

The Open Doors before the Redeemed!

A nineteenth century circuit riding preacher named Peter Cartwright was preparing to deliver a sermon one Sunday when he was warned that President Andrew Jackson was in attendance, and he was asked to keep his remarks inoffensive. During that message, he included these statements: "I have been told that Andrew Jackson is in this congregation. And I have been asked to guard my remarks. What I must say is that Andrew Jackson will go to hell if he doesn't repent of his sin."

In a while we will hear President Jackson's response to that, but I wonder...

Are there really such things in life as "open doors?"

By open doors I mean divine opportunities that can be lost to us, or become a closed door, if we don't act on them in time.

If there is such a thing as open doors, what will we gain by acting while the door is open before us? And what will be lost if we miss the moment and the door closes?

I believe today's passage will address these questions quite clearly for us!

Read Revelation 3:7-13 PRAY!

Things we know about Philadelphia:

- The city is 25-30 miles Southeast of Sardis, and was considered the gateway to Upper Asia
- It was named after the Pergamenian King Attalus III, named Philadelphor because he loved his brother
- A lot of grape growing happened there, and they worshipped Dionysus, the god of wine
- Because it was liable to earthquakes, many of its citizens lived outside the city
- It had a big one in AD 17, and had tremors that continued for years
- Emperor Tiberius had used Roman money to rebuild it
- In gratitude it was renamed Neocaesarea (New Caesar)
- As the gateway to Upper Asia, the city was responsible for spreading Greek Culture

So far in these letters to the churches we've seen Jesus as:

The One who is present with His churches and holds their pastors in His hand

The One who rose from the dead: "I was dead once, it's not that big a deal!"

We have seen that Jesus is the Ultimate Judge!

We have seen that He is all knowing, and all powerful!

We have seen that Jesus is the One who gives the energizing Holy Spirit!

And now we see...

V. 7 The Holy & True God who opens and closes doors

First we're told He is the Holy One

The word Holy makes us think about being “set apart!”
 When applied to Jesus it means that He is sinless, completely “other” than the sinfulness we see in ourselves and others.

When we are called to be holy we are called to be “other-worldly” like Jesus.

A Holy person reflects Heaven’s values even when they are on earth!

As the Holy One note that Jesus is the very epitome of what He calls us to be!
 People constantly disappoint us by saying one thing and doing another.

How sad it is to learn of ARod being on Steroids during his MVP season.
 How sad it is to see Politicians break their promises.
 How sad it is to see Preachers also in sexual scandals.

A lack of holiness is all around us.
 But Jesus is THE Holy One who will never act against His perfect character!

It also tells us here that He is the True One!

Every person on earth deep sown inside craves to know the way they should go,
 the truth they should live by, the life they should have.

**Jesus told him, “I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father but by Me.”
 -John 14:6**

Jesus is the True One!

But we also see that this Holy and True God opens and closes doors.

Verse seven tells us that Jesus has the key of David.

Now this is a very specific reference from Isaiah.

Turn to Isaiah 22:15-24 Verse 22 is repeated in Revelation 3:7.

The key to David’s treasures was transferred from Shebna the bad steward to Eliakim the good one. The authority was now his to open and close with the key.

Do you understand what Jesus is saying?

He is saying the same thing He said at the Great Commission: “All authority in Heaven and Earth has been given to Me!”

When Jesus opens a door of opportunity, no one can close it!
When He closes a door of opportunity, it is not time for it to opened.

When you and I go through the doors that God has opened for us, we finally are able to say with fullness in our hearts, “This is why I was made!”

Each open door is usually a limited time offer;
We must recognize the open door and walk through it!

Because it says here he also closes doors. Listen to me.

We talk a lot about things we’ll do some day. BUT...

When God calls you to do something and opens the doors for you to do it, and you say, “not now,” most of those doors are closed by the time you feel ready.

There are people out here who are probably called to the ministry, and you ought to be going for more training at college or seminary. Others should be contacting a mission board, but you are saying, “some day.”
You don’t get a “wow,” you get a “whoa.”

V. 8 The Open Doors before the Redeemed!

This letter to Philadelphia is only the second letter where there is no condemnation at all, like the one to Smyrna.

I think if we could hear Jesus talking, He would have a chuckle in verse eight when He says they have limited strength... “Ha ha, you aren’t much in your own strength, church, but you keep my Word and honor My name!”

It’s like Jesus is saying...

“Despite the fact that you aren’t much in and of yourselves, because you love Me and do what it says in the Bible, you are the kind of people I can use!”

And because of that I have set an open door before you that no one is able to close.

We have already seen the city of Philadelphia was there to spread Greek culture to upper Asia. Several people in the church were probably involved in that somehow. The open door for that church was to use those same avenues to spread the gospel!

How will you know something has become an open door for you?

When there is a real opportunity to spread the gospel, and your heart is drawn to the opportunity, and circumstances are lining up to reinforce the opportunity without being ‘forced,’ and you feel the Holy Spirit ‘pounding’ on your heart, the opportunity should be pursued until the door closes.

But don’t forget to seek scriptural reinforcement and the counsel of others in the Body of Christ!

The apostle Paul spoke often of open doors.

“I will stay in Ephesus until Pentecost, because a wide door for effective ministry has opened for me.”
-I Cor. 16:8-9 See also Col. 4:2-3; 2 Cor. 2:12

Paul wanted to go to Asia earlier (Acts 16:6) but the Spirit forbade it. Now Jesus tells the church in Philadelphia to go to the rest of Asia!

Let me brag on some people in the church.

Teresa: I’ll never say no to an opportunity to share. AACC, Radio, SBCV.

Jay: Upward, Alaska!

Debbie: Music leader.

Jeff: No to youth, yes to Missions teaching.

Keith: No to missions aviation, yes to South America.

Circumstances closed that door, door opened to preach. Door to start ETS opened.

Child in our church: door opened to share her faith with her granddaddy recently! And she did!

What doors are open to you?

Are you going through the door, or is the Lord already closing that door?

V. 9 Open Doors do NOT mean there won’t be opposition

When the gospel was first spreading, the church had many people in its midst who were from a Jewish background.

They had come to believe that Jesus was their Messiah and God.

This made some other Jews furious, those who did not acknowledge Jesus as their Messiah. As Jews who acknowledged Jesus began meeting with Gentiles in churches some from the synagogues persecuted them bitterly. Paul had done this before his conversion.

When John writes that they claim to be Jews but are not he is pointing to the fact that since Jesus is indeed the Messiah, there's nothing more authentically Jewish you can do then acknowledge that Jesus is the promised Messiah.

The point for us is that not everyone is going to like it when you start going through open doors.

In every generation there are those who bitterly oppose the gospel, and lash out against believers. Here we are told they will one day acknowledge that Jesus is real and loves His disciples.

Did you catch that?

Folks, I take the Bible literally. God said it: that settles it! I believe it!

I believe the foul mouthed atheist Bill Maher will bow before believers one day.

I believe the author of the God delusion Richard Dawkins will bow before believers one day.

I believe Nietzsche who said "God is dead" will bow before believers one day.

I believe that family member who has given you hell on earth will bow before you one day.

Our hope is they get saved and also love Jesus, but if they don't they will bow one day before us, realizing they were wrong about Jesus.

V. 10-11 The Great Open Door Coming for the Redeemed!

It says here that true believers will be kept from the hour of testing; Not just from the testing itself but the hour of it- very specific.

What is the hour of testing?

I believe it is the Tribulation described in Revelation chapters 6-19.

This is a good time to talk about the purposes of the Tribulation.

The Three Purposes of the Tribulation:

1. The revival of Israel in fulfillment of unconditional promises (Daniel's 70th week; Daniel 9:24-27)
2. A time of great worldwide evangelistic harvest as many people take the last chances to respond to God
3. The beginning of judgment on the Satanic world system and those who won't repent

Now we'll talk more about this in the days to come, but note that none of those has anything to do with the Church. This is the age of grace, where people respond and God puts them into churches. The word church does not occur in Rev. 6-19.

Furthermore, at the end of verse ten it says the purpose of the hour of testing is to test those who "live on the earth," or "earth-dwellers."

That phrase, "earth-dwellers, occurs throughout the tribulation and refers to those who will not repent and turn to Christ. Earth-dwellers appears here and in 6:10; 8:13; 11:10; 12:12; 13:8, 12, 14

So what event keeps true Christians from experiencing the hour of testing of earth-dwellers? I believe its the Rapture, described best in I Thess. 4:13-18.

There are those who protest and say, "that verse just means that there will be supernatural protection of Christians in the tribulation period, like Israel was protected while the Egyptians were plagued."

The problem with that is that we are told clearly that lots of people who turn to God in the tribulation are killed during the tribulation, not kept from harm then.

Now look again at verse 11-

"I am coming quickly. Hold on to what you have so that no one takes your crown!"

I believe that is the word for us as we await the rapture! Throughout the New Testament there is an eager expectation of believers that Jesus could come for us at any time! That He will open the door to Heaven and meet us in the air and bring us to Himself! Look at 4:1, where it talks of the "open door" in Heaven! That's just ten verses after this great passage about open doors before the redeemed!

V. 12 Overcomers get two more things in the New Jerusalem:

First, they get the kind of security they didn't have in Philadelphia!

They were scared to be inside the city for fear of earthquakes making buildings fall. But they would not have that kind of insecurity in the New Jerusalem. Verse 12 says they won't have to run outside the city!

Second, they will get the recognition they didn't have in Philadelphia!

In Philly they would erect pillars with inscriptions to great citizens.

In the U.S. Capitol, there are two pillars for each state with great citizens on them. William Jennings Bryan is there for Nebraska.

God is saying: When you overcome by your faith and make the most of open doors that I put before you, one day in the New Jerusalem people will be reading about you!

Interactive Pillar - Keith and Jan Jones- Equipping the Saints!

Don't miss your full reward, folks! Walk through those open doors!

God will also get His recognition in the New Jerusalem.

The citizens of Philadelphia changed their name to New Caesarea because of what Caesar had done for them. But in recognition of what God has done it will be His name in the New Jerusalem!

I told you about the courageous preacher, Thomas Cartwright, who preached to the President that if the President didn't turn from his sins he would go to Hell.

After the sermon, President Jackson strode up to Cartwright. "Sir," the president said, "If I had a regiment of men like you, I could whip the world!"

I'm calling you out this morning!

What open door do you need to walk through?

If you are here this morning and not a Christian, let me tell you the first door you need to walk through: the door of salvation!

Jesus said "I am the Door!" Door to what? Heaven...

Sinner's Prayer