

02-10-13a Revelation

Let's begin our worship this morning by taking a few moments at the outset to clear our minds and prepare our hearts to render thanksgiving to God for his blessings and to ask his blessing on us as we study his word, shall we pray? Father, we thank you for this day. We thank you for the country in which we live. We thank you for your guiding hand on our leadership.

We thank you for your blessings on our president. We pray that you will continue to be with him as he makes the very difficult decisions related to our foreign policy in the Middle East. We thank you for those in our Congress who have seen the importance of the task on which he has embarked and we ask your blessing on them and that they will present a united front to the world as we seek to preserve our freedom and to counter those who would take it from us.

We pray that you'll continue to bless our nation. We thank you for the freedom that we enjoy, the opportunities that we have and we pray for those in every level of our government, all those who have the rule over us that you will be with them and continue to bless our nation. We thank you for the opportunity we have to study your word together.

We thank you for the Lord Jesus Christ who has made a way of access from this fallen world and from our enslavement to sin through him. We have been freed. We have been given access to your throne.

We've been entered into relationship with you. We pray that God the Holy Spirit will impress the truths from your word on our heart this morning that it will transform us, that it will strengthen us and give us the ability to live in a way that is pleasing in your sight. We pray it in Jesus' name.

Amen. For our scripture reading this morning, turn with me to the book of Isaiah. The book of Isaiah, we are going to look at chapter 48.

Isaiah chapter 48. Our study is in the book of Revelation chapter 3. In the letters to the seven churches, we are in the midst of the sixth of those letters. This is to the church at Philadelphia.

Of course, this is not the Pennsylvania of Philadelphia. This is Philadelphia that was in Asia Minor 2,000 years ago. The name is the same then as now and they had the same idea, the city of brotherly love.

Jesus has introduced himself as the one who is true, as the one who is holy and has told the people in Philadelphia, I have placed before you an open door. And that's the concept that we're studying. But for our scripture reading, we're going to look at an Old Testament passage, Isaiah chapter 48.

This is a fascinating passage and I'll give a little bit of comment on it after we read it. Isaiah 48, hear this, O house of Jacob, who are named Israel and who came forth from the loins of Judah,

who swear by the name of the Lord and invoke the God of Israel, but not in truth or in righteousness. Does that sound familiar? Jesus said, I'm the one who is true, I'm the one who is righteous, I'm Hagias, I'm holy.

He says, here's Israel and they're invoking the name of the Lord, but not in truth and not in righteousness. They call themselves after the holy city and they lean on the God of Israel. The Lord of hosts is his name.

I declared the former things long ago and they went forth from my mouth and I proclaimed them. Suddenly I acted and they came to pass. Because I know that you are obstinate and your neck is an iron sinew and your forehead bronze.

Therefore I declared them to you long ago before they took place, I proclaimed them to you. So that you would not say my idol has done them and my graven image and my molten image have commanded them. You have heard, look at all this and you, will you not declare it? I proclaim to you new things from this time, even hidden things which you have not known.

They are created now and not long ago and before today you've not heard them. So that you will not say, behold, I knew that. You have not heard, you have not known.

Even from long ago your ear has not been open because I knew that you would deal very treacherously. And you have been called a rebel from birth. For the sake of my name I delayed my wrath and for my praise I restrain it for you in order not to cut you off.

Behold, I have refined you but not as silver. I have tested you in the furnace of affliction. For my own sake, for my own sake I will act.

For how can my name be profaned and my glory I will not give to another. Listen to me, O Jacob, even Israel whom I called. I am he, I am the first, I am also the last.

Surely my hand founded the earth and my right hand spread out the heavens. When I call to them they stand together. Assemble all of you and listen.

Who among them has declared these things? The Lord loves him. He will carry out his good pleasure on Babylon and his arm will be against the Chaldeans. I, even I, have spoken.

Indeed I have called him, I have brought him and he will make his ways successful. Come near to me, listen to this. From the first I have not spoken in secret.

From the time it took place I was there. And now the Lord God has sent me and his spirit. Thus says the Lord, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel.

I am the Lord your God who teaches you for profit, who leads you in the way you should go. If only you had paid attention to my commandments, then your well-being would have been like a

river and your righteousness like the waves of the sea. Your descendants would have been like the sand and your offspring like its grains.

Their name would never be cut off or destroyed from my presence. Go forth from Babylon, flee from the Chaldeans. Declare it with the sound of joyful shouting.

Proclaim this, send it out to the end of the earth. Say the Lord has redeemed his servant Jacob. They did not thirst when he led them through the deserts.

He made the water flow out of rock for them. He split the rock and the water gushed forth. There is no peace for the wicked, says the Lord.

Well that's quite a double handful of information. Let's go back up to the beginning. There's just, if you have been, if you have a good recollection of what we've seen in the letter, all of the letters to the seven churches, and particularly the one to Philadelphia, you will see some familiar language and some familiar ideas here.

First of all, there is the call to hear. We've seen that seven times in Revelation 2 and 3, or we will. Let he who has an ear hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

And this is a general principle that pertains ever since the beginning of time. Adam was in the garden and God came in and said, Adam, Adam called him in the garden and Adam didn't answer. And he said, you know, he didn't come out like he used to.

And then they had that conversation about the fall and Adam was standing there in his little fig leaf belt and he was very desperately ashamed. Hear this, O house of Jacob, who are named Israel and who came forth from the loins of Judah, who swear by the name of the Lord and invoke the God of Israel, but not in truth nor in righteousness. They call themselves after the name of the holy city and lean on the God of Israel.

These are people who profess to be Christians, who profess to be people of God, right? They say, oh, we lean on God. We swear by the name of the Lord. When we sign a contract, it's kind of like in court today.

What do they say? You put your hand on the Bible and you say, I swear to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, so help me God. Make a promise in the name of God. Hand on the Bible.

Well, these people did that. They say, this is my most solemn oath. There's nothing I respect more than God.

When I make a promise, I secure it by my relationship with God. And he says, you do this and it's not true. You say you're Israel and you're not.

Well, keep your finger in Isaiah 48 and turn back over to Revelation chapter 3 and verse 9. Don't lose Isaiah, but look at Revelation 3, 9. Jesus is speaking to these people in Philadelphia. He's already said, I put before you an open door which no one can shut because you have little ability. You have little dunamis, the word we get dynamite from.

You don't have a lot of power. You don't have the opportunity to express your strength, but you've kept my word. You've not denied my name.

He says, behold, I will cause those of the synagogue, and when you think synagogue, what do you think? Who goes and worships at synagogues? It's the Jews. That's the Jewish religion. That's the Jewish faith.

He says, those who are of the synagogue, but it's a synagogue of Satan. They say it's the synagogue of the Lord God. The very first thing they do.

If you've ever seen the old original Star Trek, you remember Mr. Spock? What is it the Vulcans say and what do they do with their hand when they say, live long and prosper? They do that thing. Some people can do it and some can't. You put your first and second finger together, your third and fourth finger together and your thumb apart.

You know what that is? You know where that comes from? That comes from, here I can do it with both hands. Never tried that left handed. You know where that comes from? They didn't invent that for Star Trek.

That comes from the Jewish synagogue. When they bow their heads, the leader of the synagogue service and back in the days of the temple and the tabernacle, the priest would stand up and do that with both hands. That makes the letter Sheen in Hebrew.

The letter S-H. The letter S-H is short for Shema and Shema is the name. That's God's name.

The priest or whoever is leading the synagogue service, the rabbi, would put both hands up like this when he is going to bless the people and he would say, hear oh Israel. They do this, they did it yesterday, all day long. They worship on Saturday, that's the Sabbath for them.

The priest or the rabbi now will stand up and put both hands out just like Mr. Spock and he is making a Sheen with each hand and he is saying the Shema. The Shema is this formula. In Catholicism you have the formula Hail Mary.

Well, the Hail Mary for Jews is the Shema. Hear oh Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord. They claim him as their God.

He says look here, these who are the synagogue of Satan, instead of the Shema, the S-H letter, they are using the S letter and they don't even know it. They are saying Satan, they are following Satan. They are not worshipping Satan, but Jesus says you are deceiving yourself.

Satan is the father of lies, he was a liar from the beginning. That's one of the things he does, he deceives. When is the very first time Satan shows up in human history by the way? He is in the garden.

Did he show up as himself? He didn't did he? He took the form of a serpent, he is a deceiver. He took on another form, another persona. And back then before the fall, the serpent was the most beautiful of the creatures in the garden.

He dressed himself up beautifully, alluringly. Satan doesn't show up with a red hide and a pointed tail and a forked tongue and a pitchfork in his hand, breathing out smoke and devilment does he? He presents himself in the guise of something attractive, something that looks good, something with great promise of pleasure and promise of happiness. That's how he fooled Eve.

In the New Testament over in Corinthians it says that Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. He looks good, he looks like he is a great promise, but he is not. These people are fooling themselves, they think my religion has got great promise.

But he says they are the synagogue of Satan, they say they are Jews and they are not. They say they are the people of God, but they are not. They say they are in a good place with God and they are not.

He says they lie. Well Satan was a liar from the beginning. But people don't... You find anybody from any religion, atheist, agnostic, I believe in science, I believe in philosophy, I believe in Confucius or the Socratic method.

Find anybody who believes in anything and ask them, do you believe a lie? Is what you believe a totally false and stupid thing? What are they going to say? No, I believe the truth, I've got it figured out, this is the truth. Everybody believes that what they believe is the truth. Now let's say just for the sake of argument that there are 700 different religions on the planet.

We'll take the 435 different major denominations of Christianity and then we'll take all of the cults and all, you know, Mithraism and Buddhism and Islam and Confucianism and Hindu and any kind of other cult you can think of. Let's just say there are 700 total. Now let's say at least somebody has got the truth figured out.

Somebody actually has the true religion. You know what that means? 699 other religions are wrong. 699 out of the 700.

They can't all be right. So if one is right then 699 are wrong. These people say that they are the people of God.

They claim to have got God all figured out and God himself is speaking here and he says you know what? Even though you've got a Bible and even though you claim my name, you're wrong.

You don't have it. Well we don't want to hear this, do we? This is not our favorite thing that well I'm wrong, my whole thing is mistaken.

And the Christians in Philadelphia were trying to go forward with what they had been taught about Jesus Christ. And the Jews said no, this Christ, that's not the Messiah. Well somebody is right and somebody is wrong.

And in this case the people in the synagogue are wrong. They said we are the people of God, we say the Messiah has not come yet or we say if he has come he has not done away with the law and we should still be sacrificing, you should still get your little baby boys circumcised, you should still be offering sacrifices, you should still be not eating bacon and ham, you should still be observing all of the things in the law. And the Christians were saying hey you know we've gotten some fresh truth from God here and things have changed.

Somebody is right, somebody is wrong. Well keep your finger in Revelation 3 and go back to Isaiah. This is not a new thing, this has been going on ever since the beginning of time.

It started in the garden, it was true in Isaiah's day. These people in Isaiah 48 swear by the name of the Lord, He's my God, they put their hands in the S and Shema, the Lord our God is one Lord. They invoke the God of Israel but look, not in truth, not in righteousness.

And look at verse 2, they call themselves after the holy city. They say not only am I Israel of Israel, not only am I the people of God, but I'm in the capital city of the people of God. What's the holy city? Everybody knows that.

It's Jerusalem, right? Even today, it's holy to the Muslims, holy to the Christians. Jerusalem is the holy city. They put that in capital letters, the holy city.

These people had a little headband, have you ever seen people with license plates? Native Texan, everybody likes that or I heart New York, you know I'm from New York, I love New York. People will claim a place and say you know I'm a little bit more special than you because I'm a native Texan. Other people have a bumper sticker that says well I'm not a native Texan but I got here as fast as I could.

Well these people are saying I'm a native Israelite, I'm a native Jerusalemite, whatever, I'm a Jerusalemite. They call themselves after the holy city, right? Now keep your finger on Isaiah 48, go back to Revelation chapter 3, I've got to get there, wait for me. Look down at verse 11, I am coming quickly, hold fast to what you have so that no one will take your crown.

Verse 12, he who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God. Now why is Jerusalem the holy city? What's in Jerusalem that makes it the holy city? It's the temple, right? That was the dwelling place of God for the Jews. For Israel, David got all the plans and the money and the timber and everything together.

His son Solomon built the temple. David brought the tabernacle that was the predecessor of the temple, brought it to Jerusalem, capital city. Solomon built Solomon's temple, one of the grandest buildings that has ever been built.

Any building you want to name, Solomon's temple is one of the greatest buildings that's ever been built. It was built in Jerusalem. It was the dwelling place of God.

The glory cloud came down and filled it. God's presence was there. The Ark of the Covenant was there.

Sacrifices and offerings were made there. So these people who are persecuting and throwing rocks at these Christians in Philadelphia and saying, we're Jews, we're better than you, we're holier than you, we're the people of God, we're the holy people of God, we've got the bumper sticker, I'm from Jerusalem. You people are off in Asia.

You're off here in Philadelphia. That's a Greek town. You speak Greek.

We speak Aramaic. We speak the language of God. We're from Israel.

We're Israelites. We follow the religion of God in Israel. He says, look, these people that claim the name of God, that write the name of the city of God on their forehead, he says, I'm going to cause them to bow down at your feet and I'm going to make you, not only are you going to be better than Israel and better than Jerusalem, I'm going to make you a pillar in the temple.

These people are going to be looking at you and saying, that beats, you know, what do they say, three of a kind beats two pair or whatever. Your hand beats my hand. Your cards are better than my cards.

I'm from Jerusalem maybe, but you're a pillar in the temple. I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God. He will not go out from it anymore.

And look at this, I will write on him the name of my God. Now it's one thing for somebody to claim the name of God and say, I carry, I've got the, I can do the hand thing. I can say Shema.

I can say the Lord our God is one Lord. Looky here, I will write on him. God's going to write his own name.

When's the last time God wrote something down? God writes things and it is a certain deal. You remember the story of Belshazzar and Daniel? Belshazzar was eating and feasting and saying, hooray, I'm the king. I'm the king of Babylon.

And all of a sudden, right in the middle of his big feast, a hand appeared and wrote on the wall and it said, mene, mene, tekel ufarsin. And it said, you have been weighed in the balance and found wanting. You think you're the king.

You think you've got in charge of everything. You've gathered all your gold and silver and you've made a big banquet and you've got all these people telling you how great you are. The hand shows up and writes on the wall and says, I put you in the scale and guess what? You came up light.

You don't have the weight that you should have had. And that very night, he was destroyed and the kingdom was taken from him. What was the time before that that God wrote something down? Remember Mount Sinai? If you've ever seen the movie, The Ten Commandments, remember the big flame of fire coming in? Hits the rock, carves out the Ten Commandments.

God wrote something down, right? Here, and we still have the Ten Commandments, right? And Babylon is still gone as a kingdom. I will write on him the name of my God. Do you think that if the Lord Jesus Christ writes the name of God on you, it's going to be permanent? Most certainly is.

People can make the sign of Sheen and claim God all they want, but if the Lord Jesus Christ writes the name of God on you, that's a whole lot better than any other claim anyone can make. And what else is he going to write? I'll write on him the name of my God, and I will write on him the name of the city of my God. This is no mere bumper sticker that might peel off.

This is graven into this individual. This is God's stamp of approval. We can approve ourselves.

We can claim something for ourselves. We can say I'm great because I'm from Texas, or I'm great because I'm from New York, or I'm great because I'm a, you know, right now, and I say this with some trepidation, but it's a great thing in these days to be a firefighter, isn't it? It's a great thing to be a fireman because firemen are the latest revered heroes in our country. We saw the firemen go in on 9-11.

It was a wonderful thing. It was a self-sacrificial act. People revere someone who sacrifices themselves.

In World War II, it was the soldiers and the sailors and the airmen who died in the defense of the freedom of our country. It was a very clear cut. You had Hitler and the Third Reich and the horrible, brutal evil that they represented on one side, and you had our armed forces on the other who went in, and men who lost their lives, who gave their lives for our freedom were revered, and their names, the men who fought in Vietnam, their names are written on that wall at the Vietnam Memorial there in Washington, D.C., and people go and get a rubbing, they put a piece of paper over it and get the name of their loved one or their relative.

And the firefighters who sacrifice themselves on behalf of others are revered. Well, who did the ultimate self-sacrifice? No greater love hath any man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friend. Jesus Christ laid down his life for us.

That's the greatest love there is. Would that people had as much reverence and as much respect

and treated the Lord Jesus Christ as much of a hero as we do firefighters. So a lot of other firefighters who haven't laid down their life for anybody have their raincoat with the reflective stripe and their firetruck and their helmet, and they stick two flags on each side, and if you see firetrucks going around Dallas, they've got the flags on there and they say, hey, we're firefighters like those guys in New York.

And I am sure that they, given the opportunity, would be just as heroic. Sometimes you get the opportunity to show your courage and your heroism, and other times you do not. We've seen these two letters in Revelation 2 and 3. The second letter and the second to the last letter are alike in that there is great trouble.

There's great persecution. Both of them talk about the synagogue of Satan. In Smyrna, the second letter, he says, you're about to undergo, he says, you're poor, you've had a lot of things taken away.

The people from the synagogue of Satan are working on you, and he says, you're going to be thrown in prison for ten days. Be faithful. You've got to continue to go through this test.

Here in the second to the last letter, he says, you've got the synagogue of Satan. They're putting pressure on you. You only have a little opportunity here because of what they're doing.

They've hemmed you in politically, they've hemmed you in economically, they've hemmed you in religiously, and Jesus says, he doesn't say you're going to be cast into prison ten days. He says, I put before you an open door, and because you have been faithful, and because you've not denied my name, you've been true in the face of this pressure to do something different, to cave in to evil and to cave in to the way of Satan, but you've not. You've held fast.

He says, I've opened up a door next to you, and you're not going to have to go through any more pressure. You just walk through this door. Sometimes God calls us to persevere under pressure.

Other times, he opens up the door and we escape. Smyrna and Philadelphia are a lot alike, and just depending on how God is going to glorify his name. Sometimes he glorifies his name by delivering us through a time of pressure.

Other times he glorifies his name by delivering us out of a time of pressure. It's God's choice. In either case, we are called to be faithful.

Sometimes because we have been faithful, God says, look, you've shown your faithfulness so much, that's all I need. I don't need to test you anymore. Here's your open door.

Other times, we've not yet learned and grown and gotten the benefit of a tough time and of a pressure, and so God says, I've got a set limit. What I used to like about exams was that they have a time limit. You dread an exam.

It was a hard course. Maybe I don't understand it too well. Here comes an exam.

But I know that as bad as that is and as bad as my grade may turn out to be, the exam is an hour and ten minutes. That's what they were at school. You've got 70 minutes to complete this exam, and whatever is going to happen, good or bad, I know that at 11.15 this morning, it's over, and the test is over.

The record is written. The grade is there, but it'll all be finished, and that's what God tells those people in Smyrna. He says, it's a ten-day test.

It's got a finite limit. Just hang on to the end. Well, I'm sitting in the dentist chair, and somebody's working away, more so in the past than now.

I have a really great dentist now, and it's not a tribulation, but when I was in the military, you don't know who you're going to get. They're training guys, and they're people who are just trying to run you through as fast as possible, and they may or may not get the Novocaine in the right spot. You're going in, your filling's falling out because the last military dentist didn't put it in right, and it cracked, and so this guy makes a bigger hole and puts in a bigger filling, and then it cracked, and you go in, and they make a bigger hole and a bigger filling.

And I'm sitting there, and I'm waiting for this guy to do his work on me, and I think, you know, if I just wait long enough, this will be over with. It's not going to last forever. I'm not in the dentist chair the rest of my life.

It's a set period of time. That's the kind of testing God gives us. It's got an end.

It lasts for a time, and then it's over. Just hang in there until it's over. Persevere until the end.

That's what he told the people in Smyrna. Here, the people in Philadelphia, they've gone through their period of testing. He says, you know what? Your time is up.

Here's your open door. You can walk through it. He says in verse 10, there's a time of testing that's about to come on the whole world to test those who dwell on the earth.

Not a time of judgment. It's not the tribulation. It's a test.

It's a time of testing. See what you're made of. See how you're going to choose.

He says, I am coming suddenly. It's not quickly, meaning soon. It's suddenly.

I'm going to come very unexpectedly. Hold fast to what you have so that no one will take your crown. He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God.

He will not go out from it anymore. I will write on him the name of my God and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem that comes down out of heaven from my God and my new

name. These people are rewarded by God.

You think, well, now what's the big deal of having a name written on me? It's a big deal. It is a huge deal. You've seen, I only see it in the movies because I don't move in the circles where they have super high security where if you want to go into a privileged place, if you want to go into a special place, you have to have an access card.

You have to have a code to punch in. You know, when people that are trying to rob a bank or trying to get into a high security area, they have to somehow crack that code. They've got to have the entrance qualification to get past.

Now they've got the fingerprint thing or the eye scanner where it scans the veins in the back of your retina to let you in. These names mean access. There is a very desirable place.

It's beyond anything we can even imagine, but what the Bible says is everybody is going to want in. They're going to see. They're going to hear.

There used to be a song way back in the old days called The Green Door. Everybody wanted to know what was going on behind the green door. And so they'd come up and they'd try to crack the code.

The little peephole in the door would open, a little sliding door and somebody would look through and they'd say, Joe sent me. Like that's the, this is what the song says. Joe sent me.

And they close the door and laugh. He hears laughter because that wasn't the right passcode. That's not the way to get in.

Everybody wants behind the green door. Well there is a place of privilege and there's a place of blessing and there's a place of opportunity in the eternal future and everyone is going to want to get in. People who thought they were going to get in and not, the Bible says they're going to be crying.

They will, grown men are going to weep and they're going to wail and they're going to be grinding their teeth because they wanted in. They can see it. They thought they were qualified and they went up and they say, Jesus sent me.

The door is just going to slam shut. They're not going to get in. But I had the bumper sticker.

I had the secret handshake. I could do the Shema with both hands. They're going to come up and try all these things and the door is going to remain closed.

The only one who can open the door is the Lord Jesus Christ. He says, I am the door for the sheep. Everybody that came before me was a counterfeit.

He says this over in John chapter 7. He says here, I'm coming suddenly. Hold fast to what you

have so that no one can take your crown. If you have these names written on you, you're going to have access to three things.

You're going to have access to the city because the city name is written on you. That's a pass code. You think about the millennial kingdom.

You've got the earth. A lot of people are going to be resurrected living on the earth. A lot of people resuscitated living on the earth.

Only certain people are going to have access to the holy land, to Israel. And people are going to wish they were there. It's going to be the sweetest, grandest, greatest place on earth.

A lot of people are not going to be allowed into the land. These people are not only allowed into the land, but the greatest place in the land is going to be the city of Jerusalem. These people have got the name Jerusalem written on them.

When they walk up to the gate of Jerusalem, it's going to swing right open. Somebody right behind them without that name is going to say, hey, just like these people over in Isaiah 48, I belong. The door is going to slam right in their face.

Once these people get in Jerusalem, what's the greatest place in Jerusalem? It's the temple. These people have got the name. They're a pillar in the temple.

They've got not just access to the temple to walk in and look around like a tourist. They belong in the temple. They are a part of the temple.

They have a functioning duty. That's where they work, is in the temple. That's their place of occupation.

They're a pillar in the temple. Not only that, what's the greatest thing in the temple? You've got the outer court, you've got the holy place, and you've got the holy of holies, where God dwells. They've got the access through the veil to the very presence of God.

Now some people say, I'm not sure I want to be in the presence of God. Well, no problem. If you don't want the presence of God, you're not going to have that name, and you're not going to be anywhere near it.

You'll be out living in Borneo or New Zealand or some far off place. But the Bible says everyone is going to wish. They're going to see it and say they're going to be kicking themselves.

You've seen the V8 commercial. People wrap themselves in their head and say, ah, I could have had a V8. Remember the Lipton commercial where the guy falls backward into the pool and he splashes in and he says, ah, that's, he drinks that tea and that is the best thing that could happen to him.

Well, those things just pale into complete insignificance compared to what God says. He says, the eye has not seen, ear has not heard, it hasn't entered into the heart of man, the things that God has prepared for those who love him. We're all going to get there, and we are going to wish that we had paid attention now so that we would have those names written on us.

Access to the land, access to the city, access to the temple, access to God himself. It is the greatest thing in the world. These people are going to have it, the name of the new Jerusalem.

And once again, if you go back now to Isaiah chapter 48, what is he saying here? These people who claimed it are not going to have it. Jesus told the people in Philadelphia, I'm going to make them fall down at your feet and they're going to recognize that you were right and they were wrong. I proclaim to you new things, hidden things which you've not known in Isaiah 48 6. They are created now and not long ago.

God identifies himself by, he says, I'm telling you now what's going to happen in the future. And I did this for you before, I told you that Christ was coming and he came. I told you that in this particular case, I told you that the Babylonians were going to come and take away the ten northern tribes and they did, or the Assyrians did.

And here's the Babylonians coming. God has given Israel prophecy after prophecy after prophecy that came true. And he says, now look at my track record.

If in the past I told you things that were going to happen and they happened, if I tell you new things now, what's your expectation? They're going to happen. God predicted the Lord Jesus Christ, said where he was going to be born, told him he was going to be born. You go to Micah and it says, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, you who are released are going to be great, you're going to be the birthplace of the Messiah.

Even the pagan Jews who rejected Christ and missed him knew where he was going to be born because they thought, because Jesus came down from Nazareth, they assumed he was born in Nazareth and they said, Jesus, he can't be the Messiah. Messiah is supposed to be born in Bethlehem. They knew their Bible and they didn't identify Christ.

God told them back in Micah that he was going to be born in Bethlehem and they knew it. They claimed God, claimed his name, said they understood his book. Lord Jesus stood right in front of them and they missed it.

You don't think they're weeping and wailing and gnashing their teeth now? They are. It's a horrible thing to miss it. You have heard, yet you have not known.

Even from long ago, verse 8 of Isaiah 48, your ear has not been opened. I knew that you would deal treacherously. You've been called a rebel from birth.

God says, the only reason I'm delaying my wrath is for the sake of my own name because I made a promise that I would preserve you in order to not cut you off. He says, I've refined you but not as silver. Some testing, you know what refining silver is like.

You put it in a crucible and you heat it up because it's got impurities mixed in with it. What happens when you heat a metal? Metal at room temperature is solid. When you heat it and heat it and you get it hot enough, what happens? It changes state and turns into a liquid.

Well, when it's liquid, things can move around and there's different densities. Silver and gold are very dense. They're very heavy atoms.

And when you liquefy them so they can move around, what do dense things do? They sink. Gravity pulls them down. Well, the impurities don't have that weight.

They don't have that property. And so what do they do? They float to the top. And so when God puts us in the refining fire, it's going to do one of two things.

It's going to be like these people. I refined you and all I got was crud. I heated you up and heated you up and it's just like heating dirt.

If we want to be silver and we want to be gold, when God heats us up, the impurities float to the top and God scoops them away. You heat it up a little hotter and more impurities float to the top and they're scooped away. An actual metal worker will heat these things up and the impurities float to the top.

And you know how he knows when it's pure enough? Because when he looks at the surface of the molten metal and there's no more impurities floating in it, it's like a mirror. And the refiner sees his own reflection in the mirror. That's what God does with us.

That's what he was doing to the people in Smyrna. He says, I'm going to heat you up and heat you up. I'm going to put you in this testing and that testing is going to help remove your impurities.

They're going to bring them to light for you and for me. And if we let God scoop away our impurities, pretty soon he's going to look down and when he sees his own face, how was man created? God said, let us create man in our own image and after our own likeness. Man was created in the image of God, but then we screwed up, we fell, we were sinful, the image of God was marred.

God refines us and removes the impurities. He looks down and sees his own image, then the refining is complete. So we have a choice on what testing does to us.

It can either just show that we're impure and we don't want to reflect the image of God or we can let it refine us and purify us. And when we reach the point of purity, Jesus says to the church at Philadelphia, you've not denied my name, you've been faithful, you've shown what you're made

of, I see my image in you, your testing is over, here's your open door, just walk through it. It's a door of access and a door of opportunity.

I'll write on you the name of Jerusalem, I'll write on you the name of the temple, I'll write on you the name of God, because you've come through testing, you've let it refine you and purify you, you're all done. So in Smyrna we see the beginning of the testing process, in Philadelphia we see the end, and the end is this great untold unimaginable opportunity in the city of God. God says in Isaiah 48.11, for my own sake, for my own sake, I will act.

How can my name be profaned? My glory I will not give for another. God's purpose is fulfilled in us when testing produces that refining, purifying quality. But we have to be willing to admit, maybe I was claiming the name and it wasn't right.

Remember that, 699 are wrong and one is right. God will let us know if we seek him. He says, listen to me Jacob, even Israel whom I called.

We have to listen to the Lord, we have to let that refining take place. We're going to pause here and take our break. When we come back, we're going to see something about this open door.

What does it mean to have an open door? There's a door, we'll see the very first time a door is ever used in scripture. If you think about it, you might remember it. It's way back when there were only about four people on the face of the earth.

That's the first time we have a door. And then we're going to see this last book of the bible and how door is used. Jesus says, I place before you an open door.

What exactly does that mean? That's what we'll look at when we come back.