

Questions From Jesus To Faith Community Church
Can I Come In?

What does the Bible mean? If the Bible is the very “breathed out” words of God then the most important question we could possibly ask is what does it really say? What does it mean?

Fortunately God didn’t leave us clueless when it comes to understanding His Word. See, God is really big on communication. God created us with intellect and intelligence. From day one in the Garden God communicated with Adam.

Isn’t it interesting that we live in the information age. We have iPhones, iPads, MacBooks. (Some people who haven’t been converted yet are using PCs and Androids.)

Anything we want to find out, from what movies are playing to airline flight schedules to recipes for lasagna to how to make a bomb is all at our fingertips.

Face Book has over 800 million active users. Lady GaGa has 15,300,000 followers on Twitter.

We love knowledge and we crave communication. Why? Because God elevates knowledge and He created us to communicate.

That means something very important when it comes to the Bible. The Bible is God’s message. God has something to say and He’s given us an objective revelation.

We don’t have to guess, “Gee is God speaking to me through the rustling leaves or is He trying to communicate to me in a dream?” That’s stuff is totally subjective.

Certainly God communicates His existence through nature, but I’m talking about specifics now. That’s why He inspired the Bible, so that we’d have a book we could hold in our hands, read over and over, and use legitimate methods of literary interpretation.

Because the Bible is written in human language with recognized structure here’s some basic rules to help you interpret what you read.

1. Where the Bible speaks literally, don't try to read something else into it. That's where Harold Camping and his end of the world predicting went wrong. He read hidden meanings into everything.
2. Consider who's being addressed.
3. Consider the contents and the context. The cults are famous for pulling verses out of their context to prove their points. Always read the surrounding verses.
4. Check out word meanings. We have a lot of easy to use tools to help us today even if we don't know Greek or Hebrew.
5. Look at the other verses that cover the same subject.
6. Never interpret a clear statement by an unclear one. That's another favorite trick of the cults.

Today we're going to look at the last of the messages of Jesus to the seven churches of Asia Minor in the book of Revelation.

We've actually titled this Questions From Jesus To Faith Community Church, and the question for today might sound like a strange one but it's this: *Can I Come In?*

Open your Bible to Revelation 3 page 1205

Today we're going to study one of those passages of scripture that's been easily misinterpreted.

Now you might say, "Hey what's the big deal. So we don't get every nuance of what God's saying. At least we're getting this message from God. Isn't that what's important."

How many of you have ever heard of "The Wicked Bible?" You can see a rare copy in the Folger Shakespeare Library. It gets it's name because a printer in 1631 published a Bible with an infamous typo.

Here it is on the screen, see if you can spot it. Notice it reads Thou shalt commit adultery.

Instantly it became a best seller! Just kidding. Robert Baker was fined 300 pounds in court and all copies were ordered to be confiscated and burned.

One word makes a big difference in the meaning of a verse. And if one word can make a difference, what happens if we get a whole bunch of them wrong. Communication only accomplishes it's intended purpose when the truth is accurately communicated.

That means we want to get it right. If we don't we end up missing the whole point that God had for us.

I. Sometimes Jesus Christ Reserves His Harshest Words For Christians

Read verses 14-16

The phrase "spew you out of my mouth" is a nice way of saying "you make me want to throw up." In fact, the edition of the NKJV that we pass out in the service says, "I will vomit you out of my mouth."

Wow. Could God actually be saying that sometimes we make Him nauseous? That's exactly what He's saying.

And in each of these messages we've seen how significant it is that Jesus uses the titles for Himself. They're different for each chrch. It's like their tailor made for each particular situation.

This is obviously a church with some big problems. So look what He calls Himself in verse 14.

First He *says these things says the amen.*

The word "amen" is a significant word. In fact too often we just throw it around almost in a joking sense. The word translated "amen" is from a Hebrew term that means "truly, so be it, that's it."

Before Jesus speaks these powerful words to the congregation at Laodicea He says, "By the way there's not going to be any arguing or debating here. When I speak it's the final word."

Not only that but He says He's "The True Witness." No false testimony here.

Then He concludes by identifying Himself as *the Beginning of the creation of God.* That doesn't mean He's the first thing God created. The Bible says, *All things were created through Him and for Him.* (Colossians 1:16)

The word *arche* that He uses means “Origin.” So He’s saying, “Just let me preface the really hash things I have to say by establishing my authority. I have every right to say what I’m saying because I’m the creator. My witness is always true. I’m the period and the exclamation point.”

I’m not sure why we so often want to take issue with God’s authority. I guess it’s because we want to do life our way instead of His. But sometimes we need the hard words and the stern rebuke.

Now here’s where the interpretative stuff becomes so crucial.

There’s a bunch of well known Bible teachers that say that Jesus is challenging a this bunch of people who meet together as a congregation but they’re not really believers.

One writer says that this congregation must be made up of unbelievers because Jesus said He’s spew them out of His mouth and Jesus wouldn’t do that if they were really believers.

Here’s my answer to that. Oh yes He would. Oh yes He would.

In fact look down at verse 19. **Read verse 19**

That couldn’t be any plainer. Jesus says, “It’s the ones I love I discipline so listen up.”

Listen to this from the Bible: *the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son. Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father? If you are not disciplined (and everyone undergoes discipline), then you are illegitimate children and not true sons.* (Hebrews 12:6-9 NIV)

If your kids act up I don’t discipline them. That’s you’re responsibility. They’re your kids. God’s discipline and rebuke and challenge prove that we’re His children. Jesus’ rebuke proved this Laodicean congregation belonged to Him.

The whole imagery here is Jesus saying, “You don’t make me nauseous because you don’t belong to me. You make me want to pop another Rolaid because you do belong to me and you’re tepid.”

“I can handle a cold glass of coke and I can enjoy a hot cup of tea, but when I pick up the cup of tea expecting it to be hot and it’s cooled off it makes me want to spit it back in the cup.”

I. Sometimes Jesus Christ Reserves His Harsh Words For Christians

II. It’s Easy For A Church To Start To Feel Self Sufficient

Read verse 17-18

Laodicea was the chief city in the region of Phrygia. It was located in the Lycus valley about 45 miles directly southeast of Philadelphia. Like most of the other prominent cities of the ancient world it was located at the crossroads of major highways. Trade columns marched along those highways and so Laodicea was on a strategic trading spot.

Laodicea also had some other claims to fame. They had running water piped in from Hierapolis via underground aqueducts. They were the central banking center in that part of the world. They were known for a wool that was raven black and became wealthy by selling this wool. The Laodiceans were quite fashion conscious. Laodicea even had a famous medical school and produced an eye salve that was known the world over.

No wonder Jesus says, *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--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.*

William Barclay writes, “There is a strangely modern situation here. The Laodiceans were people who put their trust in material prosperity, in outward luxury, and in physical health. They put their trust in the things of this world.”

Isn’t it ironic that the very things that make our life go smoother can be the things that steer us away from any sense of needing Jesus Christ?

Remember the Lord’s prayer? Jesus taught His disciples to pray, *Give us this day our daily bread.* (Matthew 6:11) Why do you think He said that? Could it be because as soon as we start storing things up our sense that we need God begins to fade.

In fact, the more we store up, the less we realize that everything ultimately comes from the creator, the true witness, the period and exclamation point of all things.

Could there be a message for FCC here today? Could there be a message for each one of us here today?

I. Sometimes Jesus Christ Reserves His Harsh Words For Christians

II. It's Easy For A Church To Start To Feel Self Sufficient

III. Jesus Christ Is Faithful Even In The Face Of Our Unfaithfulness

Read verse 19

This is the key interpretive verse that makes this whole passage come to light. Jesus isn't saying, "I hate you guys because you've rejected my message of salvation." He's saying, "I love you. That's why I'm calling you to repentance."

Read verse 20

Here's where wrong interpretation leads to wrong theology and wrong theology leads to confusion and totally missing the beautiful truth of the passage.

How many times have you heard Revelation 3:20 used as a salvation verse? Jesus is standing at your heart's door knocking. There's no knob on the outside, only on the inside. So you have to open the door. And if you pray and ask Jesus into your heart He'll come in and save you.

Now, I don't want to burst anyone's bubble here. I sure don't want to discourage anyone. So let me say two things.

1. It could be that when you placed your faith in Jesus as Savior you asked Him into your heart. When you said those words you honestly put your trust in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus as your personal Savior. If that's true praise God.

The Bible says, *For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. (John 3:16)*

Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt. But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness. (Romans 4:3-5)

I want you to know, my very dear friends, that it is on account of this resurrected Jesus that the forgiveness of your sins can be promised. He accomplishes, in those

who believe, everything that the Law of Moses could never make good on. But everyone who believes in this raised-up Jesus is declared good and right and whole before God. (Acts 13:39 The Message)

We're not declared forgiven because we asked Jesus into our hearts. We're declared forgiven because we put our trust in the only Savior.

But, number 2. It could be that you didn't really understand what Christ had done for you, you knew your life needed change, so you asked Jesus into your heart based on Revelation 3:20 in hopes that He'd straighten you out. That's not salvation, that's just religion.

Well. Remember the context here. This isn't written to unbelievers. It's written to lukewarm believers who needed to be shaken up by the one who passionately loved them.

Let's read Revelation 3:20 again

Question; did you see the word "ask" in that verse? How about the word "Jesus?" What about the phrase "your heart?"

None of those words are there. So what's the verse saying? Remember, if we miss the interpretation we completely miss that application that God has for us. This is no inconsequential matter of opinion.

God has something to communicate and the greatest blessing in life is grabbing onto that communication and internalizing it.

This is Jesus question. "Behold (pay attention, listen), I stand at the door." Jesus Christ has been and continues to stand at the door. To assume this is the door of someone's "heart" is totally foreign to the passage. This "door" is the door of the Laodicean church.

While this church was saying, "I am rich, and increased with goods and have need of nothing," they actually kept Jesus Christ outside of the church. No wonder He is described as repeatedly "knocking."

The Greek language uses tenses in a different way than we do in English. Tenses in English are more about time while tenses in Greek are more about type of action.

The Bible uses the present tense *krouo* to show that Jesus didn't just go (knock, knock, a knock knock) and then leave. Jesus doesn't give up on His church.

Then moving from the Laodicean church generally, Jesus Christ appeals to the individual believers on the inside of this church. "If anyone (singular in Greek) hears my voice, and opens (singular again) the door, I will come in to him." Notice the two conditions that Christ requires to be fulfilled by those on the inside:

#1: "if anyone hears my voice." This refers to what Jesus Christ has been saying in verses 14-19.

#2: "and opens the door." This refers to the door where the church is gathered. This involves the genuine repentance of a congregation.

Connected with these two conditions are three promises by Jesus Christ:

1. "I will come in to him" This is a promise of Christ's personal entrance into the church to meet the believer face to face. The word translated "to" is *pros* in the original. *Pros* has the idea of proximity. Jesus Christ says, "I want to be close to you." It's very similar to the Hebrew way of saying "before someone." The word is *paneh* which literally means "before the face."

Imagine that. On the one hand these Christians are making the Almighty sick by their self-sufficiency and lack of trust but at the same time He passionately wanted to be eye-ball to eye-ball with them. Nose to nose in an intimate personal way.

In fact, Jesus says, "I'll come in and have dinner with you. Drop the pretense and the self-exaltation and I'll share in the ultimate in Middle-Eastern hospitality. I'll sit down with you at the table."

One more interpretive note here. In verse 20 says Jesus doesn't say "I'll come into you." He says, "I'll come in to you (two different words), not come "into" (one word).

Revelation 3:20 is saying that Christ will come in the church to the person, not that Christ will come into the person. When He gets in the church with the person He will eat dinner with him. He will have fellowship with him.

These aren't minor details. We're not splitting hairs here. Revelation 3:20 is a verse for believers, not unbelievers.

It is a promise of personal fellowship with and from Jesus Christ, not an offer of salvation.

Now think about this. If we assume that this is just a verse calling people to have saving faith in Jesus we'll skip right over the real point.

The real point is that Jesus was standing outside the door of the church of Laodicaea earnestly knocking.

And He wasn't knocking cause He's some wimpy powerless deity who has to beg His people for anything.

Just a quick trip through Revelation and you'll see He's The Almighty, The One who holds the keys of death and hell, The Lion of the tribe of Judah, The King of Kings and Lord of Lords, He that has a sharp two edged sword.

Jesus isn't knocking at the door of the Laodicaen church because He's powerless. He's not going, "Aw please, let me in guys. It's cold out here. Can't we all just get along?" He could say the word and the whole world would just evaporate in an instant.

Jesus the Mighty God is knocking on the door of an unfaithful church because He genuinely cares for His people. They may give Him heartburn but He loves them with an immeasurable love. It's a love that defies description. It's a love that led Him to allow His own created beings to brutally torture Him and then execute Him on a cross.

Jesus Christ is faithful, even in the face of our own unfaithfulness because He has something so much better than what we're often willing to settle for.

Read verse 21

There's coming a day when all the wars, injustices, cruelty, sorrow, and even death will be a thing of the past. It's called The Kingdom of God. Jesus Christ rules in that kingdom.

Listen to what the Bible says about that magnificent kingdom time:

All the ends of the world shall remember and turn to the LORD, And all the families of the nations shall worship before You. (Psalm 22:27)

All nations whom You have made shall come and worship before You, O Lord, And shall glorify Your name. (Psalm 86:9)

And it shall come to pass that everyone who is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles. (Zechariah 14:16)

Who shall not fear You, O Lord, and glorify Your name? For You alone are holy. For all nations shall come and worship before You, For Your judgments have been manifested.” (Revelation 15:4)

God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Philippians 2:9-11)

Now catch Jesus’ promise in verse 21. Overcome the craziness and the distractions of this world. Walk with Me. Fellowship with Me and you’ll share My throne.

The all-sufficient God who could get by fine without any of us has chosen to love us through the cross and have an intimate relationship with Him. He even wants to share His throne with us. I mean how totally cool is that!

I believe we’re so much like Laodicia in this country it’s frightening. We say, *‘I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing’--and do not know that we are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked.*

Guess who’s at the door waiting to come in? Jesus Christ is asking Faith Community Church the question, “Can I Come in? Can you and I cook steaks on the grill, kick off our shoes, down a couple of frappachinos, and get real. No pretense, no holier than thou judging others, just getting real with the stuff of life?”

Now here’s the question. **Read verse 22** This takes it out of the strict realm of some first century congregation in Laodicia and puts it right in our laps.

Here’s the question, are we too busy with life to notice that Jesus is even here?

This is a real story. **Watch the video. Joshua Bell Plays The Metro (YouTube)**

A man sat at a metro station in Washington DC and started to play the violin; it was a cold January morning in 2007. He played six Bach pieces for about 45 minutes. During that time, since it was rush hour, it was calculated that thousands of people went through the station, most of them on their way to work.

In the 45 minutes the musician played, only 6 people stopped and stayed for a while. About 20 gave him money but continued to walk their normal pace. He collected \$32. When he finished playing and silence took over, no one noticed it. No one applauded, nor was there any recognition.

No one knew this but the violinist was Joshua Bell, one of the top musicians in the world. He played one of the most intricate pieces ever written, with a violin worth 3.5 million dollars.

Two days before he played in the subway, Joshua Bell sold out at a theater in Boston with the seats averaging \$100 each.

The event was organized by the Washington Post as part of a social experiment about perception, taste and priorities of people. The outlines were: in a commonplace environment at an inappropriate hour: Do we perceive beauty? Do we stop to appreciate it? Do we recognize the talent in an unexpected context?

The Washington Post author came to this conclusion:

“If we don’t have a moment to stop and listen to one of the best musicians in the world playing the best music ever written, how many other things are we missing?”

How about this question? Are you missing Jesus? Is He knocking, persistently, lovingly, authoritatively on the front door of Faith community Church?

Are you watching? Are you listening? Can He come in and take His rightful place as head of the church or is He out in the parking lot waiting for you to embrace all that He is.