

## REVELATION THREE TWENTY

Intro: (This is #3 in the series, The Great Verses of Scripture.)

One of the dangers which we face in studying individual verses is the possibility of a false interpretation because we do not interpret it in the passage where it is found. Along with this we can take a single verse and come up with a strange interpretation because we have not taken the time to check it with the rest of the Word of God.

We need also to distinguish between the primary interpretation of a passage and its possible application in other ways. But, even in this, we must not take liberties with the Word of God. THE HABIT OF APPLYING BEFORE WE INTERPRET HAS NOT ONLY LED TO SOME STRANGE INTERPRETATIONS, BUT IT HAS LED TO A STRANGE IDEA AS TO WHAT IT MEANS TO STUDY THE SCRIPTURES. People will pass by the obvious meaning of Scripture in their search for some mysterious, hidden, far-fetched interpretation, which makes others feel that it is impossible to understand the Word of God.

In approaching any passage we need to ask questions like these:

- 1) Who is speaking? Is it God? Is it an apostle? Who?
- 2) To whom is he speaking? Generally there are only two choices here: Either (1) the writer is speaking to those who are the people of God, or (2) he is speaking to those who are not the people of God.
- 3) What is he saying? Let me understand the words, and then let me seek to get clearly in mind what he means.

If we are going to understand Rev. 3:20, then let us ask these questions.

### I. WHO IS SPEAKING?

A little investigation will show us that this is the last of seven letters to seven churches, It will also show us that that the writer identifies himself in each letter with some part of ch. 1 where we have a vision of our Lord. Therefore, the letter is from the Lord.

But, some careful reader will say, Why, then, does 3:22 say, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches"? The answer is in John 16:13.

### II. TO WHOM, THEN, IS THE LORD SPEAKING? Is He speaking to the people of the world, or is He speaking to His own people?

If He is speaking to the world, then this can be an invitation to salvation. If He is speaking to His own, then we will have to interpret it in another way.

Here again we note something interesting.

- 1) In v. 14 we read, "And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write." BUT--
- 2) In v. 22 we read, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches."

So, we can say this: IT WAS INTENDED PRIMARILY FOR ONE PARTICULAR CHURCH, BUT IT WAS INTENDED EQUALLY FOR ALL OF THE SEVEN CHURCHES OF ASIA.

### III. WHAT DOES HE SAY? (Read.)

Two things immediately suggest that we have a message of the greatest importance.

- 1) The word, "Behold." It is used 26 times by John in this book, and it always precedes something which is of special importance. This is #9. Cf. 1:7, 18; 2:10, 22; 3:8, 9 (2x), 11, 20.
- 2) The Lord is pictured here as standing. This is unusual for Him now since He is seated at the right hand of God. The exceptions: Acts 7:56; Rev. 2:1 (which would seem to prove that He is standing in the vision in ch. 1 of Rev.).

Where is He? He is standing at a door.

What is He doing? He is knocking and, apparently, saying something. Note: "hear my voice," not, my knock.

What does He want? He wants in.

Why does He want in? So that He can sup with the person inside who will open the door, and so that the person inside will be able to sup with Him. The Greek verb indicates that this is for the evening meal--the most important meal of the day.

Now . . .

### IV. WHAT DOES HE MEAN?

Let us be very clear on this: HE IS NOT TALKING ABOUT SALVATION! This is not a salvation verse. He is addressing Himself to a church, and to churches.

Before we can see the point of this verse, we need to take another look at the letter. What was wrong with the Laodicean church?

It seems to have been an orthodox church. At least, nothing is said about false doctrine. And it seems to have been a busy church. He says, "I know thy works" (v. 15a). But it

was a lukewarm church, an indifferent church, self-satisfied, comfortable (they had had little or no persecution), but spiritually they were "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked."

They were a rich poor church--rich materially, poor spiritually.

Who was concerned about it? Not the pastor. And it would seem that none of the people were. BUT THERE WAS ONE WHO WAS GREATLY CONCERNED. IT WAS THE LORD JESUS!

What had happened in this church? And it is important to remember that it can happen in any church. THE PEOPLE OF THE CHURCH WERE NEGLECTING IN THEIR PERSONAL LIVES FELLOWSHIP WITH THE LORD JESUS CHRIST HIMSELF.

Just think of the picture we have here! The Lord Jesus Christ is knocking and pleading, and knocking and pleading (the verbs suggest continuous action) so that His people will realize how much He has been missing their fellowship! "Behold, I stand."

We should be knocking at HIS door; here He is knocking at our door!

An illustration: What would we do if we were suddenly to get word that President Nixon were coming to visit our church some Sunday? Think of the preparations we would make. We would decide where he would sit. We would plan every detail very carefully. We would take every precaution for his safety, etc.

As wonderful as it would be to be honored by a visit from the President, could even that begin to compare with what we are seeing in this verse tonight? And you can make this invitation just as personal as you want to because He opens it to any of His people when He says, "If any man hear . ."

The question is not, Will He come? The question is, Will I open the door to Him?

What is He trying to tell us here? May I suggest three things:

- 1) He is saying that there is nothing in any church that can satisfy Him if there is not fellowship with Him. He does not want our works unless first of all He has us!
- 2) He is saying that this fellowship must be on a personal basis--not just church fellowship. An orthodox church can die if all there is to the fellowship of the people with the Lord is that which they have together.

- We must have personal fellowship with Him alone.
- 3) I hope that this is not true of CB, but it is here for our learning anyway. If a church gets away from the Lord, as the Laodicean church had, how does it get back? By a big public meeting of confession and repentance? No. It starts when individuals in the church get out of the activity into some quiet place where they can hear the knocking and the calling, and just on an individual basis open their hearts and lives to all that the Lord has to say to them.

Concl: Note Paul's prayer in Eph. 3:17--a letter which may have been sent to the very same churches who received the book of The Revelation of Jesus Christ.

Do we have time for Him? Are we listening to His Word? Is it most important to us that we meet with Him for fellowship? Our times of public fellowship together should encourage us in our personal fellowship, BUT IT CAN NEVER TAKE ITS PLACE.

Possibly all of us need to take this verse to heart tonight--remembering that nothing is more important to Him than this, and nothing should be more important to us either.