

**Grace Bible Church**  
**The Tree of Life**  
**A Weekly Review**  
**Week ending 10/17/2010**  
**The Doctrine of The Open Door. Part 7.**

Point 7 in our study of the Open Door refers to the open door in Heaven which refers to the Rapture and the Second Advent or the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. Rev 4:1 teaches the open door of the Rapture of the Church.

In Revelation chapters 2 and 3, there are seven different churches mentioned and there are two different interpretations of the seven churches. Some teach that the seven churches portray seven historical stages the church would go through. Others teach that the seven churches refer to the seven different types of churches or individual believers that live in any and every generation of the dispensation of the Church-age. Both of these have some validity to them. Each one of these churches could portray seven historical stages that the church would go through in the exact order.

The point of view pertaining to the seven different types of churches or individual believers that live in every generation will be our focus. However, both of these views come to the same conclusion, which is the fact that in Rev 4:1, the open door in heaven refers to the door being opened for the Rapture of the Church.

So, it's interesting, that in Revelation chapters 2 and 3, there are seven different churches mentioned before the open door in heaven. I have shown in the past how each one of these churches portray the individual believers that live in every generation of the dispensation of the Church-age. For example, in Rev 2:1-3, as a church or individual believers those at Ephesus had good deeds, produced divine good works and persevered and had not grown weary.

**To the angel [or the messenger] of the church in Ephesus write: “The One who holds the seven stars in His right hand, the One who walks among the seven golden lampstands, says this: ‘I know your deeds and your toil and perseverance, and that you cannot endure evil men, and you put to the test those who call themselves apostles, and they are not, and you found them to be false; and you have perseverance and have endured for My name’s sake, and have not grown weary.’” (Rev 2:1-3)**

But in verse 4 note that they had left their first love.

**“But I have this against you, that you have left your first love.” (Rev 2:4)**

Sadly enough this has been true in many churches, including ours, some believers have left their first love. The church at Ephesus had fallen out of love with TLJC. The warmth was gone. The fire and flame had faded away. They were no longer motivated from within as Jeremiah was when he said in Jer 20:9, **But if I say, “I will not remember Him or speak anymore in His name,” Then in my heart it becomes like a burning fire shut up in my bones; And I am weary of holding it in, And I cannot endure it.**

Here was a church that was doctrinally correct, but was cold. You can be right theologically, but if you have lost your first love for Jesus Christ, then your theology is nothing but cold academics. It is the beautiful combination of sound doctrine and love for Christ that makes a church what it should be.

The Ephesian church represents the church that is doctrinally pure, yet cold. As John MacArthur said in his thesis entitled “The Church in Prophetic Perspective” Many believers at Ephesus had lost their first love because the people willingly walked away from it.

Then the church of Smyrna in Rev 2:9 went through tremendous tribulation and poverty.

**And to the messenger or pastor-teacher of the church in Smyrna write: “The first and the last, who was dead, and has come to life, says this: ‘I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich), and the blasphemy by those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan.’” (Rev 2:8-9)**

In verse 10, they were told about suffering for blessing and that they were going to be tested ten days, the number of completion. They were challenged to be faithful even if it meant death so that they would receive the crown of life.

**“Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.” (Rev 2:10)**

Therefore, in every generation of the Church-age, there are those believers who go through suffering for blessing.

So, notice that these types of churches or types of believers are described for us before the open door in heaven is mentioned. The church at Smyrna therefore, represents the suffering, persecuted church.

You say, I don't know of any suffering churches. What about the church in China? They are suffering. No one knows how many tens of thousands of Christians have been martyred in Communist China. Even closer to home, missionaries suffer abuse in South America. Some of the Christians who really love Jesus Christ even suffer abuse in the United States.

The church or individual believers in Pergamum in Rev 2:14 were warned about the teaching of Balaam, who kept teaching Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel and committed acts of immorality.

**And to the messenger or pastor-teacher of the church in Pergamum write: “The One who has the sharp two-edged sword says this: ‘I know where you dwell, where Satan's throne is; and you hold fast My name, and did not deny My faith, even in the days of Antipas, My witness, My faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells. But I have a few things against you, because you have there some who hold the teaching of Balaam, who kept teaching Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit acts of immorality. Thus you also have some who in the same way hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans. Repent therefore; or else I am coming to you quickly, and I will make war against them with the sword of My mouth.’” (Rev 2:12-16)**

This is the word of God injecting divine discipline consummating with the sin unto death to believers who end up compromising and putting stumbling blocks before members of the Royal Family of God.

Rev 2:13 says, “I know where you dwell, where Satan’s throne is; and you hold fast My name, and did not deny My faith, even in the days of Antipas, My witness, My faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells. Where is Satan's throne? He is the prince of the world. A country club atmosphere with no standards characterizes the church that marries the world. It is socially oriented--doing anything for the sake of social preservation. It is compromising--never taking a true stand. It lowers its standards to cater to compromising people. It is more concerned with the fashions of the world than with the things of God. There are many of those kinds of churches existing today.

In Rev 2:18-20, as a church or individual believers, Thyatira tolerated false doctrine and false teaching, even though in Rev 2:19, they had deeds, and love and faith and service and perseverance. Plus they had grown because verse 19 tells us that their deeds of late are greater than at first.

**And to the messenger or pastor-teacher of the church in Thyatira write: “The Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet are like burnished bronze, says this: ‘I know your deeds, and your love and faith and service and perseverance, and that your deeds of late are greater than at first. But I have this against you, that**

**you tolerate the woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, and she teaches and leads My bond-servants astray, so that they commit acts of immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols.” (Rev 2:18-20)**

They tolerated false teaching and false doctrine, especially coming from a female called Jezebel. This is the type of believer who tolerates false teaching and false doctrine and is easily swayed by the female persuasion. Therefore, in Rev 2:25, they were told hold fast until the Lord comes.

**“Nevertheless what you have, hold fast until I come.” (Rev 2:25)**

This was a sinful church that taught false doctrine. There were two basic manifestations found in this church:

1. Tolerating False Doctrine. Sin and false doctrine always appear together. Whenever false doctrine enters into a church, sin follows. For example, the church at Corinth was subject to false teachers. As a result, sin became widespread throughout the church. The church at Thyatira represents the church characterized by sin and false doctrine. Where there is a tolerance for false doctrine, theological liberalism begins to creep in and the gospel is watered down. That is how Satan brings about sin, false doctrine, human good and evil.

2. Teaching the social gospel. When the social gospel replaces the true gospel, sin and evil becomes widespread.

It happens because false doctrine removes the doctrine of Christ as taught in the Word of God. It teaches different doctrine about the inspiration of Scripture, the deity of Jesus Christ, His blood atonement, and His second coming. When the true gospel is watered down by false doctrine and the social gospel, sin and evil is the natural result. Evil is the policy of Satan as the ruler of this world.

Evil is the modus operandi, the manner of operation, of Satan from the time of his fall throughout the angelic revolution and down to the point when he became the ruler of the world. Evil is Satan’s failure to produce a system of good in mankind and society that would bring in a pseudo-millennium. Evil is Satan’s system by which he administers the rulership of this world.

Satan cannot restrain sin, and therefore he parlays human good into sin and evil. The church or individual believers at Sardis are told in Rev 3:1-2, to wake up and strengthen the things that remain.

**And to the angel of the church in Sardis write: “He who has the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars, says this: ‘I know your deeds, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead. Wake up, and strengthen the things that remain, which were about to die; for I have not found your deeds completed in the sight of My God. Remember therefore what you have received and heard; and keep it, and repent. If therefore you will not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come upon you. But you have a few people in Sardis who have not soiled their garments; and they will walk with Me in white; for they are worthy. He who overcomes shall thus be clothed in white garments; and I will not erase his name from the book of life, and I will confess his name before My Father, and before His angels.’” (Rev 3:1-5)**

Then in Rev 3:8, the church or individual believers at Philadelphia are described as having divine good deeds and a little power, and they have kept with doctrine and have not denied the Lord’s name. This is the church or the type of believer who God opens up doors of opportunity in life manifested by the Door of the provision of the PPOG and its resultant historical impact. This was actually Point 5 in our doctrine.

**And to the messenger or pastor-teacher of the church in Philadelphia write: “He who is holy, who is true, who has the key of David, who opens and no one will shut, and who shuts and no one opens, says this: ‘I know your deeds. Behold, I have put before you an open door which no one can shut, because you have a little power, and have kept My word, and have not denied My name. Behold, I will cause those of the synagogue of Satan, who say that they are Jews, and are not, but lie-- behold, I will make them to come and bow down at your feet, and**

**to know that I have loved you. Because you have kept the word of My perseverance, I also will keep you from the hour of testing, that hour which is about to come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell upon the earth.” (Rev 3:7-10)**

This is a beautiful church. God has opened a door to the world in this church. People can go through it to reach the world with the gospel. This is also a church where Jesus Christ is not denied. Its strength is in God, who said, “... My strength is made perfect in weakness....” (2Co 12:9). This is a faithful, Christ-honoring, zealous, that is alive with the flame of evangelism and in love with Jesus Christ. This is the kind of church that brings glory to God. It’s not the perfect church according to verse 9, because they had their problems. But if ever there was a church that close to perfection, it was the church at Philadelphia. It shunned sin, false doctrine, and compromise, and it kept its love alive.

Finally in Rev 3:14, we have the lukewarm believers of Laodicea as a church or individual believers. These are the type of believers who in Rev 3:17, have the attitude mentioned; Rev 3:17, **“Because you say, ‘I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing,’ and you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked,”**

The Church at Laodicea is the apostate church where Satan dwells. So we could say that there are seven categories of believers. The Ephesus type believer who has some divine good production but has left their first love. Just as there is an Ephesian church, there is an Ephesian-type church member. If the second generation Christian church could grow cold, imagine what could happen to us? They were much closer to the enthusiasm of the first generation than we are.

The Smyrna type believer is willing to accept suffering for blessing without playing operation blame game. They pay for their boldness for Christ by suffering. They give testimony to Jesus Christ and suffer abuse from people for doing that. They are people who are willing to share Jesus Christ with anyone, no matter how people criticize them or what it might cost them.

The Pergamum believer warned about compromising and becoming a stumbling block to others. The church at Pergamum was married to the world. There are members in the church today who are married to the world. They are preoccupied with their money, car, job, fashion, and themselves. They are concerned about how they relate to the world, but they are making compromises to Satan. They are unwilling to pay the price of a true disciple, so they lower their standards to court the world and discredit the name of Jesus Christ. They weaken the church and are useless to God.

The Thyatira types who tolerate false doctrine and false teaching even though in they have love and faith and service and perseverance.

The Sardis types who need to Wake up, and strengthen the things that remain.

The Philadelphia type believer who has stayed faithful to the word of God.

Then the lukewarm Laodicean believer, need more be said.

Now, after these types of churches or believers are described then we have the open door in heaven. The principle of Bible doctrine that you need to be crystal clear about is what this open door in heaven is and whom it is for.

**“After these things I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven, and the first voice which I had heard, like the sound of a trumpet speaking with me, said, ‘Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after these things.’” (Rev 4:1)**

The sound of the trumpet is very interesting because of what the trumpet represents.

**Behold, I tell you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. (1Co 15:51-52)**

This is the open door of the Rapture open for the resurrection of the Church.

**For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of {the} archangel, and with the trumpet of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and thus we shall always be with the Lord. (1Th 4:16-17)**

So Rev 4 and 5 describes the church as being in heaven while in Rev 6-19, the Tribulation occurs on earth. This is a passage that illustrates that the Church is no longer on earth and that it is in heaven worshipping the Lord. How do we know that?

**After these things I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven, and the first voice which I had heard, like the sound of a trumpet speaking with me, said, "Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after these things." Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne was standing in heaven, and One sitting on the throne. And He who was sitting was like a jasper stone and a sardius in appearance; and there was a rainbow around the throne, like an emerald in appearance. And around the throne were twenty-four thrones; and upon the thrones I saw twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white garments, and golden crowns on their heads. (Rev 4:1-4)**

In verse 4, John is given a vision of 24 elders who are seated on thrones. Notice that these elders who are seated on thrones are clothed in white garments, crowned with golden crowns, and in heaven in the presence of God. Several answers are given as to the question of the identity of these twenty-four elders.

First of all, notice that these 24 elders are not angels. What is said of the 24 elders could not be true of angelic beings because angels are not crowned with victor's crowns. The golden crowns are given to Church-age believers, 1Co 9:25, Phi 4:1, 1Th 2:19, 2Ti 4:8, Jam 1:12, 1Pe 5:4.

Also there is something which is said that I think should be very meaningful to most of you in verse 4, **And around the throne were twenty-four thrones; and upon the thrones I saw twenty-four elders sitting**

Nowhere in the scripture are we ever told that angels are seated on thrones, which speaks of royal dignity and honor. This privilege is given to believers only because of the strategic victory of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, these 24 elders are resurrected, redeemed men who are clothed and crowned and seated on thrones in connection with royalty in heaven.