

Laodicea: Pleasant as Hell

Revelation 3:14-22

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#10 in our series “The Gospel According to Jesus: The Revelation”

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Prayer

Lord God, we ask that you would help us to hear your Word. Thank you that your Word is so much more than print on a page; it's our Lord Jesus. We ask that you would help us to see you, and we thank you that you sent your Spirit so that we would. Lord God, we are asking that you would help us to preach.

Short Clip of Family Guy “Naming of Jesus”

[A cartoon Joseph and Mary huddle closely together in a barn]

Joseph: *All right here we are. This seems pretty gross.*

Mary: *I can't believe my baby's gonna be the Son of God. What should we name Him?*

Joseph: *Well this is kinda like a barn. We could call him Bernie?*

Mary: *Maybe. I kinda always liked the name Tristan.*

Joseph: *Do you want him to get the crap beat out of him? They will crucify him with a name like that!*

[Joseph and Mary are approached by a cartoon angel who looks a bit like Jesus]

Angel: *No. No. No. What are you doin'?*

Joseph: *How long have you been there?*

Angel: *Those names is no good.*

Look. Why don't ya'll just give me a list. I'll run them up to God and see if he picks one.

[The angel is talking to God in His throneroom]

God: *Nope. Nope. That's the name of champagne. No. No. Terrible. These are all just terrible.*

Angel: *Relax God. You want me to get y'all some wine and cheeses?*

God: *Wait! What'd ya just say?*

Angel: *Cheeses. Ya want me to get y'all some wine and cheeses?*

Message

It's really strange, but people in our culture often don't know what the name Jesus means. In Matt. 1:21 The Angel said to Joseph, “*Mary will bear a son and you shall call his name Jesus [not cheeses but Jesus] for he will save his people from their sins.*” It's what we preached on last time: the name Jesus means “God is Salvation.”

In Philadelphia, they had little power but they had not denied His name and so God had placed before them an Open Door—a door to their own hearts, their neighbor's hearts, God's heart and indeed, all of creation.

In Philadelphia, they had little power and an Open Door.

In Laodicea, they have plenty of power and a closed door . . .

Because they don't want to open it.

Revelation 3:20 *Behold (Idou: "Look!" imperative tense... because they must not be looking) "Look, I stand at the door and knock..."* (Literally: "I have stood here and I am knocking"). *"If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me."*

"Look, I am standing at the door knocking, Laodicea . . . if you open I'll come in." Isn't that interesting? He wants *them* to open the door.

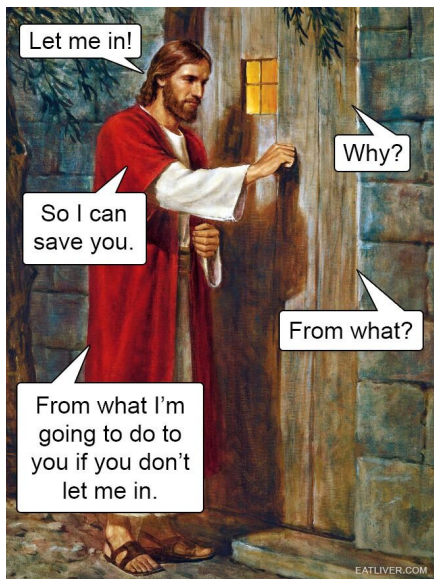
Why don't they open the door?

They must not want to open the door? Perhaps they're afraid to open the door. . . Perhaps they think He's a "thief in the night." Thieves come to take what doesn't belong to them... He may *come* like a thief, but He's *not* a thief. Everything belongs to Him.

I remember seeing the movie *A Thief in the Night* in youth group. It was like the *Left Behind* movies, kind of designed to scare kids into accepting Jesus by the end of youth group, before Jesus comes back. . . The idea was that you needed to *accept* Jesus in order to be saved *from* Jesus.

I remember thinking, "*Gosh, I used to like Jesus, and even trust Jesus . . . before I accepted Jesus, to save myself . . . from Jesus.*"

In Laodicea, maybe they're afraid of Jesus? Take a look at this:



Jesus is knocking and He says, "*Let me in!*"

"*Why?*"

“So I can save you.” “From what?”
“From what I’m going to do to you if you don’t let me in.”

Something’s not quite right with that dialogue . . .

What does it mean to open the door and let Him in?

From the movie I watched in youth group, I got the idea that it meant to say a special little prayer at the end of the movie, accepting Jesus as your Lord and Savior, and once you said that you were saved, which meant you got your ticket punched for a trip to Heaven, somewhere in the sky.

“Family Guy” clip about salvation.

[Stewie Griffin and Brian Griffin are having a conversation.]

Brian Griffin: *The Catholics believe that as long as you receive Jesus before you die, anyone can get into Heaven.*

Stewie Griffin: *Really? Anyone?* (The scene changes)

[An armed team of military Special Forces lowers themselves from a helicopter and runs towards a building. (Dramatic music plays in the background.)

Armed with machineguns the team storms a room and briskly opens doors pointing their machine guns at a surprised Osama bin laden. He quickly raises his arms in surrender and cries, “I accept Jesus as my Lord and savior.” He is shot on the spot.

Upon his death Osama bin laden is instantly transported to Heaven. When he realizes where he is, he gleefully cheers, “YES!”

I don’t know why they picked on Catholics, that’s what most American Evangelical Christians believe: as long as you say the special prayer before you die, you’re done and you get in . . .

And so it’s no wonder that folks freak out when I point to Scriptures that indicate that all will be saved . . . they immediately think,

“What about Hitler, I don’t want to sit next to Hitler in Heaven.”

They assume that Hitler will be just the same.

Because they assume that they will be just the same.

They forget that Jesus came to save us from our sins, which is the very thing most folks consider themselves to be.

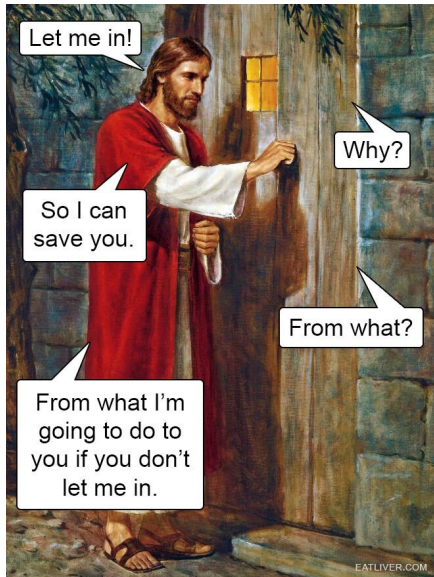
They think Salvation is simply a ticket for themselves and their ego to some place else.

Listen closely to what Paul writes in Romans 13: “The time has come for you to wake from sleep. For Salvation is nearer to us than when we first believed.”

The moment we first believed is the moment we first realized that Salvation is coming for us.

But we all got our ticket punched on a cross, where the Lamb is slaughtered from the foundation of the world.

Salvation happened at the cross, and now it’s coming for us.



So, what’s wrong with this picture?
Or I should say, the way we understand this picture?

Well, what’s Jesus going to do to them, if they don’t let Him in?

Well, we assume that He’s going to cast them into Hell? That’s a hard question because the Bible never uses any words that are equivalent to what most American folks think of as Hell.

The Word most often translated “Hell” in the King James Bible is the Hebrew word *sheol*, which is translated into the Greek word *hades*, which is the realm of the dead who are cut off from Life . . . and Jesus is *the Life*.

In Scripture, Hades begins here on the surface of the earth and continues after your body dies *IF* you haven’t opened the door.

So in this picture,
Where is Hades, or what most people think of as Hell?

- Well, where is The Life (There's only one, "The Life" and that's Jesus)...
- Where is The Way... and where is the land of the lost?
- Where is The Truth... and where is the prison of lies?
- *Where is The Life*... and where is the realm of the dead?
- Where is Salvation... and where is the Not Salvation?
- Where is The Kingdom of Heaven... and where is that other place?

If Jesus is on the outside of the door, and they're on the inside of the door, how could He be threatening them with Hell? They're already in Hell . . . And they won't open the door.

Why won't they open the door?

The guy says, "*Look I stand at the door . . .*"

If you see someone standing at the door and don't open the door isn't it because you don't trust the person at the door?

The guy says that he's the mailman, but you suspect that he's a thief in the night. He says that he's salvation, but you suspect he's just the opposite of salvation.

You know they called Him "Savior" in Laodicea, but they weren't opening the door.

-Maybe they said, "God is Salvation," but they were afraid that He was just the opposite of Salvation.

-Maybe they confessed God is good, but they suspected that He's also *not* good.

-Maybe they didn't trust Him.

We would like to think that opening the door is something that we could simply decide to do, like going through a ritual, obeying some law, or saying a little prayer at the back of a pamphlet, but opening the door is trust. And trust is Faith.

Faith is so much more than answering a question in the back of a pamphlet or some tract.

Faith cannot be reduced to steps or laws or programs. . . and so the Gospel is communicated in pictures and stories, and incarnated in human flesh.

Faith is what you believe in the depths of your being about the man on the other side of the door.

Faith is trusting God's integrity—that God is one, and God is good, and God is Salvation.

Faith is wanting to open the door because you trust the man on the other side.

You cannot be "saved" without faith in and *through* Jesus—"God is Salvation".

Opening the door is Faith.

Maybe they're afraid to open the door?

Several years ago, *Time* magazine had a cover story on fear (April 2, 2001).

In big bold letters the title page announced the biblical injunction "**Fear Not.**"

And then, underneath: "*How science is offering new hope for treating all our fears.*"

In the margins, it listed all these fears:

- Alektrophobia, for instance—that's fear of chickens.
- Homilophobia is fear of homilies—that is sermons.

Scientists have therapies to help you believe that chickens don't need to be feared. And they have powerful medications to help you not stress over sermons.

But then the article listed fears like these:

- Zeusphobia—which is fear of God.
- Staurophobia—which is fear of Jesus on the cross.
- And Thanatophobia—which is fear of death.

See? I don't think science can take away those fears.

Science can just help you hide from those fears—so you don't hear the knocking.

Medication can numb you to those fears . . .

Just like a couple pints of beer can numb you to those fears . . .

It can make you comfortably numb.

Our whole culture can make you comfortably numb.

Maybe it's all designed to make you comfortably numb . . . and addicted.

Numb: neither hot nor cold . . . just pleasant.

In Laodicea, they won't open the door because in Laodicea things are pleasant as Hell.

Well, what might Jesus do if they don't open the door?

Some say that He will stop being Jesus—that He will no longer be "*God is Salvation*" and He'll suddenly become "*God is **NOT** salvation.*" But this threat, that Jesus may no longer be Jesus, doesn't engender faith in Jesus, but rather it engenders a lot of public talk about Jesus—while people secretly mistrust Jesus. They honor Him with their lips while their hearts are far from Him.

And, it doesn't make sense; think about this picture. How could Jesus cast folks into Hell, if they're already there? I mean He can't cast you into *Hades*, if you've already locked yourself in *Hades*. But what could He do?

1. I suppose He could walk away for a time and leave you there for a time...
But not for time without end, for *Hades* comes to an end in Rev. 21.
2. And that's the second thing He could do; He could destroy *Hades*...
He could kick the door down . . . or maybe burn it down . . .
 - God is a consuming Fire. Jesus is that Fire. He is Love that burns away evil.
 - He could burn the door down. I think that's what happens in *Gehenna*.
 - And that would be terrifying, but profoundly good...

3. But wouldn't it be *best* if He could descend into *Hades* somehow?
- I mean wouldn't it be best if He could sneak behind the door and convince you somehow saying, "I am salvation, you're already trapped by Hell, so let's open the door... *If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come into him and eat with him and he with me.*"

That would be Salvation

That would be Heaven.

Revelation 3:14-16

"And to the angel of the church in Laodicea write: 'The words of the Amen, [that's like saying the word of Reality or the real thing] the faithful and true witness, the beginning of God's creation. I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were either cold or hot! So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth.'"

Yikes... No wonder they don't open the door.

It's frightening to think that He'd vomit us from His mouth. . .

But even more frightening is this question: "Why did He swallow us in the first place? *"Is he fixin' to eat us; does He plan to drink us?"*

'...because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spew you from my mouth. For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked.'"

Poor... Blind... and Naked?

Poor? But Laodicea was a center of commercial prosperity!

Blind? They manufactured a world famous eye salve!

Naked? They were known for their beautiful black woolen textiles!

They were so prosperous in Laodicea that when a devastating earthquake hit in 60 A.D.; they refused to accept financial assistance from the Empire saying, "We have prospered and we need nothing."

The only thing anyone could really complain about in Laodicea was the water. -

Nearby Colossae was known for cold, pure drinking water.

Hieropolos six miles to the north was known for hot, therapeutic mineral springs.

Because Laodicea had no water supply of its own, an aqueduct was built from Hieropolos to Laodicea. But by the time the water got to Laodicea, it had become lukewarm and distasteful.

Neither hot, (*zestos*) in Greek... or cold, (*psuchros*)

Zestos was a figurative word like "zesty" or "zealous." Like, "I'm so hot for you."¹

Psuchros was also a figurative word . . . Like, "I'm so cold toward you, I hate you."

¹ It means fervent, (as in Romans 11:11), fervent, passionate, excited.

Chliaros (Lukewarm) is in the middle, and yet, it's the opposite of both.

In Scripture, the opposite of Love really isn't hate—in fact, in the Old Testament God is said to hate, which means Love hates. And God is Love. You can only hate things that you care about. Hate is *not* the opposite of Love. The opposite of Love is apathy... a numbness of spirit. Apathy is just not caring about anyone on the other side of your own door.

It's the thing I fear most in my marriage . . .

Marriage is hard, and when we were first married and things got hard my wife had this way of just shutting down. We'd fight and I'd knock on her door. I'd say, "Are you OK?" And she'd say, "I'm fine," which meant, "Stop knocking on my door." I'd knock harder . . . And she'd just be pleasant, neither hot or cold, just pleasant.

One day, I just kept knocking; I mean I was really a jerk about it, until finally she spun around and screamed "You _____!" She said a word; she won't let me say in church. She had never said this before, but I knew she had felt that for some time and probably been saying secretly in her mind. She screamed "You f_____!" and then that word.

She looked at me... and I looked at her... It was silent for a few moments and then I started laughing. I said, "Wow, I know how you feel . . . Thank you!" Then she started laughing . . . she opened the door. Cold became hot as we began to communicate in truth. We both surrendered our shame and then we feasted . . . on each other; it was a great banquet.

Well, Laodicea is neither cold nor hot. They say they need nothing. They're "fine."

In Laodicea they say, "*We're rich we've prospered and need nothing, **not knowing** that they're wretched, pitiable, poor, blind and naked.*"

"Not knowing . . ." They must be comfortably numb . . .

It's pleasant as hell in Laodicea.

You know, if Salvation were knocking at your door and I were truly evil, and didn't want you to answer the door . . . I'd try to convince you that you were already saved and you didn't need any more saving.

Opening the door is surrendering control . . . and that is a bit frightening. But if you thought you could purchase a little salvation from me, I could keep you in bondage to me, thinking you were in control, when in fact I was in control . . . of you . . . in hell, actually, addicted to hell.

If the King of Heaven were knocking at your door, and I was evil, I'd try to convince you that Heaven was Hell, and Hell was Heaven.

If the Prince of Peace were knocking at your door, and I wanted to keep you from opening the door, I'd sell you some peace, right here, on this side of the door...

Pepsi Commercial:

Kendall Jenner strips off her makeup and fancy clothes and walks as a commoner into a diverse crowd of protestors. The crowd stands on one side of a street. Police officers stand guard on the other. KJ grabs a Pepsi and turns and smiles at a young man in the crowd. The crowd cheers her on as they see her holding a Pepsi and moving towards a police officer. She hands the police officer the Pepsi. He opens it and takes a sip; the protesters burst into an exuberant, joyful roar as the police officer drinks the Pepsi. He turns to an officer next to him, smiles—his expression an invitation to something better he’s found.

Maybe you remember that commercial. Pepsi pulled it after only a few days.

People were offended at the idea that Kendall Jenner and Pepsi could bring, “*Peace on earth*” and “*good will to men*,” because . . .

People think it takes political power and religious leaders to make peace

People think it’s the *Kings of the Earth* who make peace.

Isn’t Donald Trump or Benjamin Netanyahu the Prince of Peace... not Pepsi?

So, people were offended...

And yet almost every commercial in our society is just the same.

Think about it:

What can you say about soda pop, except, “It tastes good and may kill you.”

That’s no way to sell soda pop...

And so companies attach their bubbly sugar water to your deepest hopes . . .

And then, they try to sell them back to you in a can...

And it works! Commercials obviously work...

For you to buy Peace, Love, Life and Freedom in a can.

Companies do it because they want your money. But maybe *something else* inspires the companies and the kings of the earth to do it—to convince you – “*You don’t need salvation, for we are salvation.*”

- What’s the real thing? *Coke*.
- What’s freedom? *7-11*
- What’s infinite justice and enduring freedom? *The US Military*.
- What’s peace? *That thing they talk about on CNN and Fox News . . . and the stuff they sell during the commercials, in the can.*

“And what’s that knocking?” we ask. [Peter knocks out the rhythm of a heartbeat.]

It almost sounds like a heartbeat . . . bum-bum, bum-bum.

What’s that knocking? I’m getting a little concerned about eternity . . .

Eternity? Why are you worried about eternity? Want some eternity?
Well, Here's some eternity:

Eternity commercial:

[Sensual images of a man and woman caressing on a beach are shown while a female narrates.]
Female narration: I was searching and I found you. (Sounds of a beating heart play in the Background.) And I will love you, forever, and ever, and ever. Eternity. Calvin Klein. Fragrances for men and women.

Well . . . that does a few things all at once:

#1. It tells me that eternity is here on this side of the door—down at the mall. And . . .

#2. I can purchase eternity for about \$19.95. I like that—

Because then, I can easily gain control of eternity. And . . .

#3. Although I like the idea of buying eternity for \$19.95, I soon begin to think:

“You know... eternity isn't all it's cracked up to be.”

And I begin to go numb.

If Salvation were knocking at your door, and I were evil, I think I'd try to convince you that Heaven was Hell, Hell was Heaven...

And you could buy heaven

For \$19.95, or maybe . . .

A prayer in the back of a pamphlet, or maybe . . .

A life-time of good deeds done in fear—a repressed and vague fear, that you mistook for faith.

In the next paragraph in the Revelation, a door opens in the heavens, John sees Jesus on the throne unwrapping the meaning of space and time.

In chapter 12 we witness Christmas and Easter. And then we meet the serpent—the dragon. He makes war on the little brothers and sisters of Jesus, using a Beast from the sea, a Beast from the land, and a Great Harlot.

The Beast from the sea is like political power—politicians invariably promise salvation.

The Beast from the land (land usually represents Israel) is like religious power—religion (and I mean by that the institutions and good deeds of men) also promises you salvation.

The Harlot is an economy of consumption—she rides the Beast and seduces the nations—She'll make you think Heaven is Hell and Hell is Heaven.

In Chapter 18, she is judged and a voice cries from heaven, *“Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great! ...For all nations have drunk the wine of the passion of her porneia* (That's buying

and selling Love as if Love were a commodity), *and the kings of the earth have committed porne with her...*"

Verse 4 is most terrifying, Jesus cries, "*Come out of her my people.*"

You see the church has participated in her seductions.

-We turn salvation into a commodity that we control.

-We make salvation something small and say, "*Smile! Isn't it great to be saved?*"

-We make salvation small and cheap—something you could purchase with Sunday School attendance, a new members class, or a prayer at the back of a pamphlet.

-We make salvation small, and then argue over who has it, who doesn't have it, and who has the right to sell it, and for how much and to whom.

Salvation is *absolutely* free and that is why it's *SO* expensive. It will cost you the illusion that you could pay for it—your pride, your ego, your arrogance, your soul, your privacy and your autonomy—that thing that you refer to as "*your self.*"

Soren Kierkegaard wrote:

The greatest danger to Christianity is, I contend, not heresies, heterodoxies, not atheists, not profane secularism – no, but the kind of orthodoxy, which is cordial drivel, mediocrity served up sweet... Christianity does not oppose debauchery and uncontrollable passions and the like as much as it opposes this flat mediocrity, this nauseating atmosphere, this honey, civil togetherness, where admittedly great crimes, wild excesses, and powerful aberrations cannot easily occur – but where God's unconditional demand has even greater difficulty in accomplishing what it requires: the majestic obedience of submission. . . . Either all of God and all of you, or nothing at all!

Wilbur Reese puts it this way:

I would like to buy three dollars worth of God please. Three dollars. Not enough to explode my soul or disturb my sleep, just enough to equal about a cup of warm milk or a nap in the sunshine... I want a pound of the eternal in a paper sack. I would like to buy about three dollars worth of God please."

In chapter 18, verse 4 Jesus cries, "*Come out of her my people.*"

Then in verse 23 He rebukes the Harlot saying,

*"All nations, (all peoples), were deceived by your sorcery."
(your pharmakeia, your spell, your enchantment.)*

It reminds me of this great scene in the *Chronicles of Narnia*.
Maybe you remember? It's in the *The Silver Chair*.

At one point, the children and their friend Puddleglum (who is a Marshwiggle) find themselves in the dark underground kingdom of the evil witch, who is really the Great Serpent.

When the witch finds them, she doesn't assault them, as they expect; she enchants them. She appears lovely, talks sweetly, and sings melodiously.

Then Lewis writes, "They were being enchanted, and of course the more enchanted you get the more certain you feel that you are not enchanted at all."

They tell the witch of the real world—the Overworld, the sun, and Aslan the Lion. . . but by now it's just soft knocking on the walls.

The witch coos,

"Oh silly. You made up the idea of a sun from the idea of one of my lamps. You made up this idea of Aslan, the Great Lion, from one of our housecats."

So the children mumble, *"I suppose the other world must be a dream."*

"Yes, it's a dream," coos the witch. There is no Narnia, no Overworld, no sky, no sun, no Aslan. And now, to bed all. And let us begin a wiser life tomorrow. But first, to bed; to sleep; deep sleep, soft pillow, sleep without foolish dreams."

She makes things extremely pleasant, just as they were in Laodicea. So what are they to do?

Well, this is what Puddleglum, the Marshwiggle did: just as the enchantment was almost complete Lewis writes that Puddleglum did a very brave thing. In a daze, he walked to the fire and plunged his bare foot into the coals. He knew it would hurt, and it did, but immediately he knew exactly what he thought. "There is nothing like a good shock of pain for dissolving certain kinds of magic," writes Lewis.

At the smell of burnt Marshwiggle feet, the enchantment is broken for all. Their eyes are opened, and the witch becomes a serpent, as they escape to Narnia and to Aslan, the Great Lion—King of Narnia.

In Revelation 3:17-20 Jesus, the Lion of Judah says, *"You say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked. I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire, so that you may be rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself and the shame of your nakedness may not be seen, and salve to anoint your eyes, so that you may see. Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous (be zestos—"You're not fully clean until your zestfully clean!"). Be zealous and repent. Behold, I stand at the door and knock..."*

Laodicea is enchanted by the Great Harlot. And so Jesus counsels them, or I should say, He counsels the angel of them, or in them, to do three things:

#1 *"Buy from me gold refined by fire, that you may be rich."*

Where could they find this gold refined by fire?
Maybe in Smyrna. Remember Smyrna?

In Smyrna they were wretched, pitiable, and poor, but Jesus said they were rich. It was in Smyrna that Polycarp was martyred and appeared as gold in the fiery flames. In Smyrna there were few illusions about this world, but they were rich in Faith. (1 Peter teaches that we must suffer trials for our faith is more precious than gold, which is tested by fire.) In Smyrna they were poor but rich. And Jesus promised ten days of tribulation; He said, He knew their tribulation.

See? I think Jesus is prescribing some shared tribulation . . . for Laodicea.

I don't know exactly what that means for you:
Perhaps going on the next mission trip to Mexico with Vince and Alison.
Perhaps praying for, and giving to, our sister churches in the Philippines.
Perhaps visiting someone suffering in a nursing home or hospital.
Perhaps it means doing the dishes.

Suffering is the loss of power and control.
In Philadelphia they had little power and an Open Door.
In Laodicea they have much power and they won't open the door.
Tribulation makes us aware that we all need a savior and our savior is Love.
Tribulation makes us face our fears and watch how God conquers them.
God is Love.

It's a bit baffling to me that so much of the American Church believes that we'll get raptured before great tribulation. No one even knew what "pre-tribulation rapture" meant until 150 years ago in wealthy and powerful Great Britain and America.

Ironically, some people teach that we get raptured before the great tribulation through an open door in the very next paragraph of the Revelation. But it's in the very next paragraph that Laodicea is to begin to look through the Open Door and see how we conquer through tribulation.
For Laodicea, tribulation is not the problem, but the prescription. It's discipline: "*I discipline those whom I love.*"

All the rapture talk is baffling to me and yet not baffling to me . . . when I realize that we're so very much like Laodicea. SO:

#1 "*Buy from me gold refined by fire*"... AND
#2 "*Buy from me white garments so that you may clothe yourself and the shame of your nakedness may not be seen.*"

In Revelation 7:9 John sees a great multitude that no one can number... standing before the throne with palm branches in their hands. A voice says, "*These are the ones coming*

out of the great tribulation. They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the lamb.”

“Buy from me white robes,” says Jesus.

Well what could we buy them with?

Only our shame; only our need . . . for a Helper.

It’s that place on the body of Eve and that place on the body of Adam that we cover in shame. It’s that place on our body that reveals our need for a Helper—a Husband. Jesus means “God is Salvation” or “God is Help.” Jesus is our Husband.

He clothes us with Himself.

He is our righteousness.

He completes us in the image of God.

I don’t know exactly what that means for you, but I suspect that Jesus is saying something like this:

“Laodicea, confess your sin... How dare you say, ‘I need nothing.’”

“Don’t you see who’s knocking?”

“I’m not a thief in the night. I’m your husband.”

So . . .

#1 Buy Gold refined by fire.

#2 White Garments to cover your shame. And . . .

#3 Salve for your eyes, so you can see... who it is that’s knocking.

“See my hands and place your finger in my side.”

“I know it’s terrifying, but see me truly, and you will surrender to Love.”

In the Temple there was a door to the inner sanctuary, which contained the Ark of the Covenant, which was the throne of God. Yet no one could see that throne but the high priest, and then, only once a year on the Day of Atonement.

The door was shut. As Jesus hung on the tree and delivered up His Spirit, that veil that served as the door ripped from the top to the bottom. God got out... or maybe God got in . . . to you.

That was God’s temple and, you also, are God’s Temple.

And in your heart, there is a door... I think it’s all one door.

Revelation 3:20-22 “Behold, [Look, See,] I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me. The one who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, as I also conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.’ ”

At the start I asked, “What will He do if they don’t open the door?”

- #1. He could just stop knocking for a time...
- #2. He could kick it down... and
- #3. Maybe He could sneak inside, and convince them, to open the door.

And so He emptied Himself and took the form of a slave.
We wrapped Him in swaddling clothes and placed Him in a manger.
And He humbled Himself to the point of death on a cross.

It happened just outside the gates of Jerusalem.
He delivered up His Spirit just outside the walls of Jerusalem.
And then His Spirit descended *within* the walls of Jerusalem.
It's His Spirit that testifies to His Glory, which is His Love—His Spirit that whispers in your heart, "*Just look at how He loves you!* [Peter points to the cross.] *Open the door and let him in.*" When you do, it is the New Jerusalem coming down.

Even now, though the door may be shut, something is getting in. It's His Word, and it's His Spirit that gives you the ears to hear and eyes to see. He says, "*To him who conquers, I will grant to sit with me on my throne.*" That means you will share the same judgment, the same will: "*To him who conquers... as I also conquered and sat down with my father on his throne.*"

How do we conquer? We conquer as Jesus conquered.
And how did Jesus conquer? He conquered by *being conquered* by Love.
He prayed, "*Father, nevertheless, not my will but thy will be done.*"
And now, through the Open Door, John sees Him standing on the throne of God.

He conquered by *being* conquered by Love. God is Love.
And what did He conquer?
Well, He conquered you.

And how will you conquer?
The same way He conquered:
By *being conquered* by Him, who is Love; God is Love.

Love is the Logic of the Trinity—the economy of Heaven.
Love is the willing sacrifice of self for another.

"If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come into him and eat with him and he with me."

That's Salvation.

And so . . . What's for dinner?

Communion

On the night He was delivered up, He took bread and broke it saying, "This is my body given to you; take and eat. And in the same manor He took the cup saying this is the covenant in my blood, poured out for the forgiveness of sins. Drink of it, all of you.

This is the Open Door.

Now you may think, "Peter that last part was unpleasant. In fact it's terrifying!"

Yes it is . . . at first.

He invites you to eat Him and drink Him—to ingest Him.

And I think He would like to ingest you, as long as you want Him to. Otherwise, He'll spit you out of His mouth.

Song of Solomon 5:1 "Eat, friends, drink, and be drunk *by Love*."²
In other words: "Present yourself a living sacrifice." (Romans 12:1)

I've said it before and I should probably say it every time we have communion:

1. When one person loves in a world that refuses to love. It looks like a man hanging on a tree outside the closed gates of Jerusalem.
2. But when two people love, like when one man sacrifices himself for a woman, and that woman sacrifices herself for that man—it looks like a marriage.
...And might even feel like a Honeymoon.
3. And when all people sacrifice one for another—when they love one another, well that's the Kingdom of God. That's Salvation. Listen closely: God *is* Salvation, and I think that means Salvation is God. It's not small, You can't buy it or own it. And yet it's knocking at your door . . .

If you would, say these words out loud after me if you agree: "Lord Jesus, please come in." The Life is in the blood. Open the door and let Him come in.

See footnote at bottom of last page of scanned notes???

Prayer

Lord, we have invited you into our lives and our hearts. Thank you that you have taken us up on that invitation. And yet, Lord, you know that there are places, corners, dark spots. So, I pray that through your Spirit you would keep romancing us to open the door and let you in, and let you in, and let you in—until that great day when you are entirely in

² "...I see," said Psyche in a low voice. "You think it devours the offering. I mostly think so myself. Anyway, it means death. Orual, you didn't think I was such a child as not to know that? How can I be the ransom for all Glome unless I die? And if I am to go to the god, of course it must be through death. That way, even what is strangest in the holy sayings might be true. To be eaten and to be married to the god might not be so different."

C. S. Lewis, *Till We Have Faces* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich Publishers, 1985), p. 72.

and we are absolutely filled with the fullness of God. Thank you that you are so good God. In Jesus' name we pray.

Benediction

It's Christmas this week. This might happen: you might be sitting at home and it's just really pleasant there. You are watching TV and you kinda hear a knock. And you think, "Good God! It could be Him. I bet it's Him. It could be the Alpha and Omega. I bet it's the real thing, the Faithful One, the True One, the Beginning and the End, the King of Kings."

And you remember all your crap and your garbage, and you've got a peephole in the door. Light is shining in through the peephole. You are terrified, but I dare you to get up and look through the peephole because I think this is what you'll see: I think you'll see a

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baby! Who's afraid of a baby? Open the door and take Him in! That's Christmas! In Jesus' name, believe the Gospel. Amen.