

21. The Book of Revelation—3:18-22

(10/14/20)

We are currently in Revelation chapter 3 studying the 7th and final letter Jesus dictated to the 7 churches of Asia Minor—the Letter to the Church of Laodicea.

The church of Laodicea represents the liberal church of the last days—a church that basically denied Jesus Christ.

This church back then was an unsaved church that Jesus wasn't even a part of—as we see in verse 20, He was outside the walls of their church knocking to be let in to fellowship with them (that they would get saved and enter into communion with Him).

The same is true of liberal churches today—they are churches that call themselves Christian churches but are unsaved—churches that Jesus wants to be in a saving relationship with but at the moment is knocking to be let in.

Revelation 3:14 (NKJV)

¹⁴ "And to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write, 'These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God:

Now at this point in all but 2 of the letters (Sardis and Laodicea) there is usually a 'commendation' of some sort describing the good things that were going on in the church the letter was addressed to—but here there is no commendation at all.

Instead the Lord moves right into the 'condemnation'—

Revelation 3:15-16 (NKJV)

**¹⁵ I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot.
¹⁶ So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth...**

As we said last week—Jesus gives this church a shocking rebuke when He told them that because of their ‘lukewarm’ spiritual state—He was going to vomit them out of His mouth.

We studied what being *lukewarm* is all about last time in our study of Revelation so go online and check out the study if you weren’t here.

Revelation 3:17 (NKJV)

¹⁷ Because you say, 'I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing'--and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked--

This church was equating their physical prosperity with their spiritual health and wellbeing.

Israel did this in the Old Testament, and many do it today—if the church is prospering financially, they believe it is proof that God is blessing them because they are right with Him.

But Jesus is here condemning this very thing—their wealth and pride had blinded them to their true spiritual condition.

Wealth can often give a false sense of God’s hand being upon a church or an individual’s life.

At this point, Jesus gives the ‘**Correction**’ (cure) for their spiritual sickness—

Revelation 3:18 (NKJV)

¹⁸ I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, *that* the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see.

Jesus, the Great Physician, comes to this sick church, a church that is completely oblivious to the fact that they are sick spiritually, with an accurate diagnosis of their spiritual condition—and now in verses 18 and 19 He gives them the cure.

“I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich”

Jesus—“*My council (prescription) is this—that you ‘buy’...*” (not literally because everything God has for us is a free gift, the Lord is being somewhat sarcastic—He is speaking to a group of people that think money can buy them anything—as such, they had put money in the place of God in their lives.)

This is reminiscent of what God said through the prophet Isaiah—

Isaiah 55:1-3 (NKJV)

¹ "Ho! Everyone who thirsts, Come to the waters; And you who have no money, Come, buy and eat. Yes, come, buy wine and milk Without money and without price. ² Why do you spend money for *what is* not bread, And your wages for *what* does not satisfy? Listen carefully to Me, and eat *what is* good, And let your soul delight itself in abundance. ³ Incline your ear, and come to Me...

“I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich”

1 Peter 1:7 (NKJV)

⁷ that the genuineness of your faith, *being* much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ,

(Talk about the goldsmith and the process of refining gold in relation to our faith.)

Psalm 19:7-11 (NKJV)

⁷ The law of the LORD *is* perfect, converting the soul; The testimony of the LORD *is* sure, making wise the simple; ⁸ The statutes of the LORD *are* right, rejoicing the heart; The commandment of the LORD *is* pure, enlightening the eyes; ⁹ The fear of the LORD *is* clean, enduring forever; The judgments of the LORD *are* true *and* righteous altogether. ¹⁰ More to be desired *are they* than gold, Yea, than much fine gold; Sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. ¹¹ Moreover by them Your servant is warned, *And* in keeping them *there is* great reward.

The call to the Laodiceans is to abandon the riches of the world and embrace the true riches of God—the Word of God and faith.

Jesus is saying, “*Give the Word its proper place in your church—and then believe and obey what it says*”—that’s true gold! That’s true wealth!

Revelation 3:18 (NKJV)

¹⁸ I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; **and white garments, that you may be clothed, *that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed...***

As we said to open this letter—Laodicea was a textile town, famous for the production of black outer garments made from the glossy black wool of a special breed of sheep that grazed around the city.

Everyone in town wore these black outer garments—but Jesus is saying, “*Your black outer garments are indicative of where you are spiritually! What you need are white garments (spiritually speaking—the white robes of Christ’s righteousness) which only I can clothe you with.*”

All of their good works (liberal churches are obsessed with social programs) which they had clothed (wrapped) themselves in (helping the poor, feeding the hungry, clothing the naked...)—were all meaningless to the Lord because they were done in the energy of the flesh and apart from Jesus.

He didn’t even acknowledge them (in His eyes they were naked), in fact these works of self-righteousness were an abomination to the Lord.

Isaiah 64:6 (NKJV)

⁶ But we are all like an unclean *thing*, And all our righteousnesses [good works of the flesh] *are* like filthy rags...

Revelation 7:14 (NKJV)

¹⁴ ..."These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

Zechariah 3:3-4 (NKJV)

³ Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and was standing before the Angel. ⁴ Then He answered and spoke to those who stood before Him, saying, "Take away the filthy garments from him." And to him He said, "See, I have removed your iniquity from you, and I will clothe you with rich robes."

Revelation 3:18 (NKJV)

¹⁸ I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, *that* the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; **and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see.**

As we said to begin this letter—there was a medical school in Laodicea that was famous for an eye salve that it had developed, which was exported all over the Greco-Roman world.

The Laodiceans were very proud of their eye salve that helped so many to see—yet ironically, they never realized that they themselves were spiritually blind!

The church at Laodicea is typical of the modern liberal church which is blind to its true spiritual condition and needs and content with beautiful buildings and all the material things money can buy.

Matthew 15:14 (NKJV)

¹⁴ Let them alone. They are blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind leads the blind, both will fall into a ditch."

Matthew 23:16 (NKJV)

¹⁶ Woe to you, blind guides, who say, 'Whoever swears by the temple, it is nothing; but whoever swears by the gold of the temple, he is obliged *to perform it.*'

2 Corinthians 4:4 (NKJV)

⁴ whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.

How easy it is for the devil to blind religious people to their true spiritual condition—especially when they have wealth and use it on social programs like helping the poor (Matt.19:23-24).

Revelation 3:19 (NKJV)

¹⁹ As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent.

The Lord still loved this church back then and He loves these liberal churches today—but His love won't save them unless they repent and receive Jesus! (John 3:16—God's love can't save; it can only provide a way by which a person can be saved...)

This word **zealous** means—“*to be hot.*”

This is Jesus' last word to His Church, His final message to His last day's Church—He says, “**Be zealous**”—“*Be hot!*”

He is ordering this church to forsake its lukewarmness and get on fire for God—and to do that He says they must—“**Repent.**”

J.Vernon McGee—

“This church needs repentance more than all the others. And the message of repentance is for the contemporary church, but you will not be popular if you preach that, I can assure you. It is not too late even for those in this church to turn to Christ...”

So many Christians use Revelation 3:20 as their gospel presentation—

Revelation 3:20 (NKJV)

²⁰ Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me. [Comment]

But if you look at Revelation 3:20 you would see that before the word ‘**Behold**’ there is a space, and before the space there is a **period**, and before the period there is the word ‘**repent**’—

Revelation 3:19-20a (NKJV)

¹⁹ As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent...²⁰ Behold, I stand at the door and knock...

There can be no salvation without repentance.

There are many pastors that don't believe repentance is necessary for salvation—they say a person only needs to *believe* in Jesus to be saved (James 2:19).

I have even heard some of them say that telling people they must repent before they can believe and be saved—is to teach salvation by works!

Whenever someone says that to me—I simply direct them to the words of Jesus Himself on the subject—*"I tell you...unless you repent you will all likewise perish."* (Luke 13:3)

The Greek word for **repentance** is *metanoia* which literally means—*"to have a change of mind"*—but a change of mind that leads to a change of direction or action.

It's important to note that the concept of repentance permeates the Scriptures in both the Old and New Testaments—let's just look at some of the N.T. examples.

1. *'Repent' was the first word out of the mouth of John the Baptist (Matt.3:1-2)*
2. *'Repent' was the first word out of the mouth of Jesus (Matt.4:17)*
3. *'Repent' was the first word out of the Apostle's mouths (Mark 6:7,12)*
4. *Repentance was an integral part of the Gospel that the Church was commissioned to preach to the world (Luke 24:46-47)*
5. *'Repent' was the first word of Peter's invitation on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:38)*
6. *Repentance was an essential part of Paul's gospel presentation (Acts 26:19-20)*

Repentance is a word we don't hear too much anymore today in the church—it sounds archaic and out of step with the culture.

And so, in an effort to be hip, cool, relevant and politically correct many pastors have removed it from their preaching and teaching altogether.

Their favorite evangelistic verses then become:

John 3:16 (NKJV)

¹⁶ For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

Revelation 3:20 (NKJV)

²⁰ Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.

In John 3:16, the Lord Jesus declares God's love for the human race—but is not giving us a gospel presentation to use to bring them to Himself for salvation.

Those who try to use it as a gospel presentation neglect to mention (either thru ignorance or oversight) how Jesus preached *repentance* at other times as being *necessary* for salvation (as we just cited earlier).

And with regard to Revelation 3:20—we just saw that Jesus commanded the Laodicean church to repent as a prerequisite for Him coming into their hearts to have fellowship with them.

Some pastors say, “*We need to preach like Jesus preached and stress the love of God—not all of this ‘hellfire’ and judgment stuff!*”

Well, you'd better read the gospels again—Jesus talked more about hell than He talked about heaven or even love! (Comment)

There can be no salvation without repentance—that's what Jesus told us—

Luke 13:3, 5 (NKJV)

³ I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish... ⁵ I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish."

But where is that kind of preaching today?—it has been replaced by a modern, politically correct gospel.

You see, it's not fashionable to preach a gospel that demands that people give up sins and worldly pursuits to deny themselves, take up their cross and follow after Jesus with all their hearts and lives (commitment).

The gospel that we hear being preached today is, *"Come to Jesus and you'll be rich. Come to Jesus and He'll take away all the pain of life and make you happy."*

The gospel being preached today is a cross-less gospel that tells people to simply believe some facts about Jesus and He'll forgive you all your sins and give you heaven—and you don't have to worry about giving up anything (alcohol, drugs, sex outside of marriage...etc.)!

But that is not the gospel that Jesus, or the Apostles preached because—that is not the true gospel!

"How do I know if I've truly repented?"—there will be certain 'fruits' in your life that will bear witness to the genuineness of your repentance.

Matthew 3:1-2, 7-8 (NKJV)

¹ In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, ² and saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!"... ⁷ But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, "Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? ⁸ Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance..."

So true biblical repentance always involves change.

It is true that sometimes change takes time, but true repentance desires it with all the heart and keeps seeking God for grace and strength to change—it isn't just lip service.

Revelation 3:20 (NKJV)

²⁰ Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.

Notice Jesus invitation to this church—“**If anyone opens the door...**”

He is not speaking to the church in general—it is too far gone; the only hope now is to rescue individuals out of it before it's too late (before judgment comes).

The liberal apostate church of these last days is not going to be saved and taken to heaven at the rapture before the world enters the Tribulation.

I'm not saying that individual liberals won't be saved—hence Jesus' invitation to individuals in this church—“*If any of you hear My voice and open the door of your heart to Me I will come in and save you!*”

It's just that I don't see the liberal apostate church of today suddenly becoming evangelical.

To the church of Philadelphia Jesus promises to remove them from the earth *before* the Tribulation Period begins—He makes no such promise to the church of Laodicea.

But rather, Jesus said it will be going into the Great Tribulation Period—and I believe will partner with the Antichrist by becoming part of the Antichrist's 'world church' led by the False Prophet as spoken about in Revelation 17.

The Challenge/Promise

Revelation 3:21-22 (NKJV)

²¹ To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame 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." ' "

Once again, Jesus reference to the overcomer is talking about a person with genuine saving faith (1John 5:5).

Alright, let me conclude with this—again Revelation 3:20:

“Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in...”

Notice the Lord didn’t say, “*Behold I stand at the door and kick it open.*” He said, “*Behold I stand at the door and knock*”—it’s up to us to open the door and let Him in.

There was an English artist named Holman Hunt who attempted to capture this scene on canvas—the painting now hangs in St. Paul’s Cathedral in London.

He pictured Jesus standing at the door of a neglected cottage knocking to be let in.

One author—

“Thistles have grown up the front wall and grass covers the entry walk. Vines, weeds, and rusty hinges in the painting convey a sense that nobody cares about the cottage or its residents. But standing at the door of this cottage is the kind King, Jesus Christ, holding a lantern from which the painting derives its title, “The Light of the World.” The lantern light casts a warm glow over the front of the run-down home. And with His upraised right hand, Christ is knocking on the door.”

When he first painted the picture in 1854, he invited his artist friends to come over and critique it.

After gazing at the painting intently one of them said to him, *“Holman, you have made a terrible mistake! You left off a very important part of the door!”*

Holman replied, *“What are you talking about?”*

“The handle, Holman—you left the handle off of the door!”

“Ah,” Mr. Hunt replied, “That was on purpose. You see this door is a picture of the human heart, and the handle of the door is only on the inside, for it’s up to the one within to respond to the knock of Jesus.”

Jesus will not force His way into a heart—He won’t barge in where He’s not welcome.

He’s a perfect gentleman who knocks and says, *“If you’ll respond to Me and open the door of your heart to Me, I’ll come in and dwell with you—but the choice is up to you.”*

J.Vernon McGee—

“This is the picture of Christ we have in Revelation. He stands at the door and knocks. He will not crash the door. Regardless of what some extremists say on this matter of election, the Lord Jesus has moved heaven and hell to get to the door of your heart, but when He gets there, He will stop and knock—You will have to open the door to let Him in.”

And even though I believe the proper interpretation is an invitation for unbelievers to open the door of their hearts to Jesus so that they can be saved—it could be used also as an illustration of how many Christian’s hearts have cooled to the Lord and have forsaken Him.

Another author put it this way—

“How often I have seen Christians whose lives are represented by the neglected cottage in Holman Hunt’s famous painting. Where the fire of passion once filled the windows with the light of vibrant life, now only the dimness of passivity is evident. Once the pathway was packed firm and the grounds weeded and trimmed for the frequent, welcomed visitor, but now the threshold is rarely crossed. And the door that was always ajar in anticipation of the Master’s fellowship is now shut and locked from the inside against a friend who is now regarded as a stranger.”

Jesus loves you and is saying to you, “*It’s not too late to repent, it’s not too late to invite Me back into your heart and renew the warmth of our fellowship with one another.*”

Why has your relationship with Jesus grown cold?—because your faith has grown cold.

The solution—you need to turn away from the world and its practices (ungodly TV shows, music, video games, movies etc.) and get back to Jesus—in other words REPENT and do your first works (Rev.2:5—“return to your first love!”)

You need to renew your relationship with Jesus by doing the things you used to do when you first opened the door of your heart to Him.

Which means, get back to church and to your spiritual disciplines like your morning devotions.

Start listening to worship music again—fill your day with praise—God inhabits the praises of His people.

You also need a fresh infusion of the Spirit to awaken your faith—that only comes by filling your heart and mind with God’s Word—

Romans 10:17 (NKJV)

¹⁷ So then faith *comes* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.