

The Open-Door Church

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Preacher: Bill Story

[0 : 00] You'll find it at the very end of your Bible. We are walking our way through this significant book that is both vision and letter.

Jesus is revealing this vision to the Apostle John to be written down as a letter and distributed among seven churches that were nearby.

These seven churches are representative of all churches, not only of the time in the first century, but throughout the ages and especially today. As we read these different letters in chapters two and three, we will find our own church similar to some of these churches.

And we will find other churches we know of similar to some of these churches. We come to the sixth church. Six out of seven, we're getting there. The Church of Philadelphia, not to be confused with Philadelphia on the east coast of America.

This is a little town in Asia Minor. Not a significant city back then. The only reputation it had then was that it was a place that had frequent earthquakes.

[1 : 31] So think of it as a California kind of town. So we're looking today at verses 7 through 13.

That is Christ's message to this particular church as well as to ours. So if you're able, please stand as I read from Revelation chapter 3, beginning at verse 7.

He writes, He says, He says,

He says, He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. So reads the word. Let us pray for understanding. Father, we ask as always that you would speak to us today, that you would speak through your word, that you would cause your word to live, cause your word to act upon us as your scripture says it does.

[4 : 20] Father, help us to see ourselves in this. Father, help us to see ourselves in this. You say, you call us to hear what the Spirit is saying, is still saying today to all the churches.

So help us to hear what the Spirit is saying to us. So help us to hear what you're saying to us. This we pray in Christ's name. Amen. Please be seated. I want to start with a question.

What does it mean to keep the word of Jesus? He says this church has done that. They have kept. He says it twice. You have kept my word. You have kept the word of my endurance. You have kept it. So what does it mean to keep his word?

What does that mean? Interesting. This last week I was sent articles by two different people on a Gallup poll that was taken recently that revealed that this year was the first time that there were fewer than 50% of Americans who belonged to religious organizations.

[5 : 41] It has been dropping off, and this is the first year we went below, in America, below 50%. So people are leaving religious organizations.

They're leaving churches. And so I'm going to sing the blues.

If I could. Got to reach way down. Got to reach way down.

Got to work out my Ray Charles. So as an example, one of the articles gave as an example, it highlighted a particular person, a Grammy-winning vocalist, who was a member of a popular Christian band.

I will not give his name. He was a member of a Christian band. Who considers himself to be an ex-evangelical. Ex-evangelical.

[6 : 44] Not evangelical. An ex-evangelical. No longer evangelical. He is disassociating himself with any affiliation to evangelical churches.

He struggled. He struggled. And I'm not going to criticize his struggle. There is much to struggle with in the evangelical church. And part of this ex-evangelical, he's not the only one.

There are a number of folks calling themselves ex-evangelicals or non-s. Non-affiliated. Right? They're part of a movement termed deconstruction.

They are deconstructing their traditional church, their faith, what they grew up with. They're disheartened by it.

They're disillusioned by it. They do not understand it. I get it. I get struggling. I struggled with the church growing up as well. The problem becomes the deconstruct.

[7 : 54] That's one thing. Yes, we need to reform the church. We always need to work on the church. We always need to be relevant. We need to be faithful to Christ. And there are things where we follow tradition instead of the Bible.

I get that. I got no problem with that. The problem becomes when the deconstruction of the church becomes the deconstruction of the Bible into what is acceptable and not acceptable.

It's a modern movement because we are part of a post-modern era. We are part of a, you know, no more absolute truth kind of era.

Those days are long gone. Okay? So this is just the culture that we're in. And so there's not a sense of absolute truth. I can pick and choose what I like out of here.

So now I become the judge of what God has said. There are some things I like what God says. I like what he says about love. I like what he says about forgiveness. Give me more of that.

[9 : 02] I like what he says about heaven and all those kind of, there's wonderful things that he says. I love that God is a forgiving God and a merciful God and a loving God and a, you know, blessing God.

I got trouble with the judging God and the holy God and the righteous God. Of course, if I take all those things away, he's no longer God, but never mind. I get it.

So I get it. I get the struggle. That's why I'm not going to name this guy because he's struggling.

He's just struggling. Of course, he's sharing this with everybody and that because he's popular that makes, oh, I want to be like him.

A little dangerous. But it's one thing to not understand something and struggle with. It's another thing to, I'm going to dismiss it because I find it offensive.

I'm going to dismiss it because it's not popular. I'm going to dismiss it because it doesn't fit with the way I think things should go. Well, there's lots of things in scripture like that. God himself, I cannot fully explain.

[10 : 10] But do you take my word or his word? Lord, who has more wisdom in these things? So here we're looking at a church that has kept his word.

In contrast with some other churches that Jesus has written to, he says, I have against you, some of the other churches, that you hold to such and such a teaching. You hold to, you know, you've tolerated this Jezebel.

And you're a church that's a good witness and you're a loving church, but you've abandoned truth and said there are no lines.

So you're tolerating anything goes. Here's a church he's saying, you're not doing that. You're holding to truth. You are holding my word. And you are a loving church.

Here's a church that has found how to love people and hold to the truth. This is one of only two churches that Jesus says nothing confrontive to.

[11 : 17] Five of the churches he says, I know your works, I have this against you. Not to this church. He has nothing against this church.

This is a faithful church. It's much like Sardis. Sardis was a church that was suffering, right? And they actually had lived in a town where there was such a cult place as the synagogue of Satan.

Well, so is this church. Philadelphia also has a synagogue of Satan. Similar things. Whereas Sardis was suffering, here is a church. Yes, I think they're suffering too, although it doesn't bring that out.

But they're just faithful in witness. This is a witnessing church. That's why I'm calling it the open door church. Because he says, I've given you an open door. I've opened the door.

So here's a church that is holding, keeping, protecting the word of God as well as reaching out. They're not shut up.

[12 : 27] They're kind of the opposite of Ephesus. Ephesus was holding the truth. But they'd also lost their love, right? They're not a loving church. Here is a church that really cares about the outside.

They care. They're giving their testimony, even though it's going to cost them. And they're holding to the word. Whether they are frustrated with some of the things that the word says.

They know that the word's going to hit some places where it's going to be offensive. But Jesus knew that too, didn't he? Jesus didn't hold back the truth. Because he loved them, they needed to hear the truth. Because it's only the truth that's really going to set them free. Not the truth of the world. Not my truth. It's his truth. They're holding forth my word. So here's a church. He calls them in verse 8, the church with an open door.

[13 : 24] What is this open door? Four times in the New Testament, Paul uses this expression, open door, as an expression about gospel opportunity.

He says in 1 Corinthians 16, I'm staying in Ephesus because God has opened a wide door of effective service for me. So I'm staying. God has opened the door.

I'm staying. And Ephesus is one of the places where he stayed the longest. Because God had just opened a door. Okay, let's teach. Let's go. And the church explodes. 2 Corinthians 2, he talked about staying in Troas because there was an open door.

In Colossians 4, he asked the church to pray that God would give him an open door for the word. That God would open that door so that the word could go forth.

Acts 14, he talked about how on his missionary journey, he's reporting back how God had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles. So this open door, I think, every time this phrase is used in scripture, it means opportunity for the gospel.

[14 : 32] He's opened a door, not just as an opportunity for anything, but an opportunity to preach the gospel and share the word of Christ. Okay, so I think that's what he's saying here.

I've given you an open door. And we see in verse 7, it's Jesus who's the one who has the keys. He's the one who opens and closes. Jesus is the one who opens doors, gives opportunity for the gospel to be heard, for the door to be opened.

You know, we say, why are some certain people really effective at sharing the gospel? It seems like, you know, the door's just wide open for them. Right?

Billy Graham kind of person. You know, how come they're so effective? Well, God opens doors for certain people in certain times. And then other people who are just as faithful as Billy.

All of you young people know Billy. He is, you know. There's other guys just as faithful, but they don't have the kind of results.

[15 : 37] Well, that's God. God gives some 30, some 60, some 100 folks. That's, we don't all get to be Billys. Well, I'm a Billy, but not that Billy. It's Jesus that opens it.

It's not about how good they are or how effective they are. It's did God open the door? That's all. Okay. So here's a small church. I think that's what he means by you have a little power.

There's just a few of you. Here's a little church, yet they're going to have a powerful witness. God has opened a door for them. Because they have been keeping his word and they've been not denying his name.

In other words, they've been standing up publicly and saying, yeah, I belong to Jesus, even though that's going to cost me. So they're a church with an open door.

He also calls them a church with a little power. So what does he have to say to this church? Two words. We can break it in half here. Verses 7 through 9, he gives his commendation of them.

[16 : 47] He commends them. I know your works. I know you're being faithful. And then in verses 10 to 13, instead of confronting something, he comforts them.

He just says, I want to do more for you. I want to protect you. I want to bless you. I'm going to, you know, I'm going to, I'm going to pour some stuff out on him. So he's got commending and then comforting.

So let's look at the, what he says he loves about this church. Verse 7 through 9. He commends them for their persevering witness.

And it's specifically witness of Jesus, of his word. Even though they have just a little power, they're being effective. So let's look at this.

Verses 7, 8, 9. Verse 7 talks about the key holder. That's Jesus. Verse 8 talks about the keeping witness. And verse 9 is going to talk about kissing feet.

[17 : 46] What's that about? So you know it makes sense because it's all K's, right? So we've got the alliteration going on. I had to work hard at that one. The key holder.

Who's the key holder? Verse 7. To the angel of the church in Philadelphia write the words. Thus says the Holy One, the true one, the one who has the key of David, who opens and no one will shut,

who shuts and no one opens.

Who is this? This is Christ. We know Christ is the one giving these messages to John to write to these different churches. And each church, he defines himself a little different.

He takes aspects of the vision John saw in chapter 1 of Revelation, and he takes parts of that and highlights it to particular churches.

So in other words, those particular aspects have meaning to that church. So to this church, he says, what I'm emphasizing is I'm the Holy One.

[18 : 49] That's the Old Testament term for Yahweh, the Holy One. And of course, Jesus was born holy, right?

He is the Holy High Priest. Thank you, Mark. He is the one who has been holy and kept the law all his life. He's also the faithful one.

He's the one that was faithful and true. Jesus said, I'm the way, the truth, and life. Right? But what gets emphasized here is he's the one who has the key of David.

He's the key holder. Now, in chapter 1, he did talk about in the vision, he has the keys of death and Hades. Right? He has the key.

So he has the key to who lives and dies. The death of, the key of death. And the key of Hades.

Hades does not mean hell. Hades is the Greek word for the Hebrew word that is sheol.

[19 : 52] It just means the grave. The death and grace. He has the keys of life and death. Death and the grave. He can raise people back up.

Yeah, that's simply what it means. I have the authority for that. Here he adds, not just the key of death and Hades, but the key of David. What's David? Who's David? Well, we've heard of David.

Something to do with David. The key that has something to do with David. What did God promise David? God promised David.

Remember, at the end of David's life, he had won all the victories. He had established the kingdom. He was a very strong king. He had peace on every side, right? He had conquered all the giants and all the enemies.

At the end of his life, he wanted to do something. He had built his own self a beautiful palace. And he's looking over there at the tent, this worn out old tent that they worship God in.

[20 : 54] They've been doing it since Egypt. Here's his old tent. It's up on the mountain. Here's his beautiful, and he comes out of his door. I feel ashamed.

I live in this beautiful house. I'm worshiping God in this tent, tabernacle. I'm going to build God a house. I want to build him a beautiful temple. He tells the prophet.

The prophet goes to God, and the prophet says, yeah, I think God's good with that. I go to God, and God says, nope, nope, nope, nope, nope, nope, nope, nope, nope, nope. You're not building the temple because you're a man of bloodshed. You're a man of bloodshed.

You did what I said. I love you, David, but nope, not you. Your offspring will build a house for me.

And his son Solomon did build that temple, a beautiful temple, put gold on it and everything.

But God wasn't even talking about that son. There's going to be a future son who will build the house for you. It will be a kingdom that is eternal. Okay, that's beyond Solomon.

[22 : 00] He's talking about another son, another offspring far down the line who is Jesus. He will build a house, not a physical one, an eternal one.

So when he says, I have the key of David, I have the key of David, the house of David, the kingdom of David, I'm the one that lets people in and out of the kingdom of David.

Key to David's house. He gives entrance or denial of entrance to the kingdom. So he's got the key, and that's why he can say, I've put an open door before you.

I've opened the door. So now in verse 8, now he talks about this open door and says why he gives them that door. He says, I've set before you an open door which no one can shut.

Why? Now my translation in the New American, which translation do I have? New, not new. ESV, sorry.

[22 : 59] I read all these different, so I read the New American Standard, the King James, the NIV, and the, you know, so I get confused. Sorry. My translation here says, I've set before you an open door which no one can shut.

I know that you have, no, okay, that's not in the original. What's in the original is, I have set before you an open door which no one can shut because, because you have but a little power, and yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name.

The reason I've put before you an open door is because you've been faithful. Even though you're little, even though you just have a little power, even though you're just maybe just a handful of people in this community with a big synagogue of Satan there, you continue to hold fast my word. You continue to not deny my name, and you let others know about my endurance. In other words, my self. You're telling people the gospel. So I'm opening a door for you.

You have limited power. Now we talked about in our class before, you know, we go over the same passage. We were talking about this little power. It's confusing. You have power.

[24 : 16] How come he emphasized that they have a little? The Greek word is actually micron. It's little, right? Microns, like little. I don't know.

Does it just mean there are just a few people? Probably what he means. And even though you just have a little, you're still faithful. And though you've been faithful with a little, I'm going to open the door now.

You're going to have more. Faithful with a little? I'm going to open the door for you. I will give you this open door.

Because you have not denied my name. You have not disowned me publicly. You've been witnessing to me and about me. Here comes the surprise of verse 9.

Where is that open door? And we know it's a surprise because he says, behold, behold, behold. That's one of those Bible words we don't think is real relevant, right?

[25 : 24] Lo, behold, this and that. And so when I used to have the New American Standard. And when the New American Standard did their update, which means they don't go back to the Greek and redo it.

That just means they look at the English and say, okay, that doesn't make sense. Cross that word out. Cross that word out. So if you get an update, just know what you're getting. You're not getting a scholarly version. Of course, in the New American Standard, that's all they got now.

You can't. Unless you go on eBay, you can't find an original. Anyway. So I was preaching a sermon one time in my friend's church and in the Gospel of Matthew.

And I have this. I was going to make a big point. I just got in this new updated Bible. And I was going to preach on this passage. And there's a word, behold, that the Gospel of Matthew uses over and over and over again.

It's Matthew's. It's one of his favorite words. It's when he wants to say, look, look, look, look, look. Behold, a leper.

[26 : 24] Can you believe? A leper came to Jesus. So that's what the behold is. It's like, pay attention to this. Watch. You're not going to believe this. A leper. So Matthew uses that a lot.

So I go to make this point. And whatever the, I think it was chapter 8 of Matthew. I think it was about the woman with the demonic child and coming, you know, hounding Jesus.

He says, behold, behold, there's this foreign woman coming to Jesus. And she won't let him go. So it's a behold. And I go to make that emphasis. And I look in the text. And it's not there.

The behold's gone. Like, what did they do? What did they do? Sorry, maybe you don't get that worried about that kind of stuff.

See, I think words are important. And the way Jesus uses the words are important. Words have real meaning.

[27 : 23] And so when he says, behold, he hasn't said that yet. To this church, he's going to say it three times. Look.

Look what I'm going to do. This is not expected. This is not normal. Look, I'm putting before you an open door. Okay, that's not normal.

And then look, verse 9. Then look. Behold. I will make those. Literally, I will give those away from the synagogue of Satan.

Those people who say they are Jews. They call themselves Jews because they were born that way. Because they were, you know, they have the lineage. They got the paperwork.

They say they're Jews. They are physically. But they're not Jews anymore. Because a true Jew is circumcised of the heart.

[28 : 24] A true Jew would hear God's son and accept him. Those who reject the son of God have rejected the father.

And therefore, they are no longer the people of God. That's what he's saying. They're the synagogue of Satan. Remember, this is revelation. He is unveiling.

So in our world, we see, oh, that's the synagogue. That's the synagogue of Jews. Those are the people of God. That's their name in this world. Jesus is saying, let me take the cover off and show you what's real.

It's not a synagogue of God. It's a synagogue of Satan. It's not because they're intentionally evil people. I'm not saying that. He's just saying they've been blinded by Satan.

They belong to Satan because Satan's blinded them. Satan has convinced them. He's deceived them. They're a synagogue of Satan. Just how it is. And now what he's saying, behold, behold, what I'm going to do.

[29 : 25] Here, you have that synagogue of Satan. Here's what I'm going to do. I'm going to give you some people from that synagogue. I'm going to take them out of that synagogue. And here's what they're going to do.

Another, behold, behold, I will make them come, excuse me, and bow down before your feet. And they will learn that I have loved you.

Why does he say it that way? He doesn't say they will learn that you were right and they were wrong. Yeah, we win. Because that's not what it's about.

They will learn. Literally, they will come to know by personal experience. They will know. That what? I have loved you. Well, that's a whole different ball of wax. That's not about who's right and wrong. They will learn that I love you. That I, Yahweh, who loved Israel, have now put my love on you.

[30 : 36] Picking Gentiles. You. Whoever you are. No lineage or whatever. You outsiders. You nobodies. You Ruths.

Remember Ruth? Nobody? I'm picking you. They will learn that. I think that means they're going to be converted.

I think he's taking these people who are totally convinced they're right. They're Jews. They're in the right. You know, they got the lineage. They got the pedigree. They got the paperwork. They got everything. Except Jesus.

They missed it. He's not my Messiah. My Messiah is going to look like this. Surprise, surprise, surprise.

There's your open door. The door you never expected.

[31 : 39] The door you never expected. They're our worst enemies. They hate us. They slander us. You know what they call us? You're not God's people. You're just dirty Gentiles.

You're dogs. We're the chosen people. And God's going to go, whoo. Chosen people, unchosen. Here's the chosen. So it's a twist. A twist of irony. We're going to see that all the time in this book of Revelation. He's going to, the things that we think are a certain way, he's going to go, no, no, no. Actually, they're this way. They say this, but this is who they really are. This church looks alive, but you know what I see? Dead, dead, dead, dead, dead, dead, dead. Oh, they can say all the right words.

They look like a nice, pretty tomb, but inside. So Jesus is revealing. And here, here. And not only are these the Jews that are not the real Jews, they're actually false Jews.

[32 : 40] I'm going to bring them in. I haven't forgotten them. I'm going to bring them in. Some of them, anyway. I'm going to help them see. I'm going to cause them to see.

I'm going to take the blinders off that Satan's put on them. So here's the promise. You can read this over and over again in the Old Testament.

Now, I'm just going to give one example, Isaiah 60. This is a promise to the true Israel that the nations will come to you. The nations will come and bow down to Israel. Okay?

He says it over and over again. I'm going to set you up. You're my people. And the nations will come and bow down to you. Here's the irony. This is a promise to true Israel.

And yet, the false Jews have now become not God's people. They're actually Gentile. The Jews are Gentile. Here's another surprise.

[33 : 38] The Jews who reject me, now they're Gentile. The name doesn't mean anything. And the Gentiles, the outsiders, the unchosen, they're now the true Israel.

Listen, listen. Here's the promise in Isaiah. Your gates shall be opened. Send it to Israel. Your gates shall be opened. I'm going to open the door continually.

Day and night they shall not be shut. Sounds familiar, right? That people may bring to you the wealth of the nation. Nations are coming with their kings and led in procession.

For the nation and the kingdom that will not serve you shall perish. Those nations shall be utterly laid waste. You're the chosen. The glory of Lebanon shall come to you.

The cypress, the plain, the pine. Why? To beautify the place of my sanctuary. I'm going to build my house. And I will make the place of my feet glorious.

[34 : 40] Speaking of feet, by the way, the sons of those who afflicted you, those outsiders who afflicted you, shall come bending low to you. All who despised you shall now bow down to your feet.

Very words of our passage. Those Gentiles shall come and bow down to your feet, O Israel. And they shall call you the city of the Lord, the Zion of the Holy One of Israel.

Here's the twist. It wasn't fulfilled the way everyone thought it would be fulfilled. The fulfillment wasn't for traditional Jews.

The fulfillment was for true Jews who don't have the lineage and don't have the paperwork and don't have the pedigree, don't have the blood work. They just have the heart.

They're now the true Israel. And the old Israel, who's only Israel in need, are now the outsiders. But the hope of God is this.

[35 : 51] They become the other. They could still come back in. Remember, Paul talks about the tree, right? The tree, the olive tree. In Romans 9, he talks about the olive tree. That's all Israel. And then Jesus comes.

And what happened? The tree got cut off. Right? And what happened? All the Gentiles got grafted. So he talks about tree grafts. I guess Paul knows about gardening, right? Tree grafts. Grafted in. And now this other tree's growing.

And then Paul says, oh, by the way, God can do it again. He can cut off part of the Gentile and let the Jews come back in. He's never saying, you're done.

He's saying, wake up. There's still hope. There's still hope. You're not done because you've made a mistake.

You're not done because you didn't understand it. This guy I talked about early at the beginning here. He's not done just because he's struggling. He's making some statements that I think are unwise.

[36 : 52] Just because he's struggling. But that doesn't mean he's gone. That doesn't mean he's lost. That doesn't mean I, you know, never listen to his music. Doesn't mean that. Look, he's a guy struggling.

Who hasn't made a mistake? Who hasn't drawn a line in their Christianity that later you regret that you drew that line? Right? So Christ commends them.

He commends them. And now he's going to comfort them in verse 10 to 13. He's going to comfort them by promising protection to them through the coming tribulation. And then really ultimate eternal protection in heaven.

He just makes promises to them. I'm going to do things. One of the things I noticed in this letter, Jesus uses the word I a lot. I will give.

I will make. I will write. I will, you know, he's acting a lot in this church. I know.

[38 : 01] I will make the, I will give those of the synagogue saint. I will make them come. I will keep you. I am coming. Verse 12. I will make him a pillar.

I will write on him. Okay. I, I, I, a lot of Jesus's promises. So first he comforts them with protection in verse 10. Look at verse 10.

This is a controversial verse for some Americans. I think it's only an American theology that struggles with this, but you know, we're Americans.

We got to have it our way. Verse 10 says, because you have kept my word about patient endurance, or literally because you have kept the word of my endurance, I will keep you from the hour of trial that is coming on the whole world to try those that dwell on the earth.

So here comes the, here comes the hour of testing, the hour of tribulation, the great tribulation. The one that he's going to describe in this book from chapter six on.

[39 : 06] Okay. It involves seals and plagues. Seals. Broken seals, not seals like swimming seals. I got an image that was, that's weird.

You're just going to send seals. Otters? How about otters? Sorry. Sorry. I got started. Trumpet judgments, bull judgments, you know, all that, that all this stuff, the plague's coming, right?

And it's not coming on Christians. It's coming on the world. And he says, I will protect you. I will keep you. Literally, I will keep you away from that hour.

He does not say, I will take you out of that hour. There are some here who have a theology of that's where the rapture happens. Before the great tribulation comes, I will rapture you out.

I will say, now, I'm not against that. I don't think it's right. I don't think it's right, but I'm all for it. If I got that wrong, I'd be happy to be wrong, because I'd love to be raptured away from tribulation.

[40 : 07] I'm just not convinced that's what he's talking about. Okay. I'm all for it, though. Don't get me. The word rapture is only mentioned in one verse in the whole New Testament.

It's really tough to build much on that. Okay. But what God does consistently say is, I will protect you through tribulation. Right?

I will protect you through tribulation. In John 17, when Jesus prayed, you know, I don't pray that you take my disciples out of the world. I pray that you keep them from the evil one in the world.

See, we're to be in the world, and we're going to be persecuted. We're going to suffer for Christ.

That's what he's, you know, if we follow Jesus, that's the road. That's the road.

But he says, this tribulation is not aimed at you. I got other things for you. But this one, these things are aimed for other people. And while that's going on, I will protect you from that.

[41 : 10] It's kind of like I got a picture of, remember when God was giving all the plagues on Egypt, when Israel was, right? And each plague, right, would be on Egypt, not on Israel.

So when the darkness came, it came all over Egypt, but over where the Israelites were. Oh, light, no, not a problem. Right? So all the plagues were, Israel was protected.

They weren't out of, they were just protected from. Okay? That's all he's saying. Protection through the tribulation that's coming on the earth dwellers is what he's calling them.

In fact, from chapter 6 on, he's going to use that term a lot. They're the earth dwellers. So anyone who's not the church is just an earth dweller. Because, you know, that's what their life is.

They dwell on earth, and that's it. Earth dweller. Just an interesting term. Then he reassures them, verse 11, of his presence. He says, I am coming soon.

[42 : 13] He says, I am coming a lot in this book. Sometimes he means I'm coming soon, like right in your history of a church. Sometimes he means I'm coming.

And soon it will be unexpected, but it will be the final coming. So when he says, I am coming, it doesn't necessarily always mean the end coming. Because remember in chapter 2, verse 5, he said to the church of Ephesus, if you don't repent of your lovelessness, I am coming.

And I will remove your lampstand. Well, that's not far or distant. That's like repent now. Church, repent of your lovelessness. And he said it to the church in Sardis.

I'm coming against you if you don't repent. He said it to the church of Pergamon. I'm coming. And I will war against those in your church if they don't repent.

So he talks about coming that way. Either way, what do they do? Verse 11, hold fast. Hold fast. This is the only thing he asked them to do. This church.

[43 : 20] No call to repentance. No call to change anything. Just keep hanging in there. You're doing good. Keep hanging in there. Hold fast to what you have.

What do they have? Well, they have the word of Jesus. They have the Holy Spirit. They have the name of God. Just hang on. Nothing fancy. Just hang on.

Keep a strong grip on my word. Use the little power that you have. Persevere in your witness. And then finally, verse 12, he says to the one who conquers.

Now he says this to each church, right? End of each letter, he says, now to the one who conquers.

He who has ears, let him hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches. To the one who conquers.

And he's going to give a promise from the future. To the one who conquers. In other words, for this church, to the one who holds fast. To the one who keeps hanging in there. I will give you a blessing.

[44 : 16] And he names a couple of different things. He says, I'll make you a pillar in the house of God. In the temple of my God. So does that mean we become like Lot's wife?

We all become pillars? Because if that's it, I don't think I want to do that. That doesn't sound very fun. No, he's not. This is revelation. He's given a symbol.

You'll be like a pillar. Peter talked to the church and said, you're all living stones. Right? You're all being built into a temple. You're all like these different stones that are put together into a holy building of God.

You're like that. You're not stones, but you're like that. So you're going to be a pillar. Which means, you know, you're going to be a solid fixture, permanent in God's house.

It's not a physical house. It's a house made up of people. That God dwells in. And then he says, I'm going to write names on you. In all kinds of things, he's into writing names apparently.

[45 : 23] Now, I don't know if this is literal. He's going to write names on, you know, you're going to have tattoos everywhere, you know. Which some people would love that, I guess. They kind of do that. I don't know. Anyway, I'm not going to get into that.

I'll write names. One, verse 12. I will write on him the name of my God. I will write on him the name of the city of my God. And I will write on him my own new name.

They've got all kinds of names on them. So what is that? What's the significance of name?

Remember, we talked about that last time. The other church, the church of Sardis, he said, remember, you have a name.

That you are alive. In other words, you have an identity of being alive. You have a reputation of being alive. You have a name. That's who I am.

That's my identity. That's my name. I'm alive. But you're not. So here he's saying, I'm going to give you new names. New identity. New reputation.

[46 : 28] Here's one of your identities. It's the name of my God. You're going to have the name of the God, the Father. Oh, and you're going to have my new name. And interesting. You're going to have the name of the city of God.

Because that's who you become. He's talking about, you become the city. You're the new Jerusalem. The old Jerusalem was on a particular geographical place that was on a hill.

Well, they call it a hill. To us Coloradans, it's not a hill. It's not a mountain. So on Mount Zion, you have that one. I'm going to make a new one.

And it starts in heaven and comes down. It's not an earthly. It's something much bigger. In fact, it's a city made up of people. Revelation 21 is going to talk about this new Jerusalem.

Behold, I saw the new Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God. Just the same words here. And then he says, but it's different. It's like a bride adorned for her husband.

[47 : 37] It's not a regular city. This is different. And it's got people all in it. It's really about the people. There's foundation stones that have people's name on it.

People happen to be Jewish people. And then there's gates that have other names on it that happen to be apostles. And then there's all these people in it.

So is he talking? Well, we'll get there in chapter 21. Is that it? Are we really going to walk on streets of gold? I don't know. Something like that.

I think it's going to be a little better than that. He's trying to describe something indescribable. So here it is. We are that new Jerusalem. So what he's saying, I'll write on you the name of the new city.

In other words, belongs there. Belongs there. This is part of my city. He's got my dad's name. He's got my name.

[48 : 37] He's got the city name. He's got the entrance ticket. He's got the permanent, you know, lodge level seating. No, I don't know.

Speaking of that, which I don't know. All right. So verse 11, he says, hold fast. And then notice, hold fast so that no one may seize your crown. Huh. Here's a church doing really well.

Here's a church really faithful. And yet he implies that there's a chance that someone else can take their crown. I don't think by any means he's talking about losing their salvation.

That's not possible. I can't lose something that I didn't earn. God gave me the salvation. But I might lose a reward.

And often he talks about rewards that, you know, for some people, heaven's going to be a much more wonderful experience than for other people. Do you know that? Some are going to just get in, you know, with fire insurance kind of thing.

[49 : 45] And then, no, some will be, that's 1 Corinthians 3. Saved as if by fire. They just barely get in. Because their judgment's going to be like a fire.

It's going to burn off all the dross, right? All of our uselessness. All the stuff we did in our own flesh. Not the stuff we did by faith. Not the stuff we did by grace. Not the stuff we did with the spirit. My stuff, that all gets, yeah, that's nothing.

Yeah, Bill, what you did there? Yeah. Yeah. But others, he says, the ones that have works that are gold, silver, precious stone.

Yeah, the fire's going to come. It might melt them. But they're going to remain. And they're going to be gifted something on the basis of that. We don't earn salvation, but we do merit reward. And I think it's just that we, I think the reward in some sense is that in heaven we'll have a greater appreciation for heaven.

[50 : 47] Because we've sacrificed a lot to get that. And we're going to, oh man, it's going to be brighter.

It's going to be pure. It's going to be more awesome for those who have sacrificed more. Does that make any sense? It's kind of like when you listen to music.

You know, some music I can listen to, it's like, yeah, that's okay. There's other music I can appreciate. Like, I like bands that have brass in them. Because I used to play trumpet and trombone. So I appreciate that.

I can hear the horns. You know, it's like, oh yeah, they got horns, yeah. So I can appreciate that better than someone else. Well, imagine a maestro listening to a symphony who appreciates every single nuance of the symphony.

Because he gets it. Oh, that, oh, those, oh. Oh, they came, oh, they did it just, you know. And I think some who get to heaven will have a greater appreciation for every little nuance of heaven.

[51 : 47] And it'll make it that much more spectacular. So he says, hold fast to that, that none may take your crown.

None may rob you of that greater experience. So Paul talks about it in 1 Corinthians 9, running the race for the wreath, for the crown.

And it's more than that. Paul's kind of explaining how he lives, why he lives the way he does. He says, 1 Corinthians 9, he says, to the weak I became weak.

You know, I adapted to them because that way I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people that by all means I might save some. So I'm adapting some of my own preferences so that, you know, I'm not adapting to sin.

I'm just adapting preferences. I do all for the sake of the gospel that I may share with them in its blessings. And he's going to give an illustration.

[52 : 53] Do you not know that in a race, all the runners run? Yeah, I knew that. But did you know that only one gets the prize? Well, yeah, I guess so. Only one gets the wreath at the end.

Only one gets to stand on the top of the podium in the Olympics. So, run that you may win. Every athlete exercises self-control in all things.

They do it. Why? To receive a perishable wreath. They're aiming for the win. They're aiming for the wreath. But we do it for an imperishable wreath.

So we're still, we're also aiming for a wreath. We're also aiming for a crown. Not a crown that just, you know, lasts for a couple of weeks, but a crown. An honor.

So do not, so, this is why I live the way I do. I do not run aimlessly. I do not box as one beating the air. But I discipline my body to keep it under control.

[53 : 54] Why? Lest after preaching to others, I should myself become disqualified. So there's a sense of Paul, he's reaching for the reward, but he's also recognizing, I don't trust myself.

Because if I just kind of start cruising, I know I could go to places that will disqualify me. I was just thinking of my brother, my dear friend, who disqualified himself from the ministry a couple of years ago.

I was just reading that again. I was thinking about him. Because you disqualify yourself from the ministry, you're no longer trustable.

It's not about being forgiven. He's forgiven. He's repented. But who's going to trust him to hold the word when he himself has been the hypocrite?

We're all hypocrites, but there's certain lines. So Paul's thinking of that. Even Paul says, I could.

[55 : 05] I know me. If I'm not deliberate, if I'm not disciplined, and motivated for the right reasons. To save others.

Right? To win the crown. Which really means just to win his pleasure. I want to win his pleasure. So Paul's passion to save others, he sacrifices his own preferences to win them over.

He's not a people pleaser. He's not doing anything to win them. His ultimate goal is to please God.

So there are lines. But he desires to receive the prize that God bestows on those who please him.

To receive the crown, he holds fast to the gospel. He's deliberate and disciplined in his activities. He has kept the word of Christ. He's held fast to the word.

It doesn't. And he'll tell you. It doesn't matter if he sounds foolish. I will preach the gospel of the cross, even though people think that's absolute foolishness.

[56 : 10] I'm not going to adapt the message. It's still the message. Because the message is the power. The foolish message is the power. And even says the foolish method, you know, preaching, I'm going to still preach.

Even though by then, first century, preaching was outdated. Did you know that? Yeah, yeah. That's how old-fashioned preaching is. It was outdated in the first century.

Because there were Greeks that came along and had more eloquence and had more persuasion. Then music came along. No, I don't care. We'll go there.

Grow up in my church. The music starts playing when they want to tug your heart. Even though it sounded, even if it was unpopular, he would preach the word.

He did it all for the sake of the gospel. What's the gospel? What do we know about the gospel?

Four words, right? Gospel is four things. It's who God is. He is.

[57 : 09] Loving. Merciful. Forgiving. Gracious. All those things we love about him. And he is righteous and holy and just and will not by any means let the guilty go unpunished.

Well, wait a minute. He's forgiving. And he doesn't look. So how does that work? Okay, so there's a problem. Then there's man. So how do I know who I am?

I look at me in reflection to God. That's how I know who I am. Because I'm a created being. I'm a dependent being. And even in my best days, I still what?

I still fall short. I cannot keep the law. And that's why God gave the law to show that I can't keep the law. So that I would cry out for mercy. So how does God, you know, so here's the holy God and here's the unholy man.

And how is he going to rectify that? How is he going to bring his forgiveness in when we're guilty?

That's the third part. That's Christ. So God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son.

[58 : 23] And whoever believes in him will not perish. Not get what he deserves. But life eternal. As a gift. So God solves the problem of his mercy and his justice by sending his son to take the justice.

And give to us the mercy. That's just an incredible gift. And it's true. Only God could think of it. We would never think of this.

We would think, well, I've got to do better. Yeah, it's got to be better. I've got to improve. Then God will like me. It can be realistic.

God already likes you. Look what he does for you. So, coming back to where we started.

To those who are thinking of becoming an ex-evangelical. And I get it. I get the struggle. Those who are thinking about deconstructing their faith.

[59 : 31] Because I want to reject the things I don't like. I get that. And there are some things to reject. About the church. Okay. It's always been true.

Church has never been perfect. But if we deconstruct the Bible. If we deconstruct the word of Jesus.

If we say, I accept what Jesus says there. I reject what Jesus says there. Because I don't get it. And I think that's just, you know, that doesn't apply today. Not only if we deconstruct the Bible.

Not only do we lose the truth. But we lose the power. And we lose God's pleasure. If we disaffiliate from the church of Christ.

Which a lot of people are doing. And I understand. I get it. I've been there. But if we disaffiliate from his church.

[60 : 38] We are leaving his earthly presence on earth. It is the only earthly presence he has left. Because the church is the body of Christ.

The church is the physical representation of Jesus in this world. And if we leave it. I'm not saying every church.

Jesus is pointing out some things about churches that need to be cleaned up. Right? Are you with me? Does that make sense? Please hear. My heart goes to these folks that are leaving.

And I get it. But don't throw out the baby with the bathwater. It's the only institution he's given us.

Doesn't mean you. If you leave the church. Doesn't mean you stop being a Christian. I'm not saying that. But he tells us over and over. Love one another.

[61 : 41] As I have loved you. That's how people will know. That's how people will know. Love one another. He doesn't say like.

Love. Which means forgive them. Bear with them. Bear their burdens with them. Sacrifice for them. He who has an ear.

Hear. What the spirit is still saying. To the church. Let's pray. Father. We thank you for your word. We thank you for.

For the hope we get from this. This little church. This little church. Not an impressive place. I imagine. Not an impressive people. They have a little power.

Whatever that means. And yet Lord. For them. Because they've been faithful. Just because they've been faithful. You're going to. Surprise them.

[62 : 43] And open a door. And bring in. The least expected converts. We could expect. Do that here. Father. Help us to be faithful people.

Help us Lord. To. To. Hold fast. Your word. And never. Deny your name.

This we pray. In Christ's name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Thank you.