

Revelation 3:20 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.

Is this a description of Jesus Christ dealing with the unbeliever, or of Jesus Christ dealing with the erring believer?

This letter is to the congregation, the church - Rev 3:14 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;

The letter is not to those who are cold, but to those who are lukewarm - Rev 3:15-16 I know thy works, that thou art **neither cold** nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. 16 So then because thou art lukewarm, and **neither cold** nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.

Elsewhere in the Bible, when the metaphor of opening the door means unbelievers coming to have faith in Jesus Christ, it is God who opens the door. - Acts 14:27 And when they were come, and had gathered the church together, they rehearsed all that **God** had done with them, and how **he had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles.**

When the metaphor is opening a person's heart to believe the gospel, it is the Lord who opens the heart. Acts 16:13-15 And on the sabbath we went out of the city by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made; and we sat down, and spake unto the women which resorted thither. 14 And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: **whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul.** 15 And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there. And she constrained us.

When the metaphor is men opening the door to the lord, it is opening the door to the one they already knew as their lord before he knocked. - Luke 12:35-38 Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; 36 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. 37 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. 38 And if he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants.

Those are some of the things I could find in the Bible to help me interpret the figure of Jesus knocking on the door in Revelation 3:20.

Now hear the advice of some of my favorite old pastors. Trapp, Spurgeon, Carroll say this is not Jesus speaking to the unconverted.

John Trapp, England, 1601-1669:

This is not spoken of the first act of conversion...

Charles Spurgeon, London, late 1800s:

I have known this text preached upon to sinners numbers of times as though Christ knocked at their door and they had to open it, and so on. The preacher has never managed to keep to free grace for this reason, that the text was not meant to be so used, and if men will ride a text the wrong way, it will not go. This text belongs to the church of God, not to the unconverted. It is addressed to the Laodicean church.

He does not break bolt and bar and come in as he often does into a sinner's heart, carrying the soul by storm, because the man is dead in sin, and Christ must do it all, or the sinner will perish...

...I knock at your door, and wish to be received into your heart.

We ought to open the door at once, and say, "Come in, good Lord..."

B.H. Carrol, Texas, early 1900s:

It is a mistake to preach a sermon to sinners from this text. It is addressed exclusively to delinquent church members. In walking among the candlesticks our Lord knocks at the hearts of backslidden or hypocritical members, demanding admission and promising spiritual intercommunion to those who admit him.

The right interpretation of this line of Christ's letter to a congregation can be found in comparing it with a line from Christ's apostle's letter to another congregation.

2 Corinthians 6:1-18

2 Corinthians 6:11-16	Revelation 3:20
2 Corinthians 6:11 O ye Corinthians, our mouth is open unto you, our heart is enlarged [or "wide open"].	Revelation 3:20a Behold, I stand at the door, and knock...
2 Corinthians 6:13 Now for a recompence in the same... be ye also enlarged [or "open"]	Revelation 3:20b ...if any man hear my voice, and open the door
2 Corinthians 6:16b ...God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them...	Revelation 3:20c ...I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.
2 Corinthians 6:18 And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters...	Revelation 3:21 ...sit with me in my throne...with my Father in his throne.

So, I understand the Lord Jesus to mean:

My heart is open to you; now open your heart to me.

I am zealous for you; now you be zealous for me.

Song of Solomon 5:2-8 I sleep, but my heart waketh: it is the voice of my beloved that knocketh, saying, Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled: for my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night. 3 I have put off my coat; how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet; how shall I defile them? 4 My beloved put in his hand by the hole of the door, and my bowels were moved for him. 5 I rose up to open to my beloved; and my hands dropped with myrrh, and my fingers with sweet smelling myrrh, upon the handles of the lock. 6 I opened to my beloved; but my beloved had withdrawn himself, and was gone: my soul failed when he spake: I sought him, but I could not find him; I called him, but he gave me no answer. 7 The watchmen that went about the city found me, they smote me, they wounded me; the keepers of the walls took away my veil from me. 8 I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if ye find my beloved, that ye tell him, that I am sick of love.