



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Revelation 3:14-22

"The Curse of the Happy Medium"

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] The Scripture reading today is from Revelation chapter 3, verse 14 through verse 22. This is the last of our Lord's letters to the churches. And incidentally, while we are thinking about it, the term church itself is found again in the Book of Revelation in only one other place. And it is found then in chapter , in verse 16, not representing teaching that our Lord gives to the church, but rather, a statement that this book as a whole has been given by our Lord for the churches. So, in one sense, our Lord's message to the church ends at this point. So, it's significant from that standpoint as well. But beginning in verse 14 now, John writes,

"And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God; I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: (That in the original text is written in such a way that we could translate it this way, all of those adjectives belong to that one person or church in view, "and knowest not that thou art the

wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked one.") I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent. (One rather interesting thing is that the word for love here is the word that generally is regarded as a weaker word than the stronger word agape, which refers to the love of the directed will. This one is a term that emphasizes the sharing of common interests and therefore it commonly can be translated, affection. "As many as I have affection for, I rebuke and chasten. Be zealous therefore and repent.") 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 sup with him, and he with me. To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches."

May the Lord bless this reading of his word, and we bow together now in a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father we are thankful for the word of God, and we are thankful for these messages that our Lord has given to the churches. As we reflect upon them we see how important they are for us in the end of the 20th Century. For the same trials and difficulties and sins and other things that characterize believing individuals are things that are characteristic of us. Lord, forgive us for our lack of zeal, of concern, of zealous activity for the gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We too are so often lukewarm. And we pray Lord, that by Thy grace, through the Holy Spirit, Thou wilt stir us to be more whole-heartedly interested in working in the spreading of the good news concerning the Lord Jesus Christ. We pray Thy blessing to that end, not only upon our congregation and our church, but upon other true churches of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ as well. May the whole body be renewed in these difficult days in which we are living.

We pray for Believers Chapel and its ministries, Lord, bless them. May Thy hand be upon them for spiritual good. May the tape ministry and the radio ministry and the written ministry and the Bible classes and other forms of outreach in which we are engaged individually and as a church, may the Holy Spirit use these things to glorify our Lord Jesus Christ.

And Father, we pray particularly for those who are ill and sick and have requested our prayers for various reasons, minister to them by Thy grace through those who serve them as physicians or family or friends. Bless and give healing as it should please Thee. We thank Thee that we can turn to Thee and know that Thou dost hear our petitions at this very moment. Heaven listens to the petitions of the weakest of the saints and Father we pray for our great country, for our president, for his tasks in these days. Especially we pray for him and may if it please Thee again, there be continued peace as far as this country is concerned and a possibility of the proclamation of the gospel freely, may that continue.

And Lord we would particularly pray as a congregation that Thou would work in our hearts to stir us to be more faithful in our Christian testimony. Deliver us from the lethargy, and indifference, and lack of concern that so often characterizes us, characterizes me. And Lord we pray that by Thy grace, Thou wilt enable us to fervently serve our Lord. And Lord, too, we pray that Thou wilt enable us to be fruitful and interest others in the gospel of our Lord Jesus which means so much to us. We pray Thy blessing upon all of the ministries here, upon our elders and deacons, and the members and friends and the visitors here today particularly, Lord, encourage them through the word of God. Build them up, as well, in the truth that concerns our Lord Jesus Christ, as we listen to the Scriptures for Jesus sake. Amen.

[Message] From time to time in our exposition of the Book of Revelation, and specifically the messages to the seven churches, I've made reference to an interpretation

of these chapters, the messages to the seven churches, that has suggested that these letters as they unfold, first the letter to the church at Ephesus, the final one to the church at Laodicea, that those seven letters represent essentially seven periods of time between the two comings of our Lord, and that we may expect the church to manifest the characteristics that these letters represent through this now approximately two thousand year period of time.

I have suggested that I doubt that that is really what our Lord and John have in mind in this, but there are some interesting coincidences. Otherwise, good men would not have suggested that that may be one of the intent of these letters. We have tried to stress the fact that these are historical churches and they are written to the historical churches just as the apostles, for example, wrote to Rome and to Corinth. These letters are to be taken in a similar way. But at any rate, according to this view which we will call the historical view, Laodicea being the last of the letters would represent the last stage of Christianity on the earth between the two comings of our Lord. And so since the Lord's coming is thought by those who hold this view to be relatively near, and we have reason in Scripture to say that his return is relatively near, then this would represent present day Christianity, the epistle that our Lord wrote to the Laodiceans, the last phase prior to our Lord's return. And certainly as one looks around you can see certain resemblances between the conditions of the church at Laodicea and the conditions of the church today. Laodicea represents a kind of church that is in essence a compromising church.

One of the men that I used to listen to and whom I have read through the years, once wrote a paragraph like this, he was writing on the subject of lukewarmness and he said, "The Laodiceans must have prided themselves on being tolerant, broad-minded, middle-of-the-roaders. One can almost hear them say, 'We're not extreme radicals, nor ultra conservatives. We are fundamental modernists and modern fundamentalists. We are disciples of the great happy meeting.'" Dr. Frank Crane used to say that, "His religion was the religion of the great common denominator of all things. So, the Laodiceans did not

belong to the Iceland of a frigid intellectualism, nor to the Tierra del Fuego of a flaming evangelicism. They dwelt among the temperate zone of a tasteless, spiritual tepidity." Well, that's a marvelous little paragraph, because it is so true in so many ways to the conditions of the church at various periods in its history, and also the conditions of individual churches at particular times as well.

Furthermore, he went on to say later on in this article that a popular modernist preacher, he wrote this a number of years ago, you can see the terms are used in slightly different senses today, a popular modernist minister wrote, "The delineation of sin has undergone a transition somewhat similar to that which has taken place in painting. The old, clear cut lines have given way to an impressionistic, indefiniteness. The black and white contrast to low toned grays. The churches have adopted a hush policy regarding the doctrine of depravity and are becoming a fellowship of natural amiability. A Rotarian gospel takes the place of repentance. It's only another way of saying that contrast has given way to comparison, that the church is neither cold nor hot. One gazes nowadays at an impressionistic sketch and knows not whether it be the likeness of a sunset or of scrambled eggs." [Laughter] Well, there is a lot of down to earth wisdom in that, and I think that what we do have in our church today often fits what he was saying a generation ago.

Laodicea is the first of the churches that has no commendation. And nevertheless our Lord still expresses affection for them, as we pointed out in verse 19. Jesus begins the lesson to them with the address in verse 14 to the church of the Laodiceans. "Write these things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God." Laodicea was about forty to fifty miles southeast of Philadelphia. It was a town that was named by the wife or for the wife of Attalus the Second, who founded the city. His wife's name was Laodicy, and so Laodicea is derived from her name. The city was a center for the textile industry, for banking. It was a very wealthy city, and it was known for other

things as well. But it was a church undoubtedly that was a wealthy church and influential in the particular area.

For example, in 60 AD or so, there was a great earthquake that leveled the city of Laodicea and remarkably, they did not have to appeal to Washington for aid. [Laughter] They were able to rebuild the city entirely from their own funds without any help whatsoever from the Roman Empire, which will give you some idea of the wealth of the city. It was the place, so the *textus receptus* note says, you may find it in some editions of the King James Version, from which the Apostle Paul wrote the first letter to Timothy. There is no certainty about that at all, it's just purely a tradition, probably untrue, but nevertheless interesting from that stand point. It was founded to propagate Greek culture in Phrygia and according to historians, it failed to do that, and it failed because of its own self-satisfaction. So, that there is again a similarity between the message the church and the spiritual significance of that particular letter with the history of the city itself. So, Laodicea in one sense is a representation of the church or Laodicea.

Now Laodicea, and the church there, was known to the Apostle Paul when he wrote to the Colossians. Colosse was located thereby. He mentions those who are in the church of Laodicea. Three cities were close together: Laodicea, Colosse, and Hierapolis, all in the Lycus Valley down from Philadelphia and consequently it is not surprising that they were known to each other.

The description that our Lord gives of himself is extremely interesting. He says first that he is the Amen. Now that is a term that is derived from Isaiah chapter 65, verse 16 where the prophet mentions the God of truth. I will turn back and read that particular verse. Its chapter 65, in verse 16, and the prophet writes, "That he who blesseth himself in the earth shall bless himself in the God of truth; and he that sweareth in the earth shall swear by the God of truth; because the former troubles are forgotten, and because they are hid from mine eyes." The New English Bible for example, renders that "the God whose name is Amen." Instead of the "God of truth," "the God whose name is Amen."

The point of our Lord's statement referring to himself as Amen is evidently that he is the guarantee of the truth of the message that he himself has given. He is in a sense himself the Amen or the Amen to God's purposes. He alone is an individual who can add a true Amen to the words of God.

You know in our churches, we in times past, it was very frequent for individuals to shout Amen, and in particular kinds of churches it is still true today. The preacher will make a particular statement, and someone will shout Amen, and then another statement will be made and someone will say Amen. Now that really doesn't add a thing to what the preacher has said if it is just an ordinary believer. But if our Lord should say Amen or Amen, that's something different entirely. I'm not trying to downgrade any Amen's that you may want to say. There have been known to be five or six Amen's in the history of Believers Chapel [laughter] through its ministry and individuals gained a certain admiration from friends, at least they were well known if they were able to say, "I shouted Amen in Believers Chapel." Now usually that provokes a, "You did?" [Laughter] But at any rate for our Lord to say Amen to anything is to give it the touch of truth. So, he is the Amen to God's purposes. He alone can add an Amen and add it truthfully. So, right at the beginning he claims for himself the fact that he is the one in whom God's purposes find their consummation.

Furthermore, he describes himself similarly, I think, apart from the metaphor as the "Faithful and genuine witness." He holds the truth that he has come to proclaim faithfully, and he carries it out. He is the faithful and genuine witness as over against others who give witness and it's not genuine; our Lord's witness is genuine.

And finally, he describes himself as "the beginning of the creation of God." That might suggest if you were reading just those words, that he is saying that he is the first created being. But that is not the force of those words. That word really means he's the source of all of the creation. And in fact, in the epistle to the Colossians, and you must remember that John the Apostle would have been familiar with Colossians, and our Lord

is the one who was the ultimate author of Colossians, and in Colossians chapter 1, in verse 16 concerning the Lord Jesus, the apostle writes, "For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him."

The Arians who did not accept the eternal generation of the Son, did not believe that he was truly a divine being, they of course appealed to that text, the beginning of the creation of God, as suggesting that our Lord was in the final analysis a created being. But as Athanasius and others pointed out, if he was the creator of all things, then he himself was not a created being. So, the apostle's word in Colossians confirmed the fact that when he speaks of himself as the beginning of the creation of God, he means that he's the prime source of all of God's creation. He is the agent of the Father in the creation.

Now, having said that in description of himself, the Lord goes on to give an evaluation of the church, and here we come to the heart of Laodicea's problem. In the 15th verse he says, "I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I wish, I would that you were cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art the wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked one." So this is the cause of our Lord's problem with Laodicea.

It's they are neither cold nor hot. He wished that they were cold. I have often wondered about that, why our Lord wished that they were cold; if they were not hot, at least cold. Perhaps because if a person is really cold in the spiritual sense it might be possible for them to be awakened, but if a person has a kind of protecting covering of religiosity, it is most difficult to reach such people. So, he said, "I wish if you are not hot, I would like for you at least to be cold, and thus perhaps susceptible to the work of the Holy Spirit."

Now that has produced a bit of a question, because of that very fact, New Testament scholars have raised the question of whether this particular church and the message to it might not be interpreted in a different way. Let me try to explain. Laodicea was a city that didn't have its own water supply. It was dependent on Colossae and Hierapolis and perhaps others. But now a city that does not have its own water supply is susceptible to other influences, because its very existence depends on others. So, usually in a case like that the city or the individual will become a compromising kind of city. It's very much like the Finlandization of Europe, that is those countries that are on the border of Soviet Russia, they cannot really be independent in their minds. They are so dependent upon Soviet Russia or so fearful of them. Little Finland, from which we derive that term Finlandization is such that it cannot really be independent or the big bear to the east will come in again and take over that country. That's one reason that Laodicea was a lukewarm place. They were not their own masters, they depended upon others.

It has been suggested that since Hierapolis was to the north and east a little bit, just a few miles, I think about six miles, and Hierapolis was famous for hot springs which came out of the center of the city and flowed over a broad plateau and then finally came to a place just a few miles from Laodicea and tumbled over a cliff and when the waters tumbled over the cliff, chemicals that were in the waters left a white encrustation of calcium carbonate on the cliff so that you living in Laodicea, you could look out and see those cliffs.

They make a magnificent picture, natural miracle, kind of place, and you would see the white encrustation of the calcium carbonate and you might think that those waters that were hot springs in Hierapolis would be the kind of springs that might be healthful to drink or otherwise. And the facts were, of course, that if you tried to put that water in your mouth the first thing you did was spit it out, because it was lukewarm and flowing over that plateau and doing what it did made it the kind of water that you could not possibly drink.

So, it has been suggested that what our Lord is really saying is not that he is disturbed over Laodicea because of their lukewarm spiritual condition, but he's rather disturbed because of their Christian works. Their Christian works are not good works. They are not like the fresh waters of Colosse, the cooling fresh waters of Colosse or even the hot medicinal waters that were healthful in the center Hierapolis, but they were things that were represented bad or unworthy works. That particular interpretation has not gained total credence, however, so we are going to follow the common interpretation that when our Lord talks about lukewarmness that he is not talking so much about their works, he is talking about their spiritual condition.

So, he states, "I know your works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm." Laodicea is of the broad church school, latitude and area, something like spiritual chameleons, that is whatever the situations demands, that's what we can be. As someone has put it, "they were evangelical, that is they held to the truth of the gospel, but nevertheless they were not evangelistic." I have noticed that Christians use those two terms as if they were synonyms, but they have a special use among theologians, and they have a special use among knowledgeable Christians.

Evangelical means that you do hold to the fundamentals of the Christian faith. Evangelistic means that you not simply hold to the fundamentals of the Christian faith, but also that you are fervent and zealous in the evangelization of those with whom you come in contact, you are earnestly interested in their Christian salvation and you're seeking to bring them to the Lord. To my mind, if a person is evangelical and not evangelistic, it is very much like being a traitor to the faith. You do hold to the truth, but you are keeping it to yourselves, and thus in keeping it to yourselves you are really a traitor to the faith that you say that you proclaim.

John Wesley, in his great ministry of evangelization, the reason that he had to do that was because, in the Anglican church there were so many who were like the

Laodiceans. They were not proclaiming the word, and he was forced to go into his itinerancy by the fact that the churches had become largely dead to the things that they were supposed to proclaim. To read Mr. John Wesley's journals is very interesting, it goes something like this, "Such and such a day I preached in St. George's, and I was told that I was never to preach there again. I preached in St. Matthew's, and I was told I was never to preach there again." And so you read his journal and that's kind of the way it is, that refrain over and over again. "I preached in such and such, and I was told I was never to preach there again." So, it wasn't long before Mr. Wesley was out in the fields preaching, and continued that kind of ministry which he had actually inherited from George Whitefield.

So, Laodicea is a church that is a broad, middle-of-the-road church that affirms in its own mind, "I have need of nothing." "Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched." What a magnificent truth that is, because it illustrates the fact, if you had gone to Laodicea and you had asked them, "I'm a Christian from Ephesus, and how are things doing with the church at Laodicea?" Well they would probably said, "Things are going along fine. We'd like for you to take a look at our church." And they would take you to their property. In those days, as far as we know, they didn't have buildings, but the essence of the idea was no doubt there. The church meets over in such and such person's house, and it's a lovely house of a very wealthy individual. And furthermore, they may have talked about the facilities and the programs that they had. They had, as far as they were concerned, they had everything. In our day, it would be a large, multi-million dollar plant with all of the kinds of programs that go along with it and the facilities to make those programs, ostensibly at least, go and cause the church to grow and to spread abroad. Now that's what they were saying. "Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing." But our Lord says, "You say that you have everything, but actually you are ignorant of your spiritual condition." In other words, we must make a

distinction between what we say of ourselves and what our Lord says of ourselves. Our opinion is not always Christ's opinion of us, let us never forget that. When we look at churches today, and we gage a church's influence by its property or its facilities or its programs or its crowds let us remember that we are not necessarily hearing heaven's opinion of a church. So, you say this is what you are, but you know not what you really are. In my Bible, I have a little line from "thou sayest" to "knowest not." And to my mind it is very important that we remember that, that we are judging spiritual things correctly only when we judge them by the word of God. That is our final authority. So, they are lukewarm,

One of my favorite 20th Century evangelists was John McNeal. He was a Scot. He traveled in the United States when I was in Birmingham. The church from which I came to Dallas was South Highlands Presbyterian Church, and Mr. McNeal had at one time actually preached there over a three month period supplying the pulpit on an interim kind of basis. He was an evangelist, and evangelists have historically not a deep barrel of sermons. They don't have to have a deep barrel. If they have a couple of hundred sermons, that will suit them for their whole life. That's one of the advantages of being an evangelist. You can go from one place to the other, preach the same sermons. You don't have to keep preparing messages. It's much easier to carry on a ministry. Well, Mr. McNeal, I won't accuse him of this necessarily, but McNeal, of course being a Scot, also played God. It was well known by his preacher friends in the Church of Scotland that he was an evangelist and he went from place to place, and some of them no doubt envied Mr. McNeal, because they had to stay in one place. And they had to keep preparing new messages for five, ten, fifteen years, and that become a little bit of work after a lengthy period of time.

And so there is a story about Mr. McNeal that he was playing golf with some of his preacher friends on Monday, and he got into one of the Scottish sand traps and he was having difficulty getting out. And after he had tried with his sand wedge for about half a

dozen times and had not succeeded one of the preachers by his side said, "Isn't this interesting. McNeal has finally got himself a regular job." [Laughter]

Well, McNeal was a very interesting fellow, and he was well known in Scotland as well as in the United States, and there is a story of him preaching in St. George's West in Edinburgh which is one of the nicest of the churches of Scotland there. When you are in Edinburgh, you can go down to that church. It is where Alexander White at one time was the preacher of the word, and some other well known individuals have been in that church as well. McNeal was asked to preach there once, and so the elders knowing the kind of man he was, and this is a church where the more fashionable Scottish people attend, he was told when he came in that he should try to be as dignified as possible, because it was known that he wasn't always the dignified Presbyterian that he was expected to be.

So, when the time came for him to preach, he stood up and he took for his Scripture lesson the 3rd chapter of the Book of Revelation, and he managed to get through the message to Sardis and the message to Philadelphia as he was reading along, but when he came to the church of Laodicea he read from verse 14 to verse 16. And at verse 16 he read, "So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth." But he didn't say, "I will spue thee out of my mouth." I should say, that term means to vomit. It's that specific, and that direct. "I will vomit thee out of my mouth." But he got there, and so when he said, "neither cold nor hot," he stopped and said, "We'll have to begin the chapter over again."

And with that he read down through again, and when he came to, "So then thou art lukewarm, neither cold nor hot," he looked up and he said, "We'll have to begin the chapter over again." So he again read through to verse 16, and when he came to it the third time, he read, "So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot," he said, "I'm very sorry, but we cannot use such language in St. George's." [Laughter] And the chances are that they never forgot the message of Mr. McNeal to them that morning,

because the truth of it had really come home no doubt. "I will vomit thee out of my mouth," this is our Lord's attitude to lukewarmness. And for those of us who, so often it seems to us it seems at least, fall into lukewarmness, this gives us some idea of our Lord's sense of disapproval when we are unwilling to tell others about the gospel message which means so much to us; "miserable, poor, blind, naked one."

Now our Lord gives instruction in the light of that. In the 18th verse, "I counsel thee to buy of me." Now all of these things that he is going to ask him to buy are things that were well known in Laodicea, but now instead of buying things from others, that's where they got their sense of their riches and wealth and their standing, he says, "I counsel thee to buy from me." Because it is only from him that we are able to obtain the remedy for our need. For our poverty spiritually he says, "I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire." Heavenly riches, if I may interpret that metaphor. Laodicea, incidentally, was famous as a banking center, and so he counsels them to buy gold tried in the fire from me. Not money, but the kind of experience that one may obtain from the Lord Jesus Christ.

Philo once said, "The witless are always paupers." That has some direct application to our political world, doesn't it? "The witless are always paupers." But that holds true in spiritual things, too. That is, those who do not know the truth of the word of God, do not spend time in the word of God, do not study the word of God, they will be spiritual paupers, and in the case of Laodicea, their poverty is because of their witlessness. That is, their unwillingness to read and ponder and submit to the word of God.

He also counsels them to buy, "white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed." Laodicea was famous for a raven-colored wool, but he says, "Buy white raiment that thou mayest be clothed." I suggest, and only suggestion of course because there is no certainty about this, that this is a reference to the clothing of righteousness. It comes through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, justification. "And that the shame of thy nakedness," incidentally,

if it's not that, it's the purity of a Christian's walk before the Lord, "and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve." Laodicea was famous for popular eye salve, and in other literature, one can find reference to it, but he is speaking about the spirit of illumination that is only given by the Holy Spirit. "Anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see." And for their wretchedness and misery he will in a moment speak about an open door.

The exhortation follows in verse 19, "As many as I love," or have affection for, "I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent." Chastening being the proof of the Lord's affection, "Whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth." And I assume that that's the sense there.

Now the appeal, in the 20th verse, "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 sup with him, and he with me." This text, as you know, has been taken in different ways. You will find individuals teaching classes on evangelism who will say that this is an evangelistic text. That is, it has to do with salvation, initial salvation. "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 sup with him." That figure is often used in evangelistic classes or evangelistic meetings, to open the door of your heart, and our Lord will come in. And you will hear said of people, "He has opened his heart, and the Lord came in." Or he will describe his salvation as, "I opened my heart and the Lord came in." Well, in one sense the truth may be accordingly, but it's questionable that that is the meaning. He's talking about individuals who are lukewarm, so the suggestion is that they are professing Christians already, and thus I have serious questions as to whether that's the proper interpretation of this verse, although the experience may be a genuine experience and understood in that way by some individuals. Perhaps it is a reference to return to fellowship with the Lord. "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 sup with him, and he with me." The Greeks' customs of

eating and drinking are very interesting. Breakfast or *akratisma* was the term they used, was usually a piece of bread, perhaps dipped in a bit of wine, and that's all, and then in the middle of the day, the workers which were the general class, they would eat wherever they were, frequently in the city square. And they would obtain whatever they could, as someone has put it, a kind of a scratch meal, whatever you could have at that time, you had. And that was called an *ariston*.

But then the *deipnon* was the meal at the end of the day, and that was the main meal of the day, and the family and the friends gathered at that time around tables, and there they supped the principal meal, and that term is the term that is found in its root, verbal form here. "Open the door, I will come into him, and will sup with him." That is, I will have *deipnon* with him. I will eat dinner with him. In fact, this is the term used for the Lord's Supper. We really should call it the Lord's dinner, because it's the main spiritual meal that we have, the time of gathered fellowship, the Lord's dinner. Supper for us is usually a light meal, so this is the word that means to sup in the sense of dinner. It's that significant. So, it would be an invitation to participation in individual fellowship with the Lord.

But now notice the very next verse. The very next verse says, "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne." And so it has been suggested that this is not an invitation to salvation, nor an invitation to individual fellowship, although those are legitimate things for which to give an invitation, but this is an invitation to participation in the Messianic kingdom. That is, to come, and of course since the Book of Revelation has a great deal of stress upon the kingdom of God upon the earth, that would suit. And further, since in the Scriptures that Messianic kingdom is frequently pictured by the figure of a banquet, in fact a Messianic banquet is a well-known figure derived from the Old Testament, and even there are passages in the New Testament that suggest something of

the same thing. For example, in Luke chapter 12, in verse 35 though verse 38 we read these words, you need not look them up. The Lord in one of his messages says, "Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; And ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately. (Notice the same kind of figures, of a door, opening a door.) Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them. And if he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants."

So, the figure then is very suggestive of participation in the Messianic kingdom, the Messianic banquet. And I suggest to you that it's likely that that's what our Lord has in mind when he says, "Behold I stand at the door and knock." The second coming is near. "If any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." For those who are lukewarm, it is an invitation to fellowship, but it's an invitation to fellowship that finds its consummation in the coming kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ.

He says in verse 21, "To him that overcometh," this is the climactic promise, "Will I grant to sit with me in my throne." See how suitable this is for the Messianic banquet. "Even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches." The throne of our Lord is the throne of David, upon which he is sitting at the present time. Having won the right to do that by the blood that was shed on Calvary's cross, but which will not find its consummation until the manifestation of our Lord in his glory at his Second Advent.

Let me sum up. The curse of lukewarmness, it's a contradiction of our creed. Campbell Morgan once said, "Men who theorize about the atonement and quarrel over the forms in which they express the truth, and never stretch out the hand to save the lost souls. These are the men who are cursing the church. Men who love to split hairs about

election and free will," I wish he hadn't said that. [Laughter] Why are you laughing? [Laughter] "And yet let the millions drift and do nothing to rescue them." Mr. Morgan, of course, was a fervent Arminian, and I regret that he said that. If you are going to split hairs about anything, about election and free will is a good thing to split hairs about, but I agree with him. I think it's true, what he said. It is possible, even to split hairs about truth, and I do believe that there is a doctrine of election.

I do believe there is a doctrine of the bondage of the will, but what he's talking about is true, that we can be so concerned about the fine points of our theology, so important of course, that's what we ought to be, but if we are that, and that alone, and have not given ourselves to the evangelization of the lost, the desire, the endeavor, and the work to see them brought to the Lord, then that's wrong. That's very wrong, and he's right. And thank you the Amen, if that was an Amen. It doesn't have the authority of the Lord's Amen now, but nevertheless I appreciate the sentiment. But he's right.

Sometimes I think of Believers Chapel in the light of these things and I think that perhaps the apostle would say to us something like Galatians 5:7, "You did run well; who did hinder you that you should not obey the truth?; In other words, God has blessed us, God has brought us, God has worked in our midst. He's brought us to a particular place. But let's not stop there, let's go on, advance in the knowledge of the word of God, and in the application of it in our own Christian life. The cure, as our Lord said, for those who have been vaccinated with a mild case of Christianity is the admission of our Lord into our hearts in the fullest sense, and the resultant hot heart from the repentance that should be ours. If one looks at our Lord, you'll realize that he overcame by the heat of his passion for the father. He himself said, "The zeal of my father's house hath," to use the American Standard Version rendering, "shall eat me up." And that is a true Christian attitude too. As someone has said, "We need a great deal more agonizing rather than organizing." And remember that this is the call of the Spirit to the church, the last call.

May God deliver us from lukewarmness. May God deliver us from the kind of attitude of compromise that means that we know truth, but we are not active in the proclamation of it. Our families, our friends, our acquaintances are our mission fields. May God help us to be a true representative of our Lord, and not a traitor to the truth for their good.

If you're here today, and you've never believed in our Lord we point you to him who shed his blood for sinners, and that means that he shed his blood for you. If God has brought you to the place that you recognize your sin and need, his work is for you. Come to him. Receive as a free gift, eternal life. Let's stand for the benediction.

[Prayer] Father, we are so grateful to Thee for these messages that our Lord has given to the churches of the days of the Apostle John, for they are truly messages for us as well. May the Spirit of Laodicea never fall upon Believers Chapel or upon the churches of the Lord upon the face of this earth today. If there should be someone here without Christ, may they turn to him for forgiveness of sins, and we pray in his name. Amen.