ Beale. Revelation: A short commentary 107-109.

rather than by how much he has. But as expressed in this scripture, the Laodiceans had fallen into the same trap the Israelites did, for the self-congratulatory words attributed to them here are quoted by Christ from Hosea's prophetic condemnation of the Israelites, "And Ephraim said, 'Surely, I have become rich, I have found wealth for myself ... they will find in me no iniquity'" (Hos. 12:8). Hosea exposes the fact that Israel has prospered through dishonesty (12:7) and engaged in idolatry (chapter 1-2), indeed assuming that it was the idols that brought this prosperity (2:5, 8). Hosea declares that God has in truth found them not rich but worthless (12:11).

The Laodiceans were likewise prospering, probably due to their participation in idolatrous and ungodly business practices, but Christ, like Hosea, exposes the truth in 3:17. Whereas their counterparts at Smyrna, though materially poor, were spiritually rich (2:9), the compromising Laodiceans are materially rich but spiritually bankrupt, especially due to their compromise with idolatrous economic institutions. They judged themselves to be in good condition, but Christ reveals the truth that they are poor, blind, and naked. This is probably in ironic reference to Laodicea's well-known resources, in which they placed too much trust: its banking system, its school of ophthalmology, its famous eye salve, and its textile trade. This is a representative of three areas of life in which the ancients placed too much trust: money, clothing, and health institutions, all of which were indissolubly linked to idolatry.

Evidently, the Laodicean church's true situation was not as it seemed, so it needed "the Amen, and the faithful and true Witness" (3:14) to tell it the hard truth. The epistolary doxology had presented Jesus as "faithful Witness" (1:5). His reliability in attesting the truth is especially relevant to a church so blinded by smug self-deception. Jesus is uniquely reliable because he is "the Amen", the firm one who fulfills all of God's promises and threats (2 Cor. 1:20). Jesus is also the "Beginning of the creation of God". Paul's letter to the Colossians (indirectly

addressed to Laodicea- 4:6) called Christ the “beginning” as the originator and ruler over all creatures great and small (Col. 1:15-18). In Revelation “the beginning”, with its complement “the end,” expresses the eternity of God, who stands sovereign over history’s whole span as “the Alpha and Omega, the first and last, the beginning and the end” (Rev 22:13; 21:6). Jesus calls himself “the Beginning” to shame their self- reliance and to turn them to his infinite resources. Laodicea’s boast in its wealth reveals how thoroughly seduced this chant with her immoral wealth (Rev 18:3) and boasts “I sit as a Queen and I’m not a widow, and will never see mourning” (18:7). What Jesus finds repugnant as repugnant as the city’s tepid, polluted, nauseating water sources (3:16), is the church’s superficial complacency, resting on delusion that fiscal affluence will insulate it from need. Laodicea’s delusions of wealth are symptoms of potentially terminal “affluenza”²⁴.

3:18: I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire, so that you may be rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself and the shame of your nakedness may not be seen and salve to anoint your eyes, so that you may see.

In this verse, the Lord advises the self-satisfied Laodiceans to obtain important spiritual resources for precisely those areas in which they assume no need exists. The purchases are to be made specifically from the risen Christ (παρ’ ἐμοῦ, ‘from me’), who alone can provide them.

First, to combat their poverty, they are encouraged to buy ‘gold refined in the fire’: that is to say, they need spiritual wealth, which has been tested in the fire of the refiner and found to be trustworthy, as opposed to their financial and complacent state of well-being. The Psalmist in 66:10 testifies of God’s refining work experienced in the testing, refining and challenging conditions of the people of Israel. Testing in the fire symbolizes experiences whose purpose is

²⁴ Dennis Edward Johnson, *Triumph of the Lamb. A commentary on Revelation*. Phillipsburg: New Jersey P& R Publishing Company 2001. 90-91

shaping and drawing people to God (Isa. 1:25). This also means genuine faith, which when tested in the fire, results in praise, honour, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ according to 1 Pet. 1:7.

Secondly, the Laodiceans are exhorted to purchase ‘white robes’ to wrap themselves so to protect from spiritual nakedness. To overcome their compromise with the world, they must buy white garments to cover their nakedness especially by not becoming stained by idols (3:4-5; 6:2; 19:8). Uncovering the shame of your nakedness is language employed in God’s accusation of Israel and other nations for participation in idolatry (see Isa. 47:3; Ezek. 16:36; 23:29; probably also Isa. 20:4; cf. Exod. 20:26). The prophetic idiom is repeated here also to highlight the idolatrous nature of Laodicea’s sin. The Apocalypse refer to white robes or garments in a natural sense although the context is still figurative. The robes symbolize righteousness (Rev. 3:4-5; 4:4; 7:9,13,4). The white colouring of the garments in question can be contrasted with the black fabrics manufactured by the Laodiceans in their prosperous textile industry (Mounce 1998, 111). Furthermore, in biblical thought, nakedness is symbolic of judgement and humiliation. This is expressed in Isa. 20:1-4 (cf. 2 Sam. 10:4; Mark 15:20; John 19:23–24); while the reception of fine clothing is a mark of vindication and honour (Gen. 41:42; Es. 6:6–11).

The third purchase charged upon this community is salve for the anointing of their eyes, for they are spiritually blind. This is to combat their blindness or lack of spiritual discernment, especially so they are not deceived about the lethal danger that idol worship posed for their faith. Once again, the local situation is reflected in this reference to eye-salve. The famous school of medicine at Laodicea, where the ophthalmologist Alexander Philalethes practiced exported a powder which was extensively used to make ointment for the eyes²⁵. The Greek

²⁵ Smalley, *The Revelation to John*. 25-29

word κολλ (ο)ύριον ‘salve’,) is the diminutive of κολλούρα which perhaps means a roll or loaf of bread. The ‘Phrygian’ powder seems to have been applied to the eyes as a ‘doughy paste’²⁶.

The negative connotations of the last three adjectives in verse 17b (‘poor, blind and naked’) are balanced in Vs 18 by three positive exhortations, although the order of the second and third commands, in relation to the epithets in verse 17, is reversed. Each exhortation, giving the reasons for the ‘purchase’ of a gift from Christ, is set out in a purpose clause, using ἵνα ‘that’) with the subjunctive. The Laodicean Christians are to buy genuine wealth (gold) to become truly rich, white robes to cover their humiliation with honour, and salve to regain their spiritual perception.

The symbolic significance of the substantives (gold, garments and eye-salve) gives an overall meaning that the great spiritual inadequacy in this community is to be redressed by gifts from God through Christ. However, the reference to spiritual perception is characteristically Johannine, since the language of seeing (as of hearing) in John’s corpus is very important. The writer wants his audience to ‘see’ who Jesus really is, and to respond to his true identity as being both one with God and one with us (Rev. 1:11; 22:4; John 9:39; 20:29; 1 John 3:2; also Rev. 22:17, 18; John 5:24; 8:47; 1 John 1:1, 3).

The gold, the white garments, and the eye salve all point to Christ. We note in the initial vision Christ was attired with a golden girdle, His hair was white like wool, and His eyes were like flaming fire, which correspond strikingly to the three products mentioned in this verse. Their illness can be remedied only through a renewed relationship with Christ, by buying true spiritual resources from Him (cf. Isa. 55:1-3). Only in Christ are true riches, clothing, and insight. Indeed, Jesus himself established the fount of all true wealth through His own faithful witness in the midst of the suffering of the cross. He is all the Laodiceans really needed. Even

²⁶ Mounce, The book of Revelation. 11-15

if they lost all else, they would still have everything they really need, but without Him they have nothing.

3:19: Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent.

The tone of this oracle now changes abruptly. Here we see the risen Christ assuring the Laodicean church that the severe rebuke which he has just administered stems from his love. In Vs 19, the intention is to summon the believers as a whole and individually (Vs 20) to repentance and renewed faith.

The clause ‘I punish and discipline those whom I love’ is loosely drawn from Prov. 3:12, which is quoted almost verbatim in Heb. 12:6. Here the ‘Lord’ of Prov. 3:12 is understood to be the exalted Christ, and the proverb is made his own. It is introduced by the emphatic pronoun, ἐγώ, ‘I’). The theme of ‘educative discipline’ is common in wisdom literature, where the need to chasten one’s children out of care for them (Prov. 13:24) is applied to the relationship between God and his people (Prov. 3:11–12; cf. Deut. 8:5; Job 5:17–18; Ps. 94:12–13).

The use of the verb φιλω, ‘I love’) in this text is remarkable. There is probably no great difference in meaning between this word and the other verb in the NT meaning ‘to love’ (ἀγαπᾶν), which is used in Prov. 3:12, quoted here. But elsewhere in Revelation (see 1:5; 3:9) the verb used of Christ’s love for people is precisely ἀγαπᾶν; and the same verb is employed in the lxx and the NT (except at John 16:27) of God’s love for us. However, at John 11:3, 36 and 20:2, φιλεῖν, ‘to love’ is used of the affection of Jesus for Lazarus and the beloved disciple. The expression and use of this exceptional and ‘emotional’ verb φιλεῖν, (‘to love’) in this context is a ‘touching and unexpected manifestation of love to those who deserve it least’ among the seven Asiatic congregations²⁷

The two verbs ἐλέγχω καὶ παιδεύω, (‘I punish and discipline’) represent two stages in one

²⁷ Beale. Revelation: A short commentary 109-111.

process. The negative aspects of the believers' chastisement are balanced by the positive intention of educative discipline on the part of Christ. John 3:20 bring out the use of ἐλέγχειν, 'to punish' or 'to convict'. (c.f John 8:46; 16:8; also Eph. 5:13; 2 Tim. 4:2). The choice of the verb παιδεύω ('I discipline') is probably influenced by its appearance in the lxx of Prov. 3:11, the verse which precedes the one alluded to in this passage. In Rev. 3:19 it includes the thought of 'rousing' or 'stirring'.

The Laodicean community is urged, in view of Christ's warning, to 'be in earnest, and repent'. Its lukewarm spiritual character is to be replaced by a genuine enthusiasm for the faith (ζήλῳ, 'be in earnest'); and its members are to 'think again' about their present condition, and actively renew the character and moral praxis of their Christian lives. The literal meaning of μετανόησον 'repent' is to 'change the mind' (Rev. 2:5; 3:3).

The threat of judgement on the community and the summons to repentance are inseparable from Christ's love. They are followed by the promise of immediate table-fellowship in Vs 20. The balanced theme of salvation through judgement, here and in all parts of the Johannine corpus, is characteristic and constant.

3:20: Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If any one hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me.

This verse focuses on individual believers who belong to the church at Laodicea. The tense of both verbs (stand and knock) points to a present, continuing action on the part of Christ. He is standing there reaching out to the Laodiceans, as He is always standing at the doors of the hearts of those believers who have become cold in their love and enmeshed in the pursuit of what this world has to offer. This is an invitation, not for the readers to be converted, but to renew themselves in a relationship with Christ which has already begun, as is apparent from Vs. 19 "those whom I love, I reprove ... be zealous ... and repent". Vs 20 alludes to the cry of

God's heart toward those whom He loves. He calls them to dine with Him, to return to the fellowship they knew in days gone by.

The vision here becomes intense, as it is brought before John's very eyes; note the commanding ἰδοῦ 'see'), which introduces the manifestation. The tenses of the verbs in this sentence are significant. Jesus is 'standing' (ἔστηκα, 'I have stood') at the door; and this suggests that he has been there for some time. Meanwhile he 'knocks' (κρούω, present, 'I am knocking'); and this implies a repeated and gentle request for entry. The risen Lord is pictured in this scene in an attitude of unexpected and vulnerable contempt (Mounce, 113) with those who had in their self-sufficiency excluded him from their fellowship. Christ waits for a personal relationship to be restored. Theologically, this presentation is in line with the prophetic view in Judaism of a God who seeks friendship with his wayward people, and holds out his hands to them continually in love despite their recalcitrance. (Isa. 65:1-2; Hos. 2:16-23; 11:7-9; 1 Pet. 2:4-10). A conditional clause follows, using εἰν ('if') with the subjunctive. This means there is no certainty that a response to the voice will be made. We have heard the 'voice' (φωνή) of Jesus already in the Apocalypse, in the vision of the Son of man in glory at the very beginning of this scene (1:10, 12, 15). Unlike in 1:15 where, his powerful voice sounded like the roar of many waters, here in 3:20 the voice of Christ is intimate, pleading and personal (Cf. John 10:3, 16; 18:37b).

If the call of Christ is heeded, entrance will be made and close table-fellowship will follow (cf. John 14:23; 6:53-56). At this moment Jesus seems to be the guest rather than the host (contrast Luke 12:36-37). To share a common meal in the Middle East, then as now, is a sign of intimacy and trust. The meal suggested by the verb δειπήσω, 'I will share a meal') is the δεῖπνον ('meal' or 'supper'), which was the main repast at the end of the day, and a principal occasion for

hospitality. As such, it was a leisurely and not a hurried affair (John 14:23).²⁸

To explain the scene of Jesus entering through the open door and sharing a meal, the following conclusions are possible;

The reference may be eschatological, and speak of the return of Christ, either imminently or in the future. (note 'I am standing at the door'). This accords with the eschatological atmosphere of the following verse (21), where the conqueror is promised a place beside the exalted Christ on his final throne of triumph. It also echoes fairly directly the parable of Luke 12:35-38, in which the faithful are depicted as 'opening the door' to their master, returning from the wedding banquet, 'as soon as he comes and knocks' Vs 36 (c.f Mat. 25:1-11; 1 Pet. 1:13; Eph. 6:4).

However, if the scope of Vs 20 is eschatological, the parousia of Jesus in question is likely to be immediate, rather than distantly future. We note this from the tenses of the verbs translated as 'I am standing' and 'knocking'; although John's eschatology is consistently balanced, and the present advent of Christ to his Church always anticipates his final return in glory (see on 22:7, 12); cf. also Rev. 2:5, 16; 3:3).

Alternatively, this verse may be linked with verse 19, and construed in association with the call to repentance issued there. That summons to think again, in other words, is implemented when the audience individually responds to the invitation to 'open the door'; and it provides the motivation for such a reaction. (Mounce, 1998. 113-14; Beale, 2005. 308-309). Going by this interpretation, the primary reference of the verse is both present and personal, not future and eschatological. Nevertheless, in Johannine thought, the one need not exclude the other.

In either case, allusions to the Eucharist may be present. John here uses a language 'resonant with Eucharistic associations to describe a coming of the Lord' which is intimate and personal. The common meal in Judaeo-Christian thought, like the 'banquet', was symbolic of the intimacy to be enjoyed in the future messianic kingdom (cf. Isa. 25:6; 55:1-3; Luke 22:30; Mat.

²⁸ Beale. Revelation: A short commentary 109-111.

26:29; Rev. 19:9). The Eucharistic setting of this verse may also be suggested by the use of the verb *δειπνέω* ('eat', 'dine'). The same verb, and its cognate noun (*δειπνον*, 'meal' or 'supper'), appears elsewhere in the NT in the context of the Last Supper (Luke 22:20; John 13:2-4) and of the Lord's Supper (1 Cor. 11:20, 21, 25). (Cf. John 6:35, 52-58; Rev. 19:17). Beasley-Murray (107) argues that the similarity of thought and language here, to that which is used in connection with the Lord's Supper, is due 'less to direct reminiscence of the Supper than to the event to which the Supper itself looks forward' (see Mark 14:25; Luke 22:28-30). Nevertheless, it is hard to exclude from the exegesis of this verse all reference to the eucharist, even if John's theology is ultimately more concerned with the sacramental, than with the sacraments themselves (Smalley, John 235-37).

The primary thought in this verse therefore is of the restoration of fellowship in the present between the exalted Christ and the Laodicean believers. But it is possible that all the other allusions and associations, to which attention has been drawn, are present as well; and we have already noticed the way in which John's eschatology, like his theology generally, overlaps. There is a reference to the appearance of Christ, in the present as well as in the future; personal response to the Lord is undertaken as a result of his demand for repentance; and eucharistic resonances do surround the promise that present fellowship is an anticipation of eternal blessedness.

3:21: The one who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, as I also conquered and sat down with my father on his throne.

The risen Christ has issued promises to 'the conqueror' (here *ὁ νικῶν*) towards the end of each preceding oracle. Now the title is explained with reference to the Lord's own conquest, and in terms of possible Christian martyrdom.

Jesus is victorious because, in his cross and exaltation, he has overcome sin and death. His conquest is also the Father's. As a result, the saints and martyrs, who have themselves been

faithful even to death, are able to share in that double victory. This verse demonstrates that they can participate with God in Christ in his sovereign rule (his 'throne'). Swete (64) points out that the parallelism is not exact, since the rewards of victory are not the same in the case of Christ and the disciples. The martyrs, Swete argues, share Christ's rule, while the Lord participates in the Father's throne. However, this is to divide untheologically the person and work of the Son from the being of the Father, with whom he is one. The kingly rule shared by the martyrs is exercised by the Godhead as a whole including the Spirit. In verse 20 the coming of Christ is in the immediate present. He invites the believer to share his life with him now. By contrast, the promise in this verse relates emphatically to the future. The faithful martyrs, in Laodicea and elsewhere, are promised that they will in the end become part of Christ's triumphant kingdom. In both contexts the language is highly symbolic.

The promise to the conqueror here relates in the first place to the millennial kingdom. Its fulfillment is enacted in the seer's vision at Rev 20:4-6, where the martyrs are seated on thrones of judgement, and rule with Christ for a thousand years. (Cf. Mat. 19:28) also Mark 10:40; (of those who love God) 2 Tim. 2:11-12. But the reign of the saints and martyrs is not limited to the millennium. That future period of time anticipates the possibilities of the everlasting kingdom of God, when the faithful will reign with him for ever and ever (Rev. 22:5). This verse is wholly eschatological. But while the reference is clearly to the future, what takes place in eternity cannot be completely detached from Christian faith and praxis, on the part of the Laodicean community, in the present.

The use of ὁ νικῶν ... αὐτῷ 'the one who conquers ... to that one 'I will give' is a Hebraism. So is the use of δώσω 'I will give', followed by the (aorist) infinitive καθίσαι, 'to sit'). See 2:7. For ὡς κἀγὼ ἐνίκησα, 'just as I have conquered' (see John 16:33) (ἐγὼ νενίκηκα τὸν κόσμον, 'I have conquered the world'); also 1 John 5:4. In the present verse, ἐνίκησα 'I have conquered'

is a historical aorist, looking back to Christ's victory as past and complete. At John 16:33, the verb νενίκηκα, 'I have conquered', in the perfect tense, regards that victory as continuing in its effects. The verb ἐκάθισα 'I sat down' is another historical aorist. Christ's conquest was accomplished by the resurrection, while his heavenly session (he 'sat down beside his Father on his throne') followed at the moment of the ascension (Eph. 1:20; Heb. 1:3; 12:2).

The seventh letter draws to its close with a crowning promise. Such is the love of the Son of man (Vs 19) that the faithful are now able to share fully in the life and victory and authority of God himself. Throughout the apocalyptic visions which follow, the nature of the divine victory becomes clear. In the ongoing struggle between good and evil, no other victory is needed than that which is won by the cross of Christ, 'faithfully proclaimed to the world in the witness of his Church. The overcomer is promised that he will share the glory of Christ's throne and reign with Him over the millennial earth. Those who follow Him in humility, rejection, and suffering will also follow Him in glory.

3:22 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

This is the seventh and last time we hear the exhortation to 'listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches.' Much as the messages to the seven Johannine churches of Asia were addressed to historical Christian communities in the first century AD, they provide challenge and encouragement to the universal Church for all time. The letter to the Laodicean church ends with a summon to obedient attention, reminiscent of similar prophetic calls in the OT which use the phrase, 'hear the word of the Lord' (Isa. 1:10; Jer. 2:4; Hos. 4:1; Amos 7:16). The same formula occurs in each of the seven letters, three times near the end, and four times at the end. Christ invites the Laodicean audience not merely to 'listen' to what is being said to the churches, but also to act upon the message. The prophetic form at this point echoes words of the historical Jesus as recorded in the synoptic Gospels, but not in John (Mat. 11:15; Mark 4:9; Luke 14:35).

Also in this verse, there occurs the explicit reference in the Apocalypse to the Spirit. The writer does not distinguish between the exalted Christ and the work of the Spirit. The revelation comes from God through Jesus Christ, and is mediated to John by his angel (1:1). Throughout the letters to the seven churches and Laodicea in particular, the voice of Christ in victory is heard as the Spirit speaks to the churches. He speaks continuously (λέγει, 'is saying' is in the present tense) to the 'churches.' In the first place, the word is directed towards the seven churches of Asia, including Laodicea. But, as with Revelation in general, the scope of the message is far reaching. Christ addresses the Church as a whole, and for all time. However, the corporate reference of 'churches' does not exclude the responsibility which the individual carries to respond to the divine command. So ὁ ἔχων οὖς ('anyone who has an ear') is in the singular. So, the hearer is individually solemnly advised to listen to the voice of the Spirit and understand what God is saying to the church.

3.5 Key Exegetical Issues

3.5.1 The Lord Jesus is the originator of God's creation

This scripture clarifies that the Lord Jesus existed before his known coming through incarnation as the beginning of God's creation (Rev 3:14). Through him all creation was made possible. Jesus therefore carries all authority over all creation and there is nothing in human wisdom that is beyond his comprehension. This understanding should trigger believers to true worship of only one God Almighty through Lord Jesus and not engaging in idolatry but rely on his supremacy.

3.5.2 Omniscience nature of the Lord Jesus Christ

Just like his father, the Lord Jesus exhibited omniscience character as he addressed the church in Laodicea in 3:15-16. This is a strong affirmation to Christians that they are following a

genuine Lord. It comes back to arresting the lukewarm character among believers bearing in mind that nothing is hidden from God. He knows the prevailing spiritual and physical conditions of the church to-date. Christians ought to align themselves to the will of God in all their affairs and stand firm in their faith decisively.

3.5.3 Sin as a barrier between God and humanity

The imagery of God spitting the church out of his mouth in 3:16 depicts rejection and separation that results from indecisive Christian behaviour which keeps believers in sin. It is also a case of idolatry where people worship creation other than the creator. The lesson is that the church should desist from sin and live a healthy relationship with God the creator.

3.5.4 Complacency and misuse of God given resources

This passage illustrates a tendency by believers to live adamantly after amassing wealth and the spiritual emptiness that comes with excluding God in one's economic and social wellbeing. They are overtaken by materialism contentment and forget the spiritual wealth that comes with keeping in good fellowship with the creator. This is a big spiritual catastrophe that is addressed in this passage whereby believers should stop deceiving themselves but keep under the feet of God who has all authority over wealth and other resources.

3.5.5 Material possession is not necessarily a sign of God's blessing

Just like in the case of Laodicea, contemporary believers still assume that material possession is an absolute sign of God's blessing. However, many Christians shift attention from the creator and to their material possessions. They spend time laying strategies to sustain and making more wealth. It takes much of their time that it drains them spiritually since it stands in their place of worship. This scripture is God's voice calling the modern audience to detest from centering their life on worldly comfort and luxury and find true riches from Jesus Christ our Lord. There

is a lot of untold dishonesty as people put trust in riches in the disguise of celebrating Christ yet the intentions are very different.

3.5.6 There is wealth whose source is not Godly

This scripture also factors in the amassing of wealth through idolatrous means. The exegesis shows that the Laodiceans were likely prospering, probably due to their participation in idolatrous and ungodly business practices, but Christ, like Hosea, exposes the truth in 3:17. Whereas their counterparts at Smyrna, though materially poor, were spiritually rich (Rev 2:9), the compromising Laodiceans are materially rich but spiritually bankrupt, especially due to their compromise with idolatrous economic institutions. There's need to discern and decipher into massive amassing of wealth by certain believers lest the church falls prey and fall into the same trap the Laodiceans found themselves. This calls for seeking guidance from God, praying and cleansing all transactions made by the body of Christ in and outside the church setting for a prime purpose of glorifying and worshipping God with our wealth.

3.5.7 Jesus Christ fills the spiritual bankruptcy and covers nakedness

The Lord desires and is willing to heal all people from all forms of spiritual bankruptcy and only him can do that. There is no other valid intervention for true salvation and cleansing apart from Jesus Christ. Whoever wants to overcome compromise with the world must acquire spiritual resources to cover their nakedness by accepting Jesus Christ whose salvation is free and available for them who open for him the door to their lives.

3.5.8 Jesus' relentless desire for every one's freedom in eternity

This passage guides in verse 19-20 that there is a godly way of reprove and discipline through suffering that comes from sinning. The Lord desires that we repent and live according to his will; for the Lord reproves him whom he loves as a father does to a son whom he delights

(Prov. 3:12). The Lord stands at the door not occasionally but consistently knocking on peoples' life's doors for a prime purpose of delivering them from destruction but gain freedom in eternity. Eternal Kingdom is real and the Lord desires that away from world life, everyone should gain life eternal. That is why he never gives up on sinners. All believers should be urged in view of Christ's chastening to be in earnest repentance and replace the lukewarm character with genuine enthusiasm for faith and true salvation. This is because, Jesus is victorious. At his cross and exaltation, he overcame sin and death. His conquest is also the Father's. As a result, believers who remain faithful up to death, are able to share in that double victory.

3.6 Exegetical synthesis

This exegesis presents a message from the throne of God through the Lord Jesus who reveals them to John (Vs 14). This is a reflection of the broader theme of the sovereignty of God in human history. This passage is a demonstration of a wake-up call to the audience in Laodicea to turn from their lost mindset of idolatry and complacency.

This is a case of a people who knew the ways of the Lord but chose otherwise. They were taken over by prevailing worldly treasures as described in the economic endowments of Laodicea and human wisdom. They prioritized them over the all-knowing creator who thinks they are overly blind and lost. The passage further reveals the truth and status of their deeds in relation to their faith (15-6). The revelation of God's plan for the church in Laodicea as showed in verse 16 is both present and apocalyptic. It entails the theme willingness to suffer for Christ in the path to ultimate victory instead of the short cuts of the worldly treasures.

Lukewarmness is a killer of faith and church growth and the Lord is against it. He provides options for true salvation and bailout plan for every believer because he is a loving saviour. The idea is that Christians should not adopt a lifestyle that leads others to destruction but naturally witness for the Lord so that many can receive his glorious salvation. Verses 19-20

tell of a saviour who is willing to mend relations with every willing sinner so that they don't miss eternal life.

It is an apocalyptic prophecy for all believers who fail to heed to the teachings and expectations of God. It also helps the individual Christian to act in in the present by heeding to the Lord's counsel and teachings as shown in verse 18-20.

The apocalyptic prophecy ends with a demonstration of heavenly fellowship in verse 21 for those who heed to the teachings and counsel of the Lord featuring a new creation, as fulfillment of biblical prophecy.

CHAPTER FOUR: NATURE AND DRIVERS OF LUKEWARMNESS IN THE CONTEMPORARY CHURCH

4.0 Introduction

This section highlights the manifestation of lukewarmness in the contemporary church, driving factors and impacts godliness.

4.4.1 Bandwagon worship

The Luke warmness nature is very evident in the modern church (modern audience). Many Christians believe in God by way of attending worship services on designated days but their actions outside church show opposite of worshipping God. The National Population and Housing Census 2014 places the total number of Christians at 80% of the population. But most importantly those who confess that they are saved, the number is increasing. This is synonymous to alarming rates of immorality. This means that there is no ripe time for God to spit the church like now. They believe in the gospel and believe in the world at the same time. It is common in our society that the same numbers and faces that attend Godly places of worship also attend other deity shrines in equal measures. The same people who attend worship services are involved in acts of corruption and embezzlement at their places of work to the fulfillment of prophet Isaiah's prophecy of 29:13. For example a one Pastor Aloysious Bugingo of House of Prayer Ministries Kampala stands on the alter to minister with his concubine instead of the wife he got married to in church. The Archbishop Emeritus of the church of the province of Uganda is battling a court case with a concubine with whom he sired a child. This accelerates lukewarmness among Christians to the normalcy of double standards of salvation. It becomes so hard to preach against sexual immorality in church since many big figures of the church are living the same lifestyle.

4.4.2 Syncretism

Luke warmness in church today also manifests through syncretism where Christians of sound repute are seen worshipping in shrines. For example, a one Rebecca Kadaga a mature Christian in the Anglican faith was seen giving thanks to ancestral spirits in the shrine for enabling her win elections as Woman MP Kamuli district. This was published in Daily Monitor 23rd May 2016 where the then Archbishop Stanely Ntagali expressed discontent since the Christians in church were celebrating and thanking God for her win. She instead went to media defending her act and advising followers that they shouldn't do away with ancestral worship. This promotes lukewarmness among many Christians since they look up to such big figures. More to that, Spellanza Baguma Muhenda a Christian and Woman MP Kyenjojo (2016-2021), after winning elections invited a big cult leader (Late Desteo Bisaka) in her home to give thanks for the support towards her win yet she is a re-known Christian. This is driven by greed and dire need for self-satisfaction at the cost of godliness. Such politicians think only about votes and the following and neglect the spiritual implications of paying homage to cult leaders and idolatry but it goes a long way to normalize lukewarmness among the many Christian subjects who look up to them. God said worship no other God but me Exodus 20:3.

4.4.3 Corruption and embezzlement

Corruption scandals among Christians is yet another manifestation of lukewarmness: In the Daily Monitor July 4th 2024 the Speaker of the parliament of Uganda Anita Among and Hon Kinyamatama were quoted defending Hon. Cissy Namujju MP Lwengo in her corruption cases as long as her constituents were benefiting. This is a total display of lukewarmness since these are Christians who understand God's commandments. To emphasize the corruption, greed selfish and extravagant lifestyle of Christians, only one dress of a certain Ugandan politician was valued as to buy sanitary pads for young girls in her constituency (126 million Ug Shs). It was purchased from the UK's most expensive garments and Jewelry royal shops according to

social media Grape Vine publication 7th May 2024. Seeing the poverty trends and untold misery of some Ugandans, this is way below the Christian values as taught by Jesus in Mathew 22:39 “Love your neighbor as you love yourself”. As opposed to James 3: 11-13, this is a case of both salty and fresh water coming from the same source since all these politicians are practicing Christians. This is typical of Luke warmness that disgusted God about the church in Laodicea. God’s decision of spitting out such church from his mouth is a case of judgment and punishment that is evident in our society today. This can be explained by the pandemics, epidemics and calamities befalling nations. No word of commendation was extended to the Laodicean church. They were pictured as utterly abhorrent to Christ because they were lukewarm. In referring to the church as “lukewarm” Christ had in mind that this was its permanent situation. The same consistence in Luke warmness is common today even with the increased coverage of the gospel of true salvation. Rather, the Lord is still calling on people to be decisive in believing him and serve him wholeheartedly.

4.4.4 Complacency

Just like in the case of Laodicea, contemporary believers still assume that material possession are an absolute sign of God’s blessing. However, many Christians shift attention from the creator and put it on their material possessions. They spend time laying strategies to sustain and making more wealth. It takes much of their time that it drains them spiritually since it stands in their space of worship. This scripture is God’s voice calling the modern audience to detest from centering their life on worldly comfort and luxury and find true riches from Jesus Christ our Lord. Complacency is a common driver of lukewarmness that causes a lot of untold dishonesty as people put trust in riches in the disguise of celebrating Christ. A case in point is the annual Christmas commemoration where modern Christians go about it in a way of spending on luxuries and showing off on stolen riches. They go ahead offering big in places of worship, competing on who gives much without minding about the message of salvation that

is embodied in the birth of Jesus. The pastors in the modern church equally do not rebuke such Christians because they are more interested in their money than their souls. Prophet Hosea warned against such lifestyle in 12: 8 *“Israel boasts, “I am rich! I’ve made a fortune all by myself! No one has caught me cheating! My record is spotless!”* This is being naive on God’s authority; he sees the heart and nothing is hidden from him.

4.4.5 Prayerlessness and spiritual bankruptcy

In other cases, some contemporary Christians see no need to pray because they have what they need. They shun prayer meetings and other worship sessions. For example, a one Frank Gashumba, a Christian and motivational speaker promotes the idea among his audience in many platforms that praying is for the poor. He claims that his role is only to give thanks and not praying. He enlightens that most prayer centres and places of worship are in suburbs and places for the poor not in high class residences. According to him, rich people need nothing to pray or ask from God. This idea has also been accelerated by the lockdown effect of virtual fellowships whereby most families to-date find it more comfortable to remain in their homes and follow worship sessions online. This derails their full participation and total godly bonding that comes with physical worship meetings.

Also, to note in the Christian circles are the Christian pilgrims who trek to Namugongo Martyrs’ site for annual Martyrs’ Day commemoration. For example, they engage in self-satisfying activities like alcoholism and merry making not reflecting on the life of Martyrs and the reason for their faith. This is a correlation of being wretched, pitiable, poor and blind because they real return home and remain empty and void of God’s expectations.

CHAPTER FIVE: SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH TO CONTEMPORARY CHURCH

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the significance of this research to the contemporary church explaining the Doctrinal and Practical significance.

5.2 Doctrinal significance

The Bible's authority is derived from its nature as the "Word of God" and this is a foundational belief within Christian theology and Doctrinal principles. This statement carries profound implications, not only for doctrine but also for the practical life of believers in and around the circles of the church. Revelation 3 as a whole chapter spells out the Lord's criticism to the church but most importantly God was emphasizing his character as the utmost authority and how significant it is for the church to listen and to heed to his call of repentance. In this passage, this idea is spelt out in the Lord's attributes as the Amen, the Faithful and true witness and beginning of God's creation; the nature of Christian character; corruption through materialism, God's discipline and his desire for every one's freedom in eternity.

5.2.1 Lord's attributes as the Amen, the Faithful and true witness and beginning of God's creation

This ought to be a key theological and doctrinal principle that is-: knowing authority of trinity over all creation. It makes the message of the Bible viable indicating the right source and authority of this message and the Bible as a whole. This corresponds well with other key biblical passages such as 2 Timothy 3:16-17: "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work". This is a yard stick for the church to guide society with the right message whose source is God. Rev 3:1 indicates that it is a "Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show to his servants". He made it known by sending his angel

to his servant John. Rev 22:18-19 further proves God as the source. It clarifies that “whoever hears the words of the prophecy of this book; if any one adds to them, God will add the plagues described in this book, and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophesy, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book”. Isaiah 65:16 talks about the truthful God while Rev 1:5 highlights Jesus Christ as the faithful witness, first born of the dead and the ruler of kings on earth (also Col 1:15). Rev 3:14 is therefore an embodiment of Trinity within which lies the truth that guides the church. All promises of God find their yes in Lord Jesus that is why in prayer we utter our Amen to God for his glory (2 Cor 1:20).

5.2.2 The nature of human character: The omniscient God exposes the character of believers in Laodicea as he does today

The church should stand on the knowledge that nothing is beyond God’s comprehension. This is important in fighting heresy and cults that mislead believers especially through misuse and misinterpretation of scriptures that gradually shape human nature and character. The Lord said in Verse 3:15 that “I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot”. This means that the Lord watches actions and every behaviour of humans whether he responds or not. The church should be cautious in all actions at any time and this is a timely reminder to always be in line with only Godly character. This verse helps believers at any point in life to know that their God is watching them whether in the presence of church leaders or not. The doctrinal role of the church remains to preach and remind Christians what is God’s will so that wherever Christians are, they should be able to discern and walk rightly as God pleasing believers. This will strengthen Christian values in homes, places of work, and everywhere else outside the church building. The knowledge that God knows our works should be an important tool for us to magnify God’s presence on earth.

5.2.3 Corruption through materialism

Prosperity and riches have continued to corrupt the minds and souls of believers including the church leaders to-date. The church has a doctrinal role of preaching Godly prosperity and character response to wealth. This scripture teaches believers not to worship wealth or creation but the God of creation. The complacent character that prevailed among the Laodiceans need to be addressed as guided in this passage so that the church appreciates the God who provides and enables prosperity. The bible teaches against believing that godliness is a means of gains (1 Tim 6:5-6) for this amplifies greed, slander, constant friction among believers; but teaches that godliness with contentment is great gain. This supports Jesus' assertion that "No one can serve two masters for either he will hate one and love the other or he will be devoted to one and despise the other" (Mat 6:24). Serving God and money breeds complacency among believers and the church ought to guide so that souls are not corrupted. Proverbs 15:16 teaches that "better is little with the fear of the Lord than great treasure and trouble with it" (c.f Ps. 37:16). This is why the Lord advises Laodiceans to buy true riches from him in 3:18 for only in Jesus Christ are true riches. Indeed, Jesus himself established the fount of all true wealth through His own faithful witness in the midst of the suffering on the cross. He is all the Christians really need. Even if they lost all else, they would still have everything they really need, but without Him they have nothing. Jesus also teaches believers to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and other things will be added unto them (Mat. 6:33). This means that wealth and materialism are secondary in the life of a Christian. The church and church leaders should not prioritise them over salvation through the soul-searching gospel.

5.2.4 God's discipline and desire for every one's freedom in eternity

Quite often, the church is at cross roads dealing with Christians who fall into depression and stress resulting from suffering. This has led to the creation of departments such as intercession and counselling in the church which other ministers have misused as platforms to manipulate un informed Christians. This passage guides in verse 19 that there is a godly way of reprove

and discipline through suffering that comes from sinning. The Lord desires that we repent and live according to his will for the Lord reproves him whom he loves as a father does to a son whom he delights (Prov: 3:12). The theme of ‘educative discipline’ as commonly presented in the wisdom literature where the need to chasten one’s children out of care for them should be embodied in the church and believers appreciate that it is part of Christian living. This is applied to the relationship between God and his people (Prov. 3:11–12; cf. Deut. 8:5; Job 5:17–18; Ps. 94:12–13). The reason for this chastening is total salvation and repentance that prepares Christians for eternal living as indicated 3:20-21. The process to conquer flesh, Satan, and worldliness so as to sit eternally at throne of God should not be dented. The church ought to be guided to go through difficult situations without seeking misleading worldly solutions but to be patient in the Lord. Believers should be urged in view of Christ’s chastening to be in earnest repentance and replace the lukewarm character with genuine enthusiasm for faith and true salvation.

5.3 Practical significance

5.3.1 Sovereignty of God:

Just as Laodicea, the modern community of Christians needs to listen to God who is the Amen, the embodiment of faithfulness and truth, and the one who guarantees and fulfills the promises of God. He is also the originator of the creation of God, both material and spiritual. The modern audience that is, the church today needs to take note of truthful worship knowing very well that all creation and all God’s promises still depend and are fulfilled in the Lord Jesus Christ. Amidst enormous technological advancement and economic development, the modern church needs to know that there is absolutely nothing above the will and understanding of God. We should therefore remain in true worship and obedience of the most high God. The church and society in general are faced with severe health challenges where we are experiencing outbreaks after the other. For example, the worldwide COVID 19 pandemic, cancer, hepatitis B, HIV

among others. This is occurring amidst the high-tech medical facilities and economic developments but the high technology advancement has not saved people from numerous deaths. This brings us to the issue of total dependency on God as the Amen, the faithful and the beginning of all God's creation as indicated in 3:14 also related to words of the psalmist in 24:1.

In line of human limitation for instance, in the case of HIV/ Aids prevalence, medics have done several researches and intervention but none has established the origin, proper medication or conclusive solution. This indicates that we are dependent on God's sovereign power. Even amidst discovery of ARVs and other interventions, there is evidence that HIV is on the increase. For example, in Ruwenzori Diocese; in administrative areas of Fort portal city, Kabarole district, Kyenjojo. The minister for Primary Health care was quoted on December 3rd 2023, calling up on the church as the only remaining option to influencing behavioral change so as to help the fight against HIV prevalence.

In another human challenge, Hon. Henry Musasizi state Minister of State for Finance, Planning and Economic Development also called up on Church's intervention / church leaders to fight corruption. This was on 25th June 2024 in Rubanda district during launch of Muko Catholic SACCO. His call came following arrest of MPs Cissy Namujju MP Lwengo District and Micheal Mawanda of Igara West. All this indicate man's limitation to solve worldly challenges and human sin but instead resort to God who has absolute power.

5.3.2 Need for true Spiritual riches

Many world powers today are centres of trade, wealth and health advancements just like the biblical Laodicea. Just as Laodicea was famous for cloth and dying industries, banking services, many countries and cities today pride in armory, industries, information technology and several manufacturing plants. These have been a source of sin in form of environmental

pollution, human displacement and social injustice. Wars and deaths have also increased. With a known medical school and medical services that produced eye ointment, the Lord still instructed Laodicea to buy from him ointment for their eyes so that they could see the truth. There is untold spiritual blindness in our societies today and the church in particular. Many Christians are being led astray by false prophets and pastors. The church has become a source of destruction and den of false teachings. In John 9: 39 *“I entered this world to render judgment – to give sight to the blind and show those who think they see that they are blind”*. Only Lord Jesus can give satisfactory vision to look into God’s promised glory and how precious it is more than worldly treasures.

Much as the church and individual Christians are at the verge of being spitted by God; some church leaders have stood out as mouth pieces of God. Some Christians are equally respondent.

Archbishop Emeritus Henry Luke Orombi is on record to call believers to order of repentance and return to God. After all obedience is better than sacrifices and the heart that repent God shall not despise (Ps 51). The church ought to heed to this Lord’s call of repentance and find true spiritual riches by living a life of self-denial and self-sacrifice and focusing on the life after death by focusing on eternity because earthly riches will easily be eaten by moths (Mathew 6:18). The Christians should focus on treasures of heaven since they will give accountability of their lifestyle when they finally leave. When the church focuses on the life after here, they will shift attention from worldly things and align their lives with Godly Kingdom as the Lord advised in Mathew 6:33. After all the Kingdom of God is not a matter of enjoying worldliness but Godliness (Rom 14:17). Romans 12:2 also calls up on the contemporary Christian to avoid lukewarmness by not conforming to the patterns of this world. Christians should aim to be exemplary in character so that they can draw many to the Kingdom of God (Mathew 5:13-16; 7:15:20).

5.3.3 God's discipline and forgiveness

According to 3:19, God still corrects Luke warmness. His purpose in discipline is not to punish but to bring people back to him. The word of God in proverbs 3: 12, says: *“For the Lord corrects those he loves, just as father corrects a child in whom he delights”*. Hebrews 12:6 *“For the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes each one he accepts as his child”*. To the modern church in state of Luke warmness, this scripture calls on them to total devotion with God. God may discipline us to help us out of uncaring attitude using loving discipline. We can avoid God's discipline by drawing near to him again through repentance, confession, service, true worship, studying and applying his word in our lives and our environment. Salvation and total commitment to the gift of the Holy Spirit can re-ignite our zeal for God when we allow him to work in our hearts. According to Rev 2:5 God calls us to repentance *“Look how you have fallen! Turn back to me and do the works you did at first. If you don't repent, I will come and remove your lamp stand from its place among the churches”*.

According 2 Chronical 7:14, God promises forgiveness, healing and attention to prayers as a result of repentance. The contemporary church can be healed from all sins and calamities befalling our society if we repent. Through Prophet Ezekiel 18:21, God promises total forgiveness and long life when we turn to him. God takes no pleasure in death of any one (Ezek 18:32) and this is a good motivation for the church to mindfully repent and re-focus all attention to Godliness.

Also, according to Rev. 3:19; Christians ought to appreciate God's rebuke and corrections, it's not in bad faith. Many Christians who don't understand God's rebuke and discipline run away from churches to seek solutions from witchdoctors and false prophets who mislead them and cause them further destruction. The contemporary Christians need to appreciate that not all challenges come from Satan. God in his authority also brings challenges our way to test and

purify our faith. Old Testament believers like Job and David understood this and they would stick to God no matter the situation. They would repent and mend relations with God until his time of forgiveness and restoration.

5.3.4 The Lord's deliberate desire of redemption

Verses 20-21 speak to the modern church to leave the door open to Christ amidst quest for material wealth, education advancement and economic development. Whoever advances physically and spiritually simultaneously with Jesus Christ does not worry about missing Jesus' knock. However even for the closed doors, Jesus is standing at the door of hearts knocking because he wants to save and fellowship with all humanity. He is lovingly patient with every sinner that he politely knocks other than breaking in and entering with destruction. This a hopeful message that the church needs today that Jesus Christ is consistently calling us to himself. It comes in handy in the church today where we find many Christians who have lost hope. These include youths who have sinned and beyond forgiveness by their families for example those lost in drugs abuse, sexual abuse and alcoholism. Instead of committing suicide and camping in rehabilitation centres, Christians need to know that Jesus Christ is open for them. For example, John Babirukama a prominent digital marketer and son of a Canon in the Anglican church committed suicide on Friday May 31st 2024 on grounds that he had failed to marry and produce children of his own. Also, a 29-year-old Christian cyclist set himself on fire over a bribe in June 2020. Jesus in Mathew 11:28 calls up on all who labour with heavy ladens to come to him for rest. This should be the focus of evangelization other than the prosperity gospel that keep Christians thirsty, naked and hopeless. Jesus allows people to choose whether to open for him or not. This scripture is an appeal to modern church and all audience to allow Jesus Christ in our lives and fellowship with him here on earth and in the glorious eternity to come as he promises in 3:21 that *“those who are victorious will sit with me on my throne, just as I was victorious and sat with my father on his throne.* John 14:23 also affirms this.

5.3.5 Hearing, listening and heeding to Holy Spirit

Revelation 3: 22 calls up on any one with ears to hear and listen to the spirit. It should be a prayer for all of Christians in the current day to gain spiritual ears to listen and understand the word of God whenever and wherever it comes our way so that we can dwell in fellowship with the Holy Spirit. This is what is required of us and it is what glorifies God. There is so much noise in the contemporary church that hinder Christians from hearing what the Holy Spirit says to the Church. This is sometimes orchestrated by statuses and activities in the church, by church leaders and Christians. For example, church politics and economics that tend to overtake affairs of the church than focus on people's souls and the position of God. A case in point, when it comes to electing Bishops or creating new Dioceses, senior members of the church go out of their Christian ways to ensure their interests go through. This includes money exchanging hands, exchange of words, forgery of academic documents and many things that distort Christian testimony and manipulate the glory of God. Many Christians get discouraged and find themselves as a neglected flock since the would-be shepherds are promoting divergent agendas. For example, the recently nullified election of the bishop elect of Luwero Diocese left a lot of noise and dust among the Christian community that they can hardly hear what the Spirit says. This message is therefore timely in church that believers should use their spiritual ears to hear and practice what the Holy Spirit is saying to them.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

This research set to exegete Revelations 3:14-22 driven by the growing lukewarmness in the contemporary church despite the evangelization efforts among Christian communities. A commentary method proceeding verse by verse was used with an aim of drawing Christian values that can be adopted to address the lukewarm characters in the church. Contextual analysis was also used to identify nature and drivers of spiritual lukewarmness in the contemporary church and finally the research significance was reached.

The research notes that life is governed in the spirit. Therefore, spiritual luke-warmness is a determinant of a Christian's relationship with God and the world. It has been the driver of prosperity gospel and vice versa. It is detestable by God and a cause of absolute destruction to individual Christians and the church at large. Just as the scripture's main appeal, this research concludes by calling the contemporary church to a decisive spiritual order; arguing them to feed well on the word of God and listening to his voice. There is grace sufficient for everyone who repents and commits to Godly life, an assurance of eternity and a victorious throne for those who hear, listen and commit to Jesus Christ Rev 3:21. This can largely be achieved through enhanced obedience to God, intentionally fighting the lukewarm character, teaching against the prosperity gospel, the church openly condemning evil, instituting Christian education, leading an exemplary godly lifestyle and character as well as promoting love, forgiveness and reconciliation.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Andy, Manning. *The Problem of Lukewarmness*. Journal of Evangelical Visitor LXXV 8 (April 16, 1962): 8.
- Barclay, William. Cited in Andy Manning. *The problem of Lukewarmness*. Journal of Evangelical Visitor LXXV 8 (April 16, 1962): 8.
- Beale, David G.K *Revelation: A short commentary*. Michigan: UK Eerdmans publishing. 2015.
- Charles, H. Spurgeon. *Earnest warning about Lukewarmness*. Grand Rapids: Baker Akademics. 2020.
- Cobb, J.B (1997). Cited by Roger S. Gottlieb. *Spirituality: What it is and why it matters*. New York: US. Oxford University Press (2013) 102-111.
- Craig, S. Keener. *The NIV Application Commentary*. Pub Zondervan: Michigan Grand Rapids, 2000.
- Dennis Edward Johnson, *Triumph of the Lamb. A commentary on Revelation*. Phillipsburg: New Jersey P& R Publishing Company 2001.
- Gordon, D. Fee. *Revelation. A New Covenant Commentary*. Cambridge: United Kingdom. The Lutterworth Press 2011.
- Gottfried, Osei-Mensah. *God's message to the churches. An exposition to Revelation 1-3*. Accra: African Christian Press 1985.
- Hemer, C.J. (1986). *The Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia in their Local Setting*. England U.K. JSOT Press. Sheffield Academic Press Ltd. The University of Sheffield 1986.
- Michael, Gorman. *Elements of Biblical Exegesis*. Revised Ed. Grand Rapids: Baker Akademics. Oxford University Press. (2010) 113-129.
- Robert, H. Mounce. *The book of Revelation* Michigan: U.S.A. Eerdman's Publishing Company Grand Rapids 1998.

Silberman, L.H. *Farewell to O AMHN: A Note on Rev 3:14*. Journal of Biblical Literature - JBL 82 (1963) 213-15.

Smalley, S. Stephen. *The Revelation to John. A Commentary on the Greek Text of the Apocalypse*. London: U.K. Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (SPCK), 2005.

Samuel, Davies, (1961). *The Dangers of Lukewarmness in Religion*. Cited in the Puritan Reformed Journal 2 Issue 1 (2020) 246.

Stanley, E Porter. *Why Laodiceans received lukewarm water. Revelations 3:15-18*.

Tyndale Bulletin 1987.

Turner, C.H. *Journal of Theological Studies*. Oxford University press January, .27.106 (January, 1926) 113-129.

APPENDICES 1: PLAGIARISM CERTIFICATE

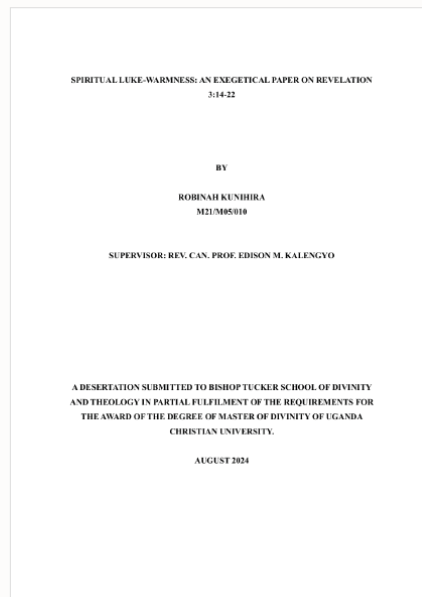


Digital Receipt

This receipt acknowledges that Turnitin received your paper. Below you will find the receipt information regarding your submission.

The first page of your submissions is displayed below.




Submission author: Robinah Kunihira
Assignment title: Quick Submit
Submission title: Academic Research
File name: Final_Thesis_22.8.2024.docx
File size: 110.34K
Page count: 67
Word count: 20,152
Character count: 100,201
Submission date: 22-Aug-2024 09:11AM (UTC+0300)
Submission ID: 2435952437



Copyright 2024 Turnitin. All rights reserved.

Robinah Kunihira

Academic Research

-  Quick Submit
-  Quick Submit
-  Uganda Christian University

Document Details

Submission ID

trn:oid:::1:2987859977

Submission Date

Aug 22, 2024, 9:11 AM GMT+3

Download Date

Aug 22, 2024, 9:16 AM GMT+3

File Name

Final_Thesis_22.8.2024.docx

File Size

110.3 KB

67 Pages

20,152 Words

100,201 Characters





13% Overall Similarity

The combined total of all matches, including overlapping sources, for each database.




Filtered from the Report

- ▶ Bibliography
- ▶ Quoted Text

Match Groups

-  **129 Not Cited or Quoted 12%**
Matches with neither in-text citation nor quotation marks
-  **14 Missing Quotations 1%**
Matches that are still very similar to source material
-  **0 Missing Citation 0%**
Matches that have quotation marks, but no in-text citation
-  **0 Cited and Quoted 0%**
Matches with in-text citation present, but no quotation marks

Top Sources

- 13%  Internet sources
- 3%  Publications
- 6%  Submitted works (Student Papers)

Integrity Flags

0 Integrity Flags for Review

No suspicious text manipulations found.

Our system's algorithms look deeply at a document for any inconsistencies that would set it apart from a normal submission. If we notice something strange, we flag it for you to review.

A Flag is not necessarily an indicator of a problem. However, we'd recommend you focus your attention there for further review.