

Affirmation: It is true. I stand at the door of your heart, day and night. Even when you are not listening, even when you doubt it could be Me, I am there: waiting for even the smallest signal of your response, even the smallest suggestion of an invitation that will permit Me to enter. Amen.

“OPENING THE DOOR TO THE NEW YEAR!”

Through the apostle John in Revelation 2—3, Jesus addressed seven letters to seven churches in Asia Minor. They were individualized letters of instruction, rebuke, and encouragement to the local congregations. To the last church, the lukewarm church in Laodicea, Jesus made this urgent plea: “Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me” (Revelation 3:20).

The idea of Jesus standing at a door and knocking is often used as an illustration of Jesus’ offer of salvation to individuals: if you would only “open your heart’s door” and let Jesus into your life, all will be well. But in Revelation 3:20, Jesus is not pleading with an individual to be saved; He’s seeking admittance to a church! It’s alarming to think of Jesus standing outside of the church and knocking, but that’s the position He was in. The Laodicean church had shut the door on the Head of the church; they were smug in their prosperity, but Jesus was left standing in the cold. He was an outsider to the hearts of the entire congregation.

Most of the seven letters contained a compliment, a complaint or criticism, a command, and a commitment from Jesus. But the church of Laodicea, like their spiritually dead sister church in Sardis, merited no words of approval from Jesus. The Laodiceans were guilty of self-reliance, self-righteousness, and spiritual indifference. Even worse, the church was unaware of their wretched condition.

To the congregation at Laodicea, Jesus issued this scathing criticism: “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. You say, ‘I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.’ But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked” (Revelation 3:15–17).

In their proud, self-satisfied, and spiritually blind state, the church of Laodicea was useless in God’s kingdom. Using figurative language, Jesus issued His command, beckoning the members of the church to exchange their counterfeit righteousness for genuine righteousness (Revelation 3:18). He called the church to be zealous and repent (verse 19).

Christ’s appeal was heartfelt and urgent: “Listen! I am standing at the door and knocking! If anyone hears my voice and opens the door I will come into his home and share a meal with him, and he with me” (Revelation 3:20, NET). The Lord’s plea was also personal. He spoke to individuals using singular words like anyone, his, him, and he. He was inviting everyone in the church to experience intimate fellowship with Him. And even though His desire was for the whole church to respond and open the door to Him, ultimately it was up to the individual to decide.

Jesus knows that not everyone will answer His invitation and open the door to a relationship with Him. Many, like those living in Laodicea, will choose to reject His call. Lukewarm, and with hardened hearts, they will remain blind to the fact that they have accepted a false righteousness (Hebrews 3:7–8). To these Jesus will say, “I never knew you, depart from me” (Matthew 7:21–23). Sadly, they will not enter the kingdom of heaven.

During His ministry on earth, Jesus went to great lengths to demonstrate that righteousness comes to us as a gift through faith alone. Having Christ’s righteousness, by grace through faith, is the only way to enter the kingdom of heaven (Romans 3:24–25; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Ephesians 2:4–8).

When Jesus said, “I stand at the door and knock,” He was inviting the members of the Laodicean church to recognize their miserable spiritual condition and receive His authentic gift of salvation. Like the apostle Paul, the Laodiceans needed to realize their absolute dependence on Christ: “What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that

I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith” (Philippians 3:8–9).

To those who would open the door, Jesus promised a close fellowship, pictured as enjoying a meal together. And He offered this great reward: “To the one who is victorious, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I was victorious and sat down with my Father on his throne” (Revelation 3:21). These words were Christ’s commitment to the Laodicean church.

Today Jesus continues to say, “I stand at the door and knock!” To churches who are filled with nominal Christians, He sends out His earnest invitation for full fellowship. The One who holds the keys to the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 16:19; Revelation 1:18; 3:7) calls us all to hear His voice and open the door so that He can come in and share an intimate union with us. To those who respond, Jesus Christ guarantees the open door of eternal life and the reward of ruling with Him in heaven. To God be the Glory. Amen.