

TEXT SERMONS

SERIES: REVELATION CHAPTERS 1-3

Message #11

"THE EXCLUDED CHRIST"

Text:

Rev. 3:20

"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."

Jesus Christ is a Gentleman! He is not a door crusher – He does not force admittance, He patiently knocks and waits. There are some extremely important knocks in the Bible. Here are three of them:

- *There is a knock that is never in vain.*
It is a knock that we make on heaven's door when in need. "Knock and it shall be opened unto you." (Matt. 7:7) This is the door of mercy; no sinner ever knocked at the door of mercy in vain.
- *There is a knock that is always in vain.*
It is when the knock is too late! "When you knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us, He shall answer, I know you not." (Luke 13:25) Many who thought themselves good enough will find themselves outside at the last, for they have never been "born again" (John 3:3,7). They do not "belong to Christ" (Mark 9:41). They are "none of his" (Rom.8:9), therefore they knock in vain.
- *There is a knock that is often in vain.*
It is the knock of the Savior Who is ignored: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock." The door must be unbolted from the inside. It is this knock that we meditate on in this message.

In Revelation, chapter one, John paints a pen portrait of the Son of God and concludes his description with Jesus' own words, "I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death." (Rev.1:18) Yet the One who has the keys is seen outside a closed door knocking, in our text. There is a sadness about that scene. Jesus, in addressing the church in Philadelphia earlier in the chapter, said that He "opens and no man shuts; and shuts and no man opens." (Rev.3:7) However, here in Rev. 3:20 He is standing before a shut door! Again, to the same church He said, "Behold, I set before you an open door" (Rev.3:8) and yet the Lord Jesus Himself is facing a shut door! How can this be? What is the meaning of this?

Let us examine this well-known verse for the purpose of understanding if it has a meaning for us today. We begin by considering the verse as a proclamation by Christ.

THE PROCLAMATION OF CHRIST.

"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." (Rev.3:20)

The Language of The Proclamation.

This statement is an announcement by Christ and begins, like most very important announcements, with an attention-getting word, an arresting word, "Behold!" It is the language of urgency. Today, when making a special pronouncement, we say, "Attention!" That is what Jesus was saying. John exclaimed early in the ministry of Jesus, "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29 and 36) Or, in today's vernacular, "Attention! The Lamb of God."

The Location Of This Proclamation.

This proclamation must not be isolated from its context. Therefore, let us consider the location of it in relation to the message that precedes it.

It is located at the end of the letter to the church in the city of Laodicea.

This is the very church that said, "I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing." (Rev.3:17) Evidently, they felt they were well endowed and did not need Christ either! He is seen here as the crowded-out Christ. How many churches are there that act as though they are self-sufficient and have crowded Christ to the perimeter of their activities?

It is located at the end of the seven letters to the seven churches.

This could be an indication that the problems that the Lord Jesus addressed in the various churches, were the result of ignoring Him. Think of the conditions that Jesus addressed in five of the churches, Smyrna and Philadelphia excluded, for they had no problem that was pin-pointed by the Lord. Here is the list:

Ephesus - lovelessness. They had left their first love.

Pergamos – libertinism. They tolerated false doctrine.

Thyatira – laxness. They tolerated a false prophetess who taught immorality.

Sardis – lifelessness. Their name was one of fame but they were dead.

Laodicea – lukewarmness. They were neither cold nor hot.

The seven churches were literal churches in existence when Jesus wrote the letters to them. However, as some have suggested, they may also be representative of the various periods of church history up until the return of Christ. Many Bible teachers have suggested that the Laodicean church characterizes the present day church and that the age ending attitude of

Christendom has shut Christ out. He did ask, "When the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?" (Luke 18:8)

The language and location of Jesus at the end of the letter to Laodicea is certainly unusual and demands our attention and serious meditation.

THE POSITION OF CHRIST.

"Behold, I stand at the door and knock."

Of the many artists' conceptions of Christ that have been painted during the centuries, none has appeared more frequently than the one of Him standing outside a door knocking.

STANDING

Notice that He is standing. "I stand at the door." That is, He is not afar off; He is near. Standing implies that He is waiting, He is patient. He does not come and go; He does not sit; He stands. Sitting is passive, standing is active; His posture is one of expectation and availability. He is seen as being available but ignored.

KNOCKING

And He knocks. "I stand at the door and knock." Jesus is seen knocking, not battering. Knocking disturbs sleep, interrupts activities, invades privacy, stirs lethargy, This is not a single tap but a continuous action and speaks of earnestness and insistence.

A closed-out Christ signifies resistance. If a saint chooses to live selfishly and sinfully, it is because they turn a deaf ear to the sound of the Savior at the entrance of their daily lives. Open to Him in the morning; live with Him all the day!

OUTSIDE

He is on the outside of the door. The problem with the church at Laodicea was that Christ was not considered an "Insider" but an "Outsider." He was not invited into their midst but was outside in the mist!

WHERE IS CHRIST TODAY?

- *He Is Outside The Door Of The World.*

John 1:10 tells us, "He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not." Christ is excluded from His world today. Were He to appear visibly before the world leaders at the United Nations, they would not want Him. Were He to offer His peace program they would reject it. Were He to appear before the United States President and Congress would they welcome Him and His remedy for our nation's ills?

- *He Is Outside The Door Of The Sinner's Life.*

While Revelation 3:20 is primarily addressed to churches generally and to the church in Laodicea specifically, it has a secondary application to the sinner as well. This verse has been the text of many evangelistic appeals. Do not miss the words "If any man" (kjv) ; "If anyone" (nkjv). He is addressing the individual here.

John 1:11 presents a similar situation: "He came to his own, and his own did not receive him." That is, He presented Himself to all collectively and was rejected. The next verse is an appeal to the individual: "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name." (Jn. 1:12)

- *He Is Outside The Door Of Some Homes.*

My grandmother had a plaque on the wall of her bedroom, over the dresser. It read, "Christ is the Head of this home; the unseen Guest at every meal, the Silent Listener to every conversation." She lived by that saying.

There are many homes, comprised of professing Christians, where Christ is not the Head; where He is not recognized as the Guest at every meal and where conversations do not reflect the awareness of His presence. Why the disintegration of the home? Why the disarray and dismay in so many Christian homes? Christ has been

crowded out. He is outside the door knocking!

- *He Is Outside The Door Of Some Churches.*

For the most part, the church at Laodicea was so busy, there was so much activity, the church was so occupied with other matters, that communion with the Lord was ignored and Jesus is seeking communion and fellowship with the individual who will hear His voice and give place to His holy presence.

Inside many churches today, there is little or no communion with the Lord Jesus. The people gather and go through the motions of a “service” but Jesus Christ is not the central focus of the meeting, the ministering or the message. Paul warned Timothy about such when he said “In the last days” there would be those who have “a form of godliness” but deny its power. (II Tim.3:5)

Many congregations are entertained, but not edified. They are feeding on that which appeals to the flesh but are not feasting upon the Bread Of Life. The Head of the church gave the church the mission of being the lights in the world, but for many, the world has gotten in and put The Light out – outside the door!

Illust. Two little girls were looking at the picture of Christ standing outside the door knocking. One asked the other, “Why don’t they let Him in?” The other replied, “Maybe they are down in the basement and can’t hear Him!” Many are down in the cellars of self-centeredness and sin and do not hear His knock. Like Samson, they are going about their religious exercises but do not know that the Lord has departed from them. (Judges 16:20)

“O Jesus, thou art standing
Outside the fast-closed door,
In lowly patience waiting
To pass the threshold o’er.

Shame on us, Christian brothers,
His name and sign who bear.
O shame, thrice shame upon us,
To keep Him standing there!”

The Excluded Christ desires to be the Included Christ; included in our world, hearts, homes and churches. Listen now, to His petition for admittance:

THE PETITION OF CHRIST.

“If anyone hears my voice and opens the door I will come in.”

There are two conditions that must be met in order for Christ to enter. First, there must be spiritual perceptivity and second, there must be spiritual receptivity.

PERCEPTIVITY IS REQUIRED – “hear.”

He said, “If anyone hears my voice.” We are told that He is outside “knocking.” Then He is said to be speaking: “If anyone hears my voice.” Jesus does not knock with His knuckles; His knock is His voice. The knock is not literal, it is vocal although not audible. It is the inward

voice of the Spirit of Christ – that “still, small voice” (1 Kings 19:12) that is heard in the conscience. The big question is not, "is God speaking," but "are you listening?"

That first knock – do you remember it? That first knock may have been when you were a child at family devotions, Vacation Bible School, Sunday School or at camp where you first heard the gospel message of how Christ died for you. The knock may have come when your mother prayed for you or when you were ill or attended that first funeral service. It may have been that time when you were in great danger and terribly afraid. It may have come in your teen-age years perhaps at a church youth function with the singing, testimonies and devotional talks that you began to think about eternal realities.

The first knock could have come when you heard the preacher declaring the Word of God; or when a friend or loved one approached you about your need of salvation; or when a total stranger thrust a gospel pamphlet into your hand; or as you listened to the radio or television speaker and were challenged to open your heart to the Lord Jesus as your Savior. Whenever it was, that first knock was unmistakable, although it may have been many years ago, you have not been successful in completely erasing it from your mind.

Until now you have not opened to Him and, although He keeps knocking, the knock is not as loud as before and the voice is very faint. I would remind you that for everyone who has heard the Good News, there is that last knock. For some. The last knock is heard when they open the door and invite the Heavenly Visitor in. For others, the last knock is heard when, after many refusals, the heart becomes calloused and the ear deaf to the sound of the knock. Yet, for others, the last knock is when death comes and the door had remained shut resulting in eternal lostness.

RECEPTIVITY IS THE RESPONSE. “open.”

“...and opens the door I will come in.” It is not enough to hear the Savior’s knock, His voice, but there must be receptivity. There must be the action of opening the door! Hearing without heeding is not receptivity but rejection. An invitation ignored is an invitation declined!

That first knock, it was sudden, unexpected, disruptive and disquieting. It caused stirrings down deep in your soul and aroused within you the sense of need. When that first knock came, you were very sensitive, tender of heart and felt the urgency to respond to the knock, but hesitated. Perhaps the hesitancy only made you bold to resist the urge to open the door of your life to the only Savior from your sin. The crisis of that initial conviction was overcome by the decision to postpone the most important decision of your life until later. You purposed that someday you would say,

“Come into my heart, Lord Jesus.
Come in today, come in to stay,
Come into my heart, Lord Jesus.”

I urge you to make that decision today, receive Him as your Savior and Lord. If you will open the door of your heart to Jesus Christ, someday He will open the door of heaven to you.

THE PROMISES OF CHRIST.

"I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me." There are two promises that Jesus makes: He promises us, if invited in, we will have His company and His communion.

HE PROMISES HIS COMPANY *"I will come in to him."* Jesus said, "I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved." (John 10:9) Here we are invited to enter into Christ. However, in Rev.3:20 we are to invite Christ into our lives. Jesus said earlier, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him." (John 14:23) Is Christ at home in your heart? When we open the door He promises to come in and to grace our lives with His presence.

HE PROMISES HIS COMMUNION

"...and dine with him, and he with Me." *The Message* expanded translation reads as follows: "I stand at the door. I knock. If you hear me call and open the door, I'll come right in and sit down to supper with you." He enters as the Guest, He remains as the Host! Fellowship with God Incarnate is the privilege of those who have heard the knock, responded to the voice and have invited the Resplendent One to become the Resident One!

CONCLUSION

Jesus is not like the Marines, looking for a few good men. He is the Sovereign of the universe, Savior of the world, standing at the door of rebel hearts desiring to enter into all who invite Him in. He awaits your invitation. He will forgive your sin, remove your guilt and give you eternal life. You can then benefit from His company and communion, even before you get to heaven! When you hear the knock, will you say, "Go away!" or "Come in today!"?

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