

"Behold, I stand at the door and knock."

It is one of the more well-known religious paintings, painted by William Hunt more than a century and a half ago, known as "The Light of the World." It is Hunt's allegorical illustration of Jesus standing before a door knocking. In one version of the painting the door is covered with weeds suggesting that no care has been given to the door and, by implication, to that which is on the other side. Many have noted, as Hunt intended, that the door has no handle on the outside, thus preventing the one on the outside from entering on his own. If the door is ever opened, it must be opened from the inside. In explaining the symbolism of his work of art, Hunt said that it was to picture or to represent "the obstinately shut mind."

In John 8:12 Jesus said of Himself, "I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life." Again, depending upon what "rendition" of the picture one views, the person, who is obviously Jesus standing on the "outside," is encircled with light, as if having a halo of light emanating from Him. Other renditions of this work of art show the person standing before the door holding in his hand a lantern that is lit because it is night when it is dark. The painting is an illustration of Revelation 3:20 - "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me."

Revelation 3:20 is often removed from its context and used as a text for the "sinner's prayer" in which one is told to pray for salvation by inviting Jesus to come into one's heart. Many preachers exhort their audiences to pray this prayer asking Jesus to come into their heart to save them from their sins. "After all," these preachers say, "Jesus stands at your

heart's door knocking, wanting to come in." It is not rare at all for some of these preachers to quote Revelation 3:20 to "prove" that Jesus wants to enter their heart. For those who know no better (because they do not know the Word of God) this resonates with them that this must be how to receive salvation. So, using Revelation 3:20 and illustrating it with this "The Light of the World" painting, many have prayed that prayer believing they have been saved. Tragically, they have been misguided. Those who have "an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says."

The book of Revelation is a confusing and greatly misunderstood and difficult book for most people. The first three chapters, however, can be understood by almost anyone. In chapter 1 and verse 11 the Lord Jesus Christ commands Apostle John, "What you see, write in a book and send it to the seven churches which are in Asia: to Ephesus, to Smyrna, to Pergamos, to Thyatira, to Sardis, to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea." The entire book, all twenty-two chapters, were to be sent to those "seven churches." Within this "book," seven individual letters were written to each of them. Those seven individual letters are in chapters 2 and 3. There is some symbolism included in each of the letters but nothing so difficult and "mysterious" that is beyond understanding.

One does not need to be a professional theologian to grasp the flow of information in chapters 2 and 3. The tables in the next column are a basic outline of those two chapters. As one can see, John was faithful to Christ's commission. He wrote a letter to each of the "seven churches which [were] in Asia." One should note carefully, however, that

even though it was John who wrote each of the letters, they actually were the words of Christ.

Chapter 2

Letter Written To

verses 1 - 7	church in Ephesus
verses 8 - 11	church in Smyrna
verses 12 - 17	church in Pergamos
verses 18 - 29	church in Thyatira

Chapter 3

Letter Written To

verses 1 - 6	church in Sardis
verses 7 - 13	church in Philadelphia
verses 14 - 22	church in Laodicea

Each of the letters followed the same format. There was (1) a greeting that included a word picture or description of the sender, Christ, followed by, (2) either a commendation or a condemnation then (3) personal instructions. The five churches that received a condemnation were given (4) warnings. Each church was then given a (5) specific promise.

The verse of scripture that "inspired" Hunt to paint his "The Light of the World" was written to one of these local churches and not to any individual. That church was the church of Christ in Laodicea. It was a congregation that was "neither cold nor hot" and it made Jesus sick. Unless the church repented of its indifference, Christ said "I will vomit you out of My mouth." ([New King James Version](#))

It is important to note that Jesus did not write this letter to unsaved Laodiceans; He wrote it to saved Laodiceans who were in danger of losing their

salvation. The church in Laodicea, like all churches of Christ, including those among us today, are composed of saved people. One cannot be a saved person and not be a member of the church that Jesus built and, conversely, one cannot be an unsaved person and be a member of His church. Acts 2:47 says that when people are saved, they are "added" to His church. So, it was to Christians and not to the unsaved that Jesus said what He said in Revelation 3:20.

Faith alone, without any obedient response to that faith is not the Bible faith that saves. It is only a faith or belief that there was, in fact, a historical Jesus of Nazareth. Bible faith requires the one desiring salvation to obey the requisite gospel conditions to receive salvation. Hebrews 5:9 says that Jesus is "the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him" - not to all who simply believe that He was or is. To the members of the Laodicean church, persons who had obeyed the gospel terms of salvation, Jesus said to repent. Unsaved sinners must also repent but repentance alone is also not all that is required of those who seek salvation.

Jesus said in Matthew 10:32-33, "...whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My father who is in heaven." It is the confession of Christ - not public or even private confession of sin to anyone - that is necessary. This is the confession that in Acts 8:37 the Ethiopian eunuch made. "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." This was also the "good confession" that Timothy made "in the presence of many witnesses." (I Timothy 6:12)

There is one additional requirement to obey to receive salvation; it is the requirement to be baptized, immersed. Jesus said in Mark 16:16, "He who believes and is baptized shall be saved." Peter preached in Acts 2:38, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins..." Paul taught in Romans 6:4 that Christians are "buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised

from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection."

But, there is no command of Christ or His Apostles anywhere in the Word of God that one is to pray the "sinner's prayer" asking Christ to come into his or her heart to save that person - not even Revelation 3:20. There is no example anywhere in God's Word of anyone ever praying this prayer to receive salvation. Not even the thief on the cross prayed such a prayer. He prayed that the Lord would remember him when Christ came in His kingdom. He did not pray for salvation. Besides, the thief made his request before the New Testament was inaugurated following the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ.

Even the prayer of Cornelius in Acts 10 did not save him. Rather, he was told to send for Peter who would tell him what he was to do for salvation. "...call for Simon whose surname is Peter, who will tell you words by which you and all your household will be saved." (Acts 11:14-15) The words were these: "...he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord," the same words Jesus spoke in Mark 16:16, the same words that Peter spoke earlier in Acts 2:38, and the same words Paul spoke in Romans 6.

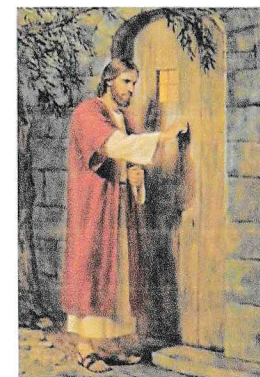
William Hunt's iconic picture is a message directed not to a lost sinner but to any backsliding, drifting, indifferent congregation of people who have been saved by the blood of Christ and who needs to repent and be restored in her relationship to the Christ who invites all men to be saved. "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

Multiple copies of this tract are available from:

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and knock."



Rick Breidenbaugh