

BEHOLD I STAND AT THE DOOR AND KNOCK

By

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Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me. —Rev. 3:20.

Christ Jesus the Lord knocks at the door!

What condescension!

The King of glory after His suffering, after His reproach, after His death, after His resurrection and after His exaltation at the right hand of God the Father, knocks. Knocks at a door.

John saw Him in His exalted status in that remarkable Lord's Day appearance (Rev. 1:10). In that glorious appearance Christ Jesus manifested all the attributes of his deity. He is the First and the Last, the Way, The Truth and the Life. As the mighty Conqueror he holds the keys of death and Hades.

Remember the days of His earthly sojourn. He manifested His glory by His works. He stilled the fierce waves of Galilee from their immense height to a mirror finish and the wind ceased also. He but said to them "Peace be still," and they bowed down to Him in obedience.

When they came to arrest Jesus in the garden, Peter jerks a short sword from under his tunic and slices off a man's ear. Our Lord reaches out touches the severed ear and restores it without stitch, scab or scar.

Yet, this same Jesus knocks!

Now all of this must be kept before us when we read this text. We cannot lose sight of who this One is. He is the mighty God. Before Him all men must stand for judgment. "I am He that lives, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, A men," (Rev. 1:18).

But He is **standing** at the door as He knocks. Consider the difference between sitting and standing. Standing signifies activity and movement. To sit is to rest. To stand indicates work is being done. There is an urgency in this posture. This will not go on for a long time. If there is not a quick response from within, He will pass on. And while He is standing there before the door about to turn and go away, He is doing two things *knocking* and *speaking*.

To knock means to strike something with a sharp blow. This is usually done with the knuckles of the fingers on a solid part of the door or house, when we wish to signal someone of our presence at their door. The people inside are busy or asleep or whatever. The knock is to awaken or to attract their attention.

He is also calling. "If any man hear my voice, and open the door..." There is in His voice authority and power and blessing. When John describes His voice in chapter one, he says "His voice was as the sound of many waters." Yet, Christ said to John, "Fear not." Christ is both speaking and knocking at the door.

What is meant by the door?

The world is top heavy with sermons preached upon a misunderstanding of the door of this text. Thousands of messages are preached upon this text every year. In most of these the text is not expounded but *confounded*. There is no exegesis only dogma. Man follows man. Every generation builds upon the false foundation of those who have gone before. Ingrained false teaching is as hard to drive out of sermons, books, or minds as flies from the kitchen.

The most common meaning given to this text declares the door is the door to the heart of the unsaved sinner. This meaning is **pressed upon the text**, for it cannot be derived from it. In this view of the text Christ is standing at the heart of the sinner. He wants to go into the sinner's heart to save and indwell him. So the Lord stands knocking very gently at the heart of the sinner, asking the sinner's permission to enter.

This is then expanded. It is not to be thought to be a specific sinner's heart. That would be too narrow. It is not any sinner's heart but it is rather **every** sinner who hears the gospel. Thus this passage is said to teach that Christ Jesus is calling and knocking at the door of the heart of every sinner.

But wait!

Even this is too small. It is not just the heart of all the sinners who hear the gospel. No! It is the heart of **all the sinners of all time**. From one end of creation to the other. This heart is so big as to include all the men of all ages—the total mass of humanity! In this view of things the zoom in is out of the question. The wide angle is insufficient. Only the all encompassing fish-eye is acceptable. Here enter Lenski, Barnes, Mathew Henry, Pulpit Commentary and hordes of other commentaries with nauseous repetition.

Think of that!

This all comprehensive door of fallen humanity which is sinful, depraved, dead! One huge door to the mausoleum of the race. And marvel of all, Christ the Prince of **Life knocks** at this door and waits for the dead to rise up in response to his calling and knocking, for we are told, he can do nothing to help them! Such is considered to be great evangelistic preaching by the religious masses. It especially thrills the Arminian. He swims in this perverted idea like an amoeba in a drop of pond water.

And what is wrong with this?

Everything!

It is a horribly grotesque theology, rotting from the core out. Shall the Lord of Glory who owns the keys of death and Hades knock at the door of the house of death? Shall He who shall call the dead, small and great, to stand before Him, knock? Shall He who gives eternal life to whomsoever He will, merely invite sinners to open to Him? Shall **He who alone can open** the heart (Acts 16:14) only knock? I ask, shall He

stand outside the door of this massive necropolis and expect the death-bound inmates (bound with a death a thousand times more fast than the bond of physical death) to bestir themselves, flip open their coffins, and fumble with the rusty vault lock so as to let in the Prince of Life? Surely no one can fail to see how deformed is such a doctrine which tries to place Christ at the death door of the lost race seeking a response where none can be given.

No matter what the men say of the text, we reject instantly this June bug exegesis.

What then is the proper interpretation?

The first thing to be considered is the context. The Lord here addresses these seven churches (Re. 1:11). He is depicted as walking among the lamp stands. This indicates His headship over all of His churches. Note He does not speak of **The Church!** He does not tell John to write to the Church of Asia, or England, or America. This is both unbiblical and anti-biblical. To use such terms is but to bow to Catholicism, visible or invisible! So the context demands that we understand this passage in the light of the glory of Christ who is the light Giver of every true church or assembly.

Here are seven letters to as many churches (Re. 1:3). Each letter is a unit within itself. The Lord closes each letter with "**He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches,**" (Cf. 2:7,11,17,29; 3:6,13,22). This means you cannot take verse twenty out of the middle of the letter to Laodicea and make it a little epistle all its own. This verse pertains to Laodicea and not to Philadelphia, or Pergamos, although we readily admit it may be applicable, to any church which has the same problems as Laodicea had. Nor should anyone get the notion that this warning was thrown in as a little evangelistic salt to prevent this epistle from becoming doctrinally rancid. This is a church message sent to an assembly of saved people about the condition of that church, and therefore it does not refer to the salvation of lost sinners! He is not calling and knocking at the door of the sinner's heart, but He is knocking on the door of the assembly.

Of the commentaries which I have consulted on this text, Trapp is best. He put his finger on the pulse of it. While B.H. Carroll, Stevenson, and Seiss are worlds better than those mentioned above, they do not attain unto Trapp who says succinctly: "And open the door...By teachableness and obedience. This is not spoken of the first act of conversion ...but of the consequences of it."

But why is the promise in the singular if this verse pertains to the whole assembly? Because there are always situations where the whole church is guilty of some departure from the truth, but the repentance is only partial (Rev. 2:16). This insures that those who do repent will be restored to full fellowship, even if the majority of the assembly does not.

In this text the Lord of the churches is on the outside of this assembly (never to be confused with church buildings which are churches only by metonymy) because of their spiritual luke-warmness. Other things have crept in, things which will snuff out the light of the Holy Spirit and write Ichabod upon the door. This means the Lord will no longer indwell this church, Mt. 18:20, which is the essence of a church. His knocking, speaking, and standing before the door of the assembly of Laodicea warns them of impending danger, for He is about to disconstitute this church. No church can long remain a church of Christ when they refuse to hearken to His voice and refuse to answer His knock at their door!