

# Behold I stand at the door and knock

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[ 0 : 00 ] Now turn to the last book in the Bible, the book of the Revelation, and to the third chapter. And to the words of the 20th verse, Revelation 3, 20.

And these well-known words, Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him and he with me.

Behold, I stand at the door and knock. You sometimes hear it said, By regular church attenders, who are not members of the church yet, you sometimes hear them saying something like this, that sermon really was not for the likes of me.

That was for the converted. Now that may be a legitimate criticism. I don't think it applies in this congregation.

I think what they're really saying is this. It's all about for those who are in the lifeboat. What about the likes of me?

[ 1 : 39 ] I am in the water. Tonight I want to speak both to those who are in the lifeboat, who know the safety and the security of being in that vessel, and also to speak to those who are still in the water, and who are asking a question, the great question, how do I get from the water into the lifeboat?

And I want to speak simply, so that the youngest person here can understand the message of this book. It really is one book, certainly made up of 66 books, of which this is the last, final part of God's revelation.

And it's one message that runs right throughout the book. It's the unfolding story of God's rescue plan, his recovery plan for the human race.

And it's a magnificent story. And to trace that story as it unfolds throughout the Old Testament, and then into the full light of the New Testament, is fascinating and gripping.

And it culminates in the revelation of God's own Son, the second person in the Trinity.

[ 3 : 12 ] Today, of course, many people who do not frequent church look upon this as an outmoded book, relevant perhaps for life in the 19th century, but certainly not applicable to 21st century man, who still has a deep need in his heart, and who seeks to fulfil that need by pursuing all kinds of mysticism and other avenues for fulfilling the longings of his heart.

And we know from this book that that longing can be made, not by any ism, but by a person. And so coming to the book of Revelation, we discover that largely it is a book of hope.

The author is John, the Palestinian fisherman, James' brother, who heard the Lord's voice and call, and who responded, who left his nets and to follow the Master.

And of the twelve, he had three, and of the three, he had one. And the one who was closest to him, who often leaned on his breast, was this man, John, who had seen his Master's face transformed on Mount Tabor and disfigured on Mount Calvary, who had seen his Master laid in the tomb, guarded by sixteen crack Roman troops.

And here he is now, an old man. And our aging population, our senior citizens, are entitled, are they not, to the best care possible.

[ 5 : 11 ] We owe them much. But John, where is he when he's given this revelation? He's on the prison island of Patmos, the first century equivalent of Guantanamo Bay.

His crimes, that of preaching the word of God and testifying to the power, to the resurrection power of Jesus Christ.

And he's there along with common criminals and others. And they know that he's different. And I guess that they modify their language when they're in John's company.

And he's given the sledgehammer to break stones along with the road-making gang. I wonder what John's thoughts were in the isolation of Patmos.

Had his beloved master forgotten him? The psalmist asked the same question. Has the Lord forgotten to be gracious? Where is his covenant faithfulness now?

[ 6 : 20 ] And it may be when providence is hard and we have to endure adversities and the Lord's people are not immune to any of the difficulties or infirmities or trials of life.

There is no immunity here from any of the miseries that are consequent upon sin. But the Lord has promised his help and his strength to those who seek him.

And he always fulfills his promise. But where is he now? Well, little does John realize this particular morning that he's going to meet with him.

And he's going to see him in a way that he's never seen him before. And the curtain is pulled aside. And John has shown the history and the destiny of the nations.

That's really the sum total of the book of Revelation. A difficult book to interpret minutely. It ponders forward as well as reflecting on what has happened, what has already taken place.

[ 7 : 30 ] And it's a book that gives rise to hope. Without hope, the human race will despair.

And hope always looks forward and looks forward to good things to come. That's really the essence of hope. But hope and wishful thinking are two different things.

Wishful thinking can collapse. But Christian hope will endure against all adversity. Some time ago, I saw a video featuring Johnny Erickson, the American paraplegic lady.

who's now confined to a wheelchair. And who doesn't even have the ability to turn over the pages of her Bible. And I recall Johnny saying this with regard to hope.

She said, one day, I'll have a new body. I'll have a new body. And that's the reality of the Christian hope.

[ 8 : 41 ] He makes all things new. New universe, new heavens, new earth, recreated bodies for those who trust him.

Created and fashioned by his own hands. And the former things will have passed away. No more arthritic pain. No more the disability of Parkinson's and illnesses of that ilk.

all things new. Looking forward. Did you have that hope? That one day, you will see him.

And when you see him, it will be as the king. The king in all the splendor and glory of his resurrection life. The king who leads his people to fountains, to living fountains of water.

And where God, his father, with maternal instinct, will wipe away all the tears. That's a glorious hope. And it's a hope that will not be put to shame for all who trust him.

[ 9 : 59 ] And so I would invite you tonight, as you're invited every time you hear the gospel, to commit yourself to him. And to know for yourself, personally, and powerfully, the truth of his own word.

The book of hope. But at the beginning of this revelation, it's a message to the churches. To these seven churches in modern-day Turkey.

John is well acquainted with these. But there's one who knows the churches better than John. And there's a message for each congregation. And he communicates that message to his servant, John.

And John writes this book, writes this message, and it's circulated to the seven churches. And chapters two and three make fascinating reading. The one who knows us better than any other, whose gaze is a penetrating gaze, knows the motive in every heart.

Knows what's behind every action. And he gives his report concerning these seven congregations. And for the most part, it's not a very commendable report.

[ 11 : 21 ] I like to think of it very much as a school report card. And the young ones here know what it's like to take your report card home after six months' work.

And it's divided into two parts. And the first part, your teacher gives you the comment on what you're good at. Your strengths. How well you've worked.

And you're commended for that. But there's a second part to your report card. And it's called your development needs. What you're not so good at.

And what you need to work harder at in order to improve. Well, the Lord Jesus gives his report card concerning these seven churches. Some of them are praised for their steadfast love.

For their faithfulness. For their zeal. And others, well, they have many development needs. I wonder what his report card would say concerning the Stormway congregation here.

[ 12 : 28 ] Would our strengths, would there be much to commend us for the good that we do? Would it say, see how these people in Kenneth Street love one another?

See how they care for each other? Or, would there just be a line or two and then a long paragraph of our development needs?

Well, we should reflect upon our condition as individuals within the congregation and also corporately. What does the Lord think of us?

He is the Lord of the church. And as I said this morning, there is no one redundant in the church of Christ. Each one has been saved to serve.

To serve here and then perfectly hereafter. And then we come to this last church, the church of the Laodiceans.

[ 13 : 33 ] Prosperous financially, a banking center, commercial city, textile center.

They had their medical school, renowned for eye treatment. And yet, the Lord's penetrating gaze exposed them as being really poor, as virtually being naked in his sight and in terms of eyesight, not just myopic, but blind.

That was the condition of the Laodicean church. And they were in the lifeboat. let's not forget that. They were in the lifeboat.

But things had gone amiss. I wonder what had happened. What happens when everyone takes the eye of Jesus?

Love grows cold. Another takes the place that ought to belong exclusively to him. What's the antidote to a loveless church or to a loveless soul?

[ 14 : 54 ] In the words of the hymn, turn your eyes upon Jesus. Look fully in his wonderful face, and the things of earth which have come in become strangely dim in the light of his glory and grace.

Does he reject them? Not at all. He says to them, behold, listen, he says, through John, I'm standing at your door and knocking.

I stand at the door and knock. never will he make a forced entry into anyone's life. He makes his people willing to receive him in a day of his power.

Solomon, in the song, at one point says this, when there's one knocking at the door, why are you standing without?

This person who knocks at the door, in Solomon's time, his head was drenched with the dew of the night. He had been kept outside.

[ 16 : 16 ] The person on the inside had no time for him or was too sleepy to get up and to let him in. And we know that the Lord Jesus, when others went to their own home, he went to the Mount of Olives.

And often time he spent the night there, under the open sky, doing what? Making a way for his bride to return.

His head was wet, his hair was drenched with the dew of the night. That's the saviour that we have. One who's intensely interested and who cares passionately for his own.

Those who earned the life. And a party was arranged, guests were invited, and he said to his daughter, there will be many of the young men who are invited who will ask for your hand in marriage, and choose well.

your future earthly happiness depends on your choice. And so the guests were invited, the party began.

[ 17 : 32 ] There was a mocking herd at the back door, and the maids went to the door, and there was a beggar, and his request was that he see her ladyship, and the door was slammed in his face, but he kept on knocking, and the dogs barked, and her ladyship was alerted, and she went to the door herself, and she said to the beggar, what is it that you want?

And he said, I want your hand in marriage. To which she replied, very well, you return one year from today, and you will have my hand in marriage. And away hobbled the beggar.

And the maids thought, how clever of her ladyship. to get rid of this unwanted guest. But then news spread that she had pledged herself to this beggar in marriage in twelve months' time.

News came to her father's ears, and he summoned his daughter, and he said to her, tell me, my dear, it's not true, is it? Yes, she said, father, it is.

At which the party abruptly ceased? Father thought that through time things will change.

[ 18 : 51 ] Time did pass, and the twelve months passed, and isn't that the story of our lives? Our life, the Bible says, is like a hand breadth.

earth. It doesn't take long to cross from one side to the other. Ask those here who have spent many years on the earth, and they will tell you it's just like yesterday when they were back in school.

There are some here tonight who had a reunion on Friday night, and they, even at their young age, will say, where have the years gone? They come from different parts of our land, and perhaps across the ocean.

and they met, and they talked, and they had much to reminisce about. Where have the years gone? It's like a story that's told, and before we know it, our dear one on earth is done.

And so the year passed, and there was a movement apparent on the horizon, and then as the horses came closer, there was a posse of men in horseback, and they drew up to form a guard, and along came this man on a white steed, beautifully dressed.

[ 20 : 17 ] Dismounted and went up to the castle gates, and there was her ladyship, waiting, and off they went together. Story with a happy ending. But who was the man?

none other than the king's son, the king's son, who, twelve months earlier, had appeared at the back door of the castle, dressed as a beggar.

Same man. How did she recognize him? I wonder, did she see something in his eyes? Eyes tell a lot, don't they?

remember when Peter denied the Lord the third time, and the Lord turned and looked at Peter? Was it an angry look?

I'd rather think it was a look of pity, one of compassion, and one of love, a look that melted Peter's heart. And the effect was that Peter went out and he wept bitterly.

[ 21 : 27 ] that's the Savior's look. And the King's Son in the highest sense, rode with all the glory of heaven, came into this world as we read there in prophecy in Isaiah 53, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, born not in a palace but in a stable, grew up not in a city but in a humble Palestinian village, an ordinary boy, outwardly, born to ordinary parents, humble villagers, pursued his father's occupation as carpenter, was in the obscurity of that place, hidden away from the eyes of many, and then died the cruel death of the cross, to all intents and purposes, a criminal, left with nothing, even took his clothes from him.

said Isaiah, he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was laid upon him, and listen to this, to the wonderful things that God joins together, by his stripes, we are healed, his stripes, our healing, nothing less than the wisdom of God could have devised such a course of redemption, of salvation.

Behold, he says, I stand at the door and knock, but he goes further, if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in and dine with him and he with me.

That's what fellowship is all about. There was a time in the Old Testament when he knocked, and he knocked for 120 years, and they knocked Noah, where is the promise of the flood?

flood, but the flood did come, and there was violent knocking on the door of the ark, but God had shut that door.

[ 24 : 12 ] The door of opportunity will not always be open, and they perished in the sea of God's wrath. And then just one further illustration of knocking in the New Testament.

Jesus, in that magnificent 25th chapter of Matthew, reminds us that on the last day, there will be a division, and in parable form he tells us what's to happen.

There were five wise and five foolish. Five were prepared, and five slumbered and slept. And then there was a knocking.

It was the midnight cry, and as always the midnight cry that serves to make the difference. And the wise went in, and the foolish were left on the outside.

Open to us, they said. Open to us. And he said to them, I know you not. There's a very serious, solemn message, the message of the gospel.

[ 25 : 27 ] It's not entertainment, it's not a story telling, it's reality. How do you get from the water into the lifeboat?

Is it by struggling, by doing your best? lifeboat? Some think it is. But if you think along these lines, and you really analyze your thinking, what you're saying is this, what Jesus Christ has done is not sufficient.

I must add my own bit. that's what makes every faith different to the Christian faith.

Every single faith in the world differs from the Christian faith. In that, every other faith will say to its devotees, do this, this, and this, or do not that, that, and that, and you will be saved.

Build up a system of merit for yourself and all will be well. The Christian faith is different. It's unique.

[ 26 : 51 ] The uniqueness of Christ's Christianity. It's already been done. The lifeboat is there, ready for those to be welcomed into it.

May I ask you, what's holding you back from being in the lifeboat? Your attendance here is to be commended.

Sabbath after Sabbath you come along so faithfully, and yet many of you are not in the lifeboat. And I'm bound to ask you the question, why not?

What's keeping you? from coming into the safety and the security of the lifeboat? I've tried to tell you a little bit about Christian hope and the blessedness that awaits.

And I'm bound to ask you this question as well. You are so regular on the Lord's day, what prevents you from coming out midweek? I'm often baffled by this.

[ 28 : 02 ] Clearly there's a hunger and a thirst for God's word. There's an appetite to hear the good news. And midweek, there is more of the good news.

There is a greater feeling of the soul midweek. And what prevents you from coming? only you can answer that question. And an invitation is extended to you.

Come with us. And why not begin this coming Wednesday? It's a meeting next door here. It's not a prayer meeting. It's a very special meeting.

And you're invited to come. And I'm persuaded that once you take that step in obedience, you will not regret it. Why not take it?

The king has promised to be present. And he's present here tonight. And if I'm not mistaken, he's speaking to you very, very clearly.

[ 29 : 07 ] In the silence of your own soul, you hear his voice. Why don't you say to him, come in. Come into my heart, Lord Jesus, and make it the throne that it ought to be.

Reign exclusively in my life. Make me your own. That's why he came. That's the meaning and that's the purpose of life.

There is no other reason for living. Let us pray.