

Knock, Knock – Revelation 3:14-22

INTRO • Read vs. 18-20 • Knock – Knock

1. Knock, Knock // Who's there? // Jesus // Jesus Who? **Exactly!**
2. That pretty well captures Jesus' message to the church at Laodicea.

V14

<sup>14</sup> “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:

1. Last week we looked at Jesus' letter to the church at **Philadelphia**.
2. 40 miles SE of there was the well-known city of **Laodicea**.
3. It straddled the same major highway & trade route that connect the western coast to the Far East.
4. Laodicea was an interesting place.
  - a. A couple weeks ago when we were looking at Sardis, we talked about the three things the ancients looked for when planting a new settlement.
  - b. Water, good soil, & easy to defend.
    - 1) Laodicea had **just 1** of those; good soil.
    - 2) When the city was first settled, it had water.
      - a) **But the wells dried up** & they had to **import** water by a 6-mile long aqueduct.
      - b) The springs they tapped were hot springs. The water had the rotten-egg odor of sulphur.
      - c) And by the time it made the 6 mile trip to Laodicea, it was **lukewarm**.
      - d) The natives of Laodicea were accustomed to drinking it, but it made visitors nauseous.
    - 3) The other problem Laodicea faced was that it had **no natural defenses**.
      - a) After being conquered easily early in its history, the city leaders devised a new policy for dealing w/threats = **Negotiation**.
      - b) Through **diplomacy** they **cut deals** w/would-be conquerors.
      - c) Laodicea developed a reputation as a city that managed to avoid war.
      - d) So: People started storing their wealth there.
        - i) A bunch of banks sprang up.
        - ii) And pretty soon, it was a rich commercial & economic center known all over the Roman Empire.
  5. Besides being a headquarters for banking, Laodicea was well-known for 2 other markets.
    - a. First The valley around Laodicea was home to a special breed of sheep
      - 1) That produced a soft but durable black wool that when the light hits it shines w/a bright violet hue.
      - 2) Weavers made a special tunic of this wool much sought after all over the Mediterranean.
      - 3) The **nickname** of Laodicea was “Tunic-town.”
    - b. Second There was a medical school in Laodicea that specialized in the treatment of eye-disease.
      - 1) They'd developed an ointment to cure the dreaded pink-eye.
  6. All of this is going to factor into Jesus' message to this church.
  7. As we look to the verse now; some of you may have already seen something unique about the way Jesus addresses them.

“And to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write,

- a. All 6 previous letters are addressed to the church **off/in** the city where they were located.
  - 1) The church of Ephesus.
  - 2) The church in Smyrna, Thyatira, Pergamos.
- b. This is addressed, not to the church in Laodicea, but to the church OF THE LAODICEANS.
- c. It's **their** church; **not Jesus'**.
- d. We'll see why that is later.

‘These things says the Amen,

8. The True One Who keeps His promises.

the Faithful and True Witness,

9. Jesus has hard things to say. They must remember His testimony is solid; it's right.

the Beginning of the creation of God:

10. Early one Saturday morning some years back, I went to the donut shop.

- a. Standing out front was a JW, holding a Watchtower magazine.
- b. He was a well-dressed man well-trained in what he believed.
- c. I ran back to my car, grabbed my Bible approached him with a grin, holding my Bible the same way he was holding his magazine.
- d. We began a discussion which quickly moved to me asserting that Jesus is God, which of course the Watchtower denies.
- e. He said, "Read Rev. 3:14" I turned to it and did.
- f. He said, "Jesus is the **beginning** of the creation. He **had a beginning**. Jehovah **created** him, so he's not God."
- g. This is a mistake cults often make. They base their beliefs on the English translation; not knowing what the original words mean.
- h. The Greek word for 'beginning' is **arche** & means ruler over; author of.
  - 1) In this context the word means Jesus is the **cause** of creation.
  - 2) It's Jesus ' way of **doubling down** on His identity **as the Creator**.
  - 3) He's not the first to be created; He's the original of ALL creation.
  - 4) So, rather than proving he's NOT god, this makes utterly clear He IS!

11. And THAT is precisely what the Laodiceans need to be reminded of as Jesus now launches into a harsh rebuke.

Vs15-16

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

1. Let's put this in current terms. This church makes Jesus want to hurl.
2. This was something the Laodiceans connected with because of their water supply.
  - a. It smelled bad & tasted no bueno.
  - b. As I said, the locals were used to it but it made visitors nauseous.
  - c. And by the time it made the 6 mile trip from the hot springs to city, it was lukewarm.
3. Water's good when it's either hot or cold. But lukewarm, it's difficult to take.
4. Add stink to it & it's a disgusting, stomach-turning waste.
5. The church in Laodicea was like their water.
  - a. And **like** the locals **with the water**;
  - b. They were **used to** the lukewarm, stink spiritual condition they were in.
6. Jesus says it would be **better** if they were cold or hot.
  - a. The words are **intense**; they mean **freezing** or **boiling**.
  - b. Of course, he'd prefer they all be hot in their love for and devotion to Him.
  - c. But if not hot, it's **better** to be **cold**. Because if you're cold, there's only one direction to go.
  - d. But when you're lukewarm, you neither.
  - e. Not being cold, you **think** you're warm **Enough**.
7. Jesus uses hard words meant to **shock** them; because that's what the lukewarm need.
  - a. **Soft words** just encourage more lukewarmness because the lukewarm see no peril.
  - b. Soft words usually make hard hearts harder; while hard words can turn them soft again.
  - c. Jesus speaks like this because He loves them.
  - d. And they are in a dangerous place they have to be rescued from ASAP.
  - e. So He uses words meant to arrest them & snap them out of the funk they've fallen into.
8. Jesus did this with the Pharisees & scribes who'd ganged up against Him.
  - a. They were self-righteous & smug, thinking they had the inside track on how to get to heaven.
  - b. They were in fact on a greased pole to hell.
  - c. So Jesus called them white washed tombs. Vipers. Sons of the devil.
  - d. Those were **not** words Jesus was accustomed to using & THEY KNEW IT!!!
  - e. So when He called them such; it shocked them & gave them pause.
  - f. And some went away so disturbed it moved them later to repent, as we see in Acts 15:5.
9. Let's take a closer look at what the Laodiceans were doing that marked them as lukewarm.

Vs17-18

<sup>17</sup> 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—

1. The Laodiceans were **self-sufficient**.

a. Their motto was, “I have need of **nothing**.” >> Not even Jesus, as we learn later in v20.

b. The motto of every believer **ought** to be, “Jesus is my everything.”

c. Paul says in well in Phil 1:21 - “For me, to live is Christ.”

2. That wasn’t the perspective of the Laodiceans. They had it all.

3. They were wealthy, healthy & had nice things.

4. And they assumed all of that was **evidence** of God’s approval of them.

5. So Jesus TELLS them God’s analysis of them.

a. “You’re not rich. You’re **poor**!”

b. “You’re not hip & fashionable in you black wool tunics. You’re **naked**!”

c. “You’re not all that sittin’ pretty in the lap of luxury. You’re **wretched & miserable**.”

d. “And you’re not spiritually fit. You’re **blind**!”

6. Their **self**-assessment was 180 degrees out of phase with reality.

7. And Jesus loves them too much to let them go on believing and living a lie.

8. So He tells them the truth; hard as it is to hear.

9. As you & I go on & grow in Christ, there are going to be times when the HS will show us things we won’t want, but need to see.

a. There will be times He will speak hard words to shatter the lies we’ve wrapped ourselves in.

b. Divine appointments when Jesus sends someone to us with **HIS** message of loving rebuke.

c. Faithful are the wounds of a friend.

d. Remember: God never wounds that He doesn’t intend to heal & make stronger.

e. He only and ever cuts to remove some spiritual cancer that’s killing us.

10. So He speaks these hard but true words, then says

<sup>18</sup> I counsel you ...

11. Oh, this is choice! He keeps using idioms from daily life in Laodicea.

a. Because there was so much wealth floating around Laodicea, **financial advisors** did a booming business in setting up new business ventures & recruiting investors.

b. Jesus uses that idea here. He has **great investment advice** -

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

12. The wealth they **need** only Jesus can give.

a. What He will give them if they seek Him, is a **spiritual** treasure of refined gold.

b. Refining was done by fire – a picture of the call to be willing to endure trials for the sake of Christ.

13. You see, the problem in the thinking of the Laodiceans was that they **equated** material blessing with God’s favor. And conversely; thought trials were evidence of His displeasure.

14. So they dumbed down their spiritual lives into a sickening blandness.

a. Missing from the preaching in Laodicea was the message Paul preached in the churches **he** planted.

b. That it is **through many tribulations that we enter the kingdom of God**. [Acts 14:22]

15. Anyone really following Jesus knows becoming more like Him means dying to self & all the trials that brings.

a. There’s no easy path to spiritual maturity. It’s no bed of roses.

b. Unless the stems & their thorns are still attached!

c. Becoming complete in Christ is an often painful experience of dying to self so Christ can live through us.

16. If you’re determined to avoid pain at all cost; you’ll never grow.

17. Sadly—that’s the choice the Laodiceans made; And Jesus calls them to repent of it.

18. He says

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.

a. It’s time for them to stop looking to the world for the definition of success.

b. They need to see things from God’s perspective.

c. They’ve thought it was about being hip & happy. It’s not; it’s about being **holy**!

19. If they would make holiness their aim, they'd be hip to the Kingdom of God and ultimately, happy in a way nothing could steal their joy.

V19

1. Now Jesus spells out WHY He's spoken such hard words to them

<sup>19</sup> As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous [hot] and repent.

2. As far off as these knuckleheads had gone, Jesus loved them, & in love calls them to repent.

3. It's time for them to turn up the heat & leave the days of lukewarmness behind.

4. God loves us as we are, but He loves us too much to leave us that way.

a. So He points out those areas that need to change.

b. Sometimes we're blind to our sin & need God to deal more strongly with us.

5. In Hebrews 12 we read -

My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, Nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; For whom the Lord loves He chastens, And scourges every son whom He receives. If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? [vs. 5-7]

V20

<sup>20</sup> 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.

1. That such a warm invitation. But look closer & you'll see something disturbing.

2. This is written to a church, but **where** is Jesus? He's **outside** asking for entrance.

3. This takes us back to v14. This letter was addressed to the church OF THE LAODICEANS.

a. It's their church – not His. He's **outside**, knocking to see if they want Him to come back in.

b. And the appeal here in v20 isn't **really** even to the church; it's to **individuals**. Jesus says ...

If anyONE hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.

4. Revival for a church and THE Church **begins** in individual hearts that open to Jesus.

Behold, [See! Don't miss this] 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.

If anyone hears My voice and opens!!!!

5. When we looked at ch1, I mentioned the key for understanding this mysterious book is the OT.

a. There are over 300 references to the OT in Rev.

b. **This** is one of those places.

6. Any Jewish follower of Jesus would hear these words and immediately remember the Song of Solomon.

a. In Song 5, Solomon comes home eager to be with his wife.

b. He's been gone, working hard all day and late into the evening.

c. But all afternoon, he's thought of 1 thing; going home and being with his love.

d. When he arrives, he turns the door handle to find it locked.

e. It's so late, she's barred the door. So he knocks & calls to her.

f. She's fallen asleep, so she wakes & says, "I'm in bed already."

g. He says, "Please come open the door."

h. She replies, "I've washed my feet & am in my jammies. It's so warm and cozy here under the covers." And she nods off.

i. A bit later she wakes up & listens but doesn't hear anything. Startled, she jumps out of bed and runs to the door, opens it and finds no one there.

j. So she grabs her robe and runs out into the streets late at night, asking the watchmen if they've seen her lover.

k. Now she's frantic because he can't be found.

l. And she worries her denial of him has harmed their love.

7. THAT is how we're to understand Jesus' invitation here.

a. When the Spirit of God convicts us, we need to respond **immediately**.

b. Delayed obedience is disobedience.

c. And there are some rich times of fellowship with God we miss, opportunities to grow or to do some eternally significant thing, because it's so cozy here under the covers; on the couch with the widescreen & Doritos.

Vs21-22

<sup>21</sup> 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.

1. Most ancient thrones weren't the narrow, high-backed affairs we think of for a European monarch.
2. The ancient throne was more like a 2-seat couch.
  - a. When the king wanted to show special favor to someone, he'd extend his scepter toward them & invite them ***sit*** w/him.
  - b. The idea was, while they sat there, the king's favor & authority was with them.
3. Jesus promises those who fellowship with Him now will rule with Him ***forever***.

<sup>22</sup> He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.