

02-10-11a Revelation

Let's take a moment at the beginning of our study to clear our minds and prepare our hearts, seek the ministry of God's Holy Spirit as we endeavor to learn and grow in God's Word, shall we pray? And Father, as we look around us at creation and as we look into your Word, we see things that are beyond our comprehension that indicate to us the grandeur and the majesty that are associated with your person, and it makes us grateful to be incorporated into your plan through the work of Christ, and we thank you for your mercy and your grace expressed toward us every day. We ask now as we prepare to study your Word together that God the Holy Spirit will give us insight and understanding. We pray that we will see the truths that you have particularly for us in the passages we look at this evening.

We pray that as a result we will grow in grace and knowledge of the Savior. We pray it in his name. Amen.

Well, tonight we take a further look at the Church of Philadelphia, this sixth of seven letters that Jesus Christ sent to the churches at Asia Minor, and I was continuing to delve in all of my many resources to try to make sure I'm understanding this as well as I can, and I ran across somebody somewhere who made what I thought was a good observation. There are blessings and things that are not so much a blessing in some of the developments of scholarship, and one of the things that started coming out back around the turn of the last century, in the very late 1800s, was the Wellhausen School of Form-Critical Study, and that's a big mouthful that says that people started kind of the well, they felt like the well was running dry on biblical scholarship and interpretation, and they were looking around for fresh ways to slice and dice the Word of God to get insight into it, and with advances in literature and the study of great works of prose and poetry and so on, they thought, well, we can really learn a lot by looking at structure, at the form, the literary form that an author uses to get his ideas across, and they said, well, why don't we use this on the Bible, and so they began what is called the form-critical approach, where they'll take a psalm or they'll take a song or a poem or a narrative section, and they will seek to break it down into fundamental elements of form. An epistle typically begins with a greeting, a salutation, and then it has certain things that tend to occur at the beginning, other things that occur at the end.

They had a heyday in the psalms, just categorizing psalms as songs of individual lament or songs of corporate praise and this, that, and the other, and so they began to find similarities of structure and then compare one to another that seemed to have the same structure and look at the elements, and a lot of it was kind of a triumph of form over content, where people got so busy saying, well, I can't figure out if this is a song of individual lament or a song of corporate lament, but they kind of forgot to look at what the psalmist was actually saying and what the theological content and what does it matter to me when I look at this psalm. So we've always been a little bit on the conservative side when it comes to saying a whole lot about form and making use of form criticism. However, somebody in the Forum Critical, I read this great long 17-page article about

Revelation chapter 2 and 3, and most of it was all about form and what did this guy say and what did that guy say, but there was one good idea in there, and he said, if you think about it, these letters are too short to have circulated individually.

They were trying to figure out what was the *Sitz im Leben* and all of these other German things, the situation in life is what that means. What was the circumstance under which this book came into being, and of course they think, well, there might have been a redactor and an editor who maybe got these seven separate letters and collected them together and stuck them in at the beginning of some other work that wound up being chapters 4 through 22 and so on. But the observation, you can pick through and pick through and pick through, and if you look long enough, you finally find a few useful tidbits amongst a great sea of wood, hay and stubble.

And one thing that he said that I thought was helpful is, if you look at these letters, you wouldn't find one of these out there like the epistle to the Hebrews or Paul to the Thessalonians or to the Colossians or even Philemon is a whole lot longer than any given one of these letters. And he said they don't have the typical letter elements. They don't have the greeting.

It does have an identification of the speaker. Jesus identifies himself with particular elements generally drawn from the vision of chapter 1. But the grace to you and peace is missing. The closing, it just doesn't follow their ideas of what a letter ought to contain.

And it's too short. If you were going to go to all the trouble to write a letter to Laodicea, it would be a whole lot longer than this. And this is a good observation.

Why? Why do we care? Because it tells us that these seven letters were meant to be together. It's a seven-fold single letter. It's a seven-fold circular letter.

If you remember, back when we studied Colossians, we noted how Colossians was carried by Epaphras in the same pouch as Ephesians or what we call Ephesians, which was actually, I think, the Laodicean letter, letter to Laodicea. But he said when you get this, you read your letter to the Laodicean people. You get their letter and read theirs in your church.

And, Paul, you look at the similarities between Ephesians and Colossians, and you can tell they were written within a day of each other and that they traveled in the same pouch. They're related. They're complementary and supplementary.

They say almost identical things in different ways. So the whole idea is those two letters are really usefully compared with one another and studied together. They shed light on each other.

They were intended by their human author to be read together and to be read in conjunction. And Jesus intended all of these letters to be kept together. And that's why he says, He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

It's an encyclical. It's a compendium. It's a single letter with seven chapters with an emphasis on

each church.

But everybody in every church was to read all seven letters. And that's exceedingly helpful because you might be starting to fade in the stretch here. We've gone through five and a half letters.

We're halfway through our sixth letter. And you can sort of lose sight of, well, I thought this was going to be a short study. I thought we were going to get the big concise seven letters and then move on.

But A, the Lord Jesus, anytime he speaks, it is the richest and most fully freighted communication that there is. All of the Bible is that way. But it is, if anything, even more so anytime you see the Lord Jesus speaking.

If you have a red letter edition and the ink is red, every word counts, every circumstance, every nuance, every gesture that's recorded in Scripture counts. And so we recognize that there is a lot of information in these relatively short letters. And the bottom line here is the main point of my introductory desultory here is that all of this applies to you and all of it applies to me.

Every detail of every letter is aimed at us as individuals, as well as members of a church, members of a body, members of a local fellowship, however large or small it may be. Your fellowship may be no larger than your family, or it may involve hundreds of believers. You may follow along in our studies on tape and attend a church elsewhere.

Wherever you are, anytime two or three are gathered together, that's church. That's the ecclesia, that's the assembly and the fellowship of believers. It's the local manifestation and the local representation of the larger universal body of Christ.

And every word of these two chapters is aimed and designed to benefit you and me. And one of the big clues we have is the fact that these letters don't stand alone. If you just chopped out the Smyrnan letter or the Pergamon letter and tried to make it its own little book, it doesn't stand alone.

Where's chapter one? Where are the other six letters into which it fits? And you can see the threads that run through all of them. They all have the same type of beginning. They have the same pattern in general and the same sort of conclusion.

And they're designed to be, it's more like the squares in a quilt. You know, we enjoy having quilts when we want to stay warm, and we wouldn't take one quilt square and say, well, this is all I need. And this happens because many, many commentators, if you look at a popular commentary, listen to someone on the radio, sooner or later you will hear someone say, well, these are sequential.

The Ephesian letter covers the first X hundred years of the church, and then the letter to Smyrna, that covers the next 400 years, and then the letter to, and they go each letter covering a different period of history. And what that means is, well, then, there's probably a few little applicable principles and nice things, but basically I should only look at the last quilt square. I should just concentrate on the Laodicean letter because that's, everybody says, the age in which we live.

And I would like to prevail against that view. I would like to offer the thought that that seriously undermines the intention of the Lord Jesus. The reason he carefully worded these and addresses them to the angel of the church and then uses, by doing that, it's a wonderful literary device because his exhortations and his criticisms, his judgments, are in the singular.

The second person singular. I know your works. You have this.

I have this against you. Second person singular. And it's as though he's talking to you and to me, an individual believer, even though it's addressed to a group and even though it was written 2,000 years ago.

So all of that, just by way of context and review, we're rapidly approaching the conclusion and the consummation of this study. But think about those letters. Go back, if you are one who spends time in meditation and wants to try to have a long-term memory of the things that we study, go back and review the letters.

Just open your Bible, no notes or anything, and read those letters and then ask, quiz yourself, what do I remember about this? What did we study? And then if you've forgotten, go back and look at your notes or go back and grab a tape or whatever. But there is no more important word from the Lord to us than what's in these two chapters. And each circumstance is different.

We've studied what the Germans and the theologians would call the *Sitzenleben* of these different letters. What was the history and the situation in these different cities? Why is it that the language was so apropos in Smyrna with the concept of myrrh and the ideas of life and death and so on? Well, are we just in one church? Are we just in one situation? Am I just the one that's got to be faithful unto death? Or am I just the one that is taking flack from the synagogue of Satan? Our lives have facets and aspects, and we have different areas. We have a relationship within our immediate family, and that's one thing, and maybe even between individual people in our immediate family.

And then we might have a completely separate set of dynamics in our work or in our out and about life. We may be involved in activities or rub elbows with people who are outside our family, and that's a whole different thing. We may have a third area where we have endeavors or responsibilities.

Some people are caretakers. I watched a tail end of a program on PBS where they were talking about people who care for a spouse or a close loved one who ends up being seriously debilitated

and how it's a whole separate thing where you pretty much have to pour your life into the care of this paraplegic or this incapacitated person. And you see people who are just neither one could really exist without the other because this disability has drawn them into where this other person is, their hands and their feet, or this other person is there.

They could not live without that person. It would have to be hospitalized or in some sort of institution. Sometimes we have a situation, maybe not that severe, but we have a significant area of duty or a significant area of opportunity that's separate and distinct from ones I've mentioned before.

So it might be that the letter to Philadelphia applies in one aspect, one area of our lives where we are not subject to a lot of failure. We've managed to be faithful and to hold forth the Lord's name in that area and that type of responsibility. But then in some other place, we're like the ones who have lost their first love.

We've gotten real mechanical, and we do it because we've always done it. We've kind of forgotten the why, and we're suffering in terms of doing that as under the Lord. Then there might be a third area of life where we're more like one of the other churches.

So you see the point. These letters apply maybe at different times or different phases or different aspects of our lives, and it's important for us to be familiar with the concepts. It's no more apparent than in the letter here to the Philadelphians.

We have already seen that Jesus introduces himself here as the one who is true and the one who is holy. And the idea of truth here, the aleiphenos or aleipheia idea, has the idea of something that is genuine. We have a lot of different ways that something can be true.

We talk about a pool cue or a board or something. You sight down it to see if it's true. Is it completely straight? We talk about an arrow that someone shoots.

Did it fly true? Did it follow the line of aim or did it diverge in some way? Diverging from a standard makes something untrue. Well, the Lord Jesus Christ has so fully conformed to the standard of the Father that he embodies the standard. He is the true.

And that's the idea. He who is holy, he who is true. Not only is he set apart and sanctified in that sense, but the life that he has lived, the example that he has set, the teaching that he has passed on to us embodies the truth.

And it's a practical kind of truth. It shows us how to live without departing from the standard. And so he is aleiphenos.

And there's aleipheia, there's aleiphenos, there's a slight difference with that suffix, that I-N-O-S suffix, and it suggests the idea of that which is genuine as opposed to that which is false. The Lord Jesus and his truth and his life are set apart from counterfeits and substitutes and near

misses that have elements. There was a young man who came and visited my office today.

People visit my office not to see me, but because my office belonged to a famous pastor of the past, and they want to come in and see if it still glows. So he came in, and he's a student at the college, but he said, well, I'm in the process of changing my major. I've been majoring in philosophical theology.

But he said, you know, I don't feel like my call to preach is a call to philosophize, so he's changing to a more practical major. I can't even believe that they have a major called philosophical theology, but I guess they do. But practice, application, the pragmatic daily, here's where my tires hit the pavement, this is what accomplishes God's calling and God's purpose.

We don't accomplish that by thinking deep thoughts and philosophizing. We accomplish it by bringing about the real fruit of the Spirit in real situations in our daily walk through circumstances and relationships. So when Jesus says, these are the things that the one who is holy, hagios, sanctified, set apart, and the one who is alathinos, he is the genuine article.

And what he has said is genuine, and what he says matters. The one having the key of David. And we began our study this last time, and it is so fascinating.

I have had things illuminated in my mind that I've wondered about for a long, long time in this study. Because we saw that this refers back to Isaiah chapter 22, he who has the key of David. And in that passage and in that context, we have a situation not unlike what we find in Isaiah 14, not unlike what we find in Ezekiel 28.

Remember that both of those passages are prophetic low songs, prophetic summations and predictions made about the king of Tyre. But when you begin to read them, you very quickly get the sense that there's a whole lot more going on than just this king of Tyre. It is an echo and a shadow and a look back into prehistory and into the time when Lucifer, the guardian cherub of God's throne room, fell.

And how he fell and what he was thinking that caused his fall. And in the same way, by looking at the context of Isaiah chapter 22, we find that there is a... I wish we had time to study the first 20-odd verses here. There's a very fascinating verse.

In verse 14, for example, he says, Then it was revealed in my hearing by the Lord of hosts, Surely for this iniquity there will be no atonement for you, even to your death, says the Lord God of hosts. This parallels what you find over in Hebrews. There remaineth no more sacrifice for sin but a certain fearful expectation of judgment.

There are situations where we pass a point of no return. But then in verse 15, thus says the Lord God of hosts. This is Isaiah 22, 15.

Then go proceed to this steward, to Shebna, who is over the house, and say, What have you here, and whom have you here, that you have hewn a sepulcher here? As he who hews a sepulcher on high. Well, the first thing we want to know is who is Shebna. I mentioned last time that he began, when you go to Kings and look at the parallel passages, he was what is called the steward of the household.

This is not a butler, this is a political office. And it is the highest office in the land, below the king. You find this in 2 Kings 18, 37, where he is called the scribe.

And that is actually his second office held. In 2 Kings 19, verse 2, he is also referred to along with Eliakim. And Isaiah 36, verse 3, you find him mentioned along with Eliakim.

He and Eliakim are like an inseparable pair that show up by way of contrast with one another. Shebna began as the second-in-command to King Hezekiah, but he got puffed up with his pride, and he started running around with chariots, he started making a great tomb like a rich man, he started aggrandizing glory and honor to himself. And this parallels, I wish we had time to just delve into it and study it in detail, but this parallels and echoes the same type of thing you find in Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28.

And this is the fall of Satan. Shebna's name all by itself tells us, because the root, Shaban, means to grow, to sprout, to expand. And if you look in a concordance, you'll find that there are some references in Nehemiah and a couple of other places to other men with this name, and the full name is Shebaniah, which has Yahweh attached to the end.

Growth is from the Lord, expansion is from the Lord. And Shebna, the Yahweh, the Yah, the reference to the Lord, is truncated from his name, and so he's just expanding on his own. It's like knowledge without love, it just puffs up, instead of growing in grace and knowledge of the Savior.

So his name tells us something about him. Also his opposite, his partner here that shows up with him, Eliakim, the son of Hilkiah, his name tells us something. And we saw last time that the idea in Eliakim's name has to do with God raising up.

It has a very similar meaning to Shebna, but it's from a different root. And this root has the idea of bringing up, raising up something that didn't start out that high. Instead of just growing or expanding, this is to raise up.

And Eliakim, Eli, my God, will raise up, is the idea. My God will raise up. You have the alternate name for God here.

It also has the idea of to set up. If you raise something up, like you can raise up a building. Well, you set it up, you've established it.

My God will establish. My God will raise up something that will never be taken down, is sort of the

idea. And it also gives his father's name.

Now, why don't we have Shebna's father's name? Well, because it's not significant. But Hilkiah, who is the father of Eliakim, his name is significant. And evidently he was an honorable man because God chose to put his name in with his son every time it's mentioned.

So you have a father-son combination that always occurs together. When you see Eliakim, he's always mentioned as the son of Hilkiah. Why is that? Because the father is important and the son reflects the integrity of the father.

And Hilkiah's name means my portion is Yahweh. My portion is the Lord. And the idea of portion here is the idea of inheritance, of permanent possession.

So look at that complex of names. I just mentioned it in passing last time, but it's so important to the Philadelphian letter because Jesus says, I have the key of David. I open and no one shuts.

I shut and no one opens. It refers back to Isaiah 22. In Isaiah 22, verse 20, God says it shall be in that day after he has rebuked Shebna and called him out for his arrogance and for his being puffed up for his own aggrandizement.

God says it will be in that day. I will call my servant, Eliakim, the son of Hilkiah. I will call my servant.

God establishes the son of my inheritance is from the Lord. My portion is the Lord. I will clothe him with your robe.

I will strengthen him with your belt. I will commit your responsibility into his hand. He will be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and to the house of Judah.

Notice, he will be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and the house of Judah. Who is the father of the house of Judah? It's the king of Judah. It's the one who rules them and provides for them.

The key of the house of David I will lay on his shoulder, so he shall open and no one shall shut and shall shut and no one shall open. He will decide who has access, who has privilege, who has opportunity in Judah and in Jerusalem. Well, that is very much what's going to be the case in the Millennial Kingdom.

The Lord Jesus Christ will sit on the throne of his father David. He will be a father to the house of Judah. He will be a father to Jerusalem.

God says in verse 23, I will fasten him as a peg in a secure place. And it's sort of a play on his name. He says, I will raise him up and pound him into the wall up high.

He will become a glorious throne to his father's house. Who's going to become a glorious throne

to his father's house? What is Jesus' royal title? Son of David. He will sit on the throne of his father David.

I will fasten him as a peg in a secure place. He will become a glorious throne to his father's house. They will hang on him all the glory of his father's house.

When you read through the Chronicles and you look at the history of the kings of Judah, it's pretty spotty. It's pretty uneven. You've got a few good kings.

You've got the Aces and the Josiahs. And then you've got a whole string of no-goodniks. Where is the glory? In fact, the Bible says that the tent of David has collapsed.

The tent has fallen down. And it says, who's going to prop up the tent of David? Well, it's the Lord Jesus. The tree got chopped down, but there's going to be a root shoot from the stump of Jesse.

That's where the prophecy that says he will be called a Nazarene comes from. There's no Old Testament passage that says anything about Jesus being in Nazareth or coming from Nazareth. So why does Matthew say, thus the prophecy was fulfilled, he should be called a Nazarene? Well, that's another play on words, because the word root or root shoot in Hebrew is netzer.

N-E-T-Z-E-R. And he is the netzer. Nazareth gets its name from the same root as netzer.

And I'm even making a little pun there, from the same root. The root is from the same root. So he is a netzer.

He is the root shoot from the stump of Jesse. He, all of the glory of his father's house, hangs on Christ. It doesn't depend on David.

He is David's greater son. The offspring and the posterity, all the vessels of small quantity, from the cups to the pitchers. And of course the idea is kind of like in a kitchen, where you've got the pegs in the wall, and you hang your pots and pans, they didn't have cupboards and rolling round things like we have in our cupboards today.

If you wanted to keep something up out of the dirt, you hung it on the wall. You put a peg up there and hung it by a leather thong. Well, he says everything in the house is going to hang on this one peg.

And that talks about us. That's a proleptic, that's a prophetic view, not only of what's going to happen for Israel, but everyone that's associated with him. The vessels of small quantity, that might be us.

Paul talks about the vessels of honor and the vessels of dishonor. They're in the household. Well, all the vessels hang on that one peg.

We are a vessel and we're not down in the dirt because we are hung on the secure peg of Jesus Christ. And then he says, by way of contrast, and he's going back to Shebna that he was talking about earlier, because Shebna has tried to drive himself into a high place. He says he put his sepulcher up on high.

He wants his permanent resting place to be up on the hill, like a rich man. And God says, verse 25, in that day, says the Lord of hosts, the peg that is fastened in the secure place, everybody thinks that Shebna is the guy that will never leave, it will be removed and be cut down and fall. And the burden that was on it will be cut off, for the Lord has spoken.

And you ought to see the dazed and confused scribbling that goes on about this passage, because people think verse 25 is talking about the same peg as verse 24, and they just don't look at the context. They don't see that God says, Shebna, you think you stand, but you're going to fall. Paul says, let any man who thinks he stands take heed, lest he fall.

James says, pride goes before a fall in a haughty spirit before destruction. Shebna is raised up, and God says, this peg that he thinks is secure is going to be snapped off. And when you think about it, the role of Shebna to Hezekiah, he was the vizier.

Nobody got to Hezekiah except through Shebna. He's the second highest in the land. And that was the role that Lucifer played in prehistory, in the garden of God, among the stones of fire, the throne room of God.

He was the guardian cherub, the cherub that covers, until the day that iniquity was found in him. And people thought, well, he's as secure as he gets. One third of the angels thought he was so secure that he could not be snapped off, and they threw in with him.

He started influence peddling. He started brokering access to God, and taking a cut for himself. And God removed him from his office.

Well, who took his place? If Lucifer is no longer the guardian of the throne room of God, who is? Well, the job went vacant for a time. But you know who's filling it now? A human being. Hilkiah had a son named Eliakim.

And Eliakim, the son of Hilkiah, took Shebna's place. Shebna, who nobody thought, Shebna they thought he was greater than Eliakim. But it turns out Eliakim has the permanent place, and Shebna got demoted.

And in the same way, in the heavenly realms, God says, I had an angel here, and he fell. I'm going to replace him with someone you think is lower, made lower than the angels. I'm going to crown him with glory and honor.

What did Jesus say to his disciples? In Matthew 28, 18. B, all authority has been given to me.

Where? In heaven and in earth.

We tend to only think about the earthly part. Jesus said, all authority has been given to me in heaven. That tells us two things.

A, he didn't have it. He doesn't say, I have always had all authority in heaven. Did he? He said, this is after his crucifixion and his resurrection, and just shortly before his ascension, he says, all authority has been given me in heaven.

The resurrected Christ, the humanity of Christ, has taken the place of an angel at the access point of God. What does Jesus say about himself? I am the way. No man comes to the Father but by me.

He is Eliakim, the son of Hilkiah. He has the door that he can open, and nobody can shut it. He can shut it, and no one can open.

What is that door? A lot of commentaries, a lot of commentaries, say this is a door of evangelism, because Paul uses that terminology. Pray that a door of opportunity will be opened, that we can go preach. But A, evangelism was only a part of what Paul was doing with his open door.

He was also trying to strengthen and build up believers in those regions. But secondly, just because a door means something one place, doesn't mean it means it everywhere. Jesus talked about himself in the Gospel of John.

He said, I am the door of the sheep. Remember back around John 7? He says, I am the door of the sheep. Which, by the way, I want to digress for just a moment, because believe it or not, that has an impact on the whole idea of transubstantiation.

Why do people think in some churches and some segments of Christianity that when you have communion, the bread turns into the actual flesh of Jesus, and the wine turns into the grape juice, whatever they use, turns into the literal blood of Christ? That's called transubstantiation. The Catholic Church believes it. Many Protestant denominations believe it.

I think the Lutherans believe in transubstantiation. I know Martin Luther did. And they think at the point, especially these where you come up and you get the little round biscuit on your tongue, anybody that does that believes in transubstantiation.

The priest has to administer it to you and that kind of thing. What church was that Patty we went to in Houston where they did that? We visited and people went up and there was a woman priest and a couple of guys. Lutheran, there you go.

So, anyway, where do they get that? Well, Jesus said, this is my body, which is broken for you. This cup is the New Testament in my blood. Drink ye all of it.

And so they say, well, you've got to take the Bible at face value. Jesus said this bread is my body and this cup is my blood. And he said in another place in John, unless you eat my flesh and drink my blood, you have no part with me.

So they say, see there, Jesus, it's a miraculous transubstantiation. Well, what about this other passage in John where he says I'm the door? So is Jesus made out of wood? A little brass doorknob there, a little latch, hinges, threshold. I am the door.

Jesus said I'm the vine. So you've got bark and leaves. Somebody going to go up and snap something off of Jesus and put it in a bundle to be burned? It's silly to take one thing that he said and say we're going to take this literally and take comparable figurative use of language and say, oh, well, we see that that's figurative.

Well, how hard is it to recognize a figure? Jesus was using the bread and using the cup symbolically. But here, God says he's a peg. He says, Eliakim is a peg.

I'm going to pound him into the wall. Well, Eliakim didn't turn into a peg and he's not in some wall over in Israel. It's figurative language and people have to be a little more sensitive than they tend to be about that to understand the word of God.

And you will notice that immediately following in Isaiah chapter 23, you go right back to a burden against Tyre. Tyre is... anytime you see things talking about Tyre, start looking for Satan because the king of Tyre, in those two chapters I mentioned earlier, Isaiah 14, Ezekiel 28, clear references to his time in prehistory. So what's our point here? What's our conclusion? When Jesus says in Revelation chapter 3, in verse 8, I know your works.

I have set before you an open door and no one can shut it. This is authority that's been given to him by God the Father. This authority has to do with access and it has to do with when he referred himself back to Eliakim, he told us something about himself.

He told us about the security of it. That's why he's Hagias and Aleithinas. He is holy and true.

He's not going to change. He's the genuine article. This is something we can pin our faith on, that we can direct our faith toward, that is not going to fail.

It's not a peg that's going to be snapped off and what hangs on it will fall to the ground. That was the mistake a third of the angels made. That's a mistake that huge numbers of human beings make when they fail to accept Christ as their Savior.

By default, they're throwing in with Satan, making the same bad choice that he did. The Lord Jesus Christ is holy, he is true, and he, with the authority given him by the Father and the function that he fulfills as the second person of the Trinity, as well as fully human and our Savior, sets before us an open door. No one can shut it.

Now he says, we want to know a little bit more about this door. We recognize that this context does not lend itself toward interpreting the door as evangelism. There's no reference made anywhere else to evangelism or failing to evangelize.

There's no commendation or judgment in any of these seven letters with reference to testimony, light to the world, or any of that. So we just don't have that in our context. This door is a door of access.

This door is also a door of escape. It is like the door to the ark, as we're going to see when we come back. And we're going to find out because, if you go forward in verse 8 now, in Revelation chapter 3, he says, I've set this open door before you.

No one will shut it because you have a little strength, have kept my word, and have not denied my name. Well, we are going to compare verse 8 to verse 10. Look at verse 10.

Because you have kept my command to persevere, that's the same thing as you have kept my word and have not denied my name. You've persevered. You've been faithful.

He says, I will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world to test those who dwell on the earth. So you have, I have set before you an open door because you've been faithful, you've kept my word, you've not denied my name. You've kept my command to persevere.

I will keep you from the hour of trial. There's a parallel here. There's a similarity of statement and they're complementary statements.

The door that is open that is not shut is the door that is going to keep them from the hour of trial. Those two things are related. So that's what we'll take a further look at when we come back from our break.

But in conclusion of our first section, one thing we don't want to lose sight of as we study the cities and the commendations and the exhortations and the promises of reward and the future for those who are overcomers is to remember it all hangs on that one secure peg. It is the Lord Jesus Christ of chapter 1 who is the faithful, the true, the holy, the one who holds the seven stars in his hands and has the eyes of fire and the feet of brass. All of this depends on the Lord Jesus Christ.

He begins each letter. He closes each letter. The Spirit does nothing but talk about Christ.

When the Spirit talks to the churches, it's talking about Christ. It's talking on behalf of Christ. It's talking in His name and for His sake.

And sometimes people think, oh, well, you're just running after rewards. You're wanting the mansions and the gold and so on. Not at all.

Paying close attention and seeking to understand and live by the exhortations in these letters is for the glory of Christ. It all hangs on Him. He is that peg driven in the wall.

And without Him, we are nothing. We have nothing. We would have no future whatsoever.

He is the open door of deliverance in many senses. And when we come back, we'll see how that open door idea applies particularly in this context.