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Revelation 3:14-22

14. “To the angel of the church in Laodicea write: The Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God, says this:

15. ‘I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot; I wish that you were cold or hot.

16. ‘So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth.

17. ‘Because you say, “I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing,” and you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked,

18. I advise you to buy from Me gold refined by fire so that you may become rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself, and *that* the shame of your nakedness will not be revealed; and eye salve to anoint your eyes so that you may see.

19. ‘Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline; therefore be zealous and repent.

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 will dine with him, and he with Me.

21. ‘He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down

with My Father on His throne.

22. ‘He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.’”

Note this passage is a message from God to the congregation of the Lord’s church in Laodicea at the end of the first century. These Christians were called to repentance, as verse 19 states, “Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline; therefore be zealous and repent.”

Also note the statement of verse 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 will dine with him, and he with Me.” This verse is located right in the middle of a message written to a specific congregation of Christians.

The first time I ever saw verse 20 was on a wooden plaque. The plaque pictured Jesus standing in front of a stone cottage and knocking on a big wooden door. Back then I understood verse 20 as referring to asking Jesus into your heart.

But as the verse is used in its context, God is not speaking to the lost--but to people who were already Christians. These Christians had backslidden and needed to recommit themselves to their Lord. One of the basic principles of hermeneutics is to ask, “To whom was the Scripture verse originally written?” In this passage the audience is clearly defined: Christians who have come to the Lord, but have become spiritually lukewarm over

time, and need to repent.

A couple of Lord's days ago one of the men in the congregation where I attend used verse 20 as a communion Scripture for the Lord's Supper. The more I have thought about it, the more I would agree that verse 20 is very appropriate to the Lord's Supper, especially in light of I Corinthians 11:23-32.

At the same time it is very inappropriate to take Revelation 3:20 out of its context and use it to evangelize the lost. To do so, in a real sense, is to either add to or take away from God's intended meaning and message of the Scripture. Later in the book of Revelation the following warning is given:

“I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God shall add to him the plagues which are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the tree of life and from the holy city, which are written in this book.” Revelation 22:18-19

“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”